

While visiting with brethren, we watched a show on television where people explore abandoned homes and film what they find inside. I don't know the story or background of these homes, or of the families who left them, but many of these homes had the appearance that they had been beautiful, with many amenities, and much potential. For example, one had many large rooms, large oak beams holding up the roof, and a large, indoor swimming pool. Some families had even left behind photos. A sister in Christ made a comment about how these abandoned homes caused her to think about the souls who have abandoned their spiritual lives. I don't know why these homes were abandoned, but I believe there is a warning and a lesson for us.

Why do spiritual houses/homes get abandoned? Sometimes it's from a lack of planning and preparation. Sometimes it's a lack of maintenance, upkeep, of our spiritual home and relationship with the LORD – the source of all good things—including our salvation, rescuing us from our sins. Without consistently seeking to enrich, strengthen, fortify, and protect our special relationship with the LORD, we can lose sight of what is truly important. If we're not careful, we can take the LORD and His goodness for granted. Jesus spoke about the parable of the four kinds of hearts, or, we might say, houses, that received the word of God (**Luke 8:11 ff**). He warned about the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life choking out the desire and joy, eventually the life itself, leaving an empty shell that did not bring any fruit to maturity.

Often, we can be like cats. Something shiny, new, flashy, or colorful grabs our attention, and off we go after it. As the old saying goes, grass is greener on the other side ... until you get to the other side; then it doesn't always turn out the way we imagined it. Paul warned the brethren at Corinth about someone preaching another Jesus, whom the Apostles of Christ had not proclaimed or taught (**2 Corinthians 11:4**). They had been hoodwinked, and didn't even know it. Our source of fellowship, safety, and a solid foundation lies in the Apostles and their teachings (**1 John 1:1-4; Ephesians 2:19-22**).

Solomon wrote, "*A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb, But to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet*" (**Proverbs 27:7**). When a soul is full, or satisfied, apathy can creep in. Jesus said it is better to hunger and thirst for righteousness (**Matthew 5:6**).

Jesus spoke of the unclean spirit who leaves his house in a man. He wanders, returns to his former house, and finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then that unclean spirit goes and finds seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they dwell in that man. The last state of that man was worse than the first (**Matthew 12:43-45**).

One might say, look: the man's house, his life, was swept out, clean. But was it filled? Was it filled with sustenance? Jesus says it was "*empty*." It was barren of things that matter. An earthly house that is left empty, uninhabited, deteriorates. Satan is always ready and willing to fill a vacuum or a void. He is constantly offering attractions and distractions to take our eyes and minds off Jesus and His Kingdom.

Consider, we fill our physical houses with things that we deem are valuable, useful, important, and precious to us. How much more our spiritual houses? What do we treasure? Jesus said, "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (**Matthew 6:19-21**). Don't be like the man who emptied his house, cleaned it, but left it abandoned.

Fill your house, your life, with the word of God, which is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb—it satisfies the soul; and in keeping it there is great reward (**Psalms 19:10-11**)! Seek and apply the wisdom from above (**James 3:13-18**). Worship God appropriately, in spirit and truth (**John 4:24**). Don't just put your armor on display, but put on and train to use the whole armor of God (**Ephesians 6:12-18**).

Paul commanded and encouraged the brethren at Thessalonica to “*comfort and edify one another; just as [they] were doing,*” to, “*be at peace among [themselves],*” to, “*warn the unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all,*” and to, “*pursue what is good for all.*” (**1 Thessalonians 5:11 – 15**). We must have intentional purpose as we seek to serve God and His people. Get involved with the local body of Christ, actively participating, with your mind, spirit, and body all engaged. To the degree you are actively involved, you will spiritually grow and develop, resulting in a higher degree of joy and contentment. There will be less time and energy for complaining and apathy.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ

(2 Peter 1:5-8).

You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen

(2 Peter 3:17-18).

~ 7 Ross Rd., Eldon, MO 65026-4416
werhuffs@proton.me