

Just Like Me

Acts 2:40-41 NIV

(Open with story of rich young man and the Pharisee song.)

Warning: we live in a world that is sue crazy and warnings are showing up on everything.

Ready to play the blame game? You are driving 100 mph in a 45 mph zone, you lose control, flip your car on a sharp curve, and critically injure yourself, who is at fault? No, not you, the Dept. of Transportation for not making the degree of banking on the curve great enough to keep you on the road at 100 mph.

You are going 75 mph in a 55 mph, and you are pulled over, given a ticket that gives you enough points to have your license suspended. Who is to blame? No, not you. The officer should have been a little more sympathetic to your situation.

You are wearing a shirt that needs to be ironed. Instead of taking it off, you try to iron with it on and guess what? That's right, you get burned. Shame on you right? No, it is the company who made the iron who deserves blame because they should have warned you that ironing clothes while they are on your body is dangerous.

You pull through McDonalds for some hot, yes hot coffee. While trying to drive your car and eat your Egg McMuffin, you spill your hot, yes hot coffee all over yourself. You're a moron right? No, it is

McDonalds fault for making that coffee too hot!

OK, one more. You decide that you need to fix the entry cable to the breaker box in your house without pulling the meter. You get the electric tape and begin to work. Uh Oh! You guessed it. You get fried! Dumb, right? Okay. Yes. That is pretty dumb.

Some thinks shouldn't require a warning.

You have heard the warning, "Be careful what you wish for?" That warning should be extended to those closest to you as well, for if their wishes come true, they affect you, too.

A woman was out golfing one day when she hit the ball into the woods. She went in to look for it and found a frog in a trap. The frog said to her, "If you release me from this trap, I will grant you three wishes." The woman freed the frog, and the frog said, "Thank you, but I failed to mention that there was a condition to your wishes. Whatever you wish for, your husband will get times ten." The woman said, "That's okay." and for her first wish, she wanted to be the most beautiful woman in the world. The frog warned her, "You do realize that this wish will also make your husband the most handsome man in the world, an Adonis whom women will flock to." The woman replied, "That's okay, because I will be the most beautiful woman and he will

have eyes only for me." So, KAZAM! She's the most beautiful woman in the world. For her second wish, she wanted to be the richest woman in the world. The frog said, "That will make your husband the richest man in the world and he will be ten times richer than you." The woman said, "That's okay, because what's mine is his and what's his is mine." So, KAZAM! She's the richest woman in the world. The frog then inquired about her third wish, and she answered, "I'd like a mild heart attack." (From Mikey's Funnies)

Warning: keep your friends close and your enemies closer.

Ok. We have had some fun with warnings...time to be serious.

Luke records Peter's message in Acts 2:14-39. Then in verse 40, we learn that Peter's words did end with verse 39.

Warning: with many other words, Peter pleaded with his Jewish brothers...Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, scribes, upper class, middle class, lower class; the same warning to all: **With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."** (Acts 2:40)

And the result of the preaching and warnings are recorded in verse 41: **Those who accepted his message were baptized,**

and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:41)

Two groups: you might think that the good news of Israel's Messiah finally arriving on the scene would bring a large majority of the crowd listening that day into the kingdom that Jesus talked about. While three-thousand sounds like a large number, from some of the estimates that historians record, this would not have been a majority of the people in Jerusalem on that day.

The majority of the listeners went on their way, business as usual on a day that changed history forever. May I remind you again, as I said I would every chance that I get, that on this great day, the powers of darkness were hard at work clouding minds, twisting words, and deafening ears. And they are at work today. Everywhere that there is a worship service going on, they are there. They never miss a service. They have perfect attendance.

The spirit of antichrist that John talks about in his epistles is hard at work in churches all over the world, doing everything possible to discredit the good news that Jesus is alive, and that this could be the day that he returns for his called out ones. Listen to the warning. Be ready.

Two groups: one walked away rejecting the hope and comfort promised by the Prophets. The other became the first of the called out ones; thought by some of that time just to be another sect of the Jews.

But the Lord wasn't finished with those who didn't respond on that day. Continuing

on in Luke's record to verse 47, we read that the believers, the called out ones, had the support of the people and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:47)

Unfortunately, the called out ones didn't have the support of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the people. This led to persecution, the stoning of Stephen and the death of James, John's brother, by the order of King Herod.

Fast forward to: Warnings to the seven churches and view these warnings in the light of the question: How effective would the Church's witness be if every Christian was just like me?

