

The Point of No Return

A plane, flying across the ocean, will eventually reach the "point of no return." It is a real and definite point, beyond which it is better, in case of mechanical problems, to proceed than to attempt a return to the origination point. In the mind of the pilot, it is impossible to turn back.

There are a number of passages which seem to indicate that it is possible for someone to reach a point in his plunge into apostasy and sin, so that it is impossible to be brought to repentance. Consider the following sobering words:

"But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed, suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing; men that count it pleasure to revel in the day-time, spots and blemishes, revelling in their deceivings while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; enticing unstedfast souls; having a heart exercised in covetousness; children of cursing" (II Peter 2:12-14).

"For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6).

How do we reconcile such passages with those that express God's wonderful longsuffering and patience? For example, *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).* *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).* Let me make three observations, which I hope will clear up the difficulty, while at the same time, serve as a serious warning to each and every one of us with regard to living faithfully in our service to God.

First, there is along the pathway that leads away from God, a point, which once passed, that spells final doom for the hardened and impenitent heart. It is a real point. Once this point is reached, it is virtually impossible to reverse the direction one is traveling spiritually. Is this because God will not forgive? No. It is because the heart becomes so hardened that it can no longer be touched with the Gospel. The problem lies not in the power or willingness of God to forgive, but in the inability of the heart to turn away from sin.

Second, realization of such a point ought to motivate us to turn away from sin while it is still within our power to do so. I have had occasion over the last two or three decades, of attempting to persuade individuals to turn away from sin and obey God, whether to become a Christian or to be restored to their first love. Some have obeyed. But a far greater number have convinced themselves that there is plenty of time, and that "someday" they would come to God. I have also witnessed a number of souls delay their return so long that eventually they simply no longer have the desire to give the least bit of consideration to their spiritual plight. They have, spiritually speaking, passed the point of no return.

Third, if you are outside the safety fold of God's gracious love and salvation, and if you, at this very moment, are giving consideration to a return to your Lord, I would strongly encourage you to act on that desire, even while it is called today. Your delay moves you ever closer to the point of no return. I cannot think of anything more tragic, or that will bring more remorse to the lost when, having entered into eternity, they remember the numerous opportunities that was theirs to come home to the Lord, but neglected that open door provided by their gracious God. If you would be saved, delay not till the morrow, for tomorrow may be too late!

- by Tom Wacaster

When Nobody Notices

Perhaps you've seen the sign that reads, "Housework is something you do that nobody notices unless you don't do it."

The truth behind that statement applies to more than just housework. People seem to have no trouble noticing our failures -- anger, impatience, criticism, or imperfections. Who notices when we "sometimes" get it right? Sometimes we feel that nobody sees or appreciates what we may do. This may be true except for one reassuring reality: God sees and He appreciates.

There are many great and beautiful things in this world that may go unnoticed: A beautiful sunrise that we are not awake to see, the many beauties that lie underwater, etc. These magnificent things are there and those immense things happen, whether we see them or not. God sees.

That reality can also be a source of security or comfort for us. According to the apostle Paul, we are ultimately serving Jesus Christ. *"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father"* (Colossians 3:17). *"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve"* (Colossians 3:23,24).

We are to serve Him with an attitude of thanksgiving and from the heart. The Lord not only sees and values what we do, but He also will reward us. *"And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary"* (Galatians 6:9).

- by Shane Williams

Be Careful About Placing Stumbling Blocks Before Others

(Jesus) said to His disciples, *"It is inevitable that stumbling blocks should come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble."* (Luke 17:1-2 – NASV) All must agree that the Lord's warning is a serious one. Surely, we must be careful to avoid offending anyone who is a child, a new convert, a weak Christian, or others who are vulnerable.

There are a couple of simple ways that we could place a stumbling block in the path of another. Consider:

1. By example. When 'at risk' individuals observe a Christian engaging in suspect activities, it places a huge temptation before them to imitate that example. When they fall into sin as a result, there is no doubt that God will hold the offending party responsible. Christians need to seriously consider where they go, what they do, with whom they associate, etc. Others are watching and observing. Will they be damaged by what they see in you?

2. By thoughtless comments. Far too often brethren will espouse strange or unproven ideas in the presence of new converts or weak brethren. Sadly, this frequently happens in our Bible classes. While it may have only been offered to 'spark conversation' or 'generate discussion', the outcome is that the susceptible hearer is shaken in faith and left in a spiritually precarious position. Examples of this sort of thing would include those who voice arguments in favor of social drinking or dancing, while adding the disclaimer, "Now, I don't do it myself . . ." What are these folks thinking!?! Do they not see the stumbling block they have carelessly cast in the path of others?

The apostle Paul said that he would forego anything that might cause offence to another (1 Cor. 8:8-13). We should do the same. Think!

- by Greg Gwin