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## ARE YOU LOST?

by Ted J. Clarke

Jesus plainly stated, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Without Jesus all of mankind is lost, meaning destroyed or ruined. We will perish without eternal life (John 3:16). The penalty for our sins is death (Romans 6:23). Death is to be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Since Jesus came to seek and save those of us who are lost, we can blame only ourselves if we do not find our way to God and heaven through Him. Christ claimed, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

It is possible to be lost and not know it. Nearly everyone of us has at some time or another thought that we were on the right road or street, only to find out that we were mistaken and did not really know where we were. We were lost. The same thing is true of being lost spiritually. We can think that we know where we are, only to find out that we are truly lost. The apostle Paul told the Athenians that they were lost and needed to repent of ignorance toward God, the true and only God (Acts 17:22-34). They were evidently satisfied with their spiritual knowledge, for very few believed Paul and changed. It is also possible for Christians to be lost! Jesus spoke about the church in Laodicea and warned them that He would "spew (them) out" of His mouth. These too were told to repent and come to Him for their true needs (Revelation 3:14-22).

Is it possible that you are lost? If you are not following the directions which Christ has provided in the New Testament, you are! Jesus said that his word will be the standard by which we will be judged! "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that

judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). The prophet Jeremiah said, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (10:23). You may think that you are saved and be lost. Let us notice two popular misconceptions which will cause many people to be lost.

### LOST, AT HOME

There are many people who truly believe that they can be good Christians without ever being members of the Lord's church. They sincerely believe that they never have to attend worship services with other Christians. Such persons often say, "I can be just as good a Christian at home as I can at church." However, the truth from the Bible is, **you cannot even be a Christian and ignore the church!** That statement ought to get the attention of many of our readers. The Scriptures teach that being a member of the **Lord's church, worshiping regularly with other saints and being a Christian, all go hand in hand.** You can not separate them. Those who think otherwise may continue to stay at home, away from the worship, but they will be **lost, at home.** Consider the evidence from the Bible.

First, the church is not a human institution, but a divine one. People first became Christians in Acts 2, when the first gospel message was preached and forgiveness of sins was offered in Christ's name (see Acts 2:36, 38). Those people who believed, repented and were baptized **were added to the church by the Lord!** (Acts 2:47) Being saved from their sins and becoming members of the Lord's church was a part of the same process. No one had a choice to be saved without becoming a part of the church! This was the church Christ promised to build in Matthew 16:18, 19.

Second, the church is **not a building!** The church consists of **saved people!** The apostle Paul likens it to the **body of Christ** and says that He (Jesus) is both **head and Savior** of that body (Ephesians 1:21-23; 5:23). Notice also that since the church is **the fullness** of Christ, you cannot be saved without being a part of His body, which is the church! Read the passages again and carefully note the importance of the church in **God's plan.** Jesus gave His blood for our sins, but He also gave His blood to purchase the church (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25). We cannot ignore that fact. Third, it is **in and through the church that God is glorified!** (Ephesians 3:20, 21) Hebrews 10:25 warns against "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." While one can serve and worship God at times on an individual basis, **there is a type of worship which God seeks by His assembled saints** (John 4:23-24). When the church assembles, every able saint is supposed to be present, **not forsaking** the assembly. To be absent is to disobey and dishonor God and Christ. In that assembly on the first day of the week, one will worship God in observing the Lord's Supper, singing, prayer, preaching and giving (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2; Ephesians 5:19; 2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Timothy 2:1-4). These are commands that true Christians will do with other Christians. God says **assemble!** You cannot ignore Him and be saved. Don't be lost, at home!

### LOST, IN CHURCH

The previous section points out clearly that one who is a Christian must assemble with the other saints to worship God on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2; Acts 2:42 et al.). Those who do not attend worship services often point to hypocrites who do attend, saying, "I don't go to church, but I'm as good as 'ole so and so, who does go." Non-attenders are not excused from worship just because some hypocrites do attend. Remember, you have to be smaller than a hypocrite to hide behind one! Still, it is true that

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**Are You Lost? - Lost, in Church**

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simply because one "goes to church," it does not mean that that person is saved.

