

One Sinner Destroys Much Good

Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroys much good. (Ecc 9:18)

By Ron Daly

The title of this article comes from a statement of the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes in chapter 9, verse 18. It conveys a thought that each of us must consider. It tells us that a sinner wields a lot of influence, but it is the wrong kind and it is destructive! Notice that the text doesn't say that "many sinners destroy much good," but "one sinner destroys much good." Many times one sinner does more harm to the cause of good, than one righteous person does to a stampeding herd of ungodliness.

A preacher may be a very effective pulpiteer and he may have a firm grasp on the truth of scripture, but if he doesn't believe what he preaches enough to live it, he is himself a sinner who destroys any good that he achieves (I Timothy 4:11-12).

An elder may have tremendous leadership skills coupled with a broad knowledge of God's word, but if he doesn't practice what he requires about honesty, controlling the tongue, moral purity, and all else, he isn't fit for the position

of overseer. He will destroy any good that he accomplishes (I Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:7).

A Bible class teacher may be kind, knowledgeable, and very practical in his application of scripture, but if he is a gossip, quick tempered, listens to slander, and never asks forgiveness from those against whom he has sinned, any good that he accomplishes will be destroyed by his sins (Romans 2:19-24).

If others see people in the church who claim to be Christians, but whose lives are full of hypocrisy and evil, then any good that is accomplished by the congregation will be destroyed (Hebrews 10:26-29).

We should promote good instead of destroying it. If our lives are not what God says they should be we are destroying the good that we or other saints seem to be achieving. We must repent of our sins and start anew. Christians, if there is sin in your life, stop it and turn to God. Then and only then will the good that we and others are trying to do will not be destroyed.



Classes This Week
Thursday 7 PM—On Campus
Truth Seekers

Sick			
Richard Wood (Melanie Smith's Uncle)	Eli Williams (Friend of Sarah Norman)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	Marion Vanhal (Paula Davis' Uncle)	Jeffery Miller (Friend of Walker Davis)
Virginia Crawford (Hunter's Sister-In-Law)	Neal May (Manna Jones' Mother)	Roger Whatley (Daphene Whatley's son)	Andrew Hagewood (Friend of Sarah Norman)
Gaylord Huffman (Jennifer Daniel's Grandfather)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Betty Bradford	Arlene Harkrider (Nichole Pender's Grandmother)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)	Dale Herd (William Herd's brother)	Carl Alexander (Hannah Alexander's Uncle)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Melissa Walker (Chuck Hahn's Cousin)	Jerry Coleman (Jon Coleman's brother)	Caleb Dobbs (Melanie Smith's brother)

July Birthdays

3 – Nathan Rouse
 6 – Katie McDaniel
 6 – Nathan Bradshaw
 11 – Chase Winslett
 11 – Madi White
 11 – Clay Morris
 12 – Aurie Adams
 14 – Laurel Jerkins
 15 – Bradley Seymore
 16 – Nathan Smith
 23 – Drew Haley Smith
 25 – Yvette Rouse

News and Notes

☒ - Suzanne Nichols' mother (Judy) had successful surgery on Tuesday.

☒ - Scott Perkins aunt died last week.

☒ - Let's continue to remember our expectant mother in our prayers, Terria Burton.

☒ - We will have a congregational meeting with the Elders on July 15.

☒ - Tam, Kitty + Paul are in China until July 23.

☒ - Toni Herd's sister, Carol, was diagnosed with colon cancer.

☒ - Here is the new address for the Jeremiah Johnson family:

**568 Bentmoor Drive
 Helena, AL 35080**

The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

What Can We Know About Heaven?

By Robert Turner



Thoughts to Ponder

Death is not extinguishing the light; it is only putting out the lamp because the dawn has come.

"Now my idea about heaven is. . ." and then the writer or speaker reveals himself far more than he tells us about heaven. The materialist, sensual, mystical, aesthetic, and surrealist all have a field day with heaven. It is "pie in the sky" to those who ridicule its reality; and an extremely plush "paid vacation" for those who equate "real" with earthly literalism.

"Heaven" is a divinely revealed place, state, or condition; and we can know only that which is revealed about it in God's word. We say "place" with some hesitation, using accommodative language; for "location" is space related, and may lose its literal significance when applied to eternity. But God's word is directed to time and space related beings, and information about deity and eternity are necessarily couched in terms that translate into mental images. We can not truly imagine "eternity" or things eternal in nature, so we must expect the Bible to use anthropomorphisms: whereby things of God, totally incomprehensible to mortal man, are described in the time and space terms of man.

