

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU KNEW YOU COULDN'T LOSE?

During one of our family devotional times a few years ago, I asked the children to consider what they would do if they knew with certainty that they couldn't fail. There were some ground rules. What you choose to do must add value to the lives of others. . .I'm not particularly interested in the success of someone eating ice cream for the rest of their lives or living in a swimming hole somewhere. What you do must be good and moral, but past that you can seek any heights that you want to set your sights on. Not only did I want to know what their goal was, but I wanted them to draw me a picture that would show them in action. The results were that among other things, I might be the father of a President, a nurse, and a woman that followed a path that looked a whole lot like her mother's. But the most interesting one to me was the one from *numero dos* that showed himself and his older brother traveling to Africa with the two oldest sons of a family that attended church with us. Zachary had identified not only who was going on this trip but their individual gifts and responsibilities for this missionary journey. Without the fear of failure they could dream big dreams.

There was another story several years ago that impressed me, though in a different way. Do you remember Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker? They were quite the couple among certain denominations as they hosted *The PTL Club* from the mid 70's to the latter 80's. Tammy Faye was well known for the amount of paint she would put on (a radio joke when I was in Texas went something to the effect of a group of preachers talking about 4" of base and 3" of powder and one of the poor souls walked out not knowing they weren't talking about skiing conditions). As they built the wealth of the PTL empire, concerns grew about their having an air conditioned dog house and having gold plated toilet handles. Soon Jim was forced to step down when an adulterous affair became public. Then he would spend 18 years of a 45 year prison term before a federal appeals court freed him for illegally pocketing \$3,700,000 that was supposed to fund part of their ministry. What I most remember about that time was the comments that came from their friend and commentator Paul Harvey. Mr. Harvey would

frequently compare their sins to murderers and other hardened criminals of the day who had walked away from serving prison time as a statement of injustice in our society. But he also spoke about a sin among those who claimed to be Christians. There was one week in particular when he shared, "Many Christians set their sights too low. They tend to deify men, and no man can measure up to that."

What would you do if you knew you could not lose? The amount of money and time is no object. So long as it's honorable and moral, you name it, and you can have it. What would you choose? Where does your heart take you?

Let's look at 1 Corinthians 2:9-12. *"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."* Someone might say, "He must be talking about heaven." But the context of the scripture is telling us that he is talking about knowledge that we have in this life. God has never been a little God. Ask Joseph about interpreting dreams for a Pharaoh without knowing first what the dream was at the risk of losing your life if you got it wrong! Ask Joshua how to tear down the walls around a city by walking around a town blowing horns and shouting at it. Listen to little David talk about throwing off shields of protection so that he might freely move to throw a single stone into the skull of a giant. Ask the apostles about speaking in several different languages. . . at the same time! Who would have thought all of that up?

Do you really think the plans the Lord has for your life are all so different? It's true that your life might not make the same ripples in the pond that some lives have in years gone past, but in an eternal tomorrow, who knows what the Lord harvests from the seeds you've sown? David said in Psalms 31:19, *"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!"* I can honestly say that I would have never even imagined 20 years ago where I would be at this stage of my life. In fact if you could have shared that with me, I'd

likely have told you that they now have medicines for such delusions. I'm nobody special, and you haven't heard about me on the news, for which we're both thankful. But I can tell you stories about a big God that does big things just to make Himself smile!

This is the truth I wanted my kids to know: if you know you're in the Lord's will, you can't lose! Now knowing that is important, and you must be very careful not to interpret your will as being His will. But once you get to that point of certainty, pull the throttle out and bend it down! Go in faith and don't look back!

I received a call from a dear family in the Lord recently that is in the process of making some major decisions to benefit their family. They are prepared to pay dearly to make what they feel are necessary changes to enhance their godly home. I was blessed to be able to share through my experiences that sometimes those leaps of faith don't turn out like you thought they would. . .sometimes you get more blessings than you could have ever dreamed of! Paul told the church at Rome, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28) You too have a calling that He has purposed for your life. Can't you hear the prophet calling you? *"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."* (Isaiah 40:31) Hey you! Mount up and ride!

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APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Can you explain the meaning of the phrase "delivered unto Satan" in I Timothy 1:19-20? What does it mean to be delivered unto Satan?

Let us begin by reminding ourselves that all unbelievers belong to Satan's kingdom. His kingdom is often referred to as the world from the Greek word *kosmos*. There are several meanings to this word but as applied in the fashion just mentioned it has reference to those who are influenced by and live in accordance to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (I John 2:16). John tells us that,

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one." (I John 5:19)

Paul also acknowledges that even those who are Christians were once a part of Satan's world. In Ephesians 2:1-3, he tells the saints at Ephesus,

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as others."

