

Connect Notes - 30 August 2015

ONE WAY - PS PHIL PRINGLE

But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved. Hebrews 10:39 NIV

When a person is baptised, they are identifying with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. It shows the commitment made to burying our old life and allowing God to wash away all the things that have kept us in bondage (like when the Red Sea closed on the Egyptian army behind the Israelites).

Being baptised also means that we have nothing to go back to; the bridges to the past are burnt; our old self crucified (Galatians 2:20). But we all know someone who has turned back and this Hebrews' verse was written to encourage the group of people who "do not belong to those who shrink back".

There comes a day in every Christian's life when they don't "feel" like going to church, or praying or reading the Bible. On those days, remember Job and how he stayed committed to God even though so many bad things had happened and he couldn't move forward.

We think sometimes, like the Israelites on the first time they reached the Promised Land that retreat will take you to safety. They were afraid so they retreated, but when you move backwards, you shrink.

God did not give us anything in Ephesians 6 (the Armour of God) to protect our back: the only way out of spiritual battles is forward. Hebrews 10:39a conversely means 'we belong to those who are not intimidated, who run to the battle in faith and get bigger'.

Even when you are in a situation where you cannot move forward, stay committed to God, keep coming to church because faith comes from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). Don't retreat.

3 reasons why people turn back and how to prevent it:

1. People become battle weary and forget that God is in the fight with them. Psalm 78:1-11 says that people turn back when no one has told them how good God is and are not continually reminded. The people of Ephraim in this Psalm had all the equipment but no faith.

It is important to keep coming to church to be reminded of how good God is. The Psalm also shows how important it is for fathers to talk to their kids about spiritual things: little habits have effects over generations.

2. When people see the size of the vision, they can be overwhelmed and forget the steps they are taking. It is important not to look at the big vision all the time but to look at the steps to get there. No one loses weight overnight, but little steps over time bring the change. Don't forget the power of tenacity or that with each step something is happening that you cannot see.

3. People turn back when they encounter hard times. Just as we cannot focus all the time on the big picture, we cannot also focus always on the little steps. When we become discouraged by the gap between our goal and the reality, the Bible says to look instead to Jesus and the great cloud of witnesses who cheer us on (Hebrews 12:1). When you feel like you're drowning, there's Noah;

when you struggle with government legislation in your business, there's Daniel; when your family turn on you, there's Joseph; and finally there's Jesus calling out encouragement.