

THE FAITH BUILDER

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God
(Romans 10:17).

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From The Editor

This is the next issue dealing with the theme of Christian depression and discouragement. It is based on Psalm 14:11: "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I will yet praise Him", etc.

It carries on from the peace of God being the normal state of the true believer, to that peace being interrupted for a number of reasons. The first part of the article shows generally that the true believer's peace can be interrupted.

This is a shorter issue because it finishes the first section of the study. The next session which will appear in Issue 12, will be looking at what a true believer can and must do if he or she lands up in a

state where there is unsettledness, leading to discouragement and depression.

It is quite possible for true believers to be depressed; even clinically depressed. It is not a sin to be depressed, and the depression does not always come from a demonic influence, as some believe. Depression can result in a traumatic event or experience that can cause an imbalance of the chemicals in the brain. The person experiences a crisis which remains unresolved, and the extended stress can cause the chemical imbalance and the person becomes clinically depressed. This is a mental illness.

It is sad that many when confronted with a depressed believer, tell them to “Harden up” or “Pull yourself together” or “You are possessed of a demon which needs to be cast out.” In my opinion, this type of advice is dangerous nonsense and can aggravate the depression and could drive the person to suicidal tendencies. Why? Because: “If my fellow believers can’t help me, what hope is there for me? I might as well end it all.” This advice merely puts the advisor in the situation where he or she can be compared to Job’s friends who gave him ill-informed advice concerning the loss of his possessions, family, and health. They put the blame on Job, rather than considering that

there were other factors contributing to Job's condition.

Well-meaning counsellors and advisers of depressed and discouraged believers need to be well-informed of the causes of depression. They need to have a comprehensive knowledge of Scripture in the way that God deals with discouraged Old Testament "saints", as well as having a good knowledge of when a person is depressed because of situational or developmental issues, or if there is demon influence. This is why I believe that treatment of depressed believers requires counsellors who are well-trained in all aspect of mental health. Anyone can put on a white coat and call themselves a counsellor, and most of the damage caused to depressed and discouraged believers has come from enthusiastic amateurs with minimal or no training, rather than the fully-trained professional Christian counsellors who have a recognised ministry to assist mentally ill believers.

This current series on Psalm 42:11 seeks to show Scriptural reasons for why a believer can become depressed, and also seeks to provide some Scriptural answers. It does not replace the need for a good, well-trained, Christian counsellor who can determine

whether the depression is clinical, needing medical intervention, or emotional, or spiritual. It may not provide all the answers, but it is a start, and I hope it is helpful to some.



A True Believer's Peace May Be Interrupted

The second doctrine answers the objection that a believer's inward peace isn't right because it doesn't last and continue: for the second doctrine says, That a true believer's peace may be interrupted.

But one thing still troubles me, and makes me afraid that my peace and quiet isn't good, and that is because I came so lightly and slightly by it. I see how it has been and is with others of the people of God; some that have been long afflicted and wounded and have been troubled a great while, and so they have had peace: but as for me, it isn't like that with me, I came lightly and slightly by my peace and quiet, and therefore I am afraid that the Lord has never yet spoken peace to my soul.

Do you say lightly? How lightly? Have you stolen your peace? Or have others paid for their peace? For you say, others have been much afflicted and troubled, and had a great deal of heart-pain.

But tell me, did those who have had all this trouble, did they purchase, or buy their peace at the hand of Christ with all this trouble? Or did Christ give them that peace and comfort freely? Buy it! No, surely; they never purchased it, never bought it, but Christ gave it them freely.

Why, if Christ gave it them freely after all their trouble, why wouldn't he give it you after less trouble? I have read, and so have you, in the gospel, a parable of two that came into the vineyard to work; the one in the beginning of the day, who bore the heat of the day, and the other at the latter end of the day; and both had \$50. When they were both paid, he who was there at the beginning of the day, grumbles, saying, "I have been here all this day, and I have borne the heat of the day, and I have but \$50; and the other that came in at the latter end of the day, has \$50 as well as I". The person who had been there working at the beginning and heat of the day, grumbles; but he who came at the latter end, he didn't complain, nor say, "Surely, my \$50 is naught, because I have \$50 given to me, as well as he has borne the heat of the day".

