

Cause of Death? Snakebite

by Jefferson David Want

Silas Barnsworthy, while hunting rabbits one day in West Texas, had the misfortune to step on a diamondback rattlesnake. The snake, unappreciative of such treatment, struck at Mr. Barnsworthy, sinking fangs into his leg, and injecting its venom. Mr. Barnsworthy made his way back to the ranch house and called for the doctor to come, informing the doctor of his mishap.

The doctor came posthaste, bringing with him a supply of anti-snakebite serum. Upon entering the bedroom where Silas lay the doctor said, "I have come to save you from certain death. Here in my bag is a supply of medicine, which, if its directions are carefully followed, is guaranteed to save you. And this is the only way that you can recover from your present condition."

Whereupon Silas expressed joy that Dr. Churndasher had come, telling him, "I know you can save me, and I have the utmost confidence in whatever you say." He then thanked the doctor profusely for coming. As the doctor left, he placed the bottle of medicine upon the bedside table, once again stressing the importance of following the directions exactly.

Silas Barnsworthy continued in bed, feeling joy for his salvation. He did not follow the doctor's instruction concerning taking the medicine, however. He had complete trust in the ability of the doctor to save him, and in the potency of the medicine, but he did not feel it necessary to follow or obey the instructions to the letter.

Silas died.

Doctor John Henry Churndasher was then recalled to make out the death certificate. As he was filling out the document, one of the neighbors asked the good doctor, "You mean to tell me that Silas died just because he didn't obey your orders?" "Why, no!" replied the doctor. "He died of snakebite. The poison is what killed him. I had nothing to do with his death." And he continued to fill out the death certificate, placing the word "snakebite" in its proper place opposite the printed words "Cause of Death."

However bizarre the foregoing tale might be, it is no less fantastic than the attitude displayed so often by so many concerning obedience to the gospel of Christ. Jesus likens Himself to a physician (Matt. 9:12) who has come to minister to the sick. Man is affected with sin, and is much in need of being cured or saved from that which sin brings — **death** (Romans 6:23). Christ has brought the gospel into the world which is such a powerful medicine that it can save even the most desperate cases. Paul spoke of the gospel as the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes (Romans 1:16).

And so man, ill with sin, has the medicine (the gospel) brought to him (Titus 2:11). He receives it with joy, but because some denominational preacher has sold him on the idea of salvation by faith only, he professes his great faith and trust in Jesus as his personal Savior, but follows only some of His directions! But he is not careful to follow all His directions because he feels that is not necessary. But obedience (or simply following the directions of the Great Physician) is as necessary in being saved from sin as it is in being treated for snakebite.

Notice how obedience is coupled with the gospel, time and time again. "*Go...and make disciples (by teaching the gospel) of all nations, baptizing them ... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you*" (Matthew 28:19-20). "*Go ... and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:15-16). "*And why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*" (Luke 6:46). "*Not everyone that says to me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father...*" (Matthew 7:21). "*...You became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto you were obedient...*" (Romans 6:17). "*...Rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus...*" (2 Thessalonians 1:8). And many similar passages could be cited. Friends, obedience is as much a part of the gospel as is salvation!

[continued on page 324804](#)