

We Need Fewer Givers
By John Gipson

We have a problem. We have too many givers. We would be better off if we did not have so many.

There are too many who GIVE UP! They serve Christ for a while, but then just quit. At one time they attended faithfully all of the services of the church, but they have started dropping by the wayside. They need to remember that Jesus said, "No man having put his hands to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62). The easiest thing in the world is just to quit. Remember that the reward comes after endurance. Don't quit!

There are too many who GIVE OVER! They become guilty of the sin of compromise. They frantically try to please men rather than God. Afraid of the disapproval and ridicule of others they just give over. In contrast with this compromising spirit, we need to hear the words of inspira-

tion, which tell us to STAND (Eph. 6:14). There are too many who GIVE IN! They give in to defeatism. "What is the use?" "It doesn't do any good." "I just can't live the Christian life." And with one excuse or another they give in to defeatism and despair. They bury their talent and go on their way, and Satan has made another conquest.

There are too many who GIVE OUT! They give out before the race is finished. And there is little point in running half a race. What a shame it is to run so far and never finish. Jesus promised, "But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved" (Mk. 13:13).

Let us each resolve not to GIVE UP, GIVE OVER, GIVE IN OR GIVE OUT! *Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com* ♦

THINK ABOUT IT!

When a farmer stops plowing his land, stops planting seed, and stops harvesting his crops, he has stopped doing those things that identify him as being a farmer. When a Christian stops attending worship services regularly, stops studying, stops giving as he has been prospered, and has stopped working for the Lord, he has stopped being a Christian because he has stopped doing those things that identify him as a Christian. "By their fruits ye shall know them," (Matthew 7:20). ♦

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

- Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3
- Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24
- Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30
- Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21
- Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27
- Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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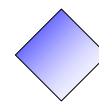


Schedule of Assembly

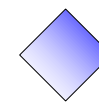
Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

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The Voice of Truth



November 13, 2011

The Bible Is the Blueprint for Human Conduct
By Jimmy Pettigrew

The word of God, the scriptures, offers to mankind principles to help them make decisions in all areas of human conduct. For many years, atheistic, pagan philosophers have assumed the duty to teach what they feel is right for human conduct. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). These men have failed every time because they have failed to consider what God has said in His words on a given conduct pattern. "They have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" (Jeremiah 8:9). "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; But the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). The Bible offers a clear voice, and throws light on how we are to live.

Listen carefully: there can be no morality without God! Why? Because God is the absolute standard of good (Matthew 19:17; 1 John 1:5; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalms 147:17; Isaiah 45:19; Hosea 9:11; Habakkuk 1:13). We are told that the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared unto all men, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12). Peter added: "According as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). Man cannot know right and wrong by reasoning on his own: "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

The world about us makes little effort to follow the blueprint of the word of God. People have rejected God's standard. We are living in a time when little attention is given to the word of God and much attention is given to doing what pleases the desire of men. Many have no regard for the moral teachings of the Bible. There is simply too much

of "Hell" in the world today. The sinful world has always condoned evil practices, such as dancing, immodest dress, profanity, gambling, fornication, and the use of alcohol. We must return to the teaching of God's standard found in His word (Galatians 5:19-21). It must be taught what God has said about the sins of adultery, homosexuality, fornication, immodesty, drinking and any form of loose living. People believe they have the right to act as they wish. Wrong! What we do in word or deed we are to do all in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:17). "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

The word of God provides us with righteousness (Proverbs 14:34; Psalms 33:12). "Every word of God is pure" (Proverbs 30:5). There is a standard of behavior that God expects men to follow, and it's in His word, the blueprint of human conduct. All men everywhere need to return to the wholesome purity Jesus stressed in Matthew 5:8. God's word is man's light, lamp and path (Psalm 119:105); it is man's hope against sin (Psalm 119:11); it sanctifies (John 17:17); it cleanses (Ephesians 5:26); it gives us understanding (Psalms 119:130); it has the power to produce godliness (2 Peter 1:3); to produce a new life (James 1:18; Romans 6:17-18).