If any should complain, those who have borne the heat of the day, who have been so much troubled,

it should in reason be them, but has the Lord employed you, and given you your “\$50”, the same peace with him who bare the heat of the day; and will you complain, and say, “Surely, my “\$50” is counterfeit money, and my peace nothing, because I haven’t borne nor endured so much trouble as another has?”

You know, some children are born into the world with more pain than others, some with less pain: should the child that is born with less pain, say, I am illegitimate, because I wasn’t born with so much pain as the other was?

When Christ is formed in the souls of men and women, some are regenerate and born again with more pain, some are regenerate and born again with less pain: should he that is born with less pain, say, “I am illegitimate, and not a true son, because there wasn’t so much pain at my first regeneration as such an one had?”

You know how it was with Zaccheus; Christ comes to his house, and the same day that he came, he said to Zaccheus, “This day is salvation come to your house.” He had assurance the first day. But Paul is converted and he lies troubled, and is blind for three days. Should Zaccheus now say, “Surely,

I am not converted, for I never was blind for three, nor was so much troubled as Paul was?”

No surely, no more may you say that your peace is false because you haven't such abundance of trouble as others have. You are not to make another's measure your rule. God deals several ways with his people, as well in regard of peace, as in regard of grace.

Therefore I say this to you, look to your peace itself. Do you have peace and quietness of soul? Then bless and praise the Lord for that peace of yours. Yes, do not only praise the Lord for your peace and quiet, but praise the Lord that you came so sweetly by it, in a way of free grace; and if for anything you are to be troubled, it is for this, that you should nick-name the grace of God, and call it little or false. Christ calls it free, and you call it false. Oh, be humbled for this, and praise the Lord for any measure of quiet and peace that he has given to you.

But, someone else will say, “All this doesn't apply to my case; for I have no peace nor quiet in my soul to be thankful for. Some are there who have peace and quiet indeed, and they, no question, ought to be very thankful for it; but my poor soul

has been long afflicted, troubled, and I never yet had assurance of God's love in Christ. I don't have this inner peace and quiet. What shall I do, that I may attain to it? Or what should a poor soul do, to get and attain this inner peace and quiet?"

You know what the Psalmist says, "I will hear what the Lord will say, for he will speak peace to his people," Psalm 85:8. It isn't in my power or in the power of any poor creature, to speak peace to you; but it is the Lord only who must speak peace to your soul; and the Lord speaks peace in the way of Christian activities, such as prayer, study of God's Word, fellowship with other Christians, hearing the preaching of the gospel, etc.



“But what does the Lord say? What does the Lord speak from his Word in the way of any of the activities mentioned before, that I who was never yet settled, may attain to this inward peace and quietude of soul?”

1. His will for you is to study and consult much the death, sufferings and completeness of the satisfaction made by Jesus Christ. Go down into the grave of Christ. Christ's blood is the object of faith, and faith brings peace. Unbelief is a painful sin, and faith is an easing and quieting grace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace," &c., Rom. 5:1. The more you see the free and infinite love of God, the more will your heart be at rest and quiet within you.

And where shall you see the love of God, except in the death of Christ? By seeing Christ on the cross, you see divine love in triumph. All true peace within, arises from sight of peace made outwardly. Where will you read of that, but in Christ's death? Therefore the prophet says, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." In Psalm 41 you have a promise made of a great blessing to him that considers the poor, "Blessed is he who considers the poor."

Who is this poor person? The Psalmist tells us, from the verse 10, that it is Christ in his sufferings: for, as he observes, this psalm is a psalm of Christ, verse 9, "Yes, my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me."

They are the words of Christ, and Christ speaks this psalm; and this poor person to be considered is Christ in his sufferings. I will not debate here the truth of this interpretation; but if it is true, the Lord has promised here a blessing to him that wisely considers the death and suffering of Christ; and that blessing lies and consists in His death and suffering.

The Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble, that is: in the evil day, or in the day of evil, or: in the day of vexation. Now the day of testing, doubts and great fears, is an evil day, and a day of vexation. It will be in this day God will deliver the believer, who wisely ponders on the death of Christ. If we could we see the heart of Christ, we should not doubt any longer, and in his death you may see his heart, in his blood you may see his heart.

You know what the prophet Isaiah says, "Lord, will you not ordain peace, who has wrought all our works for us?" And where shall you find that God has wrought all our works for us, but in Christ's grave and death?

2. You must not only go to the cross of Christ, and study his death, but you must go to Christ himself for peace. He is the great peace-maker who has a commission to take up all our outward differences and those within us. You know his words, "The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned (he says), that I may speak a word in due season to him that is weary."

Go then to Christ, and press this involvement, and say, "Lord, you have therefore received the tongue of the learned, that you may speak a word in due season to him that is weary. And, O Lord, I am one of those wearied souls; wearied with my testing and inward trouble. Now, Lord, speak a word in due season to this poor, wounded, and wearied soul." Go to Christ in this way.

But when you make your approach to Christ, be sure that you go with the right attitude. Be careful that you don't desire peace merely so you can feel good, but as a help to your grace: "He will give

grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from him that walks uprightly."

Good people seek peace for grace sake; but wicked people and hypocrites seek grace for peace sake. When you do make your approach for peace, be sure you come to Christ in the right way; and be careful that you do not desire peace only for the good feeling that comes from it, but to enhance your experience with God.

And when you go to Christ for peace, carry the promise with you. Go on the basis of a promise. Go and take time to wait on Christ, wait upon him only, and keep his way.

Some say they do wait on God, but they do not keep his way. They give up their duty if they haven't received comfort immediately. But in your approaches to Christ, go and take time to wait patiently on him; and in case that peace and comfort doesn't come right away, consider carefully that great question, Whether you are in Christ or not, whether you are the child of God or not.

“The great trouble is this, Oh, I am afraid I am not a child of God. If I just know that I am a child of God, I should have peace.”

If peace and comfort therefore do not come right away, put that question aside a little, and in due time, Christ will answer that question too, only now for the present wait on him, and keep his way.

But, because it will be said, shouldn't we be humbled for sin committed? Isn't humiliation a good means to get inner peace? Therefore, in all your humiliation, carry Christ along with you. When you go to mourn for sin, begin up high with Christ. Do not always think to begin at the lower level with sin and then raise yourself up to Christ. But begin up high with Christ, and so by your humiliation, fall down upon sin.

You say, “Oh, but I prefer be humbled first before I do go to Christ” But tell me, can you be humbled and not see your sin? And where can you have such a prospect of sin, as in the death of Christ? Is there anything in the world that can show you the misery, ugliness, and damning nature of sin, as the death of Christ?

If you begin with Christ, then you will certainly come down to your sin and be humbled for it: but if you begin with sin, you cannot guarantee that you will be able to come up to Christ.

There is many a poor soul that has said, “I will be first humbled for my sin, and then I will go to Christ”; but he has stuck so long in trying to work through keeping the Law concerning the sin, that he has never come before Christ.

And if you are humbled before you do come to Christ, you won't have any great peace and comfort in your humiliation: but if you first come to Christ, and then carry Christ along with you to your humiliation, then you will have much comfort and peace there with your humiliation. Therefore if you want to be so humbled so that you may have peace by it; be sure of this, that you carry Christ with you to that work. Don't begin always with sin to go up to Christ, but rather begin at Christ, and so fall down upon sin.

Work hard to put your impulsive, emotional self-will to death, and to get your will melted into the will of God. Emotions are as the winds are to the sea. As long as the sea is stirred up with the wind, it has no rest or quiet; and what is the reason that

our hearts are no more calmed and quieted, except that because we haven't yet resigned up our wills to the will of God?

It is our own will that troubles our peace. If you could only get your will to die and made alive again into the will of God, then you will say, "Lord, I would prefer to have peace; yet not my will, but your will be done. I would have peace right away, yet I have no will but yours; therefore, Lord, when you will, and as you will, not my will, but your own will be done". Do this, and you are at rest right away.

