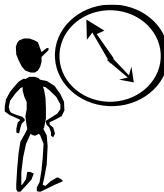


### Inside this issue:

<i>Closed Doors to Salvation</i>	1
<i>Permission and Promotion</i>	4
<i>P.M. Sermon Outline: The Marshmallow</i>	6
Duty Rosters	7
Announcements & For the Record	8



### Time of Assembly



#### Sunday:

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.

Worship 5:00 p.m.

#### Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

## Closed Doors to Salvation

By Steve A. Hamilton

Viruses are a fact of life. The coronavirus is just a new strain of what has always existed (Eccl. 1:9). However, the reaction to this virus is unfortunate. Churches closed their doors barring members from attendance. Elders are being lords over their congregations preventing those who desired to worship from using the church building (1 Pet. 5:3). Such action is void of love for the members. *“And let us consider one another in order to **stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together**, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries”* (Heb. 10:24-27).

Tertullian (145-220 A.D.) wrote a short work called “The Prescription Against Heretics” wherein he compares the benefits of heresies to deadly viruses:

“Taking the similar case of fever, which is appointed a place amongst all other deadly and excruciating issues (of life) for destroying man: we are not surprised either that it exists, for there it is, or that it consumes man, for that is the purpose of its existence. In like manner, with respect to heresies, which are produced for the weakening and the extinction of faith, since we feel a dread because they have this power, we should first dread the fact of their existence; for as long as they exist, they have their power; and as long as they have their power, they have their existence. But still fever, as being an evil both in its cause and in its power, as all know, we rather loathe than wonder at, and to the best of our pow-

er guard against, not having its extirpation in our power.”

Tertullian points out that society has little power over a virus. We would love to eradicate the virus but that is not within our power. We can treat it with medication and avoid it by putting on masks and limiting our exposure to others, but it will still run its course. The virus exists for an undesirable purpose. It removes physically weak people from society.

Likewise, heresies have the same undesirable purpose. False doctrines result in Christians losing their souls. There is nothing we can do to eradicate a false notion that disobedience to one command is worth the lives of its members. Nowhere in scripture is there a directive to suspend assemblies if we fear for our lives. Even first century Christians dared not miss worshipping the Lord in the face of martyrdom. Yet, by preventing members from worshiping as commanded lost souls is exactly what closing church doors will produce.

Consequently, many congregations closed the doors of salvation to some of their own members. The churches that reopened after forsaking worship have found weaker members absent. The virus eliminated weak members from congregations not because they contracted the virus but because the congregation set an unscriptural precedence making weak members think missing church services was acceptable if they feel threatened by any virus; even when they are perfectly healthy. What can a church say to such members to encourage their attendance without exposing their own hypocrisy?

Members felt justified in their misconduct preaching a message to put the welfare of others ahead of the Lord (Mk. 8:35; 12:30). Just the fact that churches lost members because of the virus is proof that the doors should never have closed. Churches that remained opened did not lose many, if any members. It certainly was an unintended consequence to close church doors thinking they were saving lives. However, they were losing souls. *As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one"* (Rom. 3:10-12).

Good intentions produced a stumbling block from which many weak members may never overcome. The Apostle Paul warned all Christians *"not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way"* (Rom. 14:13). A stumbling block is any obstacle placed before a member that causes that brother to sin. The brother did not place the impediment in front of himself. The stumbling block was placed before him meaning it was not his doing. Brethren placed that obstacle in front of their own members by preventing their assembling as commanded and encouraging their disobedience in the absence of any known scriptural reason for healthy members to forsake church services (Heb. 10:25).

The congregation located at Ephesus was commended for their labors and perseverance (Eph. 2:1-7). However, they lost sight of their first love. This can certainly manifest itself when assembling becomes optional. It is bad enough when members fail in their duty to attend but when the congregation affords excuses and encourages the violation of a command not to forsake the assembling does rebellion replace love. Jesus Christ said, *"If you love Me, keep My commandments"* (Jn. 14:15). If Christ's commandments are not worth keeping in face of a virus then love for Him is absent. The coronavirus has well demonstrated what it means for a congregation to leave its first love.

In most cases, fear is driving this train of disobedience. When God sent out the twelve spies into the land of Canaan, most of them returned with a bad report. That information caused the people to fear the land and its inhabitants. That fear was called rebellion. Joshua implored, *"Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them"* (Num. 14:9). The people's response was to *"stone them with stones"* (Num. 14:10). To which God asks Moses, *"How long will these people despise Me"* (Num. 14:11)?

