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We Have Been Warned!

I woke up early Friday morning and decided to take a look at the news about Hurricane Florence which was about to strike the North Carolina coast. For days the governor has been instructing residents to evacuate the area. Authority has been instructing them to heed the warnings because this storm will be deadly and dangerous. Residents have been warned not to risk their lives nor the lives of first responders. The authorities have been warning of the surge of water that is coming that will be devastating. Yet there it was the first stories to pop up in the news feed was how people were already needing to be rescued from the storm.

Why? Why do so many fail to heed such important warnings about future danger? Perhaps it is stubbornness or pride. Maybe it because of one's lack of respect for the authorities or even a healthy dose of fear with regards to the power of wind, water and rain. Whatever the case may be it parallels easily with the clear warnings of the Bible about future events and the spiritual destruction that is promised to occur. These same character deficiency are keeping the multitudes from being saved.

The Bible foretells of a judgment day. "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment," Hebrews 9:27

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil." Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;" II Corinthians 5:10-11

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness," 2 Peter 3:10-11

"And to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed." 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

Warning after warning in Scripture about being ready for the Lord to come. Obey gospel and live a righteous life or suffer eternal consequences. But the multitudes (Matthew 7:13-14) are stubborn and are full of pride and will not and do not listen to the warnings. They, like those who do not listen to the authorities when they say "evacuate", do not respect the authority of the Lord. They are not afraid of the day of wrath that is closer today than it was yesterday.

The day of judgment will either be a day of great rejoicing or a day of terror and torment. We have been warned!

Does Everything Happen For A Reason?

by R. J. Evans

Based upon how often we hear the above expression everything happens for a reason, you would think the answer would be a definite yes. Just recently I was watching a professional football player on TV being interviewed, and while commenting on his team's loss, he remarked: I know everything happens for a reason. And I can think of many other examples and situations in which this statement is used even by Christians.

If we were able to go back to the 1500s and ask John Calvin the above question, his answer would certainly be in the affirmative. In fact, this kind of thinking that is so common among us today is Calvinism through and through, and permeates almost every denomination. Calvin's doctrine of Predestination, not only teaches that only certain ones have been chosen by God to be saved from eternity, but also teaches that every little insignificant incident in their lives has all been predetermined by God. Some go so far as applying this to finding a parking space in a public parking lot.

Do I believe that certain things happen in a way in which God has designed? Absolutely! He fore-ordained from eternity that salvation would be obtained through Christ, in His body, which is His church. In fact, Paul spoke of this to the Ephesians: ...having predestined us...as sons by Jesus Christ...in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:5, 11; also see Acts 2:23; Ephesians 3:10-11; 1 Peter 1:20). We serve a sovereign God.

But that does not rule out the fact that some things happen which have no impact on Gods ultimate goals. Thus, while God may decide what needs to happen, contrary to Calvinistic doctrine, He also allows things to happen as they may. To prove this point that many things happen at random, we turn to the words of Solomon the inspired wise man: I returned and saw under the sun that -- The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all (Ecclesiastes 9:11). Again, some events randomly occur by simple time and chance.

Of course, another factor would be the providence of God in answering our prayers. He may even allow bad things that happen in our lives to turn out for our own good. For instance, it was necessary for Paul to appeal to Caesar in order to save his own life. However, while a prisoner in Rome he was able to say, But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel (Philippians 1:12).

I am so thankful that, contrary to what John Calvin taught, we have the ability to choose our own eternal destiny. And of our own free will, we can become a member of Gods family by obeying the gospel of Christ. In becoming a child of God, we then have the avenue to prayer where He, through His providence, can intervene and work in our lives. But that is a far cry from the common usage of the expression: Everything happens for a reason. If that were true of every little, small incident in our lives, then we could blame God and not take personal responsibility for our own actions.

So before you say, every-thing happens for a reason, give it some serious thought and ask yourself if you are using that expression in a scriptural manner. In one sense there is a reason for everything that happens. For example, a person is in a car wreck. Is there a reason for it? Yes, perhaps the driver was driving on the wrong side of the road, drunk while driving, or a tire blew out, etc.. But on the other hand, everything happens for a reason with the idea that every detail in one's life has been predetermined by God is the doctrine of Calvinism. The scripture does not teach such. Furthermore, the phrase every-thing happens for a reason is not found in the Bible.