

Are You A Casualty?

by Bill Crews

One of the most joyful days in the life of a responsible person must surely be that very day that witnessed his birth into God's spiritual family -- that day he determined to turn from his sins (Acts 3:19), confessed his faith in the Lord (Rom. 10:9-10) and humbly yielded to the command that ushered him out of the power of darkness and translated him into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13; Rom. 6:3-4); that day that saw the burden of all the sins of his previous life lifted (Heb. 8:12; Matt. 11:28-30) so that he stood before God as spotless as a little child who had never sinned; that day he was given the hope of eternal life (Col. 1:5); that day he became a new-born babe (1 Pet. 2:2), a child of God (Gal. 3:26-27), a Christian (Act 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:16), married to Christ (Rom. 7:4), a pilgrim and sojourner here whose citizenship is in heaven (1 Pet. 2:11; Phil. 3:20). Surely loved ones wept tears of joy, saints of God were gladdened by what they heard and saw, and angels in heaven rejoiced around the Creator's throne (Acts 15:3; Lk. 15:10).

At that time Satan suffered a decisive setback; he had lost another servant. His angels (Matt. 25:41) were not celebrating, but he would not concede; he would not give up (1 Pet. 5:8). He was consoled, not only by the possibility of regaining that erstwhile subject of his, but by his previous successes -- **for, you see, he has managed to regain more than half of those he has lost.** Throughout the land they can be found -- husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters. Most of them went astray while they were just babes in Christ, before they became rooted and grounded, but some of them had even served as deacons, elders and preachers. Even as most of them came into Christ in their youth, so most of them went right back into the world in their youth; but some of them had become battle-scarred veterans. If the most joyful day in one's life is the day of his salvation from sin, certainly the darkest and most tragic must be the day of his decision to give up his hope of heaven and to turn his back on all that Christ died for.

Reader friend, if this is the tragedy that has befallen you, may I say a few words to you?

1. Whatever excuse or excuses you may offer for your forsaking the Lord and abandoning His church and His truth will not justify you in the regrettable course you have chosen to take!
2. Whatever price for which you bartered your birthright to eternal life, you made a poor bargain indeed!
3. However many may have to share the blame for your spiritual plight, none bears as much of the blame as you alone!
4. All of the rationalizing in the world, all of the fingers pointed at others, all of the hypocrites, real or imagined, in the church will not absolve you!
5. Does it matter to you that a loved one -- a father or a mother, a husband or a wife, a son or a daughter -- is shedding bitter tears and pouring out prayers for your return to God?
6. Does it mean anything to you to know that faithful saints make mention of you in their petitions to th Father?
7. Is it nothing to you that your Father in heaven is grieved and that the Chief Shepherd who laid down his life for you is distressed by your plight?
8. Do you realize that you have not gone so far from God that you cannot return **as long as you really want to?**
9. Do you know that you cannot commit sin so heinous that you cannot be forgiven **if you genuinely repent?** And isn't that a consoling thought?
10. Do you believe that good intentions are worthless **if not carried out?** that tomorrow may never come? that any decision to come back to the Lord some other time than **now** is the wrong decision? that the longer you delay the harder it becomes? that while you delay you are setting the wrong example and exerting the wrong influence (someone else may become lost because of you; someone else may be using you as their excuse)?

If you will acknowledge your sins before God and penitently ask His forgiveness (Acts 8:22; 1 Jn. 1:9; Rev.2:4-5), you can once more be relieved of the burden of guilt and be made whiter than the new-fallen snow. Go where faithful saints gather to worship God and tell them your plight, your need and your desire. If possible, go among those from whom you wandered away -- right matters where the wrong occurred. But, by all means, come back! **"As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me"** (Rev. 3:19-20).