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"TRY AGAIN !!"

By Mike Pace

Perhaps one of you reading this paper has tried to be a Christian, but you have failed. If that be characteristic of your life, why not try again? Great success does not always come from just one single effort. Worthwhile things are worth trying and striving for, even if we must try again and again. A football team on the one-yard line may have to try several times before they ever manage to gain that one yard and score the winning touchdown. Most people successful in life will tell us that they reached where they are because they didn't give up, they kept trying until they acquired their goals. If a personal disaster strikes near home in the form of the death of a loved one, or financial ruin, or serious illness, or in some other way, DON'T GIVE UP AND QUIT!

We all know and realize that life is a constant struggle and a mixture of successes and failures. Wars are not won by a single battle. Instead, battle after battle must be fought before the victory is ever won. And in a certain sense of the word, some of these battles are lost but victory belongs to those who win the last battle.

There are very few people who spend a long life in the service of our Lord without getting discouraged from time to time. But those who overcome the world are they who, if necessary, try again and again, who just refuse to allow Satan to win the battle. If they do fail and fall, they go down fighting,

soon to rise up again to fight the good fight of faith!

It's easy to give up and quit when the going gets rough, as it most certainly will, if not now, later on in life. In making a long trip from one place to another, a traveler will sometimes encounter some detours and some rough places over which one must travel in order to reach the destination. Our spiritual lives are very much similar. As we travel through life we will most certainly encounter obstacles and detours which try and test our faith. We can expect this to be as Christians, for *"all that will live godly in Jesus Christ, shall suffer persecution."* (II Timothy 3:12). The Christian life is like running a race (Hebrews 12:1,2 and I Corinthians 9:25-27). If you fall, get up and try again! Remember the Lord said, *"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."* (Revelation 2:10).

Are There Degrees of Christians?

By Dennis R. Smith

There are many Christians in the brotherhood that have degrees and there are many different degrees or talents that make up the brotherhood, but there cannot be "degrees of Christians" any more than God is a respecter of persons. Now we are not talking about opinion, customs or styles when we refer to a Christian and his attitude toward it, but we are talking about right and wrong of one Christian in relation to another Christian. Is something right for one person and wrong for another? I cannot possibly see how this can be in view of what the

Bible says. For example: *"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."* (I John 3:4). Peter said in Acts 11:34, *"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."*

It is not an uncommon thing (even in the brotherhood) for the expression "liberal" and "conservative" to be used in the identification of an individual and his conviction on a certain matter. Now this may hold true in the area of politics, history, business or in personal matters, BUT IT CANNOT HOLD TRUE IN THE AREA OF NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY. Every child of God must *"walk by the same rule and mind the same things."* (Phil. 3:16). If this passage is from the inspired word of God (any doubts?) then we have no alternative but to believe it for what it says. Are there different laws in regard to adultery, fornication, stealing, lying? Are there different laws in regard to dress or does Paul mean what he says in I Tim. 2:9, *"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works?"* The same comparisons hold true on any Bible subject. Can a woman teach? Yes, in any area where she does not usurp her authority over the man. (I Tim. 2:12). But because of liberal or conservative issues sometimes we want to "stretch out" God's word and make it fit into situations that harbor on the conservative or liberal side. Again, there cannot be such divisions in the Lord's body and be acceptable in the sight of God.

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Either something is right for everyone or it is wrong for everyone. This holds true with congregations. What is wrong for one congregation is wrong for another. **There cannot be degrees of Christians.**

Are there different rules that apply to young people as compared to older folks? Absolutely not! If an old Christian commits fornication he is just as guilty as a young Christian. Certainly there are instructions to both. Paul told Titus that the aged men need to set the example in sobriety, faith, charity, etc., and likewise to the aged women that they in behavior as "becometh holiness" BUT to the young people he gave commandments also: "*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*" Now, if you can find any difference in the commandments of God for one person over another I would like to know where they are. It would seem that every child of God, whether young or old, rich or poor might be enriched in their personal relationship to God if all could understand what Jesus meant when he said: "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*" (Matt. 5:16).