Notice what Ezekiel told the children of Israel, "And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (Ezekiel 44:23). God's word does that for us today; it is our blueprint for human conduct. The Bible moral code is wonderfully practical; every moral rule that God has given is for our good. The gospel changes the heart or thinking; the mind is renewed (Romans 12:1-2).

Man is incapable of directing his steps in life. The Israelites had attempted to direct their lives; they had forsaken God's way: the result is captivity! The scriptures

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must be the foundation of any moral restoration. The Bible

alone is our answer! It is past high time that God's moral-ity found its way back into the lives of men and women. ♦

"... Snatching Them Out Of The Fire"

By Jarrod Jacobs

Fire is mentioned by God well over 400 times in the Bible. For example, God wanted men to use fire to offer sacrifices of bulls, goats, birds, etc. to Him from **Genesis 4** until the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (**Heb. 10:1-22**). Fire was used by God in communication with Moses (**Ex. 3**). A pillar of fire also led the Israelites at night while they journeyed to Sinai and then to Canaan (**Ex. 13:21-22, 40:36-38**).

On other occasions, we do not read about literal fire, but fire is used to illustrate truth. For example, we find God being described as a "*consuming fire*" (**Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:27**). Obviously, "fire" is not the essence of God. Rather, this metaphor is used to describe Jehovah. Also, we know that "*For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases*" (**Prov. 26:20**). In this case the burning of wood in a fire was used as a comparison to the whisperer. The fire never says "*enough*" does it (**Prov. 30:16**)? Jesus also said, "*everyone will be salted with fire*" (**Mk. 9:49**). Many other examples could be given as well in this category.

Spiritually, the Bible speaks of a "*lake of fire*" prepared for the eternal punishment of the devil, his angels, and those who die in sin (**Rev. 20:10, 14-15, 21:8; II Thess. 1:6-9; Matt. 25:41-46**). As we see, "fire" is used in many ways throughout Scripture, and deserves a more detailed study than we can offer here at this time. In this article, let us narrow our search and study to the statement about fire made by the Holy Spirit through Jude. The Holy Spirit inspired Jude to write to the Christians and say, "*Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by **snatching them out of the fire**; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh*" (**Jude 21-23**).

Often, when reading and studying this statement in Jude, folks will rightly focus upon the need for pulling folks out of the spiritual "fire" when they are in sin and error. This is necessary to save their souls. Some will note that when someone is in the fire, this is not the time to necessarily be gentle and try to coax one, but grab this person and try our best to get him away from spiritual danger before it gets worse. They risk "hurt feelings" in order to save a soul. This is certainly in line with several Bible ex-

amples, including the example of Christ; who on occasion, made folks mad when He preached (**Lk. 6:11, 11:53; Matt. 15:12**; etc.). Let us have the attitude of Paul who asked, "*Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?*" (**Gal. 4:16**). No, we are not anyone's enemies. Rather, we are true friends when we act as Christ and the apostles, and tell people the truth — even if it means hurt feelings for the moment. Another example of this can be seen in the book of Acts when folks were "pricked" or cut to the heart when they were convicted of sin (**Acts 2:36**). Some people might have held back and not told the people something that "cut" that deep. Yet, it was necessary if those Jews were to be saved from sin. I remember the apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians, where he named a multitude of sins of which the people had been cleansed (**I Cor. 6:9-11**). There is no question that Paul, as well as Apollos (**I Cor. 3:6**), Peter (**I Cor. 1:12**) Timothy (**I Cor. 4:17**), and perhaps others HAD to have spoken out against those sins, and HAD to have made it clear that what those people were doing was wrong so that those who believed could repent of their sins, and be baptized (**Acts 18:8, 11, 18**; etc.). They had to do this in order to save souls (**Acts 20:20, 27**). Might there have been some at Corinth who needed to be coaxed and treated tenderly to get them out of sin? Certainly so. Might there have been some at Corinth who needed to be "*snatched out of the fire*" as Jude described? Absolutely! No doubt, they ran into similar challenges in Thessalonica when preaching there. To some, the apostle Paul said, "*we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children*" (**I Thess. 2:7**). Yet, with others at Thessalonica, he said, "*you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God.*" That was something needed at Thessalonica because when the gospel was preached there, they preached "*in the midst of much conflict*" (**I Thess. 2:2**).

