

Northeast Church of Christ

450 Grandview Drive, Cookeville, TN 38506 • necoc.net

Volume 33 • February 21, 2010

From the Pen of Paul: “Who Did Hinder You?” (Part 2)

NOTE: Last week we began to investigate Paul's question to the Galatians. In Galatians 5:7 he wrote, “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?”

WE HAVE EXAMPLES, IN BOTH THE OLD Testament and the New Testament, of some who did “run well” for a while, but in the end failed. For instance, there was Lot's wife. She left Sodom behind with her husband and daughters; however, in disobedience to a direct command, we are told, “...his wife *looked back* from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt” (Gen. 19:26). This was disobedience, for they were told, “Escape for thy life; *look not behind thee*, neither stay thou in all the plain” (Gen. 19:17). This very incident was later used by Jesus to teach this important lesson; “Remember Lot's wife” is an exhortation against delay, hesitation, and a desire to “*look back*” from that escaped (Luke 17:32). Jesus earlier had stated, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and *looking back*, is fit for the kingdom of heaven” (Luke 9:62). Peter later wrote of blessings promised to those who have been made “partakers of the Divine nature having *escaped* the corruption that is in the world through lust” (II Pet. 1:4). He comes back to this theme later in his epistle when he writes, “For if *after they have escaped* the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are *again entangled therein, and overcome*, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (II Pet. 2:20). I believe Lot's

wife, if possible, would attest to the truthfulness of what Peter wrote.

The rich, young ruler of Matthew 19 is another such example. When he inquired of the Lord, “What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” he was told, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matt. 19:16-17). Upon inquiry as to “which” commandments, and being informed of a number of them, his reply was, “All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet” (vv. 18-20)? This young man had “run well” in keeping these commandments, but when informed of other responsibilities, we are informed, “He went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions” (vv. 21-22). He was not willing to “go on unto perfection” (Heb. 6:1).

Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, are also prime examples of this sin. They were Jesus' disciples, and apparently wanted to do good. However, their desire for praise led them to stop doing well, and they lost their lives, as well as their souls. You can read their story in Acts 5:1-11.

In the context of the question under consideration, the Galatians had been “so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel” (Gal. 1:6). The Judaizing teachers had persuaded them to “not obey the truth” (Gal. 3:1; 5:7). Satan is a great and cunning persuader. He beguiled Eve with the desire to know as God knows good from evil (Gen. 3:6). She was tricked by the serpent's cunning methods; the food was good to eat; it looked good to the eye; and

“Dear Mr. Hill: I know that you have talked a lot about divorce and remarriage. I have a question concerning that. I have met and fallen in love with a man who was married for three months and then divorced. No infidelity was committed. They just couldn’t get along. We dated before he was married, and when he was divorced he came back to me. Is there any way that our relationship and maybe marriage would be blessed by God? Isn’t there anything we can do to make it right? I love this man so much. I can’t imagine life without him. I am so upset and confused. I want to be right with God, but I just don’t know how I can turn my back on our love. I guess I am hoping that you will tell me that maybe there is a way we can be together. I know that this is a longer letter than what you usually get, but can you please print my letter or answer me personally? I know that you don’t usually answer matters of the heart, but my salvation is also at stake. Can you tell me what God wants me to do? Also, I wanted to know that if we marry and in turn my husband would be living in adultery, but what would my sin be? I have never been married before. I hope you can help me. I have loved reading your column and your words have helped me so much.”

I feel deeply for people like this lady. I have often wished I could say the magic word and it would make things right. I have told thousands of people: “When you date be sure to date one eligible for marriage because you are going to marry someone you have dated.” The dating business is serious business and so many people do not seem to realize this.

The Bible teaches there is one and only one reason for divorce and remarriage and that is fornication (Matt. 19:9). God wrote the Bible thus His wishes and will are found in the Bible. God is the God of truth (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). He cannot lie and tell the truth at the same time. He cannot make one law and contradict it at the same time. Truth is always consistent thus God is always consistent because He always sets forth truth and pursues the same.

Now what good would it do me to contradict the Bible and tell folks to go against the Bible? What I might say will not change the teaching of the Bible. What you might do will not change what God has said. Absolutely nothing changes what God has spoken. God’s Word is settled forever in heaven and on earth (Ps. 119:89; Matt. 16:19). Love does not change God’s marriage law. Compatibility does not change God’s marriage law. Happiness does not change God’s marriage law. Going to church does

not change God’s marriage law. Church membership does not change God’s marriage law. Absolutely nothing changes God’s marriage law.

Hundreds have called me about divorce and remarriage. Most all of them have said, “I know you will tell me the truth no matter what.” They are right. I am going to tell everyone the truth on all matters regardless who it may be. If I told people a lie, it would not change the truth. If I lied to people about Bible teaching, I would lose my soul and so would those who followed me. What a tragic event this would be! Some have gotten mad at me because they are living in adultery and I refuse to abandon Bible teaching and condone their unscriptural marriage. Thousands of preachers have told, and are still telling people to go ahead and live in adultery. I know what is going to happen to these preachers and those who follow them. This to me is a sad situation.

What happens to a person who is eligible to marry if she marries one that is not eligible to marry? She, too, is living in adultery (Matt. 19:9). The Bible says, “and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” Let me leave you with this advice. It is better to want what you do not have, than to have what you do not want when it comes to marriage.

—Malcolm L. Hill

she was lured by her desire to be wise. The devil persuaded Judas to betray Jesus (Luke 22:3). And he will persuade you if you are not on guard. Peter warned, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (I Pet. 5:8). Paul tells us that we need to be aware of his “devices” (II Cor. 2:11), and warns of his “wiles” (Eph. 6:11). He will “blind the minds of them that believe not” (II Cor. 4:4). Satan is often able to accomplish his purposes and persuade us to disobey God, and even to stop obeying the truth after we have been faithful for a while. This is true because, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41).

Even though Satan, through his “ministers” (II Cor. 10:15), teaches. “Once saved, always saved,” the overwhelming evidence of the Scriptures teach otherwise. Guy N. Woods, an austere student of the Bible, said, There are more than twenty-five hundred warnings to the saints of the possibility of apostasy in the Scriptures” [Guy N. Woods: *GA Commentary of James*].

So, put up your guard, study God's word diligently, apply it effectively and don't permit anyone to *hinder you* into not obeying the truth!

—Paul M. Wilmoth