In short, the Lord's church, since the restoration movement, has come a long way on the slogan, "speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is

silent." I know of no reason to make any change now. When we follow this simple rule there cannot be "degrees of Christians."

Is A Tail Ever A Leg?

By Benny L. Stephens

Abraham Lincoln insisted on facts when a case was being presented to him. One day a committee met with him to set forth a matter of public concern. Their case was built largely on 'supposing'.

Mr. Lincoln asked them an amusing question: "How many legs would a sheep have if you called its tail a leg?"

"Five," was the prompt answer. "That is what I thought you would say," declared Lincoln, "but that isn't true; the sheep would only have four legs. Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it one."

Many things are called by many names today, but the calling does not make it so. Often those outside of Christ are called Christians, but the calling doesn't make one a Christian. The Bible teaches there are certain conditions to be met before one is a Christian.

The first condition is an *obedient faith*. The book of Romans teaches we are justified by an obedient, responsive faith. The Hebrew writer says it is impossible to please God without it, (Hebrews 11:6). Unfortunately many stop with faith and call themselves Christians, but remember, the calling doesn't necessarily make it so.

Another condition of salvation is stated in Luke 13:3-5: "*I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" According to Jesus, faith alone is not sufficient to save one, but one must repent of all past sins. Repentance is a change of mind leading to a change of conduct. A little boy defined it one

time as "being sorry enough to quit." When one repents he stops living for the devil and begins to live for Christ.

In Romans 10:9-10, the apostle Paul states another condition of salvation or prerequisite of one's being a Christian. This is a confession with the mouth, a verbal confession of the resurrected Lord. A simple statement from the heart, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," is the expression used in Acts 8:37.

It is sad to see so many good people stop here without meeting still another condition of salvation. This is baptism, immersion in water for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38. Some will hasten to say, "This is water salvation," or "salvation by works." No, this is just an expression of one's faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Jesus commanded, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). By complying with the Lord's command to be baptized, one does not earn or merit his salvation. This is simply the response of an obedient, saving faith. The blood of Christ remits our sins. Our Lord shed His precious blood in His death. How do we contact this blood, by getting into the death of Christ? Paul says, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3).

Remember, calling one who has not complied with God's conditions of salvation a Christian, doesn't make him one.

DO NOTHING AND SIN

By John Gipson

The neglect of positive duty is just as surely wrong as the commission of overt evil. It is not sufficient to say, "So long as I don't drink and swear, lie and steal, fight and kill, I am all right." Take a soldier in the army. He doesn't

have to fix his bayonet and run his colonel through to be guilty of wrong doing. He can just refuse to carry out the orders his colonel gives him. When commanded to stand guard, he can just remain in the barracks. When the battle rages, he can just lay down his arms and refuse to fight. What army would tolerate such conduct? Omission is as vicious as commission.

Remember that the King said to those on his left hand, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink." He did not say to them, "You were common drunkards, you were dishonest, you were profane."

I can almost hear the words of John the Baptist, "Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." The tree that is bad deserves to be cut down, but the tree that is unproductive also deserves the fire.

In the marriage-feast of which we read in the gospels, there were many who would not come, and they perished because they would not come. You will not find one single statement made concerning them committing sins. They were shut out for not coming.

I fear for those who omit the primary commands of repentance and baptism; for those who neglect the worship of God; for those who fail to observe the Lord's Supper; for those who are too busy to pray; for those who leave the Bible lying about unread; for young people who have failed to honor their parents; and for older children who have neglected their parents in their twilight years; for those who have no out-going concern for their neighbors; for those who are ready with an excuse for every good deed which they have not performed; for all who have simply neglected.

Maybe we should preach loud and long, "You can do nothing and sin."

"Are You Happy?"

