

'Almost' is Not Enough

It is sometimes said of an individual who has not yet obeyed the gospel, "I believe he is almost ready to be baptized," or that "she is close to becoming a Christian!"

Friend, are you one of those people? Can we not somehow impress upon you:

- That "almost" is not sufficient to make one a Christian;
- That being "close" is not the same thing as being "in Christ";
- That you are still in a LOST condition;
- That Christ is coming in judgment one day?

It is essential for you to note the words of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 where he states that those "*who do not obey the gospel ... will pay the penalty of eternal destruction.*" We URGE you to take a serious look at your life, your need of salvation, and the hope that can be found only "*in Christ.*" Obey the gospel **TODAY!**

- by **Barney L. Keith**

7 Things That Will Help You Grow Spiritually

1. **LIVE and WORK** to reach others each day as if you knew the world was going to come to an end next Sunday night. Think of that feeling of urgency and priority! (Read 2 Peter 3:1-12)
2. **BE AS ENTHUSIASTIC** about the church and its services as you would be if there were an overflowing crowd each time. Think of the interest, anticipation, and excitement of an overflow crowd!
3. **COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS.** Make a list of the things you are thankful to God for and thank Him for them one by one as you pray in your closet. This will help you to be grateful (Philippians 4:6). It will also help you to realize your dependence on God (Acts 17:24-25,28; John 15:5).
4. **MAKE & MAINTAIN A LIST OF YOUR FAULTS.** And pray for forgiveness and help to overcome them as you truly strive to overcome them. This will help us see that we are really not as good as we think we are and how very much we really do need Christ for Savior. It will also help you to sympathize with the faults of others (James 5:16; Galatians 6:1).
5. **KEEP A QUIET TIME.** Set aside 30 minutes every day to spend with God in prayer, Bible study, and meditation. If you really love someone or a game you want to spend some time with them. Just so, if you truly love God you want to spend some time alone with Him. (Psalm 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Luke 18:1). First century Christians kept an "hour of prayer" (Acts 13:1).
6. **VISIT SOMEONE FOR CHRIST EACH WEEK.** Visit some member you do not know very well; or a sick person; or a visitor to our services; or a weak member who needs encouragement; or someone who needs to become a Christian.
7. **REACH ANOTHER PERSON.** Conduct a Bible class in your home once a month and invite your relatives, friends and neighbors to attend. The preacher or elders will assist you if you want them to. Matthew 5:12-15; James 5:20; Daniel 12:3. There are 168 hours in a week. If you were to attend Bible Study, morning and evening worship on Sundays, Bible study on Wednesday, 30 minutes 6 days a week in Bible reading, prayer, and meditation, and conduct an hour long study once a month, you would be giving God less than 10 hours a week, leaving you 158.

- by **Grover Stevens**

You Can ... But You Can't

You can ignore God's warnings; you can refuse His blessing; you can reject all his wondrous love; but you can't go to heaven doing so.

You can believe any doctrine you choose; you can belong to the church of your choice; you can worship God as you please; but you can't please God doing so (2 John 9; John 8:32; Matthew 15:9,13; Hebrews 11:6; Romans 10:17).

It seems that Satan has done a remarkable job of convincing the people that their religion is a matter of their choice, not God's; that it is a matter of their being pleased, not God; that is, if they are pleased, then God must be.

People insist, "I have a right to believe as I please. I have a right to join the church of my choice. I have a right to worship God as I see fit." And I reply, "Yes, you most certainly do. Not only does the constitution of our great nation give us this privilege, but so does God himself. 'Choose this day whom ye will serve' is the way God would have it."

God created man a free moral agent — that is, He made him with the power to choose. You are admonished to choose between right and wrong, between false doctrine and the truth, between worshipping God as He directs and thus please Him and worshipping God as you are pleased to have it, between being a member of some denomination started by man and being a member of the church, between heaven and hell — yes, you have a right to go to hell, but do you prefer to exercise that right?

Yes YOU CAN do as you please — BUT YOU CAN'T please God at the same time.

- by **B.G. Hope**

Hospitality

Several passages in the New Testament command us to demonstrate hospitality. Romans 12:13 urges us to be "given to hospitality". This is so important that even the qualifications of elders include the instruction that they are to be men who are "hospitable" (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8 - NASV).

We fear that some Christians have excused themselves from this responsibility by a particular definition of the word 'hospitality'. Various Greek authorities are quoted and an attempt is made to force our understanding of the word to mean exclusively "love of strangers." Usually some explanation is given about the morally corrupt conditions that existed in the public inns of the first century. Christians who traveled, we are told, were in desperate need of accommodations that were free from these temptations and evil influences. Thus the command was given to be "hospitable" - meaning to entertain traveling strangers. This standard explanation usually goes further to suggest that the command had no application to one's own acquaintances. It seems that this view fails to include the total concept of "hospitality."

The problem, as we see it, is in the assumption that since there are now adequate public accommodations, we are no longer bound by this instruction. This notion is too narrow, and does not consider all that is said on the subject. 1 Peter 4:9 tells us to "use hospitality one to another without grudging." Thayer says that the word for "hospitality" means "generous to guests," and does not, denote that these "guests" were "strangers" in every case. Indeed, the very context suggests that this sharing was "among yourselves" (vs. 8), and "one to another" (vs. 9). Clearly, this command extends beyond the matter of caring for strangers and includes the idea of sharing with those of our own number.

Christian, have you been "hospitable?"

- by **Greg Gwin**