

Halfway Is Not Far Enough

by

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Gen. 11:

Studying the Old Testament can be very interesting. Today, much of the world does not believe many of the things written therein. They believe it is only imaginary lore, passed down through time. They do not consider that the hand of God controlled these writings, thus we must take them all as truth.

Rom. 15:4, *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”*

There are those who say the Bible was written by men who were mistaken about what they wrote. They then deny that God was able to control the writing of His word by men.

2 Tim. 3:15-17, *“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”*

The Old Testament presents life on all levels — good and bad.

The reading spoke of the events concerning the Tower of Babel, the generations of Shem, of Terah, etc.; but at this time I want to note verses 27-32:

Gen. 11:27-32, *“Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abrams wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor’s wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. But Sarai was barren; she had no child. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his sons son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abrams wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.”*

Terah moves his family from Ur of the Chaldees. His destination was Canaan (between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea).

He didn’t make it: Verse 31, *“And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his sons son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abrams wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the*

Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.”

The Tower of Babel and Ur were both in the present-day Iraq. Haran was north of Ur and Canaan was west of Ur. However, nomads traveling with herds of stock followed the fertile crescent created mostly by the Euphrates River. It would have been suicide if they attempted to travel strait west through hundreds of miles of wasteland, especially with herds of animals. If they had traveled the full distance to the land of Canaan via the fertile valley to the north, they would have traveled about 1,000 miles. Haran was about 500 miles from Ur, and about 500 miles from Canaan: HALFWAY!

Terah, for reasons we don't know, NEVER got past the halfway point on his journey to Canaan.

Many people are like Terah. They know where they want to go, or need to go, but stop at the halfway point. Many are living in “*the land of Haran*” in a spiritual sense.

They started right; they made some progress, but that's as far as they went. The challenge is to move ahead; to reach the goal.

In this lesson I want to share some fundamental truths around the theme: Halfway is not far enough.

A good beginning is not enough

Yes, a good beginning is essential, and it must be right.

A sprinter in a 100 meter dash has to have a good start if he expects to win. A good beginning means a lot to him. A person who has been raised in the church does have a good start as compared to someone who becomes a Christian later in life. One who has been raised in the church normally has not filled himself with bad habits that are hard to break later, as is the case with those raised in the ways of the world.

John 8:32-36, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

If we know the truth from a very early age we can be free from many of the mistakes made by those who did not grow up in a Christian environment.

John 3:1-5, *“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”*

To be in the Christian race we must be *“in Christ.”*

- Eph. 1:3, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”*
- Gal. 3:27, *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”*

Baptism puts one into the start of the Christian race. If one has not been baptized he can make all the claims he wants that he has won the race, but God rejects that notion for it was not His race.

We, however, must keep on keeping on.

- Rev. 2:10, *“...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”*
- Heb. 12:1-3, *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”*

We cannot expect to win a race if we try to carry weights with us. Put off the weights of the world if you expect to win Gods race. Running to the halfway marker to heaven is not far enough.

Just attending church services is not far enough. What we hear and learn must be translated into action.

James 1:18-22, *“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the*

righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

The Jews thought they had a ticket right into heaven solely because they were the seed of Abraham. They did not do what God told them to do. Christ said there would be a lot of weeping and wailing when they found out they would not join Abraham in heaven.

Halfway is an enemy of ...

Realized goals.

It's easy to write our goals down, get started, but then many quit halfway. Success comes in completion.

Eccl. 7:8, "*Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit."*

Young Christians sometimes want to change the world. They get discouraged when they want results now. The ending is better than the beginning.

High standards.

Whatever we do in the name of Christ must be our best. Our lives must be pure and we should have good ethics. Matt. 5:8, "*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."*

The world says, "What's wrong with halfway morality?" Listen to Jesus:

Matt. 6:24-25, "*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"*

If you try to live in both worlds (God & man's) you will give up God's.

Growth.

Being half-grown is not enough.

Eph. 4:11-16, "*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of*

the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Those young in the body of Christ are susceptible to any wind of religious doctrine they hear. They have not yet learned to check out everything they hear concerning the doctrine of God. That's why Paul told young Timothy to study.

In a junior high cross-county race some runners misread the trail marking and ran the wrong direction. By the time they discovered the error they had lost the race. The marking of the trail although made by someone else and was not clearly marked still caused those who followed it to lose.

We must not be content to be halfway.

Being like Christ.

Jesus finished His work. He said, "*It is finished.*" He left us an example to follow.

To accomplish anything worthwhile takes a lot of hard work. We are created unto good works. 1 Cor. 15:58, "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*"

We cannot work for the Lord half-heartedly.

Why do we settle for halfway?

Because some are afraid to go beyond.

Halfway is comfortable. 2 Tim. 1:7, "*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*"

Paul did not take the comfortable way. He spoke boldly in the face of many great dangers. Yet he did not fear what may happen to him for even if he died serving the Lord, he knew a greater life than this awaited him. Knowing that can give one a sound and peaceful mind in spite of the dangers the world places in front of us.

Because the zeal for the journey has been lost.

Other things become more important to them — their jobs, their family, other interests. Things that detract them from their work for the Lord.

Rev. 3:14-22, “*And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*”

They were lukewarm. Their works were half-hearted.

Rev. 3:19, “*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*”

Because of the influence of others on us.

Our models influence us (i.e., peers, leaders, etc.) Thus, we think what others do is normal and okay. 1 Cor. 15:33, “*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*” Christ is our model.

Because of laziness.

Some don't like to work.

- Prov. 15:19, “*The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.*”
- Prov. 24:30-32, “*I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.*”

- Prov. 12:27, *“The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.”*

I offered a man a job clearing blackberries. He refused, saying he already had enough work lined up. However, he kept right on gathering money from people on the streetcorner. He didn't want to work; it was easier to beg for money.

A Seattle radio station survey discovered that 95% of the bums on the street asking for handouts were fake. They were perfectly able to work; they just chose that lifestyle because it was easier than working.

Because of ignorance.

Hosea 4:6-8, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.”*

Boy! Talk about the influence of your sin! God said if you reject His knowledge He will reject your children. Why is this? How would they learn of God if their father did not teach them?

You can't do what you don't know. 2 Tim. 2:15, *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*

Because of procrastination.

“I'll do it tomorrow.” No, let's do it today. Jos. 24:15, *“...choose you this day whom ye will serve...”* We don't know what tomorrow holds.

Conclusion

Every Christian is on a journey to heaven.

- Heb. 11:16, *“But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”*
- Heb. 13:14, *“For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”*

We must not stop halfway. A good beginning is not enough. In baseball, getting to second base won't add another run to the score.

Halfwayism is an enemy of our faith. We must remove the things which stop us. Don't settle in Haran, as did Terah.

Examine yourself. Where are you? Keep going. Let's all meet at the finish line.

Rev. 2:10, "*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*"