Do you lack peace and comfort and quietness of soul? Take care how you walk with doubting company. Take care how you walk with those that are full of fears and doubting. As one drunkard affects another, and one swearer gives birth to another, and one opposer of godliness draws on another, and one adulterer spawns another; so one doubting Christian makes another doubter.



You who are weak, and full of doubting, should go and lean upon those who are strong and have full assurance; and you who have assurance, should give the shoulder to those that are weak, and say, "Come, and lean upon me, and I will be a help to you".

You know how it is with the ivy and the vine; the ivy leans upon the oak, and the vine upon the posts or the side of the house. The ivy and the vine do not lean one upon another. If the ivy and

the vine should come and lean upon one another, what twisting would there be; and both would fall to the ground. But the ivy leans upon the oak, and the vine upon the posts or the side of the house.

So a weak Christian should go and lean upon a strong Christian. But if one doubter leans upon another doubter, both will fall to the ground.

I have read of a woman who was under great testing, and meeting with another woman in the same condition, said to her, "I am afraid I shall be damned". "So am I too", said the other. But she said, "Oh, again, I do not only fear, but I am sure of it; certainly I shall be damned". "Yes", said the other, "Yet my condition is worse, for I am damned already". Here was damned and damned: "Oh", said one, "I shall certainly be damned"; "Oh", said the other, "I am damned already". Oh, what communion is here! Is this to build up one another?

Do you therefore lack comfort and peace? You who are weak, go and lean upon those that are strong and have full assurance; and you that have assurance, not be unwilling to offer your shoulder to those that are weak, and are full of doublings.

In conclusion, do you lack peace and inward quietness of soul? Whenever the Lord then begins to speak the least peace to your heart, be careful that you don't refuse it, but rather improve it, and stir up yourselves then in a way of believing. Praise God for every smile, and rejoice in the least. If there is a bent two-dollar coin, as it were, be sent you from heaven, save it, even every love-token. Peace is a tender thing. Does the Lord begin to speak peace to any of your souls? Now stir up yourselves in a way of believing, and then Christ will give you more.

You know how it was with Nathaniel. When Nathaniel believed upon what Christ had spoken, Christ says to him, "Do you believe because I said to you I saw you under the fig tree? I will show you greater things; you will see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

So the Lord Christ will say to a poor soul, "I have spoken a word to you, and I gave you a little peace, and do you believe because of the word I have spoken to you? You will see greater things, and I will give you abundance of peace".

Look into Isaiah 43:18, and there you shall find the Lord speaking like this: "Oh that you had

hearkened to my commandments; then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea." When the Lord speaks, and calls upon people to believe, if then they listen to him, then shall their peace be like a river.

And when does the Lord call in a special manner upon people to believe? When he gives out a word, and gives them a little peace, then he is calling upon them to believe. "Now return, and now believe", says the Lord.

You know how it was with Elijah: when they lacked rain, and had lacked rain for a long time, Elijah sends his servant towards the sea, to see if he could perceive any rain coming, and Elijah falls down upon his face in prayer; his servant goes, but no sign of rain: he goes again, and no sign of rain; and the seventh time Elijah's servant perceives a cloud, of the bigness of an hand, and he comes down to his master, and tells him he had seen a cloud, the bigness of a person's hand: whereupon Elijah concludes and says, "Come, let us up, I hear the noise of many waters."

So I say, you have been downcast, and have been much discouraged, yet if you have been at prayer, and a little refreshment comes, though it is but the

size of a hand, then conclude and say, "Surely, there is more rain coming; Come, O my soul, why are you cast down? And why are you troubled within me? Hope in God, and wait on him, I hear abundance of rain coming".

When our Saviour Christ sometimes speaks peace, he does at the first speak with a small word, and if that increase faith, then he speaks further.

You know how it was with Mary; she was at the sepulchre, and had been inquiring after her Lord, and says she to the angels, "They have taken away my Lord"; and the angels talked to her, but could not comfort her. But at last our Saviour Christ comes, and he speaks to her, and then she was comforted. But what does he say to her? Only one word; "Mary".

