

# It Is Written

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## *When A Loved One Is Making A Terrible Mistake*

By Heath Rogers

What are we to do when a loved one is making a terrible mistake? We often feel helpless as we must stand on the sidelines and watch the approaching disaster unfold before our eyes. Does the Bible give us any help with such situations?

The words that Jesus spoke to Peter on the night that He was betrayed give us some insight into how Jesus handled this kind of situation. "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren'" (Luke 22:31-32). Notice some things Jesus did regarding Peter's approaching denial.

**1. Jesus Warned Peter.** Peter did not know the severity of the trial that awaited him. The Lord understood that Peter had been singled out and his faith was going to undergo a difficult test. Jesus likened it to the sifting of wheat. In their day, wheat was sifted by being placed in a metal box and shaken vigorously until the husk was removed from the kernel. Peter's faith was going to be shaken to the core that night. He could not accept the fact that he would ever fail his Lord (v. 33), but he would that night. Jesus warned him.

Those who see dangers that lie ahead are duty bound to warn others. The watchman had a responsibility to warn the city of an approaching enemy, and God's people have a similar responsibility to warn others of approaching dangers (Ezek. 33:1-9). The book of Proverbs is Solomon's warning of the pitfalls of life to his sons. Paul warned the elders of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:28-31).

Warning those we care about is an act of love (Rev. 3:19), but these warnings will not always be appreciated. They can be received as wounds (Prov. 27:6) and as a slap in the face (Ps. 141:5). Peter did not heed the Lord's warning, but he was warned. The warnings we give our loved ones may fall on deaf ears, or even be repaid with anger, but it will be better than living with the regret of having done nothing.

**2. Jesus Respected Peter's Free Will.** You and I enjoy free will from God. The Lord warns us in His word, then allows us to make our own decisions. Sometimes these decisions please God, but other times they grieve His heart. Either way, God allows us to make these decisions.

God has also granted free will to our loved ones. When they become adults, they have the right to make their own decisions. When they make good decisions, our hearts are filled with joy. However, when they make bad decisions that bring severe consequences upon themselves and others, our hearts are grieved.

Jesus did not stop the testing of Peter's faith. He warned Peter, then allowed Peter to make his own decisions. We must do the same thing. We can give advice, warnings, wisdom, and a good example to those we love, but in the end, they have the freedom to make their own choices.

Some of the most miserable Christians I know are people who try to control the lives of their grown children. We are to train up our children in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6), but then we have to let them go. When our children get married, they are to leave "father and mother and be joined to" their spouse (Gen. 2:24). Some fathers and mothers do not let their children leave. This is not God's plan. Not only are these individuals miserable, so are their loved ones.

Free will is a double-edged sword. It has the potential to give parents their greatest joys and their greatest sorrows. However, we must respect the exercise of this free will.

**3. Jesus Prayed for Peter.** There is still something we can do after we have warned and encouraged our loved one – we can pray for them. We can pray for them to make the right decision. We can pray they will come to their senses and repent (Luke 15:17). We can pray the consequences of their error will be minimal. We can pray God will give us wisdom and peace during our heartache (1 Pet. 5:6-7; Phil. 4:6-7). Remember, there is power in prayer. "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

**4. Jesus Identified the Real Enemy.** Jesus correctly identified Satan as the culprit in the matter

regarding Peter's failure. Satan loves to destroy God's people. If he cannot do so through a direct assault on us, he will use our loved ones.

We know that Satan is the master of deception (Rev. 12:9). He is a liar and a murderer (John 8:44). He is the roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). The Bible also tells us that Satan is able to trap people into doing his bidding. "And that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Tim. 2:26). Unfortunately, sometimes these trapped individuals are our dear loved ones.

It is only natural for us to project our anger upon the individuals who are causing us to experience great pain and grief. We must rise above this temptation and have the presence of mind to see Satan's evil hand involved in such situations. He is the enemy, not our loved one. We need to be praying fervently that they will come to their senses and stop serving the wicked one.

**5. Jesus Anticipated Peter's Return.** Jesus warned Peter, told him He was praying for him, and foretold his failure. However, Jesus also anticipated Peter's repentance.

We are not entirely like Jesus in this situation. He knew Peter would return. We are not deity. We don't know the future. Our hearts ache not knowing if or when our loved ones will repent.

We may not be like the Lord in this situation, but we are like the father of the prodigal (Luke 15:11-24). He respected his son's free will. He did not forbid him from leaving, and he did not chase after him and try to drag him back home. When the rebellious son came to himself and returned home, his father "saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him" (v. 20). The father never made his son out to be an enemy. His love and compassion for his son never changed. While he did not go after his son, the father always watched for his son to return home.

Hope is a powerful thing. It is the anchor of our soul (Heb. 6:19). As long as our loved ones have life, we have hope (2 Pet. 3:9). Why would we pray for our loved ones if we did not anticipate their repentance? When the father heard his son confess his sin, he welcomed him back into his home with celebration, "for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:24). This may not be the case for us, but we can cling to hope.

## How Can We Step Up?

*By Marty Kessler*

Three things I read recently with which I absolutely concur:

1. "Children died in the great flood of Noah's day because their parents failed to get them on the ark"
2. "If our children have to ask us if we are going to church today, we are doing it wrong"
3. "Christians should not have to be badgered into attending Bible classes and worship"

Ouch! Those hurt! Well, only if they are true. Truth is, living as a Christian begins with worship and Bible study. As David wrote nearly 3,000 years ago: "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" - Psalm 122:1

Prepare to meet with the saints, and to be on time. We always prepare for those things we care about.

- On Saturday night, let your children help choose their clothes for Sunday morning.
- Lay those clothes out so they are ready to go.
- Get them to bed early and get them up in plenty of time.
- Get to the parking lot 10 minutes before meeting times (planning to be "on time" will make you late).
- If needed, have quiet, age-appropriate activities for your children during worship (note taking items, soft toys, etc.)

We know the old adage, "Failure to plan is planning to fail", but I would rather say, "Succeeding to prepare is preparing to succeed".

## HONESTY-ERROR-TRUTH

*By Eugene Britnell*

There are many good people in the religious world who are honestly mistaken, but when a man who is honestly mistaken hears the truth, one of two things must happen: He will cease to be mistaken or will cease to be HONEST. If he does not obey the truth, he will no longer be honest. If he does obey the truth he will no longer be mistaken. Honesty and error must separate when truth comes along. No man can be honestly mistaken if he has heard the truth!