

Words of Truth

“One Sinner Destroyeth Much Good”

By: Brian A. Yeager

Throughout the Bible we see that the influence of one person can cause much good or also much harm. Eve influenced her husband and sin entered into the world (Genesis 3:1-21 and I Timothy 2:13-15). On the other hand, the only begotten Son of God came into the world and died that we might be saved (Romans 5:6-12). His influence teaches us how to be saved (I Peter 2:21-22).

I do not want this article to come across as though there are not good individuals who use their influence for good. The Bible is full of examples of those who did things right and set a good example to be followed. For example, we have Noah (Genesis 6-8), Abraham (Genesis 22:18 and Galatians 3:18; 29), Joseph (Acts 7:9-15), Moses (Acts 7:35), David (Acts 13:22), Elijah (I Kings 18), Micaiah (II Chronicles 18), Josiah (II Kings 22:1-23:25), John the Baptizer (Matthew 3:1-12), Philip the Evangelist (Acts 8:25-38), Phebe (Romans 16:1-2), Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-30), and Epaphras (Colossians 4:12) who serve as good examples. Many more could have been listed (cf. Hebrews 11:1-40).

We’re supposed to be good examples to others (Titus 2:7-8). Sadly, it is the influence of evil that always has a greater impact on people (Proverbs 9:6, Proverbs 13:20, I Corinthians 15:33, and II Timothy 2:16). We have to face the facts. Most people love darkness more than light (John 3:19-21 and John 7:7). The world is evil (Galatians 1:4). The whole world lieth in wickedness (I John 5:19). Those points are obvious. What is not so obvious, to some, is that there are also sinners hiding among God’s people (Matthew 7:15-20). It is those who hide among us that serve as the greatest threat. Thus, we need to consider the title of our article in the context of wolves among the sheep.

What Can One Sinner Among Us Do To God’s Work?

*“Wisdom is better than weapons of war: **but one sinner destroyeth much good**” (Ecclesiastes 9:18).* Some would discard the warning of the verse you just read. Some actually think it is okay to have someone among God’s people that is a wolf. Even when people know there is a wolf among them, they often do nothing about it. This was one of the problems in Corinth. Notice: *“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you” (I Corinthians 5:1-2).*

Why was Paul concerned about the fornicator in Corinth? For one, fellowship with this one fornicator implicated all of the brethren in Corinth (Ephesians 5:7-11, I Timothy 5:22, and II John 9-11). Secondly, sin spreads like a cancer. Notice Paul’s instructions about this threat: *“For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power*

*of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. **Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?** Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (I Corinthians 5:3-8). We see the same warning elsewhere too: “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. **A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump**” (Galatians 5:7-9).*

The fact that sin is contagious is not something we should ignore. When evil men are among us we must expect things to get worse and worse (II Timothy 3:13). The influence of the ungodly is not just a problem in the assembly either. Whole houses can be subverted [overthrown] through the influence of the ungodly (Titus 1:11). God’s people of old faced similar problems, as did the churches of Christ in Corinth and Galatia. Sinful influences caused God’s people to fall away (Deuteronomy 7:1-6, I Kings 11:1-9, Ezra 10:10, Nehemiah 13:23-27, and Jeremiah 5:31). Brethren, we have to learn from these things (Romans 15:4 and I Corinthians 10:1-11).

Making The Application Here in El Paso

We have seen many who pose to be God’s people whom we have found to be liars (cf. I John 2:4). While it’s easy to pick on the false teachers around us (James Jones at Montwood, Joe Wright at Pendleton Road, Howard Bryan at Westside, etc.), think of the ones that have been “among us”. We’ve had gentle, older men and women who appeared to be faithful. Yet, those like Herman Starkey, were working behind the scenes to promote division (Proverbs 6:12-14 and Jude 4). We have to keep working to see those things coming before the damage occurs (Proverbs 22:3; 27:12).

Paul warned the Ephesian elders saying: “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. **Also of your own selves** shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:28-31). Brethren, we will fail if we are not mindful of those among us just as much as those that come from the outside. Any one of us could fail and attempt to bring others down with us (II Timothy 2:17-18). This is not said to make us a paranoid people, who read into things and jump to false conclusions (I Timothy 6:3-5). However, we have to maintain our carefulness and awareness of each other’s spiritual condition (II Peter 3:17). In doing so, we must maintain a righteous judgment (John 7:24 and I John 4:1).*

Conclusion

We have a close spiritual family here. However, if we become complacent watchmen (Isaiah 56:10), we can become a divided spiritual family. All it takes is one sinner to destroy the many good things we have going on here at this congregation. The disciples of our Lord had one among them, breaking bread with them, named Judas who tried to destroy much good (Matthew 26:17-25). Brethren, no congregation of the Lord’s people is protected by some invisible force field. The one Judas, who could be among us, can work a horrible thing. Let’s be aware (Philippians 3:2)!