

Preacher's Pen points

“Five Steps”...Forward & Backward



Recently in our “Honoring God’s Voice” class we discussed five essential things to forgiveness of past sins. Most of us know these steps quite well: 1) Hear; 2) Believe; 3) Repent; 4) Confess; 5) Be baptized. The importance of these things can be seen by looking at the Great Commission where Jesus mentions the importance these things as a part of man’s response to the gospel.

The Beginning of a New Way of Life...

Careful students of the Scripture have come to understand that each of these steps actually lays the foundation for the life of discipleship. Each of them has implications for the future life of the disciple. In other words, the new disciple in Christ will continue to “hear” the teaching of the apostles, continue to “believe” in Jesus as God’s Son, continue to “repent” of sins as he discovers them in his life, continue to “confess” Him before others, and continue in obedience as has been indicated by submission to “baptism”.

Or Five Steps of Condemnation

Recently Laura pointed out to me that the five steps of salvation are also five steps of condemnation when reversed. I had never thought of it that way; but consider the validity of the suggestion. When a person starts to turn away from the Lord he quits “obeying” God’s commands as he had in baptism. He begins to ignore his duties to God as a disciple. But this is only the first step away from the Lord. As he continues this life of disobedience, he also, not wanting to appear to be hypocritical, is reluctant to “confess” his faith in Jesus. He may simply sit quietly when others speak about the word of God. Where obedience was once the norm, now disobedience has taken its

place and the person leaving the Lord now quits “repenting” of sin. He has learned to live with his bad conscience and can go on without making needed corrections. Of course, such a hardened life of sin is accompanied by “disbelief” in the truths that once made him decide to become a disciple. Suddenly he begins to question everything, no longer sure that the gospel is really true. And at last, the apostate ends up right where he started. Just as, at one time, he was eager to hear what God said, he now has come full circle. He doesn’t even want anyone to talk to him about faith or service to God. He simply doesn’t want to listen any more! In this sense, the path to condemnation is simply the reversal of the path to salvation.

Which Way Are We Taking?

The importance of these five-steps is clearly seen when we realize that their presence or absence in our lives will determine whether we live joyously in the presence of God or whether we are separated from His presence forever (2 Thes. 1:7-8). And in the meantime, they will mark the difference between the growing disciple and the withering one.

So if you have taken those steps to the Lord, we encourage you to continue to let those principles guide your life. But if you have started reversing them, beware! To go back to where we once were places us in the gravest condition. Peter says, *“For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them.”* (2 Pet. 2:21). Which way are you steps taking you?

—Johnny Felker (www.truthchasers.com)