

HOW TO BECOME A FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST

GOD says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"; and, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"; "The wages of sin is death"; "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Here death does not refer to the body, but to the soul. Death does not mean ceasing to be, but it means separation from God and all that is good, and suffering eternal punishment in hell. (Read John 3:16.)

ONE CANNOT HIDE SIN

No one can go to Heaven who has not been cleansed from his sins. You cannot cover up your sins with good deeds nor wash them away with water. There is nothing that you can do to get rid of your sins, but to repent of them and ask God to forgive you for Jesus' sake. To "repent" means to be so sorry for your sins that you will not do them again. (See I John 1:9.)

Jesus, who never committed sin, suffered the punishment for your sins and shed His Blood on the cross for you. If you accept that and believe it in your heart, God will forgive your sins because of what Jesus did for you, and He will give you power so that you will not need to commit any more sin. God will make a new man out of you. You will have no more desire for tobacco, strong drink, or any other bad habit.

LIVING WITHOUT SIN

You cannot be a follower of Jesus Christ and do things that are not right, for "he that committeth sin is of the devil." You cannot follow Jesus and the devil at the same time, any more than you can walk on two roads at the same time. (Read I John 3:8.)

You may have learned much about Jesus in the Book of God, and even been baptized in or with water, but if you cannot keep from doing wrong you are still following Satan. Or if you were a real follower of Jesus at one time and lived for a while without sin, but afterwards you sinned again, then you are no longer on God's road. One sin will turn you into the devil's road and you cannot get out of it in your own strength. You will have to repent again and confess your sins to God and believe that He forgives you and that His Blood washes your sins away, and then the peace of God will come again into your heart (John 6:37).

RESTITUTION MUST BE MADE

If you have become a true follower of Jesus you will do all you can to straighten up your past sinful life. If you have stolen things you will take them back or pay for them. If you have cheated anyone you will make it right. If you have told lies you will go and confess them. God will show you every wrong thing that you have done, and if you are willing to make it right He will help you to do it.

"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephesians 4:28).

If you are a real follower of Jesus Christ you will have the fruits of the Spirit in your life, for the Bible says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." It also tells us what they are, namely: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

NO WORLDLY DESIRES

You will also keep the commandments of God, for Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments"; and, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." One great commandment is: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Another command is: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." You will want to tell everybody what God has done for you. You will not wait until someone pays you to go out and tell it; but you will be willing to work with your hands and earn your own living and witness for Jesus every time you get a chance.

WATER BAPTISM

Another command is, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19, 20). One must receive salvation before he is baptized with water, for we see the disciples were told to go and teach, and then to baptize. Water baptism is an outward symbol of the inward work that is already done.

"How am I to know which is the right mode of baptism?" We will let the Bible speak and you can judge for yourself. It says there is only "one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5).

When Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan, the Word says, "And straightway coming up out of the water. . ." (Mark 1:10) which shows that He had been down in the water. And when Philip baptized the eunuch, it says, "And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him." The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, tells us very plainly what is signified by baptism. He says, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3, 4). We see, then, that water baptism follows salvation, and is one of the ordinances that Jesus has given us to obey.

FAITHFUL SERVICE TO EMPLOYER

When you work for anyone you will be faithful and do all that is required of you whether he sees you or not. You will not sit down and rest when you ought to be working, and you will not quit before it is time to quit. Here is what the Bible says about it: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free" (Ephesians 6:5-8).

GOD HATES UNCLEANNESS

"Fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephesians 5:3-5).

Fornication is an awful sin in the sight of God. He punished the people of Israel for it more than for any other sin. In one day He caused twenty-three thousand of them to die because they had committed this hideous sin. Later on, one of their kings caused them to commit this sin again on a large scale, and God told the Prophet Elijah to write to him and tell him: "Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: and thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day" (II Chronicles 21:14, 15). Many people even nowadays are suffering with awful diseases because they have committed fornication; but even if you should escape suffering in this world because of that sin, you will not escape the judgment of God in the last day, which is eternal burning in the fire of hell, unless you repent.

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" (I Thessalonians 4:3). We are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret" (Ephesians 5:11, 12).

MEAT OFFERED TO IDOLS

"Abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication" (Acts 15:29). The reason we are to abstain from meats offered to idols is that we are told in the Bible that "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (I Corinthians 10:20).

NO PART WITH INFIDELS

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or

what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 6:14-18).

THE SIN OF ADULTERY

"Thou shalt not commit adultery," is another command of God. This means if a person is married he or she should not go to another man or woman and commit sin with them. Jesus said that if a man even looked on a woman to lust after her he had already committed adultery with her in his heart. He also said: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder"; and, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (Mark 10:11, 12). So long as your first wife or your first husband is living you have no right to get married to another. If you do, you are not a follower of Jesus, because He forbade it.

Your wife should be more to you than just a mere slave; she is a part of yourself, as the Bible says, "They twain shall be one flesh"; "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church"; "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it"; "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church."

DUTIES OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." If your father or mother or your guardian tells you to do something that is not contrary to the Bible, and you refuse to do it, you have sinned, not only against them, but also against God. And you cannot be a follower of Jesus Christ and disobey your parents, because God commands you to obey them. Of course, if they would tell you to go and steal or tell lies or do anything that the Bible forbids, then you will have to obey God rather than man, and suffer the consequences.

"Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That means that you should teach them what is in the Bible, or if you cannot do it, send them to some school where they will be taught about God. It also means that you should teach them to be obedient to you. If they disobey, punish them, but not in anger. If you get angry you are not right with God, for He tells us to put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, and to be kind one to another and tenderhearted.

HONOR DUE GOVERNMENT

The Bible also tells us what our duty is toward our government: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Romans 13:1-7).

Jesus Himself paid tribute money. The Bible says, "And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? He saith, Yes." Then Jesus sent Peter to the sea and told him to "cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee" (Matthew 17:24, 25, 27). When Jesus was on this earth He was very poor, but He did not excuse Himself from paying tribute to the government, even if He had to perform a miracle to do it. God gives us strength to work, and we should always try to pay for everything as we go. We should not go into debt. The Bible says, "Owe no man any thing" (Romans 13:8).

HEALING THROUGH PRAYER

The Bible also teaches us what to do when we are sick. It says, "I am the LORD that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:26). It also tells how we are to go about it — "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:14, 15). By an "elder" is usually meant one who is called of God to preach the Gospel — a minister or a missionary. But in case there is no one on whom you can call to do that for you, you can ask anyone who is a real follower of Jesus, to take a little olive oil and anoint your forehead with it, and lay his hands on your head and pray to God in the name of Ye-sus, and ask Him to heal you for His name's sake, and if you believe it with all your heart you will be healed. Or, if you want to, you can write to the address given on the front page and tell your need, and the people of God in Portland will pray for you, and God will heal you.