**Mike Hipes – Facebook Lesson, July 15, 2020**

Good afternoon!

Having a mole removed from your body is never a pleasant thing! Years ago, I had a cancerous mole removed from my back. Recently, a new darkening mole showed up on my neck. Margie said, you better go get that checked out! Considering my past, I decided to go! The doctor said that given my history I better not take any chances and remove it!

What do you think my doctor would have said if I asked him the leave it there or if I suggested that the mole and I would try to coexist? How risky would that be, rather than cutting it out completely! Wouldn’t that be an irresponsible attitude?

In Judges chapters 1-2 we find God’s people who had left Egyptian bondage, wandered in the wilderness for 40 years and now they were ready to enter the promised land. Joshua brought them across the Jordan and into Canaan land. God’s call to His people was to take the land flowing with milk and honey that He had promised them! However, the land was filled with their enemies. Regardless, God commanded them to drive them out. However, Judges 1:28 says, “they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.” The Israelites decided that they would allow themselves to coexist with the enemy. How risky would that be, rather than cutting them out completely? Sound familiar? Even more dangerous than the presence of the enemy was their relaxed attitude toward them! It wasn’t long before the Israelites intermarried with the enemy, worshiped with the enemy., and were overtaken by the enemy! What happened? Like turning a blind eye to the presence of a malignant mole, the rapid decline for God’s people was because they let down their guard and actually gave permission for ungodly to dwell with them!

Two lessons: How to remain set apart while coexisting in this world.

1. This is a spiritual challenge more than a physical challenge. God’s warning regarding their enemy was, “they shall become as thorns in your sides and their gods shall be a snare to you.” Judges 2:3. The biggest threat to God’s people was not the armies of the Canaanites but the religion of the Canaanites! The Canaanite religion was a me-first religion, where anything goes. Peruse your own interests, worship your own idols, feel free to do that which was carnal and immoral. In effect, it was how one could remain selfish and religious all at the same time! Where did we ever come up with thinking that feasting on the world’s desires and eating at the table of the Lord can co-exist! They compromised in their hearts which resulted in compromising in their behavior. We have all been spending a lot more time alone or separated these days with this new situation in our world. Remember, only when we are faithful in private can we expect to walk victoriously in public! As time goes be on the seamless blending of the world into the hearts of believers is something to be on guard for.

2. This is all about who sits on the throne of our lives. There is only room for one, God! The result of what happened brought about what is stated in Judges 2:10. “and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor the work which He had done.” They insisted on dethroning God and enthroning other gods! Indirectly they were enthroning themselves and their own personal desires and wants. They thought, what’s the big deal with having co-existing thrones? In doing so they reduced the Almighty God to just another god! Had they forgotten so quickly Exodus 20:3, “You shall have no other gods before Me!” False gods come in many forms. From the ones we wax and drive to those we watch in our living room. Those we replace our time with God in prayer and study with to those that we seek for personal desire and self-seeking results.

Let’s remember that some things just cannot co-exist with us without them wrongly impacting our lives. We must treat the spiritual battle with the same fervor as the physical and behavioral battle. As we continue to fight the good fight in whatever situation we are currently in, may we take to heart the fact that, whatever hinders our relationship with God needs to be treated like the mole on my neck! The doctor cut it out completely. Although at the time of the removal it was still not dangerous, he said that moles like mine could possibly turn bad and do great damage if left unchecked. Let’s stay on top of our spiritual lives brothers and sisters!

Blessings,

Mike