

The Importance of Warnings

Luke 12:13-21

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** In our studies in the book of Revelation we read about John and the “*little book*” in chapter 10.
 - A. Recall that John was told to “*Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.*” (Rev. 10:9)
 - B. And, when John ate the book that was his exact experience: **Rev. 10:10:** “*Then I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.*”
2. Three times in the Bible someone is told to eat a book:
 - A. Jeremiah: Jer. 15:13-15
 - B. Ezekiel: Ezek. 2:8-10
3. To “eat” God’s word is obviously a figure of speech; God’s word is often described as food:
 - (1) Bread: Matt. 4:4
 - (2) Milk: 1 Pet. 2:2
 - (3) Meat: 1 Cor. 3:1-2
 - (4) Honey: Psa. 119:103
 - A. To “eat” it suggests a willingness to accept it: **Ezek. 2:8:** “*But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.*”
 - B. It also suggests a willingness to apply it: i.e., when we eat food we digest it, metabolize it, and it incorporate it in our body. The parallel spiritually should happen when we “eat” God’s Word.
4. The book John is told to eat had two effects: “*...sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.*”
 - A. God’s word is often sweet: **Psa. 119:103:** “*How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!*”
 - B. That is so, because there are so many sweet thoughts and promises in the Bible (e.g., forgiveness, redemption, relief from burdens, peace of mind, rest, etc.).
 - C. But God’s word is also full of warnings; causing many “spiritual heartburn”:
 - (1) Avoid: **Prov. 4:14-15:** “*Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. 15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on.*”
 - (2) Flee: **1 Cor. 6:18:** “*Flee sexual immorality.*”; 1 Cor. 10:14 (flee idolatry); 1 Tim. 6:11 (flee love of money); 2 Tim. 2:22 (flee youthful lusts); Jas. 4:7 (flee the devil).
5. Many don’t like sermons that warn; the ones that “*make your stomach bitter*” (Rev. 10:9).
 - A. Most people like to hear nice sermons on peace, love, or heaven (Joel Osteen).
 - B. But warnings are necessary; there are 16 “*beware*” and 26 “*take heed*” passages in the NT.
6. **3** Let’s consider some important things we need to remember about warnings.

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **4** Warnings keep us safe:
 - A. They are often unpleasant, bothersome and disruptive to what we want to do; but without warnings, we could be injured in a storm, our car run out of gas, gas grill could explode.

- (1) God's warnings do just the same. They keep us safe.
- (2) We may not understand the complete importance of the warning, but God does.
- (3) He knows the trouble that we can get into. For example:

I Cor. 15:33: *"Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.'"*

- (4) God knows better than we know! I Jn. 5:3
- (5) Sometimes we think we know more than God!
 - ☛ We think we don't need warnings; "I can run my own life, thank you very much!"
 - ☛ We are too smart for those things.
 - ☛ We are too strong to be affected.

B. It's like the warnings on the side of a pack of cigarettes.

- (1) I don't know if those ever stopped people from smoking; because the guy that wants to smoke will smoke.
- (2) It's beyond my understanding how folks can stand outside of a funeral home and smoke, especially when grandpa lies dead inside because of lung cancer.
- (3) Some will just ignore the warnings. When they do, they suffer (my mother).

2. **5** Warnings seem so obvious they're not needed, but they're necessary:

A. You've seen car commercials where they're driving crazy (too fast, sharp turns, donuts, etc.).

- (1) At the bottom of the screen: *"Professional driver on a closed course. Do not attempt."*
- (2) Like I'm stupid enough to drive 90 mph on a curvy mountain road with a 1000' drop off!
- (3) It may seem obvious to you and I, but some people aren't as bright as you and I!

B. I also love the many warning labels on products.

- (1) I don't know if they are there to avoid lawsuits or because some dummy actually tried it and now the company is forced to warn others about not being so dumb.
 - (a) On a hair dryer, you'll find a label warning not to use in the shower (duh!).
 - (b) Amazing new hairdo if you try it.
- (2) Warning label on a chainsaw, not to sharpen while it's running.
- (3) Warning on narcotic pain reliever to not drive or operate heavy machinery; and to think, most of these folks that would try these things are probably out driving (Think of drug ads on TV and all the adverse side-effects they mention.).

C. Men/women need warnings because we are forgetful! We don't pay attention like we should! We are arrogant to the extent we often believe "It won't happen to me!" We often get complacent and apathetic about danger!