Several things can make our worship of no account. Matthew 15:9 says that teaching the commandments of men in place of God's word makes our worship "vain." Worship is to be conducted "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Worship is more than just going through the motions, even if the motions are the right ones. There must be an attitude of worship with the inner person (one's spirit) being involved. To be present for worship and act like one is bored to tears, or to be thinking about things other than worship **is not worship at all!** Some of the Corinthians had perverted worship by turning the Lord's Supper into a physical feast with no concern for the Lord nor their less fortunate brethren. Paul said that they were not truly worshipping (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). One's manner of life can also void one's worship! Micah 6:6-8 shows that this was a problem among the Jews, who thought that God would be satisfied as long as they offered the sacrifices and paid their dues, regardless what their personal life was like (see also Isaiah 1:1-20). Jesus rebuked those who paid tithes on the smallest of items but did not exercise the weightier matters of justice, mercy and faith (Matthew 23:23). Romans 12:1-2 calls upon us to live pure and holy lives, sacrificed in service to God. Only then will our worship be acceptable to Him. Those who

are only "Sunday-go-to-meetin'-Christians" will not be saved, when they serve the devil the rest of the week. Such hypocrites were constantly condemned by Christ and are lost, even if they attend church worship.

Worship which is in spirit and truth is what God seeks from His children (John 4:23, 24). When one does not attend such worship assemblies, or when one perverts the worship or is a hypocrite, the result is the same. Such people are lost! **God requires proper worship!** (Hebrews 10:25; John 4:24) We are trying to give Him such worship. Why not visit with us soon? Don't be lost, anywhere!

**DIVINE CHASTENING**

by Standfast Oyinna, Sr.

*Editor's Note: The following article is from one of our preaching brethren in Nigeria, West Africa. We have a good number of brethren in Africa who have requested the **Fulton County Gospel News** and they are among our most appreciative readers. Brother Standfast Oyinna, Sr. (isn't that a great first name for a Christian?) has written on a subject seldom treated and has presented an impressive array of Scripture references for our consideration. If you profit from his article, please let him know. It will cost you an overseas stamp, but you will be a great source of encouragement to Brother Standfast.*

Saints can fall into painful circumstances. Some are so painful that one begins to wonder if the Lord is still on His throne. At a time such as this the enemies of David asked him, "Where is your God?" (Psalm 42:10)

Both saints and sinners suffer affliction. This is not always due to sin. In some cases it may be. Jesus warned one man, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you" (John 5:14). People sometimes cause their own suffering. Love of money, for example, leads to all kinds of problems: "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:9, 10).

This article is about the afflictions

which befall God's children, such as those which befell Job. This is called "chastening" by inspired writers. Did you know that God's obedient children are chastened today? By God's children I mean those who have obeyed the gospel of Christ according to the new covenant (1 Peter 1:14, 22, 23).

We are chastened because our Father loves us. "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Proverbs 13:24). "Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction" (Proverbs 19:18). "And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens...' If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Hebrews 12:5-11).

"But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent" (Revelation 3:19). "So you should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you" (Deut. 8:5). The Lord chastens us so that we may serve Him more acceptably. The Psalmist says: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes" (Psalm 119:71).

Job understood that he was being refined by his trials: "Look, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him. But He knows the way

that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:8-10).

Israel was refined by God: "For You, O God, have proved us; You have refined us as silver is refined. You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs. You have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; but You brought us out to rich fulfillment" (Psalm 66:10-12). "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction" (Isaiah 48:10). It was foretold that the Christ would purify God's people: "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness" (Malachi 3:2, 3).

"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion," says the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand against the little ones. And it shall come to pass in all the land," says the LORD, "that two-thirds shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; and each one will say, 'The LORD is my God'" (Zechariah 13:7-9).

"In this (hope of salvation) you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6, 7).

In these citations we have come across the terms: fire, water, gold, silver, refine and purify. Water and fire are conventional metaphors for severe trials. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you" (Isaiah 43:2).

