

“Which Name Should I Change?”

By Glen Young

There was this fellow and his name was Joe Hogbristle. Well, he couldn't take it anymore, so he went to a judge to get his name changed. The judge said that he could understand why he would want his name changed. So the judge asked him what name he wanted. He replied, "Bill Hogbristle, I'm sick and tired of people saying, 'Hello Joe, whatcha know?!'" The part which needed to be changed remained as it had been. No matter if Joe became Bill, the person in question remained a Hogbristle! Which leads me into a discussion of conversion.

Jesus said, "... Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn [ye be converted (KJV)], and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3. Thayer defines strepho (strepho) as, "1) to turn, to turn around 2) to turn oneself (that is, to turn the back to one who no longer cares for another); metaphorically, to turn oneself from one's course of conduct, that is, to change one's mind." When we consider the metaphorical meaning, we are considering the change which takes place in the mind. It is a changing of one's character. Paul illustrates this in Romans 12:2 when he speaks of being "transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." "Be ye transformed" is from the Greek word metamorphoo (metamorphoo) which means "to change into another form." Thayer. This is a change, which in turn, affects a change in conduct.

We must conclude that to be converted means that a person becomes a new creature in Christ with old things passing away and all things becoming new (See 2Cor. 5:17). Is it possible for someone to be baptized without being converted, even if that someone understands that baptism is for remission of sins? Yes! Paul told the Ephesian elders that grievous wolves would enter in among them (Acts 20:29). Who were these wolves if not those who were unconverted? How could they have become a part of the Christian community if not through baptism? And how would they have been received if their baptism had not been accepted by Christians, hence, baptism for remission of sins?

The entering in of these wolves can be illustrated thusly, Mr. Alien Sinner comes to realize a need for a change in his life. This may come about because of marriage problems, financial problems or problems with his job. He is sick and tired of having to deal with these problems. He is convinced that the solution to his problems resides in changing his name. This can be accomplished by baptism. He rejoices at finding the solution to all his problems, or so he thinks. He submits to baptism for remission of sins. The Christian community sighs with great joy and receives him into their fellowship.

What has taken place? Has a metamorphosis occurred? Has the individual become a new creature? Has his desire changed from pleasing himself to pleasing God? Is doing the will of the Father in heaven his number one priority now? Or, is it business as usual? He has a new name but does he have a new life?

A Hogbristle is a Hogbristle whether Joe or Bill and a Sinner is a Sinner whether Alien or Christian. It is so easy to be overwhelmed by the circumstances of life. It is easier still to think we can solve our problems by changing what we think is the cause. O foolish men, change your spiritual hearts not your names. "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

Truth or Lie?

"Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel..." (Phil. 1:27).

"It is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error. It is better to speak the truth that hurts and then heals, than falsehood that comforts and then kills. It is not love and it is not friendship if we fail to declare the whole counsel of God. It is better to be hated for telling the truth than to be loved for telling a lie. It is impossible to find anyone in the Bible who was a power for God who did not have enemies and was not hated. It's better to stand alone with the truth than to be wrong with a multitude. It is better to ultimately succeed with the truth than to temporarily succeed with a lie." (From Adrian Rogers, Quoted in The Berean Call, Dec 1996, p. 3)

Make Lemonade

"But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ..." (Phil. 1:12-13).

The people who consistently manifest the greatest joy are those who refuse to be discouraged by their circumstances. Someone has said, "If life hands you a lemon, make lemonade." Charles Goodyear's lemon was a prison sentence, resulting from a contempt of court citation. While in prison, Goodyear became an assistant in the kitchen, and while there, he continued to work on an idea. In the process, he discovered a method for vulcanizing rubber. His lemon, a prison sentence, became our lemonade. He produced better tires which meant better travel and a better way of life.

Continued faithfulness to God, in spite of difficult circumstances, will eventually result in manifold blessings.

Willing and Able

"...Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." (Phil. 1:11) "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1Cor. 15:58).

There was once a farmer who had two mules. One was named "willing" and the other was named "able." The story goes that willing was willing, but was not able. On the other hand, able was able, but was not willing. Able thought willing should have been more able, but how could he when he was not able, but was willing? Willing thought able should have been more willing, but how could he when he was not willing, but was able? All would have been great, if only willing would have been more able, and able more willing, but neither willing nor able, were both willing and able, and as you can might expect, the farmer didn't get much done.

Let us be both willing and able to do the Lord's work.

A Moments Wisdom

- Do not let sinners freely enter hell, but leaping over our bodies as we grasp at them.