

## Ersatz Christians?

### I. Slide#1 **Announce:**

- A. **Slide#2 Children at risk meeting** - today 3-5pm. An expert, in the fight against HT. Sherri Harris, has been overseeing salvation army's fight against trafficking in O.C.
- B. **Slide#3 Pray** - Greg in Burma (sick on way in).

### II. **Intro:**

- A. **Slide#4 Title: Ersatz Christians.** [Ersatz/*air-sotz* not real or genuine]
  1. **Ersatz** (*air-satz*) [Etymology/History] - In the opening months of **WWI**, *replacement* troops for battle-depleted German infantry units were drawn from lesser-trained **Ersatz Crops**, who were less effective than the troops they *replaced*.
    - a) **Also**, the Allied naval blockade of Germany throttled maritime commerce with Germany, forcing Germany to develop *substitutes* for products.
  2. **Which included:** *synthetic rubber* (produced from petroleum); *tea* composed of ground raspberry leaves or catnip; **Slide#5** and *coffee substitute* using roasted acorns or beans instead of coffee beans.
- B. **Slide#6 Outline: Ersatz Christians. Productive Christians. Kosher Christians.**

### III. Slide#7 **ERSATZ CHRISTIANS (4-6)** [Ersatz - *not real or genuine*]

- A. This section of Scripture has been *debated, fought over, & argued* for 2000 years.
  1. I will do my best to **guide** us *step by step* through a *theological minefield*.
- B. **Slide#8a 3 MAIN OPTIONS** it is speaking of:
  1. **Option #1 True Believers who apostatize**
    - a) There are those who see this group as *actual genuine Christians*.
    - b) They believe God supplies *grace* to those who are trusting Him, **but** the ultimate perseverance of any believer depends on *the cooperation of his own free will*.
      - (1) **Therefore**, any Christian whatever his state, is capable of the apostasy & condemnation here described.
  2. **Slide#8b Option #2 True Believers, but a Hypothetical situation**
    - a) It is taking the *"what if"* line of thought.
    - b) If salvation is Jesus alone, & one *"tries"* Christianity, **then** walks away, **what else is there for them?...there is no hope!**
  3. **Slide#8c Option #3 Professing Believers who apostatize**
    - a) They are **not** true believers, only one's who *"appear"* so.
    - b) 1st we must define *"fall away"*. This is *parapipto*(*para-peep-toe*). [NT.'s only occurrence]

- (1) It means apostasy. It doesn't take place suddenly & unexpectedly. Rather, it is part of a **gradual process**, a decline that leads from **unbelief to disobedience to apostasy**.<sup>1</sup>
  - (a) When it takes place it leads to **hardening** of the heart, & the **impossibility** of repentance.
  - (b) The author gives examples of the **Israelites** showing *the process* of apostasy in 3:18 & 4:6,11, each speak to *disobedience*.
- (2) Apostasy that rises from *unbelief* **results** in a hardening of the heart & an *inability* to repent.
- (3) There is a big difference from *falling away* & *falling into* sin.
  - (a) **Judas fell away** (apostasy); **Peter fell into** sin (backslid).

C. Now let's look at **all 3** of these options...

1. **Slide#9 Option #1 True Believers who apostatize** [I reject this wholeheartedly]
  - a) Wait, Brian are you going to give us **your bias**? **Yes**. But, my bias is based on my studies of Scriptures & how I see the whole of Scripture as *congruent, harmonious & compatible*
2. **Slide#10 Argument against: I believe in the internal consistency & coherency in the bible.** [i.e. *Scripture must interpret Scripture*]
3. **Consistently** throughout scripture those who are **genuinely** Christ's *do not* fall away into apostasy.
  - a) **Slide#11** Thus Paul says, **being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it** (will carry it on to completion/NIV) **until** the day of Jesus Christ. Phil 1:6
  - b) **For I am persuaded that neither death nor life,...** shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom.8:38,39
  - c) Scripture asserts, **For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,...** these He also **called**;...these He also **justified**;...these He also **glorified**. Rom.8:29,30
  - d) Peter said believers are given, **an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.** 1 Pet.1:4,5
  - e) **Slide#12** Paul said, **for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.** 2 Tim.1:12
  - f) Scripture declares that true believers are **sealed for the day of redemption.** Eph.4:30
  - g) John says apostates were never true members, **They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.** 1 Jn.2:19

<sup>1</sup> Simon Kistemaker, pg.160.

- h) Again & again Scripture says we can have **eternal life**. What kind of **eternity** would that be **which** could be **brought to an end** in our own life span?
- i) And lastly my favorite...Jesus said, **My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand...and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.** John 10:27,28
4. **Slide#13 Option #2 True Believers, but a Hypothetical situation**
5. Barnes, **It's not an affirmation that any had actually fallen away, or that they would.**
- a) But let's suppose they could...**It's over!** God does not have **some other cure** for sin when Calvary is rejected. **No** better proposition. **Not even** a plan B.
- b) **Slide#14** It's the **reduxeo ad absurdum** argument, meaning **reduction to absurdity**. It's when you take their side & then show them there **absurdity** of their argument.
6. Vs.4 is a positive declaration, **it is impossible** (not very difficult, not kind of hard, but **utterly unachievable**) to fall away & then be renewed again.
- a) If a Christian fall from grace, he **must** perish. He never could be saved. **Why not?**  
The crime would be *so great*.
- b) There is only **one way** to salvation, having tried that, & then renouncing it, **how could they be saved?**
- (1) **He is like the drowning man.** If there was but **one plank** by which he could be saved, & he should get on that plank, & then push it away & plunge into the deep...he **must** die.
- (2) **He is like the sick man.** Who had the **one kind of medicine** that could restore him to health. If he should deliberately throw it away...he **must** die.
- c) **So in religion.** There is but **one way** of salvation. *If a man rejects that, he must perish.*
7. **Slide#15 Option #3 Professing Believers who apostatize**
8. "Consistently throughout Scripture those who are genuinely Christ's do not fall away into apostasy."<sup>2</sup>
9. **Slide#16a 1st** this is what the writer of Heb already referred to in ch's 3&4 *child of Israel*
10. **Slide#16b 2nd** **enlightened, shared, & tasted** corresponds w/the privileged experience of the children of Israel in the wilderness.
- a) As part of the covenant community, the fallen Israelites placed the blood on the doorposts, ate the Passover lamb, miraculously crossed the Red Sea, observed the pillar of cloud by day & fire by night, tasted the miraculous waters at Marah, daily ate manna, &

