

Stay In The House

By Ben Godwin

An ounce of prevention is said to be worth a pound of cure. Never was it truer than when God levied the tenth and final plague against Egypt—a destroyer (death angel) sent to claim the firstborn child of every household. To shield the Israelites from this massacre, God instructed each family to slay a lamb and apply its blood to the door posts of their houses. This event spawned the annual Passover Feast that is still celebrated some 3,500 years later. God promised, “...and when I see the blood I will **pass over** you.” (Ex. 12:13) This promise, however, hinged on one crucial condition, “**and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.**” (Ex. 12:22)



The message was clear—“stay under the protection of the blood.” If a Jew ventured outside his house that fateful night, he would have put himself in danger. As long as they remained in their houses, they had the guarantee of divine protection from the plague. The next morning, weeping and wailing rudely awakened Egypt from its slumber as parents discovered lifeless children. “*For there was not a house where there was not one dead.*” (Ex. 12:30) In the land of Goshen, among the Israelite, not one soul was lost. Why? They stayed in the house!

• A Harlot’s Hope & A Scarlet Rope

Forty years later, Joshua sent two spies to scout out Jericho. There they met Rahab the Harlot, whose house provided direct access to and from the city. She cleverly hid the spies under stalks of flax on her roof and misdirected the king’s soldiers to the countryside on a wild goose chase. Rahab told the spies that the citizens of Jericho heard how God parted the Red Sea, drowned the Egyptian army and destroyed the two Amorite Kings of Sihon and Og on the other side of the Jordan river. Jericho nervously suspected that it was next on God’s hit list.

Rahab only asked that they return her favor with a favor—that her family be spared. The spies agreed, provided she’d display the scarlet rope she used to let them out of the city in her window. They warned her that their vow would be nullified “...*If anyone goes outside your house into the street...*” (Josh. 2:19 NIV) When God reduced the massive walls of Jericho to rubble, only one section remained intact—Rahab’s house with her family huddled safely inside. That scarlet rope is a fitting type of the blood of Jesus. The message again is clear—stay under the canopy of God’s protection. Rahab stayed in the house!



• Rehab’s Rehab

Apparently, Rahab and her family left the ruins of Jericho, converted to Judaism and accompanied Israel on their conquest of Canaan (Josh. 6:25). She renounced her sensuous lifestyle and later married one of the spies she protected, Salmon, a prince of the House of Judah. Together they produced a son, Boaz, who married a Moabitess named Ruth. Ruth, in turn, gave birth to Obed, the father of Jesse, making Rahab the great, great grandmother of King David (Ruth 4:21).

In one of the most remarkable stories of God’s grace, Rahab became one of only four Gentile women, all of whom had checkered pasts, included in the lineage of Christ (Tamar, Ruth and Bathsheba being the other three—Mt. 1:3-6). This former harlot was also given an honorable mention among the heroes of faith—“*By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.*” (Heb. 11:31 NKJV) Furthermore, she was cited as an example of how works should compliment faith in justification (Jam. 2:25-26). Rahab’s portfolio is one of redemption—how God can bring good out of bad and rehabilitate a broken life and make it into something beautiful.

- **The Ark of Safety**

If we make poor choices and get out of God's will and then bad things happen to us, it's not God's fault. Of course, being in the will of God doesn't guarantee exemption from all problems. But many calamities can be prevented by staying close to God. It would have been presumptuous for Noah's family to wander outside the ark as the rain began thinking they could swim back when the water rose too high. Unfortunately, many people gamble with their soul this way. They get discouraged or disgruntled and leave the church, opening the door for Satan to wreak havoc in their lives and then wonder why God let them down. Friend, please stay in the ark of safety. Stay under the canopy of protection and favor that results from fellowship with God and other believers.

- **Lot Loses the Lottery**

When Lot broke fellowship with Abraham, his life unraveled. It all started with a feud over where his sheep grazed. Lured by the well-watered plains of Jordan, Lot "*pitched his tent toward Sodom.*" Soon he was taken hostage and Abraham came to his rescue. Eventually, Lot moved into Sodom and became so warped by its perverse influence that he offered his virgin daughters to the lustful mob that surrounded his house to defile the angels (who looked like men) who came to warn him of the city's pending destruction. His son-in-laws mocked him. As they fled the city, his wife looked back longing to return and was turned into a salt statue. Even worse, his two daughters got him drunk, committed incest with him and gave birth to Moab and Benammi, two future enemies of Israel. I think it's safe to say that Lot grossly underestimated the blessing by association that comes with staying in righteous company. If he knew ahead of time the toll that Sodom would exact on his family, he would have never parted ways with his uncle Abraham.

Sadly, many people take foolish risks by quitting church over trivial issues, petty disputes or personality conflicts. As a result, their lives or families often end up falling apart. The truth is we need each other. Too many dangers lurk outside the safety of the fold. Satan's goal is to isolate us and then exploit our vulnerability. A lone sheep has a far less chance against a wolf than a united flock with a watchful shepherd. No wonder Solomon wrote, "*Two are better than one...for if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.*" (Ec. 4:9-10 NKJV)

- **Is the Grass Really Greener?**

Like Lot, the Prodigal Son was seduced by the proverbial "the grass is greener on the other side" illusion. He demanded his inheritance and swiftly squandered it. "*And when he spent all...he began to be in want.*" As soon as his money was gone so too were his fair-weather friends. This young man, who just wanted to have some fun away from the rigid rules of his father's house, learned the hard lesson that sin takes you farther than you want to stray, costs you more than you want to pay and keeps you longer than you want to stay!

Admittedly, there is fun in sin or no one would commit it. But eventually the fun (what lures people out of the house to begin with) wears off and the consequences start taking their toll. Every lure has hidden hooks. Caution: in regard to temptation, the grass is always the greenest near the septic tank!



- **The Prodigal's Regret**

After living high on the hog, the bankrupt Prodigal ended up feeding hogs—the ultimate insult for a Jew. Satan promised the palace but delivered the pig pen. Starved, even the swine feed looked appetizing.

Finally, when he hit rock bottom, "*He came to himself.*" He realized what a fool he'd been and worked up the courage to return home. No doubt he rehearsed his apology on his long journey. He expected (and would have welcomed) to be treated like a slave. Instead, his father saw him in the distance, ran to meet him, kissed and embraced him and threw a feast fit for a king. He ordered the servants to bring out the best robe (symbolic of righteousness), a ring (a token of union and authority) and shoes (the badge of sonship and freedom), three items he probably pawned for a few meals.

Late that first night back in his father's house, after the celebration subsided, I can imagine this wayward son lying down in his old bedroom. The familiar surroundings evoked a flurry of fond memories. Staring at the ceiling, in retrospect, he must have thought, "*If only I would have stayed in my father's house.*" Restored? Yes! Forgiven? Absolutely! A new beginning? Definitely. But oh the ugly scars, the wasted years and resources, the haunting memories, the nagging regrets of falling out of fellowship with his father.

Restoration may be one of God's specialties, but prevention is His preference. It's good to have a life preserver on a boat, but it's better not to need one. And while God's grace is a safety net that will catch us if we fall, His grace, better yet, is able to keep us from falling. And while it is no secret what God *can* do, it is also no secret what we *should* do—stay in the house!