

The Writing on the Wall

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The Tides of Darkness

“Sin will take you further than you wanted to go, keep you longer than you wanted to stay.” That is what my pastor, Ron Shrum told me once. I worked with a young man whose spiritual condition deeply troubled me. He was a young man who favored the gothic style, and signed his emails ‘the tides of darkness’, he said it was the name of his hacker group. I knew precious little about him other than that, but deep in my spirit I mourned over what I feared was true. Over and over in my head I heard the ‘the tides of darkness’ echoed. One night I got up and sat in front of my computer and let God do the typing. This is the result.

“I don’t see anything wrong with it!” the black haired man said to me. “I mean, I can quit any time I want. I am not, like, engrossed in it, just kind of dabbling.”

I responded, “Witchcraft, sorcery, necromancy, eastern mysticism, immorality, rebellion, and sin in general are NOT things to be dabbled with. You say you are ‘just feeling the waters.’ Well, these things are like a vast, deep ocean – dark and inviting, from the edge. The mysteries of their depths call out to you. The promise of its secrets and power are irresistible. You stand at the edge of the water and ignore all warnings of the dangers of the sea. ‘I am just standing at the edge! Just dabbling.’ you say, ‘No danger’. Then the sea seems to call out to you as you gaze some more. Your imagination takes over and you take a few steps out, just a little further into the icy water. ‘Hear my instruction! Don’t be a fool and ignore it!’ (Prov. 8:31) cry those around you. ‘Stay out of the water, it is dangerous,’ they say. But you, in your limited understanding and pride, do not see the danger of standing ankle deep in water, so you ignore them. Soon, the icy water around your ankles no longer seems cold, and the thought of going out a little deeper seems easy, not dangerous. So you take a few steps further out. The water comes

up to your knees as you ignore those who call out to you to come back. What a ludicrous idea, ‘come back.’ It only comes up to your knees. Why, you could turn around and walk back anytime with no problems.

“Your eyes are drawn out to the horizon. And then, before you know it, the tides have come in and you are totally surrounded, the water that once came up to your knees now comes up to your neck. The icy liquid threatens to strangle you as you ask yourself, ‘What happened?’ But it’s too late. Like a raging storm, the Tides of Darkness came in! The Tides of Darkness have you. You try to turn and swim to shore, but it’s useless. The undertow has you, and like a great slimy tentacle, the current pulls you in, deeper, into the dark sub-zero water. It seems like the more that you struggle to get free, the harder it is to get free, until you just stop struggling. And it is when you stop, that things really get bad. The pressure of the depth presses against you until you cannot breathe, and it threatens to overwhelm you. As you are pulled deeper, shapes begin to take form. Horrible, ghoulish faces appear all around you, threatening to devour you. The Tides of Darkness have you. The icy water saps your strength and you are helpless as the Demons of the Deep torment you and you are pulled ever deeper, ever darker, into despair.

“Finally, you reach the deepest, darkest point in the sea. You cry out in anguish, ‘OH GOD!’ and you hear a thousand voices taunting you, mocking you. ‘Oh yes, call on Him! Oh God! Come and help me. I have made a mess of my life and now I want you to come and make it all better! God doesn’t care about you, he allowed us to have you. You are ours.’

“It is then that you realize that it is true. You *did* make a mess of your life. It was *you* who stepped into the water, *you* who ignored the warnings, *you* who allowed them to get you. This revelation does not help, for it only compounds the problem, why would God help *you*, when you do not deserve it?”

It was at this point when the black haired man stopped me. “I don’t believe that!” He exclaimed in an angry tone.

“It does not matter; the truth does not change just because you do not believe it.” I turned to go, when I had a sudden thought. I turned and faced him, “Just when you reach the point of hopelessness, I want you to know. There *is* a lifeline. There is a way out, there is a Rescuer. If you want it; for no matter how deep you go Jesus is deeper still!”

And with that I left him there, fuming in rage at the words I had spoken to him. Twenty years later, I visited this man's grave. On the front of the tomb these words were etched:

Once I was sinking in the deep, dark sea
As all my enemies encompassed round about me
And cried aloud in hellish glee
'The Tides of Darkness have thee'
And so it was. For overwhelmed by my own sin
I was sinking deep within.
And as the last ray of light faded from my view,
I realized that it was true.
For the blame of this tragedy
Could be placed *only* on me.
I was fairly warned by many a fellow,
Of the horrible dangers that did lie below.
But how fiercely I fought
To deny that a little leads to a lot.
And how safer it is, to be far from he
Who seeketh to devour thee.
But all was lost!
Oh, how pride has such a great cost!
But, then I remembered the words of a friend,
Who, from love, had this word of hope to lend.
That no matter how deep or ill,
'Jesus is deeper still!'
So, for all those who have yet to stray,
Remember these words of mine, I pray.
And for all those who have lived this story,
Darkness cannot live in the presence of HIS glory.
And last, but not least
Friend, I'll see YOU at the feast!