

Are You Also Going To Leave?

When it is first heard, the Good News, or when we first realized that we were sinners and that we would face eternal judgment if we reject God's one and only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, a "believer" could easily think "Why would anyone reject or abandon God once they become knowledgeable?"

There are those that never receive Him in the first place...

Luke 8: ¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹²The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

then there are those that believe at first, but then fall away...

¹³And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.

This is most troubling for me, how one can know the truth, and walk away. Everyone can hear it, at least physically for those that have the mental faculties. But isn't that enough? Then again, why doesn't everyone "embrace" salvation? It's so strange to me. Why was Abel obedient and Cain insolent? You'd think that the first son of Adam, the one created from dust and walked with God, would know better.

No one can come, unless...

John 6: ⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But there are some of you who do not

believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) ⁶⁵And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

This knowledge of the Good News or “awakening”, as I like to call it, is only the beginning. Being “born again” (see John 3) is just that, in a spiritual sense, anyway. We start out as these little seedlings that require tender, loving care. Our faith, at this point, is very delicate and prone to many dangers that can retard our growth or uproot it altogether.

¹⁴And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

Did you catch that?

“their fruit does not mature.” Can’t we all relate to this in one way or another? The friend that seemed to answer the altar call one night, but he won’t even return your call the next? What happens to them?

Romans 10: ¹⁶But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”

1 Peter 4: ¹⁷For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

And what is the gospel?

Acts 17: ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, **but now**

he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

In even simpler terms:

Matthew 4: ¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

There's that word: Repent

This is not a very popular word, but it is the Word that Jesus, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, and all the other saints preached.

This is not something we do as one event. Repenting is something we do continually until we die. It is a command for the unbeliever and the believer alike. What kind of a believer says "Oh, I repented 3 years ago, but now I'm good, no need to do that again, whew! (as he wipes the sweat from his brow)"? I think many do, in their minds, but they fool themselves.

Although we are made perfect through Christ, this is not realized while in these earthly bodies of flesh.

Allow me to make one thing clear about repentance.

I used to think that when I repented, it meant that I was somehow "turning from sin and vowing never to commit those sins again that I committed before". That is no longer my understanding, thank God. That used to give me so much guilt that the devil used to keep me from doing much good because I hated myself.

Repenting, as I understand it now, is simply changing my mind about my sin, knowing that it leads to death, and feeling

sorry about it. This is the godly sorrow that brings us back to His feet where we confess and seek restoration and healing.

*1 John 1: ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, **he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

James 4: ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Do you see the difference?

When I focused on my inability to keep from sinning and thought that I must be a “bad Christian” because I kept doing the things that I knew I should not, it kept me from going to God.

Genesis 3: ¹⁰ And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”

Now that I continually seek Him, despite my sinful nature, I know that I will never meet His standard, although I strive for it. As I seek Him I am always repenting in prayer saying “Teach me your ways and change my heart. I am far from living the way you want me to live.” The closer I get to knowing Him, the more I realize how far I am off the mark. **The closer we get to God, the worse we look in comparison.** He is so merciful and patient with me that I cannot even begin to

tell you.

Matthew 5:

³ *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

⁴ *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

⁵ *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

⁶ *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

Check out what the Apostle Paul had to say after many years of serving Jesus:

Can you relate to this?

Romans 7: ¹⁵*For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.*

²⁰*Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus*

Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

This text is difficult for me as if things are hopeless, but it is always a breath of fresh air when I get to chapter 8:

Romans 8: ¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Isn't this cool? ***"in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us"*** Is that Christ-like or what?

Compare that to:

Matthew 5: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

I take this to mean: The work He accomplished over 2000 years ago is still being fulfilled through our lives today. Pretty cool, huh?

Growth is essential.

Growth should be constant and consistent. At first, the seedling should be protected, taking extra protection against temptation. I believe that in many ways, God has great mercy for the new believer and at the same period, He expects growth.

This is Discipleship 101.

If the growth does not occur, the roots will not grow deep and the seedling will start to wilt and be easily uprooted.

Hebrews 6: ¹Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ²and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³And this we will do if God permits.

Just like any relationship, like marriage, for example, it is always either moving towards one-ness or towards separation.

Are you moving closer to Him or further away from Him?

Growth yields a closer walk with Christ.

Consider how close Abraham was with God so that after 35+ years of walking with God he was obedient enough to sacrifice his only son, no questions asked! He wants this closeness with us!

My life over the past 10 years has been somewhat chaotic. (some of you reading know this to be true) Can anyone else relate to a chaotic life? Have you been greatly frustrated or has life made no sense at times? OK then, at least a few of you, or perhaps many, will understand this then.

A part of my testimony is this: **The more life seems chaotic and things seem to be in complete disarray, the more following and focusing on Jesus Christ makes sense to me.**

Can I get an amen?

Hebrews 4: ^{7c} "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden

your hearts.”

Here is my ultimate “secret” for spiritual growth, at the very least it is the catalyst that got me started. Read and see what that seedling can become! The secret, of course, is found in verse 2, which helps me to live up to verse 1. The fruit of this obedience is mentioned in verse 3. The little seedling has grown up. ☐

Psalm 1

*¹Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;*

*²but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and **on his law he meditates day and night.***

*³He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.*

Let me draw a conclusion that I’ve made as a result of this brief study.

**People fall away primarily because they fail to
continue growing in the knowledge and
understanding of Jesus Christ.**

Please do not let this be said of you!

I beg of you please, seek God with all you’ve got! Grow deep in God’s love so that you will have the same conviction that we see Peter have in verse 68:

John 6: 66 At this point many of his disciples turned away

and deserted him. 67 Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you also going to leave?"

68 Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. 69 We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God."

Will you grow with us in 2019?

Dear Lord, I don't know what to say. After all the wonderful things you've taught me, I am speechless. My prayer is for those that don't know you and for those that don't share the same conviction that I do. You are the One that has the words of eternal life. Where else would I go? Teach me how to love you more.

Let my words, thoughts, and actions become your words, thoughts, and actions. I want to be more like you. Less of me is fine with me and more of you is greater. Thank you for all that you've done in my life and for what you continue to do. I know that you know what's best for me and that gives me great joy. Please use these words you've given me to bless others and perhaps open some hearts. You are the God of all Creation and I am excited to be at your service! In Jesus name, Amen.

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