

FAITH CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

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“Pastor Sheri’s Desk”

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Proverbs 14:12,

*There is a way that seems right to a man,
but the end is the way of death.*

In my personal devotions this month I’ve been reading through the Book of Proverbs. Once again, I have found that this amazing book has so much wisdom to dispense into our lives...***if*** we will heed it. Unfortunately, the thing that most often keeps us from reaping the benefits of this wisdom is our own propensity to continue walking in our own way. After all, that way *seems*...so...*right*. It’s the way that feels natural to us, which often means that sadly, we don’t doubt it. Albert Barnes calls this, ***the way of self-indulgence and self-will***. Even wise Solomon (often referred to as ‘*The Wisest Man in the World*’) struggled to follow his own wisdom in the latter years of his life, which should serve as a cautionary tale to all of us.

The other day something happened that brought this Scripture home to me once again. I had expressed something that I thought seemed right. Gary and I were having a conversation about a visitor who came to church a few weeks back. I remarked that she visited in the Sunday evening service. Gary said that he thought it was in the Sunday morning service. (Yes, I realize this isn’t exactly life and death stuff here.) The point is that I genuinely...sincerely believed I was correct. I didn’t doubt it for a second. But the following day - suddenly - like a flash - it became clear to my mind that no - indeed our visitor actually did come to the Sunday morning service. But this is my point - in that moment I really, sincerely, and quite falsely believed that I was absolutely correct. And what’s alarming is how completely convinced I was of my rightness. I use this as an example of those times when we assume we are correct about something...but we are NOT. It’s like the old saying - if you are absolutely, positively SURE you’re not insane...well, you know the rest. LOL

Yes, the above example is simplistic. But what happens when that way that seems so right to us means we are in error about something more serious? What about when it’s something that does indeed have consequences? What about when it’s something that has eternal consequences? What if the end of *this way* that we are convinced of, ends in spiritual death?

Like my own example, one may wonder, ‘*How can I be so wrong?*’ How do we make these types of decisions that seem so right, but have deadly endings? I believe the real issue that must be examined is the process by which our own life decisions are being made. What are the criteria, what is the lens through which we are testing these *ways that seem so right* to be sure that they are right before God? Where does God factor into our decisions? What place does His Word have in our lives? Our answer depends on who sits on the throne of our lives. If we have placed ourselves in that kingly position that we were never meant to have, we will experience many earthly frustrations that end in spiritual death. Psalm 9:7 tells us who is enthroned... “*But the Lord sits enthroned forever...*”

This is one of the many reasons why I love the Church! I agree with the quote, “*The local church is the hope of the world!*” The reason for this hope is that the local Church is the place where we encounter Jesus. It is the place where we encounter a Pastor who, through the Word of God, we are forced to see the true condition of our hearts. This is a work of God’s grace in our lives. Because often it is something we would rather look away from. Have you ever had a mirror take you by surprise? Maybe you were walking in the mall, and suddenly you see your own reflection, and it takes you completely by surprise, before you had the opportunity to brace yourself by ‘striking a pose’? This is what the Word of God does in our lives, when we place ourselves under the leadership of a godly, anointed Pastor.

I love what Paul David Tripp said about this...

Paul David Tripp: We all work to convince ourselves that we are better off than we are...that we are not that sinful after all. We evaluate ourselves by looking into mirrors other than the one truly accurate mirror, the mirror of the Word of God. God knew this would be our tendency. So He designed a means for us to be confronted again and again with the depth of our sin and the expansive glory of His provision - the Lord Jesus Christ. He ordained that we gather again and again in services of corporate worship and be confronted with our true identity as both sinners and children of grace. We will continue to need that reminder until our sin is no more and we are with Him and like Him forever. Corporate worship is not a thankless duty for the religiously committed. No, it's another gift of mercy from a God of glorious grace. (See Hebrews 10:23-25)

New Morning Mercies by Paul David Tripp

And let me tell you, the enemy of our souls has been working overtime to keep us from experiencing Corporate Worship. He knows how powerful it is when we gather together in that uninterrupted time of Pastoral teaching from His Word, of those precious times of fellowship with His people as we worship together and encourage one another. One of the most distressing things to come out of COVID is not only that people miss being in church. It's when they no longer miss it.

Now I realize some may think that I am saying these things to get people to come to Faith Christian Assembly. Well, first of all, I believe with all of my heart that it is not my responsibility to build the church - that's what Jesus said He would do, and I fully trust Him to do just that. (Matthew 16:18) But my overwhelming concern is for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. **We all need a Pastor!** We need a Pastor who will teach us God's anointed Word, but we also need a Pastor who knows us, who will walk through crisis with us, and as Hebrews 13:17 tells us, "...will keep watch over you as those who must give an account..." This conviction and zeal that I have for the Church is the way I have lived my life. I have been under the leadership of wonderful Pastors who have led me since I was a child. And I am thankful to Almighty God for each and every one of them, and the influence they have had on my life and my family.

The world around us doesn't have this understanding. In fact, we find the world around us mocking anything traditional, let alone what God's Word has to say about how we are to live. And if those who follow Christ allow themselves to be influenced at all by this deception - it can affect the way we live. This can come about in a very subtle way. And I've seen far too many people fall prey to the disasters of going in the way that seems right. And you know what? It turns out quite badly. But instead of that being the very thing to bring them running back to God, and His Church, they become angry...bitter. They allow themselves to play the role of the victim.

God obviously knew that this too would be our propensity...

Proverbs 19:3, NIV

*A person's own folly leads to their ruin,
yet their heart rages against the Lord.*

Why rage against the Lord? Well, it's easier to blame anyone else, even Almighty God than to take responsibility. The victim mentality today abounds everywhere. There are too many around us who are suffering needlessly because they refuse to walk in obedience to God's Word. God has lovingly provided for us. Let's embrace all that He has graciously given...Amen.

Ephesians 4:11-12, NIV

Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up-