



Rockwood Church of Christ

The Proclaimer

March 29, 2020

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Deacons:

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Steve McCreary

Minister:

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Service Times:

Sunday

Bible Study 10 am
Worship Service 10:45 am
Worship Service 6 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study 7 pm

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Demonstrate That He Doesn't Belong

The student came into my office yesterday with a surprise. "Excuse me, but there's a snake in the hallway." "What?" I asked. "Yeah! A snake, right outside your office door!"

I opened the door, and sure enough, there was the foot-long garter snake, motionless in the middle of the hallway floor a full 50 feet from the front door. I deftly picked it up (the student said, "Eeewww!") and took it outside, releasing it in our flower bed with the Vulcan gesture and farewell greeting, "Live long and prosper!"

Returning to my office, I began to meditate about how often the spiritual Serpent has entered our Christian student center and how often he slithers into the church building. I know he must be a regular visitor at both places.

In fact, he's been sliding into the homes and assemblies of the righteous for eons, inflicting pain, suffering, and death wherever he is not discovered and tossed out. How can we deal with the Serpent more effectively? A simple plan would correspond to what I must do to keep that snake out of our building.

Prevent the Serpent from entering in the first place. There may be a neglected opening through which he enters again and again. Find it and stop it up.

Assume that he will be trying to get in or is in already. The Serpent likes nothing better than to sow discord among brethren (**Proverbs 6:19; Galatians 5:20**) or to cause saints to stumble (**Luke 22:31-32**). No doubt Christians are tops on his list of intended victims.

Look around for him. He may not be out in the open like mine was. He may be hiding behind good intentions, competition, or hurt pride.

If you find him, get rid of him immediately. The larger snakes grow, the more troublesome they become. *"Resist... and he will flee from you"* (**James 4:7**).
Steve Singleton

A Few Gray Hairs

“Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not” (Hos. 7:9).

“I see some gray hair!” We all hear these words eventually. The hoary head is one of creation’s Way of reminding us that our lives are like a flower. They bloom and fade quickly.

Hosea did not bring up the subject of our hair turning gray just to teach us that it is a sign of aging. As he does so often in this book, he uses a simple fact of nature to illustrate a spiritual truth. Gray hair is a sign of aging, and with aging comes a loss of strength. The first part of **Hosea 7:9** says, *“Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not.”*

Age comes upon us before we know it. We lose strength before we realize it. Like a man who is beginning to age, the Israelites had lost their spiritual vigor. The prophet said “strangers” had consumed their strength. The strangers were ungodly heathen. How did these people drain the spiritual strength of the Israelites? The preceding verse tells us: *“Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned” (Hos. 7:8)*. The people of Israel had blended in with the Gentiles. They had accepted their Ways and even worshiped their gods. They went along to get along. In the end, they were like a half-baked cake.

Like a man who doesn’t realize his hair is beginning to turn gray, these Israelites lost the strength of their convictions before they knew it. They did not see how weak they had become. They were oblivious to their true condition, so Hosea holds up a mirror to show them.

The prophet Hosea may as well have been talking about Christians today. Many children of God have mixed with the world. They have closed their eyes and compromised. They have given in on one point and backed down on another until there is little spirituality left. They have learned to think, talk, and live like the world. The people around them use bad language, dress indecently, and have sex outside of marriage, so they go along with these things to have friends. They have been taught to be tolerant and respectful of all religions, so they refuse to disagree with false doctrines because they tell themselves that arguing with people is not Christlike. Little by little, they give in until their convictions are so diluted that others cannot tell the difference between them and the world.

But like a man who is unaware that his hair is becoming gray these Christians don’t realize how weak they have become. They may even smile and tell themselves they are as strong as they ever were. The pleasures of this world and the deceitfulness of riches have sapped their strength and they don’t even know it.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17).

Kerry Duke