So when a person is in trouble, the Lord comes sometimes and speaks only a word. He takes a promise maybe, and uses it as a word upon the soul, and the heart answers, "Rabboni, my Lord".

If the Lord therefore speaks just one word to you, then stir yourself up in believing, and listen to him,

for he will speak yet more fully and plainly. Only when he speaks, listen. Take diligent notice of him and use what he says to improve your faith. Then your peace will be like a river, and your righteousness as the ocean.



Genuine Believers Vs Religious Hypocrites

By Paul Christensen

In this time where there are many Christian denominations containing professing believers with different perceptions and doctrinal positions concerning salvation and sanctification, it is difficult to determine whether the professing believer that you meet is actually a true believer in Christ, who came through the "narrow gate" of true conversion or "over the wall" of "getting religion".

The problem is that on first impressions and outward appearances, they both appear exactly the same, in both behaviour and manner of speaking. In fact, the religious person may appear to have much higher standards of conduct than many true believers, and can quote many passages of the Bible to show that their sanctification is superior to many in the "common herd". Of course this is no surprise, because Jesus spoke about the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13:24-

30. The “tare” was a weed that grew up with the wheat and by appearance was so much like the wheat plant that one could not tell them apart until the harvest. Trying to weed them out before the harvest would have damaged the good wheat.

The principle behind the parable was that the church is made up of true believers and religious hypocrites and because the appearance of both are so similar to each other, trying to “weed out” the hypocrites would damage the good believers. Attempts have been made in some churches with the result that many good believers have ended up being damaged and wounded through false accusations of hypocrisy when, in fact, they were good believers. It was for this reason that Jesus said that it was better to wait until the harvest when the good wheat would be gathered and stored, while the tares are piled up and burned. In the same way, there is a day of judgment coming when the true believers and the hypocrites will be separated and the true believers will be accepted into the New Jerusalem, while the hypocrites will go to their destruction.

So, in order not to damage true believers, we need to give every professing Christian the benefit of the doubt. When Jesus gave the instruction not to judge others, this is what He meant. We are not to judge others by their outward appearance, but give them the benefit of the doubt until it becomes obvious that a professing believer is a hypocrite and not a true believer. There are many who will be exposed by their fruit: "By their fruit you will know them" (Matthew 7:15-20); and "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). But there will be many who will remain undetected until the final judgment where then they will be exposed for who they really are.

Now, while reading this, many godly believers will be asking, "Lord, is it I?" For this reason, I will show some of the differences between a truly godly believer and a hypocrite, just for the benefit of those who are doubting within themselves. I must point out that these differences are not to be used to judge others, but to judge one's-self so as to dispel any inner doubts as to the genuineness of their conversion and walk with God.

For the purpose of this article I will use the term "sincere" to describe genuine believers, and "hypocrite" to describe false believers.

This brings me to the first point: that sincere believers are those who are open and honest with God and with themselves. There are no hidden corners here; no skeletons in the closet. These are believers who have opened their life up to God and have shared all their secrets with Him. 1 John 1:9 is a well-used scripture: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." They have no fear of being examined to see if they are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5), because they have confidence in their forgiving God and therefore have no fear of punishment for their shortcomings and failures.

Hypocrites have secrets, from God and others. They hide their faults and failings. This can give the impression to some that things are not what they appear to be. This is because they are more afraid of the punishment for their failures than for the nature of the failure itself. They know that they are not sincere believers and so they will not be

open with their faults and failures before God because of the fear of punishment. Judas was like that. When Jesus told His disciples that one of them was going to betray Him, they all, with the exception of Judas, asked, "Is it I?" But when Jesus went on to say that it was better for the one who betrays Him to have never been born because of the consequences that awaits him, Judas is then prompted to ask, "Is is I?" It was only when Jesus mentioned the punishment that the betrayer was going to receive that Judas was stirred up.

This is not to say that sincere believers ought to go around confessing their sins, faults and failings to all and sundry. There are some faults that can be shared with selected brothers and sisters in Christ (James 5:16), and there are others that should be shared with God alone. Wise believers will be discerning what to share with others and what needs only to be shared with God alone. Sincere believers should share their faults with God first, and then find out from Him whether it is wise and appropriate to share with anyone else.

