

The Beginning of the Christian Life

S066 26 0816P

Sometimes it is necessary to go back to the beginning. A right foundation, or a right beginning, is absolutely necessary for a successful Christian life. There could be no growth and development, no right goal, no perfect happiness, and no eternal life without a right beginning. That means to repent, be born again, and give our lives to God.

Malachi 3:7 "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?"

It is necessary to often revisit God's teaching, and to be in an attitude of real surrender and real faith. A right attitude and a right understanding of God's Word are necessary to be victorious in our trials, to grow and develop properly, to reach the great goal of perfect victory, perfect happiness, and everything else that goes along with it.

Best of all, it enables us to be prepared for eternal life, so we should be glad to revisit these vital principles of God's full Truth and to have our young people who are at the beginning of their Christian lives hear them as well.

This salvation, this Truth, or this plan that God has made, is not a battery with stored up electric charge. It is not the "Energizer bunny" that we can go on for the rest of our life without having to trust God, or look to Him for anything.

In our natural condition we all would like that kind of salvation, or religion. The carnally-minded man, meaning the man driven by human desires and instincts or the desires of the "flesh", he would never want to, or have to, depend on God anymore---never have to deal with God. That is the desire of a carnal mind.

For the death of self and the greatest and most terrific blow to the devil, it is a good thing that God's salvation plan is not based on stored up "energy" or stored up resources, but it is based on continuing faith in God.

John 15:4-5, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

If we should be upset by Satan, and stumble because of his subtleties, and through some lack in us, whatever it may be, we can start right over again, start at the beginning, reconnect to God, and we can make more rapid progress than ever before. We can also receive a rich blessing and more light.

There are large numbers of people, even among those who profess to be Christians, that have never started right. As a result, they have gotten away from that foundation truth, and they are going along in Satan's path in one way or another. They are not living an overcoming life--- overcoming the temptations from the devil and his agents with God's help. So, of course, they are not growing and developing properly.

The "Good News" is that anyone can start over again at any time. One can go before God, get right down, and begin all over again, and God will meet them half-way. Then they will receive the benefits of a right start in the true Bible way.

The first step in the divine life is conviction, which is God showing us that our ways and plans are wrong, and then we decide to accept that God is right.

There are people that try to take some machinery apart, maybe tinker with a car. Some are mechanically inclined; some seem to be geniuses on that point. Yet, if they cannot get it together right, they know they will have to try another plan. When the Holy Spirit has done the work of convicting us, we realize that we must follow God's plan---our plans are not working.

If we are traveling, going a long distance and we become convinced that we are on the wrong road, we may ask someone who knows, and then with their help we get back on the right road. If we ask God for His help, He will help us to get back on the right road in our lives--- the straight and narrow path.

John 16:13, "**Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but**

whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

When we are convicted by God through His Holy Spirit, we see that we are following the wrong plan of life, so with His help we turn right around and follow God's plan for our lives. Unfortunately, sometimes, it seems to take very serious troubles and circumstances to convince us that we are on the wrong road. God in His great mercy allows us to experience troubles and difficult circumstances so that we might see the errors of our ways.

Every human being is born with an obsession, through the power and control of the devil, that our way of life is perfect. Often, we grow up in it for a long number of years, under that control of Satan and obsession that our plans and ways of life were the only good ones.

That obsession was planted there by the devil at the very beginning of our life. It was deceitfully placed in us, and we did everything opposite to God's plan---getting more and more convinced that our ways and our efforts and plans to get what we would like to have in life were perfect.

Satan has convinced many that God's ways, as given in His Word, which we often knew nothing about, were foolish, ineffective, and the most nonsensical thing there is.

We are born with that handicap. We are thoroughly convinced that our ways are the only ways worth having, and God's ways are no good at all. However, under God's teaching, we come to the exact opposite view of God. God's ways, God's views of what the real Truth is, are exactly opposite.

God often has to allow some very serious things to happen to us to convince us that our ways are not working out. Sad to say it seems that many people are never convinced that God's ways are best--only a handful here and there it seems.

The Bible is true when it says, "Real Christians would be very scarce in the closing days of the Gospel." That is, real Christians would be few and far between in comparison to the number of people in the world. Currently, there are over 8 billion people in the world. Of course, only those that know God, got out of their own ways and into His, would be saved.

