

Are You A Casualty — Have You Left the Lord & His Church?

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 (Romans 10:9-10), and humbly yielded to the command (baptism) that ushered him out of the power of darkness and translated him into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Colossians 1:13; Romans 6:3-4); that day that saw the burden of all the sins of his previous life lifted (Hebrews 8:12; Matthew 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 in heaven (Colossians 1:5); that day he became a new-born babe in Christ (1 Peter 2:2), a child of God (Galatians 3:26-27), a Christian (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:15-16), married to Christ (Romans 7:4), a pilgrim and sojourner here whose citizenship is in heaven (1 Peter 2:11; Philippians 3:20). Surely loved ones wept tears of joy, saints of God were gladdened by what they saw and heard and realized, and angels of God rejoiced around the Creator's throne (Luke 15:10).

At that same time Satan suffered a decisive set-back; he had lost another servant. His angels were not celebrating, but he would not concede; he would not give up. 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 in the past.** 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 in the faith; 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 in the army of the Lord. 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 and turn his back on all that Christ died for.

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

- Whatever excuse or excuses you may offer for your forsaking the Lord and abandoning His church will not justify you in the regrettable course you have chosen to take.
- Whatever the price for which you have bartered your birthright to eternal life, you have made a poor bargain indeed.
- However many may have to share the blame for your spiritual plight, none bears as much of the blame as you alone.
- All of the rationalizing in the world, all of the finger-pointing at others, all of the hypocrites, real or imagined, in the church will not absolve you of your guilt.
- 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 tears and pouring out prayers for your return to God?
- Does it mean anything to you to know that faithful saints made mention of you in their petitions to the Father?
- Is it nothing to you that your Father in heaven is grieved and that your Savior is distressed by your plight? Do you realize that you have not gone so far from God that you cannot return, **as long as you really want to?**
- Do you know that you cannot commit sins so heinous that you cannot be forgiven, **if you will genuinely repent?**
- 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

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