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WILL MOST PEOPLE BE LOST?

By Harold Turner

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:13-14).

Contrary to popular opinion, Jesus tells us that most people will be lost. The idea of universal salvation, or that most people will go to heaven, is not true according to Jesus. In Matthew 20:16 Jesus said, "For many will be called, but few chosen." In Luke 13:24 He said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." These words are both sobering and frightening, but they are true - most people will be lost.

It is not God's will that any person be lost. From God's point of view, He would "have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (I Tim. 2:4). In Ezekiel 33:11, God said, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9). The most important truth of the Bible is that God wants each and every one to be saved.

To keep people from being lost, God has made provisions by which any and all can be saved if they want to be. Jesus said of himself, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10). If it is God's desire to save all, and Jesus came to save us, why, then, will the majority of people be lost?

Many will be lost because they have never heard the gospel. No person has assurance of salvation apart from hearing, believing, and obeying the gospel. In II Thess. 1:7-9 the Bible states, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." The gospel is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believes." (Rom. 1:16). Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.) And in John 6:44-45, Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." How does God draw us to Christ? "And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." We are drawn to Christ by the gospel, and no man can come to him who has not been taught. As Christians, then, we must do all we can to teach the gospel to the lost world; for the provisions for salvation have been set forth in the gospel.

Many people will be lost because they have placed their faith and trust in false teachers. Because a

doctrine or practice is religious does not mean that it is approved of God. Satan may take the form of an "angel of light" (II Cor. 11:14), and he has ministers who appear as "ministers of righteousness." (II Cor. 11:15). Jesus referred to Satan and his workers as "wolves in sheep's clothing." (Matt. 7:15). Satan works effectively in religion to deceive people from "a love of the truth, that they might be saved." Satan isn't concerned about how religious one may be as long as the person is religiously wrong. Satan knows well that there is no salvation outside Christ (Acts 4:12.) If one is not in Christ, it doesn't matter how religious he may be, he is still lost. In Eph. 2:12 Paul said, "That at that time ye were without Christ . . . having no hope, and without God in the world." In Matthew 7:22-23 Jesus speaks of people at the judgment trying to convince him of the things they had done in his name, but of these Jesus said, "I never knew you." They were religious, but they were not right, and were not in Christ, for he never knew them. Consider this. There is no salvation outside Christ. Galatians 3:27 states, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Romans 6:3 states, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" These are the only two passages telling us how to get into Christ, and they both state that we are "Baptized INTO Christ." How, then, can one be saved before and apart from being baptized INTO Christ? Most religious teachers and preachers today are telling people that they are saved by "faith only," and that baptism is not essential to salvation. Faith is essential in salvation, but are we saved by faith only?

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James 2:24 states, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and NOT by FAITH ALONE." Those who preach salvation by faith alone are preaching salvation outside Christ. They are not of God, but of Satan!

Some people will be lost because they are trusting in their own moral goodness. They just cannot accept that a God of love and mercy will condemn people who are morally good. These people fail to understand that salvation does not hinge on our own goodness. Who is good enough to be saved on their own? In Romans 3:10-12 God states, "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one." In verse 23 he adds, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." In the eyes of God there are none good enough to save themselves by their own goodness. The salvation of all depends on our accepting Christ in obedience to the will of God. The people in Matthew 7:22-23 were morally good people, no doubt, but they were lost.

Many will be lost because they lack faith in what God says. Many people refuse to accept what God says about salvation, about the one church, about worship, about how

the church is to be organized and governed, about the reality of hell, and, in fact, about everything the Bible teaches. It is astonishing how people can become so fearless and bold as to challenge what God says. These people are going to force their desires on God. But how foolish can man become? But what is sadder yet is the fact that so many people will believe and accept what these say without ever questioning what God may say about any given subject. The apostle Paul was careful in his teachings "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (I Cor. 2:5). How people today need to be like the Bereans, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things be so." (Acts 17:11). We had better have the right basis for our faith - the word of God. (Matt. 7:24).

