

## **Almost Right**

Imagine this: A young boy takes a math test and answers the question  $5 + 5 = 9$ . The teacher as she grades the test sees that the young man has all the other answers correct and he has only missed the one. And he is almost right at that! He is only ONE number away from being 100% correct. So she marks him 100% on the test anyway. A perfect grade for being almost right! Or a runner doing his best, coming in second place in a race, he is only a fraction of a second behind the first place runner, but the judges award him the gold just like the man who completed the race in first place, I mean, he was almost in first place anyway.

Appalling? Who here would accept this? If we allowed the boy to get by with almost being right - would you want him counting your change out at the local retail store if he grew up thinking  $5+5 = 9$ ? Or, would you consider it fair play if you were the one who trained so hard to be the best in your race only to see someone who did not quite as well be awarded first place right along side of you? So why is it when it comes to "religion" we think being almost right is ok? Especially when the outcome of being right will determine where we spend eternity.

Actually, man's choices in religion are limited to two! Not the hundreds of choices people want to believe exist. The choices are simple - you can choose right or wrong! Jesus said in Matthew 12:30 "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad." So Christ Himself eliminated any gray areas of worship and service. Is there anyway we can be almost right and still go to heaven?

Can we be almost right in worship to God and be acceptable, for instance? Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1-2; offered to God a "strange fire." They were pretty close to being right. One can make the argument they were offering God the service He commanded, at the right time, and at the right place. They just used a different fire to burn the incense. Although this act of worship was almost what God commanded, it was rejected by Him and those two priests lost their lives! The lesson learned is that being almost right is actually being totally wrong! Worship to God must be what He commands and be exactly according to His Word. (John 4:24, 17:17; Hebrews 8:5.) How about when it comes to our salvation? Saul is a good example. He was an honest and sincere man. He practiced his religious convictions zealously (Acts 23:1). He kept the Law of Moses to the best of his ability. But for all of his being almost right, Paul was lost! Christ told him on that road to Damascus to go and learn what he must do. And at the conclusion of his instruction he was told to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins! (Acts 22:16.)

Can we be almost right in doctrine? In 2 Timothy 2:17-18 Paul confronted Hymenaeus and Philetus about teaching a doctrine about the resurrection of the dead. They were teaching that the resurrection was "already past". This error from the truth was overthrowing the faith of some. These men were almost right but ended up being totally wrong!

Can we be almost right about the church? Can one join the church of his choice? Can we all be right or almost right enough to be acceptable to God, no matter how much we differ? Jesus promised to build HIS church in Matthew 16:18. He died for this church. Acts 2:47 says the saved were added to the church when they gladly received the Word and were baptized! Who's church? Baptists? Methodist? Or God's?

Whether it be in worship, salvation or anything else God commands, we must study our Bibles and be right with God in all things!

**- by James R. Dunigan**

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***Some thoughts about offering...***

### **Criticism**

#### **Revelation 2:19**

*"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first."*

There is something very interesting about this verse. The letter to the church at Thyatira is to be a letter of warning and of criticism, and yet it begins with a verse of undiluted praise. Here is something which every preacher and teacher, indeed every Christian, must learn. Real criticism

must always *encourage* and never *discourage*. When we have reason to rebuke or to criticize anyone, we must make it clear that we are doing so, not because we *dislike* him, but because we *like* him; not because we *hate* him, but because *love* him; not because we think that he is *useless*, but because we think that he has it in him to be *useful*; not because we wish to *hurt* him, but because we wish to *help* him. That is why criticism will often be most effective when it begins with praise. It is wise to point out that which is good before we begin to seek to eradicate that which is evil.

- by William Barclay

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### **“He Being Dead Yet Speaketh”**

Concerning Abel, the Hebrew writer stated: “*He being dead yet speaketh*” (11:4). His example of faith and obedience has served to motivate others for thousands of years, and continues to do so.

When we die, our influence will also linger. Ours will not endure for nearly so long as Abel’s, but it will have a lasting impact on certain others. **Consider:**

- **Your family** – No doubt the greatest realm of our influence is with those of our own kinfolk. They know us best of all, have spent the most time with us, and are the ones most thoroughly familiar with all that we have done. What bearing will your life have on those you leave behind? Will your children be blessed with a legacy of faithfulness from which they can draw strength long after you are gone? Will your children’s children continue to benefit from your strong example? Or, will they have learned a sad lesson of spiritual compromise from what they have seen in you?

- **Your friends** – All of us have a wide reaching circle of friends and acquaintances. You might be surprised to know how much your words and deeds are being observed by them. After all, you are a Christian, and they know this about you. Therefore, they are drawing conclusions about the Christian life by what they see of it in you. Even after you are dead and gone, they will have an enduring impression – for good or bad – from you.

- **Your brethren** – In the Lord’s church we are to be a close knit spiritual family. God’s plan for the church included the positive strength and support we could gain from one another (Eph. 4:16). Unfortunately, some do not take this very seriously, and instead of helping and encouraging their brethren, they actually serve as a source of disappointment and discouragement. When you die, and as your fellow Christians look back on your life, will you be seen as an asset or liability in the family of God?

One day, in the not-too-distant future, you will die. What will your life’s example continue to say about you then? Think!

- by Greg Gwin