

The Booing Spectators

Have you ever noticed who does the booing at a ball game? It is not the players on the field. They have made their own mistakes, and they are not inclined to boo their fellow-player when he makes his. They are pulling for one another, encouraging, helpful. They play as a team, win or lose as a team, suffer together as a team, and rejoice together as a team. It is the spectators who boo. So it is in every walk of life: it is the spectators who, as a rule, do the criticizing, not the participants.

Unfortunately, in every congregation, there are the spectators and the participants. The spectators never teach a Bible class, preach, lead singing, preside at the table, or encourage those who do those public works; they really don't get that much involved in the worship itself. But, more often than not, they are the very ones who are found criticizing the preacher or the song leader or the Bible class teacher. They are the ones who are so embarrassed and incensed when someone commits an "error" in his efforts to lead the group. They come wanting to hear something interesting and that will make the time fly. If they hear, they "cheer"; if not, they "boo." Not so with the true participants, those who are really involved in the Lord's work. They are the ones "cheering on" that "rookie" who is preaching his first sermon or leading his first song. When a brother attempts to teach his first Bible class, they are looking for ways to be helpful. They are sympathetic; they rejoice in the success of others; they mourn over the sorrows of others; they feel for the one who has failed, make allowance for him to try again, and assure him that he will do better next time. They rejoice especially in the development of the young men and women in the Lord's work. They are just as nervous and excited when the young people make their first attempt at presiding at the table or teaching a class as they would be if they were their own children.

How many preachers have decided to move because of the booing spectators right at the time when the participants were enjoying their greatest spiritual growth? How many elders have planned a work around the demands of the spectators rather than the needs of the participants?

Spectators need to become participants and find out what it's like out there "on the field". Participants need to keep on doing their best, ignoring the "boos" while looking to their all-seeing and understanding "Manager" for approval. All need to be preparing for judgment, where it will be the "doers of the word", not the critics, who will be saved. "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous" (I Peter 3:8).

Christians, like ball-players, make a sad mistake when they listen too closely to the "boo-birds".

- by Bill Hall

The Governor Called

I received a phone call from the Governor a few weeks ago. Well, sort of. It was the Governor's voice, but it was actually a recording. You see, it was election eve and he wanted my vote. I suspect many others got the same call.

The Governor had never called me before. He never asked my counsel on any issue he faced. He never expressed concern about how I felt about any matter. He never thanked me for being a law-abiding, tax-paying citizen of the State.

Even in this call the conversation was one-sided. I had no opportunity to respond. I was not allowed to make any suggestions. The Governor called only when he wanted something, and he gave me no indication of interest in a personal relationship beyond that.

Of course, I understand the situation. I do not expect more from a head of state. It just got me to thinking about another means of communication: prayer.

How often does God hear from me? Is it only when I need something? Am I disposed to do all the talking instead of listening to His word? How interested am I in His perspective? Am I thankful? Might I leave the impression that, despite the contact, I have little interest in a personal relationship with Him? Think about it.

- by Frank Himmel

“Once Saved, Always Saved”

This doctrine is also known as “The Impossibility of Apostasy” or “The Perseverance of the Saints.” The Westminster Confession puts it this way: “They whom God hath accepted in His beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of Grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.” The doctrine is NOT supported by what is taught in God’s Word. Note:

1) *“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” (Galatians 5:4)* This verse shows that some who were in God’s grace could fall from His grace. How can this Scripture be harmonized with the statement above?

2) *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” (Hebrews 3:12-14)* This passage is addressed to “brethren,” and they are warned about the possibility of “departing from the living God” and about being “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” Their salvation was conditional upon holding “the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.”

3) *“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” (2 Peter 2:20-22)* Observe those who are described in this text -- people who had “escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord.” These people were saved, but they could be “entangled” again and “overcome.” And, that latter state would be worse than before they had ever known the Lord. Clearly, they could be lost after having been saved.

More Bible verses are available on this subject, but just these three passages make it clear that “once saved, always saved” is not taught in God’s Word.

- by Greg Gwin