<sup>2</sup> Ray Stedman, Hebrews, pg.76.

heard the voice of God at Sinai, but their hearts were hardened by unbelief, & they fell away from the living God.

11. Slide#16c 3rd Once enlightened – Jn.1:9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.
- a) Tasted the heavenly gift – We are to **taste** & see the Lord is good. **But then** we must **ingest** him fully. **Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.**
    - (1) They might have been catechized, baptized, & partaken in communion (thus tasting of the heavenly gift) these are all “acts” that any unbeliever could do.
  - b) Partakers of the H.S. – Sharing in the H.S. implies that this is done in fellowship w/other believers (emphasis on *shared*).
  - c) Tasted the good Word of God – King Herod enjoyed listening to John the Baptist preach. Mark 6:20
  - d) Tasted the Powers of the age to come – These mentioned here experienced “*signs, wonders, & various miracles*” just as there counterparts (2:4). They even experienced the raising of Lazarus, Jesus, the dumb given voice, the blind sight.
12. How does one **experience** all of this & not be regenerated?
- a) Let’s ask Judas. Jesus knew his heart from the beginning, but he fooled the disciples to the last.
    - (1) Wiersbe said, *That if Judas died before the betrayal, Peter would have preached him right into heaven.*
13. Slide#16d 4th Note, the verses **preceding & following** (1-3 & 9-12). Vs.4-8 use the 1st & 2nd person plural pronouns (**we & you**). **But here** in vs.4-6 the 3rd person plural pronouns, **those & they** occur.
- a) So why is it “impossible” for them to repent? Because it is the **Unpardonable sin** from Mt.12. *Which is* the calculated refusal of the Spirit’s witness.
  - b) They have **known** the way **but** not **owned** the way.
  - c) They had **professing knowledge, intellectual knowledge**.
  - d) They were **professors, but** not **possessors**.
  - e) They **seemed** to have experienced salvation, **but** in due time they **drifted back** to the life that suited their nature.
  - f) **Hear this folks**, for those who **think** that they’ve committed this **unpardonable sin**...If you’re **concerned** about it, **that** indicates you have **not** committed it & **that** you are still capable of repentance.

#### IV. Slide#17 **PRODUCTIVE CHRISTIANS (7,8)**

- A. An illustration from nature drives home the point.

- B. (7) The **healthy Christian** bears herbs for its farmer (fruit).  
 (8) The **apostate** bear thorns & thistles (no fruit).
- (vs.7) The **healthy Christian** receives blessings from God.
  - (vs.8) The **apostate** is near to be cursed, & whose end is burned.
- C. A refusal to **progress** in the Christian life (vs.1) leads logically to **retrogression**, of which the ultimate end may be **apostasy**.

#### V. Slide#18 **KOSHER** (proper) **CHRISTIANS (9-12)**

- A. (9) After addressing the possibility of apostasy, the writer assures his “**beloved**”(9) readers that he is confident they weren’t in that condition, & would progress.
- B. **Things that accompany salvation** – Like what?
- Works** (context of the next 3 verses) [They had a faith that **worked!**]
  - James says, **What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can (such) faith save him?... Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead... Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. 2:14,17,18,26**
- C. (11) Here we find this truth again that is found many places in scripture... The only reliable sign of regeneration is a faith that does not fail & continues to the end of life.
- It may at times **falter** & grow **dim** as it faces various **trials & pressures**, **but** it cannot be **wholly abandoned**, for Jesus has promised, **“I give them eternal life, & they shall not perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”**
  - Slide#19 As it has been said, **“If your faith fizzles before you finish, it’s because it was faulty from the First.”**
- D. (12) **Maturity** is not automatic.
- E. **Sluggish** - In house fires, **smoke inhalation** is just as fatal as **the flames** themselves. **And** so w/**sin**, you may fight off **flaming vices**, **yet** die from the **inhalation of idleness**, or the **smoke of slothfulness**.
- We need to be saved from the **smoke** as well as from the **flame**.
- F. **Faith & Patience** –
- G. **An old village blacksmith once said**, **“There is one thing I fear**: being thrown onto the scrap heap. You see, in order to strengthen a piece of steel, I must 1st temper it. I heat it, hammer it, & then quickly plunge it into a bucket of cold water. Very soon I know whether it will accept the tempering process or simply fall to pieces. If, after 1 or 2 tests, I see it will not allow itself to be tempered, I throw it onto the scrap heap, only later to sell it to the junkman for a few cents per pound. **“I realize the Lord tests me in the same way: through fire, water, & heavy blows of His hammer. If I am unwilling to w/stand the test, or prove to be unfit for His tempering process, I am afraid He may throw me onto the scrap heap.”**

1. When the difficulties in your life are hottest, stand still, for later on...it produces a harvest of blessings. Then we will be able to say w/Job, When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.
- H. Prayer: *Higher than the mountains that I face. Stronger than the power of the grave. Constant in the trial and the change. One thing remains. **Your love never fails.** It never gives up. Never runs out on me. That's...**Your love.***