

Restoring the Erring

Once one becomes a Christian, they have made a good start into leading a life that is pleasing to God and gaining a home in Heaven. However, becoming a Christian is only the starting line and not the finish line. When one has decided to become a Christian, they do not become perfect. Even when we become Christians and work hard to lead a life that is pleasing to God, we can stumble and fall. God expects our efforts to strive toward perfection but does not expect us to be perfect. What do we do after we have become Christians and we sin? What do we do when a brother or sister in Christ falls into sin? In this lesson we will explore what the Bible has to say about fallen Christians being restored to Christ.

Who is erring?

John 6:66 “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” For many reasons someone that once followed Christ can choose to turn away from Him. It could be that a Christian fell back into some sin they once took part in. It could be a Christian has let some new temptation into their lives and they have given into it. Maybe a major life event or stressor has happened, and the Christian has turned to something sinful, and not to God, to help them through it. We are all human and have times of difficulty in our lives, but as Christians we should let those times help strengthen our faith not weaken it. However, sometimes for many reasons a Christian stumbles and falls when they turn away from Christ. If a Christian is willing to repent and get their lives back on track with God, He will always forgive us. We must remember that even when God forgives us, we might still have an earthly price to pay for our sins. (If a Christian robbed a bank, but later repented of this sin. Then after repenting, that Christian turned themselves in to the earthly authorities. God would forgive this repentant Christian, but they would probably still have to face going to jail or some kind of probation. This Christian could face their earthly punishment knowing God had forgiven them and they had a home waiting in Heaven, if they remained faithful.)

Romans 16:17-18 “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” Christians are not to let those that teach false doctrines or try to cause problems in the congregation go unchecked. As a faithful Christian, we are to try and reach these fallen brethren and stop their sinful conduct. Putting a stop to their false teaching or division causing behavior helps the rest of the congregation not become a part of the fallen Christians sin themselves. Stopping the fallen Christian’s sinful behavior also lets the fallen brother or sister in Christ know they are in error, but the congregation loves them enough to try and teach them better. Hopefully, this leads to repentance on the fallen Christian’s part and they once again become a faithful part of the body of Christ. Pointing out someone’s sinful behavior should always be done in Christian love, because the goal is to try and restore the fallen Christian not drive them away.

1 Corinthians 5:1-13 “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's

wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” As Christians when we know a brother or sister in Christ is involved in sin, we are not to turn a blind eye to it. That is NOT love! Christian love is to try and help someone involved in sin see their error so they do not lose their soul. Simply ignoring their sin is NOT being kind to them, trying to help them be restored to Christ is. As Christians we should not try and teach someone in sin out of arrogance, anger, or some misguided feeling of superiority, but rather we must teach the Truth in a loving way. Someday we might need a fellow Christian to help us see our own error.

Galatians 6:1 “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” When a brother or sister in Christ falls into sin, a faithful Christian will try and help them see their error. A faithful Christian will, in a loving way, take the time to try and teach their fallen brethren what the Bible says about their sinful behavior. Should this fallen Christian hear you and repent, then you have done your Christian duty, and a lost soul has been restored to Christ.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” Sadly, sometimes even when we do our Christian duty to try and teach a fallen Christian about their error, they will not repent. Sometimes even after much effort has been given to try and teach a fallen Christian their error, they do not respond but continue in sin. When this happens, in order to try and save the fallen Christian’s soul, and never out of anger or spite, a congregation can withdraw from someone. The goal is to try and get this fallen Christian to look at themselves and repent of their sin. This is done out of love to try and restore such a person to Christ. If the fallen Christian repents and once again walks a faithful Christian path, then they are restored to Christ’s body and are once again in fellowship with their fellow Christians.

2 Timothy 4:10 “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.” When Christians do not put Christ

first, sin can creep into their lives. When a Christian chooses to make something of the world to be first in their lives, they are not living as Christ would have them live. When money, possessions, family, children, spouses, etc. are more important than Christ, a Christian is not living a life Christ wants them to live.

Hebrews 10:25-26 “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins” When a Christian does not prioritize Christ and lets other things come first, they will find reasons to not attend worship service, or not read their Bibles. A Christian that does not put being a Christian first in their lives opens the door for looking for excuses to let sin into their lives.