D. That's scary! God's warnings are the same. They are necessary. They are necessary for our spiritual growth, our relationship with Him and our wellbeing.

E. Our scripture reading is one example; here, the Lord warns against greed.

Lk. 12:15: *"And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.'"*

- (1) This warning follows a conversation that started with someone telling Jesus to instruct a family member to share the inheritance.

- (2) Three things were wrong with this request:
- (a) First, he interrupted Jesus; and essentially told Him what to do; one doesn't tell Jesus anything. Jesus is the Lord. He tells us; we might ask, but we don't tell.
 - (b) Secondly, had Jesus gotten involved in this family squabble, His mission would have been sidetracked; if he'd gotten involved He would have opened the floodgate and been involved in a myriad of such trivial matters.
 - (c) Thirdly, this man had a problem with greed.
 - (i) This is why Jesus issued the warning.
 - (ii) Storm warning ahead; the way was not calm; greed will eat you up!
 - (iii) He wasn't listening to Jesus. He was waiting for a moment to jump in and demand that Jesus settle things at home. Greed blinds us.
 - (iv) We get thinking about wanting a new car, new house, new golf club, that vacation...and before long, it's all we think about, talk about, and dream about.
 - (v) We become obsessed. We won't be happy until we get it. That's greed. It leads us away from God. It consumes us.

F. When we begin to ignore, or even slightly annoyed, at warnings we are in big danger!

1 Cor. 10:11-12: *“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”*

3. **6** Warnings are to be passed on to others:

A. What do you do with warnings?

- (1) When there's a storm warning what do you do? Warn others?
- (2) When a young child is about to reach for something on a hot stove? What do you do?
- (3) If the person standing beside you is obviously distracted and is about to step out into traffic. What do you do?

B. Shouldn't we do the same thing spiritually?

Ezek. 33:7-9: *“So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. 8 When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”*

C. Paul certainly felt the obligation to warn others:

2 Cor. 5:10-11a: *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;”*

- (1) We warn others the path they're on won't end in Heaven.
- (2) We warn about attitudes and language.
- (3) We warn to try to help one another.
- (4) It's not because we are better, it's because we don't want others to be hurt.

Gal. 6:1: “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”

4. Some specific warnings:

A. This lesson would be incomplete without offering some important warnings from Scripture.

B. Have you ever driven through the Smokey Mountains or out west through the Rockies?

(1) You often see road signs; ‘Beware of falling rocks.’

(2) “Beware” is a strong word: “to be wary, cautious, or careful of (usually used imperatively)” (Dictionary.com)

(3) To “beware” carries the idea of alertness, attentiveness, watchfulness.

(4) “Beware” is a word of warning.

(5) We humans have a tendency to ignore “warnings”: e.g., tornado warnings

(1) “It won’t happen to me.”

(2) “I’ve never seen that sort of thing happen around here.”

(3) “That takes years to affect you, so I can _____ now.”

(4) “Oh, that warning light comes on all the time; I just ignore it.”

(5) “Do you hear that funny sound? I don’t think it’s anything.”

(6) “Oh, I can go at least 30 miles after that warning light goes off.”

C. We’ve already made the point there are 16 “beware” and 26 “take heed” passages in the NT.

D. Let’s quickly review a few “beware” passages; passages issuing warnings:

(1) Beware of falling away:

2 Pet. 3:17: “You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

(1) It is a shame to quit serving the Lord and go back to the old life (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

(2) But there are many that do so!

(3) Falling and failing in our spiritual life can happen even to the best—to Noah, David, Solomon (**Phil. 3:18-19:** “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame — who set their mind on earthly things.”).

Heb. 3:12-14: “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,”

(4) Don’t think it can’t happen to you! **1 Cor. 10:12:** “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” I’ve seen so many who’ve fallen away! **Heb. 10:35-39**

(2) Beware of forgetting:

Deut. 8:11-14: “Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, 12 lest — when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; 13 and when

your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; 14 when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;”

(a) Moses’ constant warning to the children of Israel: Never forget God! Why? We are forgetful creatures! Especially when things are going well in our lives.

(b) That’s why memorials are so common; they’re solid proofs of men’s short memories:

I Cor. 11:23-26: *“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”*

(c) Never forget all your blessings and good things are only made possible by the Lord:

Jas. 1:17: *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”*

(d) Make it a habit to give God the glory, praise and thanks (**Psa. 103:2:** *“Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: 3 Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, 4 Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,”*).