And then many will be lost because they are not willing to turn from their sins. God will not save man in his sins, he saves us from our sins, and before he can do this, we must be willing to turn from them. In Acts 17:30 Paul said that "God commands all men every where to repent." Jesus said, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3). If there is sin in our life that we will not give up, there is no hope for our salvation. Truly, "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23). Is any sin worth losing our soul for? We had better believe what God says about hell.

The Bible assures us that some day Jesus will return. When he returns it will be to receive the faithful up into glory, and it will also be to eternally punish those who have not obeyed the gospel (II Thess. 1:7-9). What if he should return today? Would he find you ready? Being lost is the most useless waste in the world. The lost are losers. Losers of the best this life has to offer, and losers of eternal life. Jesus asks you, "For what has a man profited, if he shall gain the

whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26). As the Bible pleads, "Today is the day of salvation." Will it be for you?

"Sittin' and Stewin"

By Bill Graddy

When Christians gather together on the Lord's day to worship God, this should be one of our most delightful experiences! Is it? We should never allow anything to keep us from this sacred and solemn occasion - prostrating ourselves in deep contrition before God in His House on His Day around His Table! Although we will be hindered from the services from time to time, let us make sure we are not at fault.

If the Lord's day is not one of our most meaningful and fulfilling events, perhaps the lack of study and preparation for it is a culprit? Read Malachi 1:12, 13.

Because of many comments, we wonder if Christians are really enjoying the worship of God or are they just "sittin" and "stewin" as they say? What has caused this "weariness" (Malachi 1:13), and wincing of soul? As already noted it could be a lack of study and preparation on the part of the individuals. However, let us look for the stumbling block elsewhere. The elders have a tremendous responsibility to see that the church is kept pure. (Acts 20:28). These guardians of souls must know of the "wolves" and their doctrines in order to keep the flock safe. A deficiency here in not keeping abreast of the issues and properly teaching against them - thus not taking a stand for the truth, is deadly. Preachers failing to speak all the truth can be another reason for members "sittin" and "stewin". Preachers must desire to teach, to inspire, and to hold before the hearers "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14). Sermonettes,

anecdotes, and lectures on our American Heritage will not fill the order. The word of God is powerful and when preached it will produce a "stick" or a "stir." Again, elders must see that the word is preached!

As Christ beheld Jerusalem and wept, so we weep today as we see one congregation after another leaving the "old paths." Congregations who were once a bastion of the faith will not endure sound doctrine now. Many of our preaching brethren have become hirelings with office hours, a secretary, and the weekly bulletin with all the activities of the church consume their time. Their sermons no longer cause "Felix to tremble." Listening to the older and faithful members of the church bewail and bemoan these days, we see the need for dedicated elders, men of the book to emerge "Holding forth the word of life . . ." (Philippians 2:16).

"Sittin" and "Stewin" is an attitude that has developed because of the lack of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The Word cannot become flesh until we know it. Knowing it is equal to doing it in the complete sense; therefore, let us all, if we are, "Sittin" and "Stewin"; **STUDY THE BOOK** that we may be healthy Christians. But, "...unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required . . ." (Luke 12:48). Hence, elders have the greatest responsibility and must see that the members are being taught the truth. Another way to prevent "Sittin" and "Stewin" is to keep the members busy and challenged in the work of the Lord. Elders have a great task! Maybe soon, we will learn I Timothy 5:17. It must be elders who turn the church around.

THE RESTORATION PLEA

By Bobby Dockery

Near the beginning of the last

century, a great religious movement began to gain momentum in what was then the frontier states of Kentucky and Western Virginia. It was completely unlike any other religious movement since the first century. It had as its aim the restoration of New Testament Christianity in all its original purity and glory.

The movement drew its leaders from men with many different religious backgrounds. Men who had been reared as Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Baptists united in an effort to erase denominational differences in the restoration of New Testament Christianity.

The Restoration Plea called for the following Biblical principles:

(1) **THE UNITY OF ALL CHRISTIANS ON THE BASIS OF THE BIBLE ALONE.** Recognizing that real religious unity would be possible only when men would subordinate their own opinions to the authority of the scriptures, the restoration leaders resolved to "Speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent." (I Peter 4:11).

