

Sink or Swim

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A “sink or swim” situation is a situation in which a person must put forth effort or fail. This figure of speech comes from the idea that if someone enters deep water, he will either sink to the bottom or swim to safety. One could say that Christianity is a “sink or swim” endeavor, because we must put forth real effort or fail.

When we become Christians we “take the plunge” - This is true both in a literal and figurative sense. We are plunged into the waters of baptism to become Christians (Colossians 2:12), and it can also be said that when we become Christians we “take the plunge” of total commitment to Christ. When a person becomes a Christian, receiving God’s grace through obedient faith in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:8; Hebrews 5:9), he should realize that there is the possibility that he could fall from that precious grace (Galatians 5:4). This could happen if that initial obedient faith gives way to a lack of obedient faith. Therefore, we must put forth full effort or we will fail. We will either sink or swim!

The Word of God teaches us how to “swim” - The only way we can stay afloat and keep our heads above the water spiritually is to keep our focus on Christ and His Word (Psalm 119:105). Christ left us the ultimate example of someone who “swam” through this life without sinking, and we are to follow the example He left for us in the Bible (1 Peter 2:21, 22). We must use the Word of God to keep from sinking into the temptations of sin (Psalm 119:11; Matthew 4:1-11). In the days of Noah, he and his family were kept above the destructive flood waters because they had obeyed God’s Word to enter the one place of safety (Genesis 6:22; 7:16; 1 Peter 3:20, 21). Today the one place of safety is Christ’s church that He built (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 5:23).

After becoming Christians, some never even try to stay afloat! - It amazes me how some people show interest in the Gospel and are baptized, only to never be seen again! Of course we should try to encourage them to persevere, but sadly this type of person often shows no interest in doing what is right after his baptism. One doubts if such a person was ever really converted at all. It is as if this person entered the water and immediately began sinking because he refused to swim.

After becoming Christians, some stay afloat for a while, but then they allow themselves to drown in the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life - It is

so easy to start sinking down into the affairs of this world (Luke 8:14). Americans' lives are busier than ever before. We have to keep calendars within arms' reach to keep all our appointments organized. Wallace Huffman, a professor at Iowa State University in Ames who is a specialist in labor economics, said "Americans work longer hours than their European counterparts. While many Europeans take four to six weeks of vacation – often including the entire month of August when factories close – many Americans take no vacation at all" (Source: www.cbsnews.com). While being busy is not necessarily a bad thing, the problem is when we are always busy for the world instead of being busy for the Lord! Not only are we busier than ever in secular areas of our lives, we also have a wide array of materialistic "toys" which often distract us from God and His Word (TV, Internet, cell phones, iPods, video games, etc.) It seems that there are more avenues of sin than have ever existed at any point in history. If we take our focus off the Lord, we will drown in sin, just as sure as Peter began sinking when he took his focus off Jesus:

And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:28-31).

If we have unwavering, obedient faith in Christ, we will be saved by the grace of God, but let us remember that being a faithful Christian requires effort! Will we sink or swim?

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