Sincere believers are those who pray much and study the Bible in private when there is no one else to watch or be impressed. Their fellowship with God is mainly in private and any public expression of faith is commensurate with their private expression of faith with God.

Hypocrites can be very outward in the expression of their spirituality in front of others. They do this to impress others that they are very spiritual and close to God when in fact they little private contact with God. Their prayers are public and not private. They are very vocal in group Bible studies and seek to impress others of their extensive Bible knowledge. They are the ones who like to occupy the important places in church where they have the most prominence. When there are chances to share "a word" with the people, they can be very eloquent and persuasive, but upon closer examination, their teaching will lack a certain depth that comes from a personal experience with God.

Sincere believers will never push themselves into prominence. They will only go and speak when

they are invited. If they are not invited, they will stay home. If they are not invited to speak, they will stay silent and take part in the general worship with everyone else. They will take a lower status place when seated at a gathering or function because they will think it better to be invited to "come up higher". They will be content whatever situation they find themselves in.

The hypocrite is not content to remain in a place where there is no prominence. This is because their whole worship depends on being seen and heard by others. If they are not invited to speak to the congregation, they will find other ways to get their views across. They will target the less experienced and vulnerable believers and use their charm and "spirituality" to influence these ones to their way of thinking.

Some churches believe in and use the gift of prophecy in their services. Sincere believers, if they have received a prophecy for the church, they will consult with the leadership to ensure that their prophecy is appropriate. This is in keeping with Paul's instruction to judge prophecy (1 Corinthians

14:29). Also, they prefer to have their prophecies recorded for future examination and evaluation. They will be quite happy to acknowledge that their prophecy may be incorrect if the leaders judge it to be so. They will be happy to engage in prophetic workshops to “hone their craft” where they can make mistakes and not be criticised for them, and receive confirmation whether they have or haven’t the gift of prophecy.

A hypocrite will not accept constructive criticism or correction concerning prophecies, and will keep clear of prophetic workshops. If they do attend, they will use their “gift” to influence others, rather than for learning and gaining experience in the prophetic. There is the example of a man who attended a prophetic school, and going around giving personal prophecies to other participants. When it was brought to the attention of the leadership (who were not previously aware because they were not consulted beforehand), the man refused correction and had to be “invited” to leave the school escorted by a friendly, but very large security assistant.

There is another example of a young man who regularly gave very loud and long prophecies in the morning services. It was obvious that this young man had many personal problems and was not prepared to accept correction from those who tried to assist him. It was unfortunate that there were too few in the leadership of that church who were experienced enough in the prophetic to give effective guidance to that young man, and his prophecies were a disruption to the services for quite a while before he finally left the church.

There was another situation where a large man with a "built-in" microphone gave a long, loud prophecy. After he had finished, the session leader got up and said, "Well, we can safely ignore that one!" Here was a leader who was very experienced in the prophetic and could discern that this was a flesh-based prophecy from a self-important person, not from the Holy Spirit.

Sincere believers are not afraid to be the real persons that they are when no one is watching them. They are the same when alone with God, with friends and family, and in church. A true

believer is recognised when the child says to her godly parent, "You are just the same at church as at home." She would know because she would see her parents in their strengths and weaknesses at home, and when their conduct at church is exactly the same, the child acknowledges it and knows that their faith is genuine.

The hypocrite's children will see and know that there are major differences between home and church. They will see that hypocrites will be all saintly and worshipful in church, but leave it all behind when they go back home. There have been examples of church-going folks being all religious on Sundays at church, and getting drunk, beating up their wives and children during the week. This is where the hypocrites' personal and family lives are not consistent with their religious activities. Charles Dickens relates Mrs Jellyby, a religious mother who spent so much time on religious activities that her children were neglected and starving (Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*; <http://www.shmoop.com/bleak-house/mrs-jellyby.html>). Such people bring the Christian

church into disrepute and put people off from being converted to Christ.

