

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; Matt. 15:9,13; Heb 11:6; Rom. 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 ye 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**

Are You Interested?

Devotees of pagan religions memorize their "sacred writings." No one can teach in a Mohammedan mosque until he has memorized the Koran. Buddhist priests can quote their writings for hours without making a mistake. How is this possible? *They are deeply interested in their subject.*

Some sports enthusiasts can tell you the batting averages of practically every player in the major leagues. They know the scores of every football game played last year. Some go so far as to watch two games at once on different televisions lest they miss some significant play. Why is this? *They are deeply interested in their subject.*

Others are experts at Trivial Pursuit. They can answer questions ranging from movie stars to motor cycles, from science to snow-capped mountains, from Japanese customs to Jack and Jill nursery rhymes. How did they obtain such proficiency in trivialities? *They are deeply interested in their subject.*

Some who profess to be Christians don't know where to find scriptures telling man what to do to be saved. They have need that one teach them again concerning the first principles (Heb.5:12). *Wonder why?*

- by **Rick Duggin**

The Church Died!

Impressive churches dot the pages of Bible history - Antioch, Ephesus, Jerusalem, Phillipi, Rome. From more recent restoration history, a host of names are recalled. But what finally happened to those churches? A few remain; most are gone. They died! Is this destined to be the final chapter of this church? Why did they die?

Did the churches become outdated? A new T-model Ford is as good as ever but not suited to the demands of our day. Man has not changed. Man's spiritual needs are the same. God's church is perfect in design and needs no improvement. That is not the problem.

Was it persecution that destroyed those grand churches? All churches felt the lash of persecution, but that is when they multiplied their numbers. They died later. Churches die from within - not from outside pressure.

Churches die at the tables of compromise. When the churches fought the world, sin, and false doctrine - asking no quarter nor giving any, they prospered. Brethren bore scars; they lost a

battle now and then, but they did not lose the war. In their hand was a two edged sword, and on their side a divine defense none could penetrate. Compromise opened the gates and sheathed the sword. "Let's not dispute with people..." That appeal is the cankerworm and caterpillar that devours a church - and it is at last dead, stripped of its courage and faith.

Churches die of indifference. All churches lose members - they die, quit, or move away. Laziness just revises the directory and waits for move-ins and births. No effort is made to restore the fallen as scripture demands. No seed is sown. No one has home Bible studies. There is no zealous pursuit of souls. That church naturally – gradually - eventually but ever so surely dies.

Churches die from misdirection. They adopt worldly religious ideals. They see the church as a social reform agency, a general benevolent society, and a recreational institution. Its spiritual mission is forgotten. The harder they work, the worse the church becomes. Finally it is but a grotesque caricature of the Lord's church. Somewhere along the way, the church died - the victim of apostasy. Other churches have no direction at all. They are content to open the doors three times a week, have a meeting once a year, and paint the building when it begins to peel. They go in circles constantly wearing the ruts deeper and deeper. They press without a real goal, running on the treadmill until the church dies.

Is such inevitable? Must our work be wasted? No! The Lord has a prescription: "Preach the word...in season, out of season..."; "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life..." "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." May we have the zeal, faith and backbone to take the medicine.

- by Joe Fitch

Signs That One Is or Is Not Truly Converted To The Lord

I'm not a real, serious fan of soccer. Oh, yes, if there is a big match being played – maybe like the World Cup finals, for instance – I might watch a little. And, I do have an appreciation for the athletic abilities of the true stars of the sport. But, over all, I'm not a big fan, and my actions prove it.

On the other hand, I love football. ('American football' to those of you who insist that 'soccer' is actually 'football.') I keep up with the scores, statistics, and standings. I watch games as often as possible. I've even been known to sit out in the rain, freezing temperatures, and even in a snow storm in order to attend a game in person. I'm a fan, and my actions prove it.

The same sort of analysis can be made about one's real devotion to the Lord. In fact, you could say that it is fairly easy to detect if a person is truly converted to Christ – or not. Indications of such can be seen in many ways:

- Attendance – does an individual attend all of the assemblies and Bible studies (unless seriously hindered by illness, etc.)? If so, we would count this as a sign of commitment. But if their attendance is very 'spotty' and many things keep them from the assemblies, we'd be suspicious that something is lacking in the area of true conviction and devotion.
- Service – does he/she look for opportunities to serve, or is he/she looking to be constantly on the receiving end of help, visits, kindnesses, etc.?
- 'Chip on the shoulder' outlook – is this person one that is easily offended, even by the most trivial of matters? Are they ready to 'quit the church' over some minor problem? If so, this would surely demonstrate a lack of true devotion to the Lord

This list can be expanded considerably, but we hope you get the idea. Others can easily see how serious you are about doing the will of God. And, of course, He knows perfectly whether you are truly converted, or not. Think!

- by Greg Gwin