

September 8, 2008

TURN A CORNER!

In the enormous financial uncertainty of these days, a few poor people are getting richer and a few rich people are getting richer, but multitudes of poor people are getting poorer, and multitudes of rich people are getting poorer.

In this last group, surprising numbers are sitting in their big homes frightened, still trying to act rich, while running up bigger and bigger debts every month.

Remembering that God owns everything, and distributes to each person as He pleases – what's He up to?

Deuteronomy 8 makes it clear. Describing the way God led the Israelites through that “vast and dreadful desert” (v.15), verse 3 says, “He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna... to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”

He knows well our tendency to self-conceit: “When you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down... then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God..., You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth” (vss. 12-18).

Later, the prophet Hosea, remembering God’s warning and what happened when they didn’t respond, reasserts God’s sure cause-and-effect promises:

“When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me.

“So I will come,...

I will lurk,...

I will attack,...

I will devour...!” (Hos. 13:6-8).

Wait a minute! We thought “God is love”! Not if you say it in a singsong voice as a religious panacea! In Hosea 13:4 God says, *in your face*,

“I AM the Lord your God....
You shall acknowledge no God but me,
no Savior except me.”

He says it with tears. He pleads, “Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God. *Your sins have been your downfall!* Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to him: ‘Forgive all our sins.... We will never again say “Our gods” to what our own hands have made’” (14:1-3).

Mingle your tears with His tears. “*Take words with you!*”! A silent repentance is no repentance at all. Gather your wife and children together, Dad! *Open your mouth!* Say to them, “I blew it. I haven’t ‘lived on the word of the Lord’ myself – as Deuteronomy says – and I haven’t fed you, family, the Word of the Lord. I can see I’ve been slaving for ‘bread,’ Deuteronomy calls it – money – and made that my god instead. That’s why the Lord has been taking it away!

“Let’s start again. Let’s all tell Him we haven’t loved Him the way we should have, we’ve been distracted by [you fill in the blank], and we want to love Him from now on with all our hearts, and be together in the Word and in prayer. And we’ll knock down any false gods that get in our way! Family, what do you say?”

God says if you return to Him, “I will heal their waywardness and love them freely” (Hos. 14:4).

Yes, “God is love.”

Love Him back. You know what to do.

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