Jewish typology finds its final usage here. God built a literal people, a literal nation, through whom His Son would put on flesh and dwell among men. He used these people, a distinct advantage to them, as His vehicle for demonstrating God-to-man dealings (Rom. 3:1f;

I am persuaded heaven is not for everyone. It is a prepared place for a prepared people. Heaven's invitation is not limited; its glories are available to all. But many are ill prepared for heaven, and I cannot believe God would force heaven upon anyone.

9:4-5). Then, as His eternal purpose began to reach its fruition in Christ, the literal kingdom of Israel is seen as a type of His spiritual rule over whosoever will. Christ reigns on "David's throne," and is our High Priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Acts 2:30f; Heb. 6:20f). Scattered Israel finds a "highway" and "returns. . . in righteousness" (Isa. 10:20f; 35:8f); and all Christians are "Abraham's seed" or "the Israel of God" (Gal. 3:29; 6:16). It should come as no surprise that heaven is called "New Jerusalem"; and praise to God there is described in Jewish terms: "golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints" (Rev. 5:8).

The apocalyptic description of heaven (Rev. 21:1f) speaks of the "Holy City" Jerusalem, with its walls of jasper, and

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 Walker Davis
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 Larry Rouse
 (334) 734-2133

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES
Sunday
 Bible Class9:30 AM
 Worship10:20 AM
 Evening Worship 6:00 PM
Wednesday
 Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

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 Evangelist and Editor

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other precious stones; its street (singular) of gold; twelve gates, each made of a single pearl, named after the twelve tribes of Israel. The tabernacle (KJV) of God is there, but this is the true abode of Jehovah - not a "tent" in which the "presence" of God is indicated by a cloud of glory. In fact, we are told "I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (**21:22**). God is on His throne - for the authority of God is eternal. There is plenty of water, and trees, including the "tree of life" (restoring that which was lost when man was separated from Eden). The high imagery is further indicated by the measuring of the city "the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal" - a perfect cube (**21:16b**).

Materialists may literalize heaven to a point of absurdity: as though heaven will be the fulfillment of their most covetous and lustful appetites. We sing, "I want a gold (mansion) that's silver lined" - forgetting that the street is made of gold. It seems we should realize that Bible descriptions of heaven which emphasize its beauty, its value, the peace and lack of pain that prevails, etc., are relating heaven's wonders to the human realm. We cannot improve on God's way of describing heaven, and would be foolish to try it. But there is ample evidence God is telling us that holiness, righteousness, purity, and praise of God find perfection there. This means little to worldly people, but is given its true significance by the genuine child of God.

Paul wrote: "Our citizenship is in heaven: whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (**Phil. 3:20**). Philippi was a Roman colony, where citizens were mostly retired soldiers, given full citizenship in the "mother" city Rome. Though far from that city, they dressed Roman, spoke Latin, observed Roman morals, were governed by Roman magistrates, "remained unshakeably and unalterably Roman" (cf. Barclay). Paul was saying the Christian, no matter where he is, must never forget he is a citizen of heaven; and his conduct must match his citizenship. To this kind of people, heaven is "going home." "Oh what a wonderful thought to those who have practiced heavenly citizenship, longing for the day when they will dwell in God's presence. "Home to heaven" will be a happy trip for those who, on earth, hunger and thirst after righteousness (**Matt. 5:6**). But what of those who have no such taste? Can we expect them to long for a life totally different from what they now pursue?

The passage in Philippians continues: "(Christ) who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory. . . ." In Romans 7 the body, with its fleshly appetites, is seen as a "law" (force) which wars against the inward man or mind desirous of doing God's will. The conflict results in a "wretched man," captive to sin in his members, and delivered only by forgiveness through Christ (**7:18f**). The Christian must strive to "put to death the deeds of the body" (**8:13**). Paul then promises that though we, "groan and travail in pain... now" (**8:22**); we wait for our adoption, to wit, "the redemption of our body" (**v. 23**). This body, with appetites which war against our desire to serve God, will be changed in heaven - the conflict will be over. How wonderful for those who war against the flesh here! But what of those who "let themselves go," and revel in appetites of the flesh? Do they long for a body change, with fleshly appetites removed?

I am persuaded heaven is not for everyone. It is a prepared place for a prepared people. Heaven's invitation is not limited; its glories are available to all. But many are ill prepared for heaven, and I cannot believe God would force heaven upon anyone. There is an old story about a slave whose "Massa" had died, and who was asked if he thought the Master had gone to heaven. He said the "Massa" always talked about places he planned to visit, and made great preparation for going there. But "Massa" never talked about heaven, and made no preparation for that destination. "Chances are he ain't makin' dat trip!"

Sorry - I can't tell you any more about heaven than what you can read in the Scriptures; and I can tell that only in terms used by the Holy Spirit to give us some idea of its wonders. But God's word clearly warns us of an ultimate "last day" when judgment shall be declared, and we shall face one of two eternal destinies. The righteous dead shall be there (**1 Thess. 4:16**), and so shall the wicked. "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (**Jn. 5:28-29**). Christ makes it clear that the destinies are the same duration: saying, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life" (**Matt. 25:46**).

