

The Old Paths

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“Thoughts Following The Bombing”

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On Monday, 4/15/13, folks near the finish line of the Boston marathon suffered a great tragedy when two bombs exploded on the sidewalk. My understanding is that 4 people have been killed since Monday, and nearly 150 people have been injured in some manner. As more details emerge, we need to pray for the families affected, for the injured people, and for the doctors and nurses who are caring for the injured at this time. Some people will be coping and living with the consequences of this event for many years.

We Know Who Was Really Responsible.

As I thought about these events and their consequences, my mind went to the source of what was behind it. What could cause people to want to commit such violence? The overwhelming majority of people attending the race were no doubt strangers to one another, as well as strangers to the bombers. Why would they want to commit this violence? While we may never fully know the reasons, I realized that we already know who ultimately was behind such an act — Satan!!

Satan tempted these people to commit such destruction, and they yielded to that temptation (Jas. 1:14-15; I Jn. 2:15-17). If we never know all the “whys” be-

hind the bombings, we do know this! We know that Satan tempts man in this way because he is our enemy (I Pet. 5:8). He hates mankind and wants men to turn against each other. He is an enemy of love, of truth, and of right (Matt. 13:25-39). He wants confusion, and not peace (unlike God, I Cor. 14:33). He has been a murderer and a liar from the beginning (Jn. 8:44), and the murder and mayhem on that Monday is just more proof of it! Therefore, we need to remember that in this life, it is Christ who has given us the opportunity to be saved (Rom. 1:16). He loves us, and wants us safe. Christ is our true friend (Jn. 15:13)! Satan is our enemy!

Life Is Uncertain.

As I thought about the bombing, my thoughts also turned to the people who were hurt. While the bombing was intentional, the people hurt were random victims. Had circumstances been different, any one of us could have been among the number of injured or dead (Ecc. 9:11-12). Any one of us could have been the ones forced to endure pain and injury, or be among the families of those who are suffering. What can I learn from this event? One thing I am reminded of is when Christ referred to two events in Luke 13:1-5 where people suffered and died. In both cases (some folks Pilate had killed, and some folks killed by a wall falling on them), Jesus asked those listening: *“Do you think they were worse offenders than all the others ...?”* The

answer was “No!” Their transgressions were not “worse” than others, even though they died at that point. Jesus then tells the crowd (and us), *“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Lk. 13:3, 5)!

What I learn from the Boston bombing is that I need to make my life right with God while I can! We have no promise of tomorrow (Prov. 27:1). We have no guarantees! Making plans for the future is a good thing to do (Jas. 4:15). However, tomorrow is still in the hands of God, and not ours! Therefore, let us not put off doing what we know we need to do (Heb. 3:7-8; Mk. 16:16)! I notice in the Bible that when folks knew what they needed to do to be saved, they went right then and did it (Acts 2:41, 8:36-38, 16:30-34, 22:16)! This is but more evidence of the fact that we do not know what will be tomorrow. Therefore, take advantage of our opportunities to serve and please God while we still can!

As of this writing, I know there are at least 4 people who can make no more choices! Their bodies are at rest, and their voices are silent! All decisions they wanted to make, and all plans they had will now go undone! Friend, how long will it be before you or I are in that situation? (Job 14:1-2) Listen, do not let your children nor any other family member follow your casket to your grave with them knowing that you put off becoming a Christian!! Your family will miss you when you are gone. Don’t let them grieve at your passing as those who have no hope (contr. I Thess. 4:13)!!

This Life Is Not All There Is!

A final thought that went through my mind as I saw the horror and the aftermath of the bombing is that I was happy to know that this world is “not my

home"! As the years pass, I long more and more for "that city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). This world will continue to get worse and worse because men have decided to direct their own steps (Jer. 10:23). As this continues, Christians will understand what Paul meant when he said, "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better" (Phil. 1:23). That is the truth! Bombings, violence, wickedness, and similar things are not from God, but are from Satan.

Conclusion

Seeing that bombings, mayhem, wickedness, and the like are not likely to end soon (II Tim. 3:13), what can we do? Are we powerless against such actions? By no means! "God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" (II Tim. 1:7). We have power, for we have the gospel of Christ at our fingertips (Rom. 1:16). The gospel is God's power to save and to change the hearts of men.

Think about where you were before you became a Christian (Acts 22:16). Do you want to go back to that life again? I don't either. Therefore, let us take this gospel, this life-changing message, and tell others about it. When we do this, then the world can truly change for the better. Change does not come at the point of a spear or the muzzle of a gun. Change comes when the hearts of men repent and turn back to the Lord (II Pet. 3:9)! Truly, "the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5).

Snake Handlers!

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There are no miraculous snake handlers today (Mk. 16:17). Just as there is no one who can "drink any deadly thing" without it hurting him, so there is no one who can "take up serpents," as Paul did, for example, and remain unharmed when bitten by a venomous one (Acts 28:3-6). (If anyone doubts what we have just said, we are ready to "try the spirits" (1 Jn. 4:1)!

Jesus, though, referred to his generation as "serpents...a generation of vipers" (Matt. 23:33). Today, such snakes still slither about (2 Cor. 11:3). They are wily, cunning, secretive. They lie unseen. They often strike without warning. Spies and unfaithful friends are referred to as "snakes in the grass." That is, they are hidden, unsuspected enemies. Brethren, men like this occasionally crawl about and coil up among us.

It is necessary, therefore, that we learn how to handle them. In short, we need to learn how to be "snake handlers."

First, we need to be on the lookout for them. Be watchful, wary, lest they crawl into our sleeping bags with us (Jude 12).

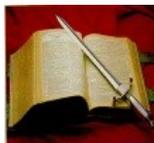
Second, identity is very important. Some serpents are helpful. My granddaddy would not allow us to harm the black snake that inhabited the corn crib. He said it ate the rats and mice who ate the corn. However, he would kill a rattler or a copperhead in an instant. Let us study and learn how to recognize poisonous "snakes" (the two-legged kind) so we may refute their deadly doctrines before they strike.

Third, there is a right and a wrong way to handle a poisonous serpent. Likewise, we must use tact, wisdom, and judgment when dealing with such clever adversaries. We must not provide them with an opportunity to plead for sympathy. We must not make them look like martyrs. We must not make these sneaky snakes appear as objects of persecution. Let us learn how to handle them aright, avoiding their fangs as we cut off their heads.

Fourth, serpents appear as part of the terrain. They fade into the scenery unseen. The twig or the vine may be a snake! Likewise, "serpent-saints" come in privately (2 Pet. 2:1, 2). They pretend to be part of our love, our fellowship. They seem like they are "of us." They make us think they hold to the same faith. But they are not vines of Christ. They are camouflaged snakes!

We need, therefore, to be effective, efficient snake handlers. Are we?

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