Although the area is now known as Asia Minor, at the time that the messages were sent to the churches located there, Asia was the largest and most important of the Roman providences in the area. The strategic importance of the presence and witness of the Church can't be overstated.

For example: the resistance of false apostles for the Church of Ephesus was praised. But, a warning; she had left her first love.

For some of the other churches listed, the warning to resist those of the synagogue of Satan, a false prophetess identified as a Jezebel type person leading the church to practice immorality and idolatry, a warning against lukewarmness and the appearance of being alive, but actually dead.

All seven churches received this warning: ⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)

If we fast forward a little further, history records that the church entered a time called, 'the Dark Ages.' Church and state united and worldliness entered the church.

In the early church, believers came from every class, but mostly from poor and slave classes. Yet all were equal in the church and any could hold a position of leadership, regardless of class or social status.

But, this changed when the union of the church and state made the church rich. It became politically and socially expedient to associate with local churches. Pagan practices and Pharisaic attitudes began to dominate the leadership.

The mission of the church to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised (Luke 4:18) was abandon.

Here is one example of what can happen to people when the church looks and acts like the world. This is only one example; my intent is not to single out the nation mentioned.

The Dalits, also called the "untouchables," "outcastes," and most recently "slumdogs," comprise nearly one quarter of India's society, with population estimates of 250 million people. The term

“Dalit” means “those who have been broken and ground down deliberately by those above them in the social hierarchy.” Dalits live at risk of discrimination, dehumanization, violence, and enslavement through human trafficking every day. By all global research and reports, the Dalits constitute the largest number of people categorized as victims of modern-day slavery.

Historically, Dalits were segregated from the mainstream society as untouchables. Traditionally, Dalits were considered to be beyond the caste system. They were originally considered the fifth group beyond the fourfold division of Indian people. They were not allowed to let their shadows fall upon a non-Dalit caste member and they were required to sweep the ground where they walked to remove the 'contamination' on the path.

Dalits were forbidden to worship in temples or draw water from the same wells as caste Hindus, and they usually lived in segregated neighborhoods outside the main village. In the Indian countryside, the dalit villages are usually separate outside the main village where the other Hindu castes reside.

Does this sound familiar? Do these people remind you of a group of untouchables in Jesus day? Lepers: and Jesus touched them.

If we have a Pharisaic attitude, then we have our list of untouchables; those that we would rather not associate with.

God forgive us for our arrogance and our shortsightedness. Forgive us for falling short of our God-given responsibility to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised (Luke 4:18).

Our obligation as Christians is not only to warn people of sin and the consequences it brings, but also to bind the wounds of our brothers and sisters in Christ who have been victimized by the enemy, and to tell those who have never known the washing of regeneration that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay their sin debt, that His blood can wash away all of your sins, and that He rose from the dead to prove that He has power over death, hell and the grave.

Christians need to remember history, and resolve that this particular history not be repeated. People like the dalits, or what ever label that has been put on them, need to know that Christ's church is for them; Christ died for them, too. With regard to this message all Christians have been anointed by the Holy Spirit as priests; to keep our eyes open for the crushed and the bruised.

Warning: with many other words, Peter pleaded with his Jewish brothers...

This message and the Pharisee song came about while I was thinking about the question, “How effective would the Church be if every Christian was just like me?” I wonder if one of the warnings that came to Peter's mind as he preached that morning

was ‘be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’ (Matthew 16:6)

Luke records: To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about^[a] himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

¹³ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

¹⁴ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14)

But all too often the Church becomes a place of ridicule because of those who have forgotten to “consider themselves, lest they also be tempted.”

In the short time that I have known some of you, I am aware that you have been through the ringer in your battle with the powers of darkness. You have been battered and bloodied from the near lethal blows that Satan has inflicted upon you, and you desperately needed medical attention, the kind of medical attention that only Jesus Christ can give.

I hope that when you come to this building that you find not only friendly 'called out ones', but that you find people who are willing to come along side you, that will encourage you, help pick you up when the enemy has delivered his best shot.

We have a tradition here that is ok to be broken from time to time. After the message, we have an invitation and closing song, mixed with a few reminding announcements. There may be a time when some of you need to linger for questions, or prayer. Don't think that you have to rush off just because it is time to shakem' out.

This is your building; this is your time; this is for you and those who will come.

"How effective would the cause of Christ be if every Christian was just like me?" Is answered by our willingness to become a servant, following Jesus example: **For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)**

So, don't point fingers and play the blame game. Listen to the warnings of God's Word and continue to be one of the called out ones, ready to meet Jesus when he comes, and help as many as we can along the way to stand with us as called out ones.