(2) **THE REJECTION OF ALL MAN-MADE CREEDS.** Because of the divisive influence of creeds, confessions of faith, books of discipline, and official prayer books, those who desired to be simply New Testament Christians determined to accept only the Bible as the all-sufficient rule for religious faith and practice. (John 12:48).

(3) **THE USE OF ONLY SCRIPTURAL NAMES IN REFERRING TO GOD'S PEOPLE.** Resolving to call Bible things by Bible names those who were intent upon restoring New Testament Christianity called themselves not "hyphenated - Christians" but simple 'Christians' only. It was their intention to honor only Christ - not men or doctrines, or practices - by the name which they wore religiously. (Acts 11:26).

(4) **THE RECOGNITION OF THE ABSOLUTE AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH.** Those who were dedicated to the restoration of undenominational Christianity noted that the churches of the first century were not subject to any Board, Synod, Convention, Association, or Ecclesiastical Hierarchy outside the local church. They insisted therefore, that individual churches today, like those of the New Testament, should be governed by a plurality of elders without any organization above the congregational level. (Phil 1:1, Acts 20:28).

(5) **THE RESTORATION OF THE GOVERNMENT, WORSHIP, AND TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.** Believing that the church of the New Testament provides a continuing pattern for the church as God would have it today, the pioneer preachers of Restoration called for a careful reproduction of all the particulars of New Testament Christianity. (Galatians 1:6-9.)

The Restoration Plea found a receptive audience in frontier America. Thousands joined the movement toward Undenominational Christianity. They were disillusioned with denominationalism and its legacy of factionalism, strife and bitterness. They realized that the answer was not in the creation of another denomination but in a return to the church of the Bible. They were determined to be Christians only!

After nearly 170 years, the Restoration Plea is more powerful than ever!

Those who are members of the churches of Christ continue to cherish the hope that they may be Christians only! In humility they continue to plead for and seek the unity of a divided religious world on the basis of the Bible alone. In pursuit of that grand objective those who are committed to the Restoration of New Testament

Christianity urge, now, more than ever, that men and women of all religious persuasions resolve to examine their beliefs and practices with the intention of sincerely trying to "Speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent."

Why not be just a Christian?

REPENT OF PAST SINS

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:19).

A careful study of the reference listed above will show that repentance, on the part of man, is something that must be done in order to receive forgiveness of sins. A host of scriptures may be offered to support this fact, such as: Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, Acts 5:31.

Learning that God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent" and that repentance is a prerequisite to forgiveness of sins, what is repentance? Repentance is not sorrow, "godly sorrow works repentance." (II Cor. 7:10). Reformation of life is not repentance (Matt. 3:8), reformation is an outgrowth which takes place in the heart. The English word "repent" is translated from a compound Greek work meaning "to think differently after." Repentance may be defined as "a change of will or mind which results in a transformation of life." This is illustrated in Matthew 21:28-29.

The sinner is motivated to repent by godly sorrow because of his sins (II Corinthians 7:10) and the goodness of God (Romans 2:4).

Have you truly repented of your sins? Salvation may be yours by the grace of God; however, one must comply with God's commandments to be saved. "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3, 5.)

How To Become A Christian

The most important question ever asked is: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Then the HOW becomes equally as important. Notice the step by step process. First, we must have faith in the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. (Heb. 12:2). This faith comes by the hearing of the Word of God. (Rom. 10:17). "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6). With the belief and trust that Jesus is the Redeemer, we must repent of sins. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30). In repentance, we turn from sin, **STOP** serving Satan and **START** serving the Lord. (Matthew 3:8;

Luke 13:3). With this new attitude we are ready to confess our faith, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:9-10). Read Matthew 10:32-33. Acknowledge our faith, repentance and confession, the last step into Christ is baptism. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:27). Read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Now that our past sins have been forgiven, the Lord has added us to His church and we are Christians. (Acts 2:47 and Acts 11:26).

BECOME A CHRISTIAN

Mail all address changes to:
CHURCH OF CHRIST
P. O. BOX 251
MAMMOTH SPRING, AR 72554