The Israelites had good reason to fear. *"The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature"* (Num. 13:32). However, the people allowed their fear to immobilize them. They no longer wanted to obey God's command to take the land of Canaan. They ignored Joshua's admonition, *"If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us"* (Num. 14:8). They even argued that their lives were far more important (Num. 14:2-3).

If we could only recognize the application this story has upon our present distress. Congregations have allowed their fear of this virus to immobilize their devotion for Christ. No longer is keeping His commands important when it comes to the lives of the brotherhood. Never mind, *"He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you. So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear" (Heb. 13:5-6).* Rather many congregations have rebelled by ignoring His command to assemble. If anyone dares to rebuke their disobedience, they are called murderers. Might as well stone them with stones. How long will these people despise God?

Christians have no reason to fear death, distress or even governmental intervention. *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword"* (Rom. 8:35)? The only thing that will separate us from the love of Christ is our own disobedience! Our reaction to this virus should not be a decision that facilitates a departure from Christ and His Church by closing our doors!

## Permission and Promotion

By Marita Crozier

I recently read *Lessons from the Classroom: 20 Things Good Teachers Do* by Hal Urban. Don't be fooled by the title into thinking that this book is only for educators and thus not for you.

On the contrary, this is one of the best books I have ever read about life in general. There are so many wonderful messages found in this book there is no way I could fit into one article. So instead I am going to write a short bit about what's been on my mind the most lately from this book.

I have read many great books that inspire me in many different ways. I will read it and love it and put it into practice with gusto...for a few weeks before I forget all that I read and revert back to my old habits again. I do much better when I have a tagline to quote to myself to help me remember.

I loved the book *Do Hard Things*. This has become an oft repeated moniker around our house. When something comes up that someone doesn't want to do, someone chimes in with a "Do Hard Things!" and we all know what is meant by that. Sometimes we have to do things we don't want to do ... we have to do hard things.

I have picked one up from *20 Things Good Teachers Do*. It has really stuck with me and helped me and I am sharing it with you.

### **"What you permit, you promote."**

Stop and think about that a moment. Perhaps it doesn't smack you right between the eyes like it did for me. But there is so much truth to that simple statement.

My first thought when I read it was naturally applied to my family in our home-school. It is a book about good teachers, after all.

Everytime I permit huffing and puffing and general whininess or argument when one of my kids has been given an assignment, I am only promoting that attitude.

Everytime I permit a sloppy, half-done effort at an assignment, I am promoting that exact work ethic.

You get the idea. But then I began thinking about this in other areas of our home life.

Everytime I permit my kids to leave their things on the floor, I shouldn't be surprised that they will continue to do it...I promote it when I allow it.

Everytime I permit a child to argue their way out of something I told them to do, I am promoting that behavior the next time I ask them to do something.

Everytime I permit an outburst of anger or frustration, I am only paving the way for it to continue indefinitely.

Really, anytime I permit any negative behavior, no matter how small I am giving

my hearty endorsement of it and shouldn't be angry or frustrated with them if they continue to act that way.

Sometimes I am tired and I don't feel like dealing with a negative action. But lately I think to myself that what I am permitting, I am promoting and it gives me that kick in the pants I need to stand up and respond the way I know I need to. Quickly and consistently.

But wait a minute. This whole "what I permit, I promote" thing applies to me too. Only, I don't want to admit that, do I? If I permit myself to stay up too late doing housework or playing on the computer so that I am too tired to give my full attention to my kids and my household duties the next day, I am promoting that example to my children, even to myself.

If I permit myself to be too busy to read my Bible or to pray to God, I am promoting that behavior to my children and again, to myself. I shouldn't be surprised if I never have time to do these important things or allow myself to whine and declare I didn't have time. I permitted it. Therefore, I only promoted it.

If I permit myself to approach my housework in a half-way manner, taking too many breaks or not redeeming my time then I am only promoting the notion that approaching responsibility is a half-way affair to my kids.

If I allow myself to give in to my own frustration, allowing myself to respond in a negative, sarcastic or angry way with my kids, I am only promoting the teaching that responding that way in and difficult situation is totally acceptable. Not only that it is acceptable, but I am encouraging it.

If I permit questionable movies or songs, I cannot deceive myself into thinking that I am not whole-heartedly promoting those same movies and songs to my kids and promoting them to a higher station of prominence in my own life than I should.

Every time I openly criticize another person or say something negative about someone, or permit my children to do the same, I am promoting a character that is critical and judgmental.

I could come up with a zillion examples of permission and promotion of things I shouldn't be permitting and promoting. But next time you find yourself facing a difficult situation with any area of your life, call to mind this helpful phrase...because it is true.

### **What you permit, you promote.**

Think on that and grow wise.

*"Who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them" (Romans 1:32).*