As noted above we all at one time were in the world. However, as the Gospel is preached there are those who place their faith in Christ and are called out of the world to a living relationship with God by the blood of the cross. It is in His death we are washed and made clean. We receive the righteousness of God imputed to us by our faith in Christ. No longer are we enemies of God but now are born again, new creatures, alive unto God!

It is from this we glean our understanding of the concept of the church. Literally we become the called-out ones. We are called out of the world and into the body of the saved. Paul in Colossians writes,

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:13-14)

Once having been forgiven we are now called upon to live a separated life. This does not mean that we will reach a sinless state of perfection in this life but rather one that is not controlled by the world. We are to no longer live our lives to fulfill the desires of the flesh or the eyes and are to be humble in our lives rather than bowing to the pride of life. As Christians we are dead to sin and must now not let sin reign (rule) in our mortal bodies. This is the work of sanctification and occurs over time as we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Word.

But what of one that refuses to give up a life centered on the world? It is possible that once having been born again to return to the old life of the flesh. There are several passages that show us the danger of such. Let's note a few. *"For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them."* (II Peter 2:20-21)

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame." (Hebrews 6:4-6)

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." (Romans 8:12-13)

The Church has a ministry to assist and deal with those who have forsaken God for the love of this present world. God has told us in the scripture that we are to seek to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness and gentleness considering ourselves lest we also be tempted (Gal. 6:1). If those efforts are resisted, then we are to deliver such a one unto Satan.

This phrase, while found in I Timothy 1, is also found in I Corinthians 5. Here we also find an adequate explanation of what action this implies. Space will not allow full development of the passage but basically we have a man who was living with (sexually involved is the assumption) his father's wife. The Church at Corinth had taken no action, and the context seems to imply a general acceptance of the behavior. Since others had reported this situation to Paul, the question I am sure they were asking was what are we to do. Ignore it as we are? Or do we have some responsibility to take some sort of action? To this Paul responds by telling them that the one who has done this deed should be taken away from among them (I Cor. 5:2). He instructs them,

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (I Cor. 5:4-5)

This is followed by a detailed explanation of why this should be done, mainly dealing with the influence that this evil, if tolerated, would have upon the Church. He reminds them that he had told them previously not to keep company with any brother who was sexually immoral, or covetous, or idolater, or a drunkard even to the extent of with such a one not even to eat. And finally he commands that they put away from them this evil person (I Cor. 5:13).

So from the text, to deliver one to Satan involves the congregation putting this person or taking this person out of the local fellowship. It was to be acknowledged when the Church had come together that this was the action it was taking. In practical matters such as day-to-day they were not to have company with (intimate brotherly friendship) one so delivered. Some may at this point ask, and rightfully so, "Does this mean that if they show up at our assembly we are to physically remove them?" In my opinion this is not the meaning. Perhaps Jesus can shed some light on what this means. In Matthew 18:15-17, He discusses how to deal with a sinning brother. He lists several steps which all seek to rectify the situation. However, if resisted then the offender, if he refuses to hear the Church, is to be considered like a heathen and a tax collector. So rather than physically driving one from the assembly, it suggests an attitude toward them that acknowledges they are in willful sin and are not recognized as a part of the local body.

Turning our attention to those mentioned in I Timothy we note the same phrase was utilized by Paul. Their sin was blaspheming God by rejecting the faith and making a mess of it. They were teaching heresy. The term blaspheming indicates that they were misrepresenting God's truth. A very serious sin! Basically the same action was to be done as at Corinth. They were to be put away and not be recognized as a part of the local body.

We would be remiss if we failed to address the reason or reasons why such serious action is necessary. Since the

ones mentioned were living as those in Satan's kingdom, they should be recognized as being such. Hence we have the term "delivered unto Satan". At one time they were under his power, had obeyed the gospel, and now have gone back to him in their manner of life and conduct. The purpose, of course, is for the protection of the believers. This was Paul's lesson as he discussed purging the leaven from the body (I Cor. 5:7). In addition he also took this action in order to save the souls of those so delivered. He had the best interest of their spiritual condition at heart. This was to be God's chastening so their souls would be saved and that they would learn not to blaspheme.

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How long did the flood waters cover the earth?
2. When the Amalekite man came and told David about Saul and Jonathan's death, what proof did he show David?
3. According to Solomon in Proverbs, what does good, like medicine?
4. In John's account of the feeding of the five thousand, which two disciples were involved in Jesus' discussion of how to proceed?
5. The first chapter of Hebrews related Jesus as being greater than what?