Sincere believers are those who promote the grace of God toward sinners and fellow believers. They will seek to present Christ as their loving Saviour who died for them on the Cross and who is quick to forgive all sin when the sinner repents, or the believer invokes 1 John 1:9. They know that there is no condemnation to those who are truly converted to Christ (Romans 8:1). They know that if God and Jesus do not condemn true believers, neither will they. If they feel the need to correct a brother or sister in Christ, they will do it with the utmost humility (Galatians 6:1). Also, they will make their initial approach privately and will follow the scriptural procedure in order to make their correction effective and acceptable (Matthew 18:15).

Hypocrites will be quick to correct and rebuke others, and mostly in public. They will cobble Bible verses together to prove their point. They will apply Old Testament verses, along with the commandment-type New Testament verses to

"expose" sin in others. They will construct "exposing" websites to show the faults and failings of prominent ministries. They will give more prominence to believers having to obey commandments, than to have faith in Christ alone for their justification. They will blur the principles of justification with those of sanctification. They will often say that if a believer commits certain sins they will lose their salvation. They will present a God who is angry, harsh and unforgiving to sinning believers. This will often be a reflection of their own view of God, seeing that they know that they would have serious doubts and a lack of the assurance of their own salvation if they did not strive to be perfect by keeping their chosen set of commandments. They are seeking to impress God by their outward good works and religious activities, and they would seek to influence others to do the same. Unfortunately, they will be the ones who will be rejected by Christ at the judgment (Luke 6:46).

It should be a comfort and assurance to doubting souls that if they have concerns that they might be hypocrites instead of true believers, there is every

indication that they are genuine converts to Christ. Hypocrites don't have those concerns. Usually they have a false peace and confidence in their religious experience. Sincere believers will be praying to God in private and pouring out their concerns and fears to Him. This is Paul's initial response to what happened to him on the Damascus Road: "Behold, he prays" (Acts 9:11).

A good question for sincere believers when they pray is to ask God, "How do I become a real Christian?" God will answer, "Be yourself." You might answer, "I can't be just myself. All my faults and failings will be obvious to all to see." God will answer, "Don't worry. If I don't like you, I will change you." Because a sincere believer is always open to correction and change, God can do this in many ways to enhance that believer's experience in Him.

So what can a hypocrite do to transform into a sincere believer? The best thing is to go through the initial steps of faith to a true conversion to Christ:

1. Know that you are a hopeless sinner, deserving of punishment in hell.
2. Believe that Jesus paid the price for you on the cross and took your sins upon Himself and that He rose from the dead to give you eternal life.
3. Receive Jesus and His righteousness into your life as an act of faith.
4. Rest in His faithfulness and allow the Holy Spirit to work on-going sanctification in you as you continue your walk with Him.

Once you go through these steps of faith, God will reveal Himself to you and establish a personal fellowship with you. "Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Then the hypocrite will no longer be such, and therefore no longer fearful of punishment for his failures, and his public fellowship and Christian expression will be commensurate with his private fellowship with God. Others around will see the change and rejoice in it.



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Paul Christensen

This magazine's purpose is to build up the faith of

believers.

I am an elder of St Aidan's Presbyterian Church in Conifer Grove, Auckland NZ. At present, I am assisting with the ministry of the church along with the other elders and very capable preachers as part of an elder-run church. I am including articles from recognized, effective pastors and ministries that have proved themselves in having the Holy Spirit work with them in the conversion of sinners, effective and powerful impact that they have on believers, and in the growth of their churches. I think that it is important for the members of the congregation to have a range of ministry outside of their usual one-person ministry that has been the norm for a number of years before our current minister recently resigned.

You will notice that I have included jokes and humorous pictures in this magazine. I am a strong believer in humour as a healing resource. I believe that the business of sharing the Gospel is serious, but some become so serious that they are dour and humourless. I don't think that these people are a good advertisement if we want our church to grow and be filled with believers who are passionate for Christ and who approach their faith with joy. "In His presence is fullness of joy" (Psalm 16:11), and good, clean humour is an important part of that.

All articles are printed with the kind permission of the authors, who believe that it is important that the message of the Gospel gets out there, and the importance of walking with God in love and faith, along with unity among Christian believers.

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Once you have read this, pass it on to someone else who might be encouraged by reading it.