Job was a man who was thoroughly convinced that he could please God by his own efforts. That is the most serious place a person could be found in. Of course, Job did everything else by his own efforts. We can realize what God had to do to convince Job that his ways were wrong and that God's ways were right.

When Job was on an ash-heap full of sores, God asked him a few questions. God said, "If you can deliver yourself, go ahead and do it. If you can help yourself, I will stand aside and allow you to work."

Then, Job was convinced that he was on the wrong track and had a wrong religion.....And he was willing to take his place and give God His place. Job 42:5-6, **"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."** His captivity was turned without him even asking for it. He only had to pray for his friends.

Job came to the point where he found out that God's ways were better than his ways, just like Peter was with the draught of fish. That convinced Peter that he was in the wrong religion.

The more willing we are, the more quickly God will enable us to see this. Spiritually, when things are not working out the way we planned, then we are willing to try something else, God's way which is the only way worth having. It is very easy to see this, if we are open-minded and willing. The more stubborn we are, the more quickly we will accept the devil's lies and suggestions.

The Holy Spirit is always trying to convict us of any wrong move we have made. That's why temptation comes, to convince us that we are on the wrong track at that point. God has to show us to enable us to see and turn from it.

The Holy Spirit is always present to do this work. John 14:16-17, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

The greatest attitude we can take is to be open-minded and allow God to work in our lives. The Holy Spirit will do His work quickly, when we are

willing to lay aside the devil's ways and doings, and accept God's plan for our life.

All God is trying to do is to convince us, and to convince the world and individuals, that their ways are absolutely demonic and destructive for time and eternity. The Great Tribulation will convince the world that their self-efforts were all wrong and the Great Tribulation will be the outcome of their efforts.

The millennium will prove how easily, perfectly, and quickly, God can make the world what it ought to be. God has to do that in individual lives. We have to be convinced that our ways are not working out. Then, we are willing to accept God's ways.

That brings us to repentance. Repentance is nothing more or less than trying another plan---going another direction. When we are willing to lay aside our old way and go another, that's repentance.

In divine things, it means we are willing to give up our plan of life of self-effort, trying to get what we would like to have by our own efforts---and being willing to accept God's plan of life. That's all confessing and forsaking of sin is---to be willing to give up our plan of life and accept God's---go just opposite to the way we were going before.

Of course, the devil will fight every step we take---trying to convince us that we are making a mistake and we will never have anything we would like to have---never have any real happiness. Satan suggests it will be like being in prison for life.

But that's just opposite to the truth.

The only thing any human being wants, from the cradle to the grave, is happiness. That's the atmosphere of the human life. Just as a fish wants to live in the water, and a bird to fly in the air, so man is seeking perfect happiness. And, the devil has convinced man that the only possible way he will ever find happiness is by his own efforts.

People in the world are all caught up with business and receiving the praise and approval of men, the pleasures of this world, getting divorces and getting remarried, and many other things. Jesus Himself said, Matthew 24:38, **For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until**

the day that Noe entered into the ark," It is just a variation of their one desire, and their one effort, to find happiness.

We have proven In our own lives that it never will and never does work out, and we have only seen a drop in the ocean of how bad it will work out. To spend an eternity in the Lake of Fire without a drop of water to cool our tongue (which would be a relief), is a most dreadful result of trying to find happiness in our own way.

The Tribulation will convince people that they cannot find happiness by their own efforts. We must be convinced that our ways are wrong; We must lay aside our own efforts and let God work for us. That is all repentance means... To be willing to give up our own efforts to find happiness and accept God's plan as given to us in the Bible. That means to confess and forsake our sins and to give up our old ways.

Malachi 3:7, **"Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?'"**

The foundation cause of sin is human effort and never wanting to have a thing to do with God. It is the worst sin. If we strike at that root and get rid of it, everything else will take its rightful place. It will be no trouble to live a moral life, no trouble to meet things right, and no trouble to grow and develop properly.

We are fortunate to know that we can get right back to the beginning of things--- confess and forsake our sins---get rid of all sin---the foundation of sin, and begin a life in God's will. That's what repentance is; that's behind the scenes.

Consecration is next, and repentance paves the way for consecration. God says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us." 1 John 1:9. God gives us a one hundred percent pardon and cleansing. Pardon and cleansing is ours for the asking.

The moment we are willing to confess our sins; God's Word says that God will forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9. We want to be sure that we have done that.

#S066 26 0815P