I am saying all of this to challenge us with the following question: Once this person has been "*snatched out of the fire*", how do we treat him? Do we treat him with love and kindness, or as some "outcast" who is undeserving of concern and forgiveness because, after all, "we KNOW where he has been"? Consider this thought carefully in light of the withdrawn man in **II Corinthians 2**. It is evident the church withdrew from him after being instructed to do so

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in **I Corinthians 5**. Now, following **I Corinthians 5** is the letter called **II Corinthians** wherein the church is instructed to forgive this man since he has shown his repentance (**2:6-8**). He had obviously been in the "fire", was "snatched" out of it, and now it was time for the church to recognize his repentance and his being forgiven by God. They now needed to forgive him. Would they? Will we forgive the withdrawn who repent?

In addition to the above, what about the "alien sinner" who has never known God, but does now? Perhaps it is that this person was "*snatched out of the fire*" (**Jude 23**) by a person whose love for their soul outweighed the fear of hurt feelings. How do we treat this forgiven person? Do we set a good example, or do we stand back with a "wait and see" attitude?

Remember, this person has been in the "fire" and has come out! He has been saved from sin, and stands as a newborn babe in Christ (**I Pet. 2:2**) that is in need of instruction, correction, and being pointed in the right direction (**II Tim. 3:16-17**)! Yes, this is what the Bible does, but does not this person also need to be TAUGHT by Christians who care? Absolutely! Such teaching demands patience, love, and concern (**II Tim. 4:2; I Cor. 13**).

While we think about this one "*snatched out of the fire*", have we ever considered the fact that the person who has been pulled from the "fire" is a BURN VICTIM? It's true. Have you ever seen someone who has suffered burns on his body? Have you seen the people whose skin has melted, or has been scarred due to being in excessive heat? Spiritually, if one has been in the "fire" of sin and wickedness, does that person not also have "scars"? Perhaps these scars are not visible (perhaps they are!), but are they not still there? Again, how do we treat this person who has been spiritually "scarred" and has come to Christ, the Great Physician, for healing (**Lk. 5:31**)? If someone assembled with us and suffered physical scarring from

burns, would we treat this person as an outcast? Would we ignore him or refuse to shake hands? Would we stand at a distance and perhaps wave? Or, would we show kindness to this one, and offer to be of service?

If we understand this in light of the physical problems some may have, why can we not see this in those with spiritual problems to overcome? Let us remember that after one has been saved from sin (**Mk. 16:16**), he still has problems to overcome! Salvation does not mean an end to all sin, or an immediate end to habits that have been ingrained over a lifetime! This one "*snatched out of the fire*" now needs to be comforted and shown that there truly is "*balm in Gilead*" (**Jer. 8:22**) for the sin and scars, thanks to the Lord's sacrifice and the encouragement of fellow Christians!! The spiritual scarring can be helped and healed through Christ and through brothers and sisters who show love for this soul who has come to Christ "*poor in spirit*", "*mourning*" over sins, in meekness, and hungering and thirsting for truth and spiritual nourishment. This person has come to God asking for mercy, trying to purify his heart so he can have peace with God and his fellow man. Will we watch and care for him?

Conclusion

Snatching someone out of the fire demands my perseverance and true love for the soul of another. It doesn't end there, though. Just as one's spiritual work and growth does not end, but is just beginning when baptized, so also, my work in encouragement and spiritual help and encouragement does not end when a person is baptized! That same perseverance and love necessary to convert a person is needed when helping this one to stand and be faithful unto death (**Rev. 2:10; I Cor. 15:58**). Don't forget that this spiritual "burn victim" needs our love and patience. No, we do not coddle one in sin, but we do as the father of the prodigal son did (**Lk. 15:20**), and look daily for opportunities to extend the helping hand to these precious souls. *Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com* ♦

HOW TO GET WHAT YOU WANT

If you want friends — **be friendly.**
 If you want someone to smile — **smile.**
 If you want courtesy — **be courteous.**
 If you want knowledge — **study.**
 If you want a good name — **live right.**
 If you want to reap well — **sow well.**
 If you want to be a Christian — **obey God's word.**
 If you want to go to heaven — **live a Christian life** ♦