

God Has Spoken Tract Series

The Way Back

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You who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted
(Galatians 6:1).

God has a plan for saving the sinner who has never left the world and come to God. Such a person must first hear the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:18-20), then believe that Jesus is the Son of God (John 8:24; 20:30-31), repent from his sin (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30; 26:20), confess – or profess – his belief in that identity of Jesus (Acts 8:37; I Timothy 6:12), and be baptized into Jesus for the forgiveness of sins (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3; Acts 2:38). Until these steps are accomplished in this order and from a sincere heart, man is still outside of Jesus and separate from God. He is without hope (Eph. 2:11-12).

Now consider the person who sins against God after having once been saved. How is that person to be saved again?

Of course, there are some who believe that it is impossible for a saved person to sin and be lost again. It is puzzling why any reader of the Bible would believe this. Much of the New Testament was written to warn Christians against losing their faith by sinning again against God after having once been cleansed in the blood of Christ.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds
(Hebrews 1:1-2)

Even the apostle Paul had to guard himself against that possibility (Philippians 2:11-14). He wrote to Christians that they “take heed” (I Corinthians 10:12; Hebrews 3:12) not to fall from faith and depart from God.

If a Christian fails to “take heed” as Paul warned, and then does lose his salvation, does he need to go through the original procedure all over again to regain his salvation? No, God recognizes that His “dear children” (Ephesians 5:1), though He encourages them not to do so, will sin again after once being saved from sin (I John 1:8, 10). His mercy is everlasting (Psalm 100:4; 103:17); He has made provision for our forgiveness when we, as Christians, sin again.

As long as we walk faithfully in Him we are continually cleansed from all sin by the blood of Christ (I John 1:7), but when we interrupt that faithful walk and turn back, we interrupt the application of that cleansing blood (verse 6). God has promised, however, that “if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (verse 9).

It is not necessary for the Christian in sin to hear the gospel again as if he had never heard it. He already knows it, has once obeyed it, and knows that he has sinned against the God who gave it. It is not necessary for him to come to belief in Jesus. He is already a believer in Jesus, but has yielded to temptation and done what Jesus commanded him not to do. It is, however, necessary for the sinning Christian to repent from that sin which is his disobedience to the One he has promised to serve. To repent is to turn in thinking and practice from the sin back toward Christ (Acts 20:21). He has already been born into the family of God. He cannot be born into it again, but he does need to be restored to fellowship in that family.

Whereas, in becoming a Christian a person must confess (Acts 8:37), or profess (I Timothy 6:12) his faith in Jesus, that is not required of an erring Christian in seeking forgiveness of his sin. The erring Christian must, however, confess his sin to God (I John 1:9), an action not required of God in becoming a Christian, though some

preachers today require it without God's authority or approval. Upon repentance and confession of his sin the Christian is once again brought into fellowship with God. He does not need again to be baptized, as he did in first repenting from sin and becoming a Christian. The following table shows these two procedures side-by-side.

THE WAY INTO CHRIST (How a sinner becomes a Christian)	THE WAY BACK INTO CHRIST (How a sinning Christian returns to Christ)
Hear the gospel (Mark 16:15)	
Believe that Jesus is Christ (John 20:31)	
Repent from sin (Acts 2:36-38)	Repent from sin (Acts 8:13,22)
Confess faith in Jesus (Romans 10:8-10)	Confess sin (I John 1:9)
Be baptized into Christ (Mark 16:16)	Ask God's forgiveness (Jas 5:16)

Does the church today need to preach the way back to Christ? The answer should be obvious as we compare today's attendance to worship and Bible classes with that of 10 and 20 years ago. Many of those who were once among us, but no longer give this time and attention to the Lord still live in the community. They have not moved across the country; they have simply moved away from the Christ who gave His life for them – and whom they once promised to serve.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Galatians 6:1).

How may a Christian be “overtaken in a fault”? Moses says that it happens “through ignorance (Lev. 5:15). Hosea (4:6) relays God’s lament that “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

Paul says “IF a man be overtaken.” The clear implication is that it is possible to avoid that sin. We can avoid it by not being ignorant of God’s word, and by constantly applying what we know. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). In the context of Galatians 6 Paul says that we should pay attention to ourselves. “But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another” (v. 4). He says that we should respond properly to what we are taught. “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things” (v. 6), and he concludes, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (v. 9). It is what Jesus said to those Jews who believed in Him: know the word and continue in it (John 8:31-32).

“Restore such an one,” Paul said, and do so “in a spirit of meekness.” Thayer defines the verb *katarti’ dzo* (translated “restore”) as “to render fit, sound, complete, to mend (what has been broken...), to repair, to complete, to fit out, equip, put in order, arrange, adjust ... to strengthen, perfect, complete, make one what he ought to be.” Helping a brother or sister to come out of sin and back to Christ fits him or her again for Heaven, a state we do not enjoy when we continue in sin. Thank God for His promise in the letter from James: “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20). James had previously coupled the promise with the command thus: “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (v. 16).

When God tells us how to do what He has commanded, we are obligated to the character or method as much as to the basic

command itself. “Meekness” is translated from a word that Thayer defines as “gentleness, mildness, meekness.” Various modern translations use each these words. Webster defines “meekness” as it is used here as “enduring injury with patience and without resentment: mild ... not violent or strong: moderate.” It’s the attitude that a person would have if he approached his brother or sister with the love of Christ. Leading a soul out of sin ought always to be done with love and tenderness, and not with the judgmental or self-righteous spirit that is seen in some.

It is perhaps most interesting to pay special attention to the addressee of this command, and to what is said about him. The apostle of Jesus Christ has written to “Ye which are spiritual.” The command is not to the elders, or to the preacher, but to all Christians who have “the Spirit of Christ” (Romans 8:9). It is not, however, a distinction between a sinner and one who is superior. The “spirit of meekness” should make that clear, but Paul adds a warning that the “spiritual” Christian might just as easily stand someday where now stands the man “overtaken in a fault.” Thou art to restore thy brother “considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” I want a greater number of faithful saints around me because it is at least somewhat true that “there is safety in numbers.” I want faithful saints working together in the church so that there are those who will rescue me from Hell if I myself should ever yield to temptation. If I think that I have not sinned, or cannot sin, I deceive myself, and the truth is not in me (I John 1:8).

I need you to help me to get to Heaven, therefore I labor in a spirit of meekness to restore you when you have been overtaken in a fault. May God in Heaven, our loving Father, be merciful to us both.

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