By Eugene Brewer

In a recent national poll of the adult population of the United States, 44% say they are "very happy," 51% "fairly happy," and 5% "not too happy." The highest proportion of the "very happy" were people who are highly committed to spiritual ends, who attend church more than weekly, and who feel they are living "very Christian lives." 71% of those not living a "very Christian life" were in the two lower happiness categories.

Another poll by Educational Communications which surveyed 55,000 juniors and seniors in 22,000 public, parochial, and private high schools showed that 35% of those earning top grades were living with both natural parents, in homes where formal religion is practiced. 84% of these high achievers favor traditional marriages and reject the use of cigarettes and illegal drugs.

Is there some relationship between being religious and happiness? May we assume that a traditional and religious home life makes a significant contribution to human happiness and intellectual achievement? Surely these conclusions must follow, though other factors may have affected the polls to some degree. This relationship may surprise the non-religious, but should occasion little more than a rhetorical "So!" among believers.

It should not be surprising that those who have recognized their ultimate purpose in life have a better self-image and a higher level of satisfaction with life. Nor should it be unexpected that young people from stable, religious home excel in the development of their God-given endowments. These conclusions are made with full recognition that much that passes for spiritual living is shallow and hypocritical, nor are we unaware that some marriages are only superficially intact.

If righteousness exalts a nation (Proverbs 14:34), it will follow that to whatever degree God's ways are

practiced by a people, their self-realization will tend to characterize them. This fact tends to argue persuasively for the validity and values of Biblical faith and living.

SATAN'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH

By Barry Cunningham

Many battles have been lost because of a lack of knowledge of the opponents strategy. Not knowing of a surprise attack or a new, secret weapon has cost many victories, no doubt, through the years.

Football fans have seen, many times, the effectiveness of trick plays, fancy moves and unexpected changes in winning ball games.

Knowing, then, the need for not only having a plan of your own but also being aware of the enemy's plan, great effort is put forth in studying the opponent's strategy.

In our fight against sin we have a very dangerous opponent in Satan. He is described as "a roaring lion" (I Peter 5:8). Against him only the "whole armour of God" is effective (Ephesians 6:11). Such are his devices that he will even "fashion himself into an angel of light" (II Corinthians 11:4).

We should, therefore, be continually aware of Satan's plan for the church. I believe that Satan's plan is basically threefold.

1. Satan wants to keep people out of the church. He knows that only those who are in the church receive the benefits of Christ's shed blood. Therefore, to keep people out of the church is to keep them from being saved.

a. He doesn't want us to believe. (Hebrews 11:6).

b. He doesn't want us to obey. (Matthew 7:21).

c. He points out the hypocrites in the church. (Romans 14: 12).

d. He says, "Wait a While." (James 4:14).

e. He hardens the heart. (Hebrews 3:8).

Generally, Satan is successful in

keeping people out of the church. In regard to those who are in the body of Christ - he doesn't give up.

2. Satan wants to get people out of the church. The denominational doctrine of "once saved always saved" is a lie. Satan knows that if he can get people to quit the church they will relinquish all claim to the promises of God. They will be, in essence, lost!

a. He would have us grow weary. (Hebrews 10:24-26).

b. He entices us to sin. (I John 1:8-9).

c. He would have us to hate our brethren. (Hebrews 13:1).

It's only a matter of time until the weary, sin laden and hate-filled church member quits. Satan never rests in his efforts to stop the church of Christ!

If Satan isn't able to keep people out of the church or to get people out he still doesn't give up!

3. Satan wants to render those in the church helpless. The next best thing, in his eyes, to no church at all is a weak and ineffective church.

a. He encourages division. (I Corinthians 1:10).

b. He would have us to do as little as we can. (I Cor. 15:58).

c. He would have us to fail to do good. (James 4:17).

d. He would have us to do nothing at all. (James 1:22).

Satan is, indeed, a formidable opponent. He is out to get you and the church of which you are a member. Thank God that Jesus Christ has the power to destroy the works of Satan! It is "in him" that the victory will be ours!

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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

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