

A REVERSAL OF THE OPPOSITE DIFFERENT KIND

After Saul's conversion in Acts chapter nine, he immediately began to preach Christ. The twenty-first verse of the chapter reads: *"But all that heard him were amazed, and said, is not this he that destroyed them which called on his name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?"* Later in the chapter, Paul went to Jerusalem and attempted to join himself to the disciples, but they were afraid of him, not believing he was a disciple.

A one hundred eighty degree reversal of a man's position is sure to cause astonishment with those familiar with his past position, behavior, and actions. How could this man so intent on destroying the faith in Christ and those who called upon Him, suddenly preach His name? Saul was on a mission to Damascus to bind Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem. Instead, he was found preaching Christ in the synagogues in that very city!

We always rejoice to hear a reversal like the one Paul made. But a reversal of the opposite kind will bring down our gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. In the last twenty or thirty years, there have been more occasions for that kind of sorrow than we all care to ponder. Men who once taught the truth on baptism and the church now deny it. Many of those brethren commenced upon their reversals by denying they had changed their doctrine; they told us they had only ameliorated in attitude. However, their actions proved that they had not just changed in their application of truth, but that they no longer believed it. The words Moses said to the men of Rueben and Gad apply to them: *"...and be sure your sin will find you out"* (Num. 32:23). One can adamantly deny he has changed in a substantial way, but his actions will manifest the truth that he has.

There are brethren who time after time after time have quoted John 8:32, and 2 John 9-11. For now, to a man, they would claim those verses mean what they have always believed them to teach. But their actions say just the opposite. They have expanded their circles to embrace in their fellowship those who practice things they stood against in former days. From their mouths they still affirm it is wrong to fellowship false teachers, but they do it, anyway. One can almost hear it now: the time will come when their actions will force them to say, "I was not only wrong in my application of the foregoing verses, but in my interpretation of them as well." Jesus, they may say, meant we can only know the truth on certain things, and the apostle John was only talking about the doctrine "about" Christ instead of the doctrine "from" Christ.

Some have already made the leap when the subject is instrumental music. They can give as good a defense as anyone for a cappella singing, but destroy the entire argument by affirming their doubt that it is a salvation issue. It is only a small step from questioning the sin of placing the super bowl ahead of the kingdom of God, to changing the time, or even dismissing altogether the Sunday evening worship to accommodate the game. It is only a small step from questioning the sinfulness of dividing the assembly into small groups or to have "children's church" to actually doing those things. It is only time that separates questioning the appropriateness of having a version policy in place, to opening up both the pulpit and the classrooms to any book embossed on the front with the words, Holy Bible.

Satan walks about as a roaring lion seeking those he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). Some people he can gobble up like a hungry lion consuming his prey in only a few bites. Others take more time. They can only be consumed over time, a little bite here and a little bite there. Yet, once these have allowed themselves only to be sniffed by the devil's nose and licked by his tongue, the danger of complete destruction looms very real. Their opposite reversal to the one Paul made will someday be complete.

The way to prevent a reversal opposite from the one made by Saul, is to believe and apply the apostle's response to the false brethren in Jerusalem: "*To whom we gave place by way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you*" (Gal. 2:5). If Satan gains either one's actions or his mind, the truth is, he already has them both, and a complete reversal from defending the faith to destroying it will not be far behind.

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