Revelation 2:4 “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” Christ is to be the Christians first love, when He is not, we get our priorities wrong and sin can enter our hearts.

How does God see the erring?

Matthew 16:26-27 “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” The erring brother or sister is lost. Nothing can be worth losing our soul over. We will all go to Heaven or Hell based on our own choices and no one else’s. We can choose to correct the sinful behavior in our lives, and go to Heaven when the time comes. We can choose to not correct the sinful behavior in our lives and lose our souls for eternity in Hell. A Christian is not going to be perfect, but if they truly repent when they sin, God will forgive them. The sin left unrepented of God will not forgive.

2 Peter 2:20-22 “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” God sees a Christian returning to sin, as one that is in a clean state returning to an unclean state. In other words, going from being free from sin, to once again wallowing in sin. However, if a Christian truly repents of their sin and corrects their life, God is ready and willing to forgive. Once a Christian repents, they are clean again in God’s sight.

1 John 1:7-10 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” We can not walk in the gray. We can not walk a little in the dark, but mainly in the light. We either walk in darkness or light in the sight of

God. When we do not walk in light we therefore walk in darkness. So when we stumble, as Christians, we must repent and turn from our sins (darkness) to walk fully in the light. God will forgive, if and only if, we repent of our sins.

What is our duty to the erring?

Matthew 18:15-17 “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” If we know a brother or sister in Christ is struggling with sin, we need to talk to them. If they have done something that was directed at us or not go talk to them one on one. Sometimes the fallen Christian will not respond, but how do we know if they will or not if we do not try? We do care about their souls, don't we? Should one on one talking not work, try just a few trying to reach them, if that doesn't work perhaps the elders can reach them. Only if much effort to reach a fallen Christian fails does the congregation withdraw fellowship. Sadly, sometimes this last difficult step is necessary. Remember each of these steps is taken out of love for the fallen Christian to try to bring them back into the fold.

1 Corinthians 5:1-6 “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” and **2 Thessalonians 3:6** “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” also **2 Thessalonians 3:14-15** “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” A congregation cannot ignore sin. Sin ignored is sin accepted. Once sin is accepted by a congregation it can damage that body's ability to be what it should be in standing for Christ and His teachings. The outside world can see if a congregation accepts sin or not. When a congregation is aware a brother or sister in Christ has fallen, it must be addressed lovingly, in an effort to get that Christian to repent and be restored to Christ.

Galatians 6:1 “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” and **1 Thessalonians 5:14** “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.” We are all just humans with strengths and weaknesses. A congregation that belongs to Christ will strive to help lift up one another in difficult times to make each other

stronger Christians. One day we might need help, another day another Christian might. Christians need compassion for one another. Compassion does not ignore sin, it confronts it. The loving thing to do is to help someone that needs help and not be overly concerned with hurting their feelings. Which is worse having one's feelings hurt or losing your soul?

James 5:19-20 “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” Reaching out to a fallen fellow Christian might lead to them repenting and their soul being saved. Even if they do not respond, in trying to reach them you are demonstrating Christian behavior. Shouldn't a Christian find the effort of trying to help restore a fellow Christian worthwhile?

How do we treat those restored from erring?

John 15:12 “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” Christ loves us all. He died and rose from the dead so that we can be saved, if we are willing to obey His teachings found in the New Testament. He wants us to love each other as He loved us. That means lovingly trying to help a fallen Christian repent and be restored is expected behavior on our part. Once a fallen Christian has repented, they are no longer fallen, and should be treated as a restored brother or sister in Christ.

Ephesians 4:31-32 “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” Once a fallen Christian repents God forgives them, and so should fellow Christians. When a fallen Christian repents, God fully restores them and no longer remembers their sin. Fellow Christians should accept and encourage their restored brother or sister in Christ.

Conclusion

Hopefully, in this lesson we have come to better understand that if a faithful Christian stumbles and falls by giving into sin, there is a way back to Christ. When we stumble, we must repent and get back into the race, and run towards salvation. If a brother or sister in Christ stumbles, we must try to help them get back up if we can. Take a moment, if you are a Christian, and think are there things I need to repent of? If so, please do so now before it is too late.