Whatever heaven will be like, it will be "home" for the Christian, and an end to the struggles of this life. Those who are striving to serve God in the here and now, are going to love it. I doubt that those who ridicule the godly life would be happy there. And that is doubly sad, for it is highly unlikely they will like the other place.



How to Avoid a Spiritual Failure

By Paul Earnhart

In his final hours in Rome, awaiting an inevitable execution, a very lonely apostle Paul suffered some additional heartbreak. "Demas," he wrote, "hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (**2 Tim 4:10**). We are left to speculate as to the particulars—what dread fears or powerful allurements led this faithful friend and co-worker to abandon the kingdom of God and to forsake his burdened brother. It was not as though he had fled the field at the first approach of trouble. During Paul's first imprisonment in Rome Demas had evidently been a steadfast companion (**Philemon 24; Col 4:14**). Now, unexpectedly, this heart—mauling betrayal and desertion. Only those who have had a trusted companion in Christ—one who has proven himself in many a crisis—to suddenly turn from God and run for the world can understand. It can numb the spirit.

What is it that can cause one who has invested so much in the kingdom to suddenly abandon everything? Some fade early because they have little understanding of the calling of God and even less commitment. The first approach of temptation and hardship devastates them (**Luke 8:13**). Others seem to have a deep commitment to righteousness but not an absolute one. Their price for betrayal is high but they have one nonetheless, and when it gets high enough they run. The wealthy young ruler who came to Jesus was like that. He was willing to give up a lot, but not everything (**Mt 19:16-23**).

Paul said that Demas "loved this present world." The "world" is many things. John describes it as a way of thinking where lust, materialism and pride abound (**1 Jn 2:15-16**). What was it that got to the faithful Demas? Was it fear of death or imprisonment? Or was it something more subtle like a nostalgic longing for the old easy ways free of constant unabating warfare? We are not told which one of these undid Demas but one of them found its mark.

Breaking points can come to us too if we are not very careful. A deep hurt we cannot find it in ourselves to forgive. A disappointing marriage. Failures with our children. Lost health or prosperity. Anything we had never imagined happening to us. And often it's just plain prideful stubbornness. At any rate, don't ever say you'd never do what others have done. You've never been all the places you could be. Peter learned a valuable lesson about that (**Mt 26:31-35**). It is far better that we know our own weaknesses and watch and pray that we enter not into temptation (**Mt 26:41**). Satan loves an arrogant and

self—confident man.

Another lesson to be learned from the failure of others is that those who at last go back, at first look back. Departures of apparent suddenness are really the end of a process. Our Lord warned that those who put their hand to the kingdom plow and look back longingly at the world are not fit for the kingdom of God (**Lk 9:62**). The disciples who go back are those who first begin to cultivate again the values of the world and like the Israelites in the wilderness grow nostalgic amidst their trials for the fleshpots of Egypt. They forget, of course, the galling bondage that accompanies the life of sin. These are the ones who gradually cease to meditate upon God's word (**Psa 1:1-2**), then become prayerless (**Jas 4:1-2**) as God and Christ seem far away. First men cease to study, then to pray, and, finally, to care. Sometimes this all begins as a casual flirtation, a few little compromises dismissed as harmless. Too much time with worldly companions (**1 Cor 15:33**), too much interest in a job (**1 Tim 6:9-10**), too much concern with being accepted and making our mark in the world (**1 Pt 5:5**). Finally, it becomes a passionate love affair that makes us heedless of the injury we do to our Savior, ourselves and others.

Satan is the master of the "short step" method. Slow change is more effective in producing spiritual collapse than sudden departure. The danger of alerting the victim to what is happening is eliminated. We can be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (**Heb 3:12-13**). Warning flags need to start flying the moment we feel the slightest ebb in commitment. Beware the spiritual slow leak. The unfailing answer to this kind of spiritual failure is the daily discipline of an uncompromising dedication which admits of no exceptions and makes quick and humble redress for every transgression. Burn all your bridges and press on to the heavenly mark (**Phil 3:7-14**). And if, in spite of everything, you happen to stumble badly, don't let despair destroy you. Remember that everyone who has faltered has not ultimately fallen. We can all thank God for that. John Mark's disgraceful desertion in Pamphylia (**Acts 13:13**) was not the end of him because he didn't allow it to be. Paul sent for him during his last hours (**2 Tim 4:11**) and the Holy Spirit chose him to record the gospel story. We don't have to be like Demas. In the mercy of God we have the privilege of being like John Mark or Peter, and, yes, even Paul.