The other metaphors are borrowed from the technology of using fire to test the genuineness of precious metals and

to remove impurities. "The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Psalm 12:6). When gold and silver are crude and unpurified, they appear valueless. They must be refined and purified by fire before their true value is attained. The same is true of God's children. Isaiah realized that he needed to be purified: "Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.' Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he has taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged'" (Isaiah 6:5-7).

When confronted by the majesty of God, Isaiah realized that although God had called him, he was not absolutely righteous. "We are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6). Peter felt the same way when confronted by Christ: "...he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'" (Luke 5:8). We are unclean people when compared with the righteousness of a Holy God. So then, before we are used, we need refining, purification, cleansing and polishing. The reason for the chastening which we receive may be that we have a little pride, envy, malice, jealousy, covetousness, dishonesty, or something such, which needs to be removed from our hearts.

Did you ever pray, "O Lord, cleanse me, purify me."? He may answer that prayer by throwing you into a furnace of fire!

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*Loving means to love that which is unlovable, or it is no virtue at all; forgiving means to pardon the unpardonable, or it is no virtue at all; faith means believing the unbelievable, or it is no virtue at all. And to hope means hoping when things are hopeless, or it is no virtue at all.*

*We wouldn't mind the meek inheriting the earth if we could be sure that they would stay meek after they get it.*

## WIN, WITH P.M.A.!

by Russell M. Kline

First Corinthians 9:24-27 reads: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Among other things, these words from the pen of the divinely inspired apostle Paul teach us of the importance of **attitude**, as it relates to successful Christian living. Is it likely that a runner will win a race, if he does not believe he will cross the finish line first? Will a prize fighter win his bout, if he loses his confidence and swings at nothing? in order for God's people to successfully run their race and fight their fight, they must **believe** that they can win (Heb. 12:1, 2; II Tim. 4:6-8)!

When I played football for Harding Middle School, our coach placed a great deal of emphasis on the relationship between attitude and winning. He hung a sign over the door of our locker room, which read: "Win, With P.M.A. (Positive Mental Attitude)." Since I have become a Christian and a gospel preacher, I have seen "signs" like that one throughout Scripture. Attitude directly affects the worship we give to God (Jno. 4:24; Mark 7:6), the service we render to others (II Cor. 9:7), the number of souls we win for Christ (Rom. 1:16; I Pet. 3:15) and the success or failure of our Christian lives (I Cor. 9:24-27; II Pet. 1:5-12).

From the very beginning, attitude has been important to God's people. It was a negative attitude which delayed Israel's entrance into the promised land (Num. 13:26-33). It took a positive attitude of one young man to slay Goliath of Gath (I Sam. 17:32-54). It was Peter's great faith in the power of God, which made the draught of fishes possible (Luke 5:4-7). In each of these cases, as in others, **attitude** was a deciding factor.

Today, attitude is just as important to God's people as it always has been. If a congregation of the Lord's church convinces itself that it is impossible for it to

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grow, then it will not grow! If a Christian convinces himself that it is impossible for him to live a faithful Christian life, then he will not! Many of us are familiar with the tale of the "Little Engine That Could." All of us could learn a great deal about proper Christian attitude from that simple children's story. We will never accomplish anything for God, if we do not believe that we can do it! That is one reason why Hebrews 11:6 says, "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."

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**FAITH AND WORKS**

An old Scotsman was operating a small rowboat for transporting passengers across one of the little lakes in Scotland. One day a passenger noticed that he had carved on one oar the word "Faith" and on the other oar the word "Works." Curiosity led him to ask the meaning of this. The old man said, "I will show you." He dropped one oar and applied the other called "Works," and they just went around in circles. Then he dropped that oar and began to ply the one called "Faith," and the little boat went in circles again--this time the other way around.

After this demonstration, the old man picked up both "Faith" and "Works" and plying both oars, together sped swiftly over the water, explaining to his inquiring passenger, "You see, that is the way it is in life as well as in the boat."

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**THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

**GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION**

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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