(3) Beware of a wicked heart:

Deut. 15:9a: *“Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart...”*

(a) We are what we think! **Prov. 23:7:** *“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:”*

(b) The heart of man is the seat of his thoughts and issues in life:

Mk. 7:21-23: *“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”*

(c) The heart is where temptation is conceived and born.

(d) Whatever we premeditate in our heart will eventually manifest itself in what we do!

(e) The man with an evil heart will surely be destroyed; but he who guards his heart and fills it with God’s words shall be blessed.

Prov. 4:23: *“Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.”*

(4) Beware of false prophets:

Matt. 7:15: *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”*

(a) The notion of dealing with false teachers is not very high on most Christian’s list of priorities, but it should be!

(b) They are everywhere:

I Jn. 4:1: *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because **many** false prophets have gone out into the world.”*

2 Pet. 2:1: “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, **who will secretly** bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”; cf. Acts 20:28

- (c) Notice Jesus says they won't come with name tag that says “I'm a False Teacher.”
- (d) A counterfeit's only hope to be successful is when it is disguised as the real thing!
 - (i) They talk, pray, sing, read the Bible, and even preach God's word LIKE a true Christian; but they are not real Christians (**2 Cor. 11:13-14:** “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness.”).
 - (ii) The Lord Jesus said by their fruits they shall be detected (Matt. 7:20; 2 Pet. 2:1b).

(5) Beware of hypocrisy:

Matt. 16:6: “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.’”

- (a) Their “leaven” was their false doctrine and hypocrisy! **Matt. 16:12:** “Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”
- (b) We must be careful NOT to do the right thing, at the right time for the WRONG reasons! Mk. 12:38-40
- (c) Examples: serving and giving to church to be popular and look good; praying long prayers with flowery words to impress others, studying the Bible in order to boast of superior knowledge; preaching for money, material gain or personal prestige (big shot); helping the poor and needy only to use them later, etc.
- (d) Good deeds done with wrong motives are Satan's snares and traps that many have fallen into; beware of eye-service! **Eph. 6:6-7:** “not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men,”

(6) Beware of covetousness:

Lk. 12:15: “And He said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.’”

- (a) Oftentimes our selfish desires provoke us to become lovers of money and things instead of God; it doesn't matter how big or small your net worth! Covetousness is a disease that knows no economic boundaries!
- (b) Covetousness, the materialistic view of life, is dangerous and damning; just ask the “certain rich man” (Lk. 12:16-21); **Lk. 12:20:** “But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’”
- (c) It's no wonder Paul even equates it to idolatry (Col. 3:5).
- (d) I'm not advocating poverty, but perspective: **Lk. 12:15:** “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

(7) Beware of vain philosophy:

Col. 2:8: “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

- (a) This warning includes vain traditions (Matt. 15:7-9) and false science (1 Tim. 6:20).
- (b) There are millions of vain philosophies that want to pull us away from Christ!
- (c) Christ and His apostles warned that no matter how appealing certain long-held beliefs are (if they are contrary to scriptural truth), we are to avoid and reject them.
- (d) People advocating such things do not have our best interests at heart:

Col. 2:8: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

2 Pet. 2:3: “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you...”

(8) Beware of fornication:

1 Cor. 6:18-20: “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

- (a) God created man/woman as “sexual beings” (**Gen. 1:22:** “Be fruitful and multiply...”).
- (b) Our sexual desires can be the strongest of our urges, but there is only one legitimate relationship where God allows the expression of our sexual desires (**Heb. 13:4:** “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”).
- (c) We must beware of our sexual desires! They can overcome us like a flash flood destroying everything in its path!
- (d) In five minutes we can destroy our reputation, our peace of mind, and our soul.
- (e) Fornication has destroyed many! **Prov. 7:6-27: vv. 26-27:** “For she has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men. 27 Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death.”
- (f) The greatest thing you can give your future husband/wife is to keep yourself sexually pure (also remember Matt. 19:9).

II. CONCLUSION:

1. Avoid...flee...beware.
2. These are some of God’s warning lights on the dashboard of life.
3. We need to pay attention to them.
4. We need to see the good in heeding these warnings (1 Jn. 5:3).
5. We need to know that these warnings could save our lives, especially eternally (**Psa. 19:7-11:** “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.”).