

Bryan Station Baptist Church

INDEPENDENT ORGANIZED 1786 MISSIONARY

THE PIONEER BAPTIST

"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before 'Kentucky Was A State'"

Vol. 7

Lexington, Kentucky

February 1976

No. 5

'I Do Not Want To Go To Hell'

BY THE LATE C. D. COLE

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

My subject is a statement most anybody will make. It expresses a universal longing. Nobody wants to burn. Everybody is afraid of fire. Jesus Christ warns us to fear God who is able to cast both soul and body in Gehenna.

A woman once called me over the phone to ask me if she bobbed her hair would she go to hell. She went on to say that another woman had told her that if she bobbed her hair she would go to hell. And she repeated again and again the words I have taken for my subject: "I do not want to go to hell." And I echoed her sentiment. She wanted my opinion on the matter. What could I do but read the Bible? I have no opinion, and if I did have, it would be worth nothing. So I read from I Corinthians 11:3-15, and told her that was all I or anyone else could know on the subject. I pointed out that the Scripture does not say that to bob the hair will send a woman to hell. I distinguished between the way to be saved and the way to please the Saviour. The Bible makes it plain that the way to be saved is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; that the ground of salvation is what Christ did on the cross in putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The Bible makes Christ and Him crucified as the sole object of our trust—so far as salvation is concerned.

Therefore, we must trust Him for salvation because all the merit is in His blood.

As I left the phone, my mind began to work. I recalled the woman's words, "I do not want to go to hell," and I repeated them for myself, for "I do not want to go to hell."

Hell is a place to be dreaded and God who casts into hell is to be feared. When Paul wanted to climax the terrible condition of the heathen, he said, "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

PEOPLE LIKE TO BARGAIN WITH GOD

And then I began to think how people like to bargain with God. If people were to be convinced that to go to church twice on Sunday and prayer meeting every Wednesday night would assure a home in heaven, there is not a man anywhere who would not make the promise to do so, and also, make serious efforts to keep the promise. There would be many a stretcher or pallet in God's house. Company would not keep people away from church. There would be nobody on the lake on Sunday if everybody were convinced that they must go to church on Sunday to be saved. And that would be a bargain would it not? That would be cheap salvation would it not? But what would it show? It would show that people were only concerned about their own safety and the motive of love—the desire to please God—would not enter into such service.

The house of God would be filled with grumblers—they would be there from fear of hell. Their bodies would be there, but their hearts would be elsewhere. They would be there from necessity, not from choice.

Now when God says that salvation is free—without money and without price; that Jesus paid it all; that we are saved by grace through faith; that salvation is not of works; that we are to serve out of love and seek to please our Redeemer, the whole question takes on a different color, and people begin to ask, "Can I do this or that and be saved?" And this reveals a bad heart and the danger signal needs to be sounded. It is a bad sign when one is willing to do for his own safety what he is not willing to do to please his Redeemer. If a woman keeps her hair long as the price of salvation and is not willing to keep it long in grateful obedience to God's word, there is lack of love.

If God should say in His word that all who tithe will be saved, I doubt whether anybody would refuse to pledge to tithe. That would be a bargain would it not? Cheap salvation that costs only 10% of what God, in His providence, enables us to make. Why we are giving to our government about 40% of what we make. Much of the taxes we pay are hidden, but it is tax just the same. And it is a bargain at that. It is much better to pay these taxes than to run afoul of the law and spend a term in the penitentiary. But when God, who saves us by His grace, tells us to honor Him with our substance and the firstfruits of our increase, that becomes a horse of another color. Men will tithe for safety's sake who will not tithe for Christ's sake.

I have had people say to me, "If baptism is not essential to salvation, then why be baptized?" It is the same spirit that wants to bargain with God. Now salvation by being baptized would be a bargain would it not? It is a cheap salvation that can be purchased with a bath. But when God says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and then goes on to command baptism to symbolize the believer's union with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, then obedience becomes a matter of love—a desire to please Redeemer.

IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS

God does not want hell-scared service. He wants love to be the motive of our service. There is a filial fear—the fear a child has for its father—the fear of chastisement—that may exist where there is love, but this is altogether different from the fear a criminal has of the judge.

God wants obedience from the heart—glad obedience—voluntary obedience. Obedience from fear

of hell is selfish and does not express the love of the heart. It is saying that something else is preferable—I really hate the God who commands it, but I realize He is too much for me, and I'll have to do it to keep out of hell.

The woman who keeps her hair long because she is afraid of going to hell; the church member who tithes from fear of hell; the person who is baptized in order to be saved, are serving in the letter that killeth, but it is the Spirit that giveth life. God wants worship rendered in spirit and truth.

THE FEAR OF GOD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

It is my candid judgment that in the conversion of every sinner there is fear—fear of God as a Judge. But as one grows in grace, he increases in love and the fear element becomes less. The Philippian jailer was moved with fear when he asked, "What must I do to be saved?" The saved thief on the cross rebuked his fellow sinner and said, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?"

The thought of fear is wrapped up in the word "salvation." To be saved is to escape something terrible—it is to be delivered from the wrath to come. The motive of fear is held up as the reason for repentance. "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Fear is given as a reason for faith. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). "...but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences" (II Cor. 5:11).

John says there is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. When we get to heaven there will be no fear, for then our love will be perfected. There will be no chastisement in heaven, for there the spirits of the just are made perfect.

The person who wants to drive a bargain with God will naturally render as little service as possible—just enough to escape hell. If I can do something without risk of hell, I will do it." This is why people who believe in salvation by works are no better in their daily conduct than those who believe in salvation by grace. Fear is not as valuable a motive as love is. Fear looks for a bargain; fear does as little as can safely be done; love delights in service; love sees how much it can do, not how little.

This whole question of Christian living looks simple as a matter of reason—it looks good on paper, as a matter of statistics. Here is a church

of 160 members. Every member claims to be saved and to love God. Think of what 160 people who are devoted to a cause can do. 160 people with their hearts in a thing can do wonders. Then why are wonders not done? 160 members loving Christ and His church can fill this building for every service. Then why are there so many empty pews? There is but one answer: too many of us are trying to bargain with God, and the bargain hunter pays as little as possible for an article. And this bargaining spirit is a bad sign—it shows lack of love—and lack of love reveals a lost condition. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed when the Lord cometh.

When a man resigns being a Christian, it is a sure sign he was never a Christian. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (I John 2:19). All these resignations reveal an alarming situation. God never saves a sinner and then abandons him to the devil, the flesh, and the world. The child of God has many foes, but his faith will hold fast to Christ unto the end, and plead nothing before God save the blood of His Son. And so preserving attachment to Jesus Christ is the grand mark of a saved person. Peter says that the born again person is kept by the power of God through faith (I Peter 1:5).



If all that we say,
 In a single day;
 With never a word left out,
 Were printed each night,
 In clear black and white;
 T'would prove queer reading, no doubt,
 And, then, just suppose,
 Ere our eyes we could close;
 We must read the whole record through.
 Then wouldn't we try
 A great deal less talking to do?
 And, I more than half think,
 That many a kink
 Would be smoother in life's tangled tread,
 If half that we say,
 In a single day,
 Were left forever unsaid.

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