



# FEED MY SHEEP

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## How To Inherit Immortality—The Basics, Part 1

This issue of FMS will be a very different type of article than what you normally find here. As regular readers know, we focus on trying to teach Christians biblical truths beyond the basics. However, this is going to be a very basic teaching on a most basic topic. It will take two issues of FMS to present the fundamentals on how to become a Christian.

I am assuming that most FMS readers on our mailing list are already Christians. But these get posted to my website and certainly, among those readers, a lower percentage are Christians. For those who are Christians, this will not only serve as a brief review, but these couple of issues could also be used to help lead someone to the Lord, or you could simply hand them the CD or audiotape version, which is available under the title: *How to Become a Christian*. (One CD or tape: \$7 ppd.)

Before we can understand *how* to become a Christian, it is first necessary to define *what* a Christian is. Very simply, a Christian is a person who is a believer in and a follower of Jesus Christ. Okay then, but who is Jesus Christ? ...And why should I follow Him? To answer that question, we need to establish a few facts first.

Every man and woman has within themselves the innate knowledge that there is a Creator, a Supreme Being, a Being to whom we give the title "God," among other names and titles. Some may deny that they have that innate knowledge, but I believe it to be the case because the Word of God tells us so. Everyone in their innermost being simply knows that there is a God, a Creator. It therefore begs the question: Then did He just set things in motion after creating the universe and leave us alone to fend for ourselves as best we can?

Or did He and does He communicate with us? As everyone in the western world knows, there is a collection of writings known as the Bible which claims to be

the very words of the Creator. It purports to contain the story of God and His plan for man—from the creation of the universe, to the creation of the first man, to the consummation of the eons far off in the distant future.

For the person reading this who is not a Christian, I ask you: Do you believe the Bible? Before you answer, let me point out this. It might seem elementary, but it astonishes me to know that there are people ("Christians") who claim to believe the Bible who have never *read* the Bible, the whole book. So I would expect you, the non-Christian reader to logically answer: No, I do not believe the Bible because I have not read it. My point here is to prod and encourage those who already claim to be believers to follow through and read the whole Bible. After all, this sacred book is what defines what a Christian is—and so much more. It is the guide book for all of life—the Owner's manual—given us by the Creator Himself.

This is not to say that one cannot become a Christian without first reading the entire Bible. We are going to give you the simple steps to becoming a Christian now, but then it becomes incumbent upon you, and important for you as a neophyte, a baby Christian, to actually become familiar with all of God's Word, the Holy Bible.

Now back to the question of who is Jesus Christ and why should I follow Him? Again, to keep it very basic, because Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is in fact God Himself. We have a ten-part lecture series on that. In it, we demonstrated with many unassailable proofs that Jesus was and is God. Those lectures, plus two others on the deity of the Holy Spirit, have been packaged into an album and are available from us in either CD or audiotape format. [Order album A-124;

\$33 ppd. Specify format.]

So because Jesus is God, He is our Creator, who lowered Himself to become one of us. That is more than a sufficient reason why we should follow Him, because we know deep inside that there is a Creator God. He gave us life. He gave us consciousness and self-awareness. Furthermore, He also has the power to stop our life at any moment. In fact, He has determined the terminal point of life for every one of us.

To elaborate further why we should follow Jesus Christ, there are at least two overwhelming reasons. One is totally out of self-interest and the other is of self-humbling. The self-interest is this: I think most people would agree that the one thing that every person desires more than anything else in the world—beyond all riches, beyond all power and prestige and fame in the world—what everyone desires more than anything else is *immortality*. And we quickly qualify that to mean, an immortality without any pain, suffering, sickness, disease, accidents, etc. Eternal utopia!

So if it is true that God took on the form of a man; i.e., that He took on a flesh body in the form of Jesus Christ, and I share with you the good news that Jesus promised us that the way to immortality is by following Him, then just out of our own selfish desire to have immortality, it would behoove us to follow him.

The other reason we should follow Jesus starts from the same point; namely, that if He is indeed God; if He is indeed the *visible* manifestation of the *invisible*, eternal, one Creator-God; then we, as His creatures, *owe* Him. And what do we owe Him? ... ***everything!*** We ought to humbly bow down before Him, acknowledge Him for who He is, and worship Him with praise and honor. Yet all of that would ring hollow in His ears, unless we are also obedient to whatever He commands us. By right of Creation, He owns us!

So to me those are the two overwhelming reasons why one should *want* to become a Christian, and let's put those two in their proper priority now. First in line is God, not our own self-interest. Because we owe everything to our Creator, we therefore ought to hear what He is telling us, and then follow up on that by doing whatever He tells us to do (or not do).

Secondarily is where our self-interest belongs, because as a *bonus* for being obedient to Him, we earn immortality, don't we? Not so fast there! I am pleased to report to you that the preceding is NOT true! Why am I pleased about that? Because if we had to earn immortality, we would all be sunk, lost, have no hope of attaining it, etc. A very important aspect of our eternal salvation is that it is NOT a bonus for obedi-

ence to God. We cannot earn immortality. How do we know that? Because God tell us in His Word.

**Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:**

**9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.**

So immortality is NOT something anyone can earn. God gives it to us as a free gift. In other words, by grace. But it also says we are saved “through *faith*.” So it appears that one of the requirements of becoming a Christian is having faith, or belief. Which leads to the question: faith or belief in whom or in what? And it also begs the question: what if we just can't “buy into” it? What if we just don't believe? How does one obtain that faith? Thank God, He gives us the answer to all these important questions.

**Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by [through] the word of God.**

Alright, so now that we have answered the basic questions—albeit very simply—the questions: *what* is a Christian? and who is Jesus Christ? and why should I follow Him?—with those questions now answered, we can move on to answer another key question: *How* does one become a Christian?

We have just seen that faith is one of the requirements. But even faith or believing is not something that we do in the sense that it is of our own doing and initiative and thereby we earn immortality. No, rather, the Bible tells us that even faith comes to us as a gift from God. (See Ephesians 2:8 above.)

The immediate means to faith, though, is *hearing* the Word of God. That happens in any number of ways. You can hear someone teaching or preaching from the Bible, or you can simply read the Bible for yourself and you will “hear” the words of God in your mind. You are even now, by reading this, *hearing* the Word of God.

For the person who has done *some* Bible reading and/or heard some Bible teaching or preaching, and yet you still feel or think that you really don't believe or have faith at this point; well, then we need to go on to ask those other pertinent questions—the ones we mentioned a moment ago—the questions: believe in whom or what? It only makes sense that in order to have faith, you can't let the word “faith” dangle out there all by itself. You have to have an object of faith. *What* is it? or *who* is it that I am expected to believe in in order to become a Christian?

Again in our attempt to put it in the simplest terms, the *who* is Jesus Christ and the *what* is the gospel. Now to flesh out those answers just a bit. Salvation to immortality requires faith in Jesus Christ, believing that He is God manifested in the form of a man. As such, as God and man at the same time, Jesus was able to accomplish what no other person could ever do, to pay the price for (earn) immortality on behalf of everyone else. We could not do it for ourselves and we certainly could not do it for others. We will discuss that further in a moment. The Bible says in...

**Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess [i.e., profess] with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.**

**10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

So salvation requires faith in Jesus Christ; that answers the *who*. And we said the *what* is the gospel. *Gospel* is from an old Saxon word that simply means “good news.” How many of you occasionally watch the news on television? How much of it is ever good news? One percent? Two percent, if we’re lucky. Well, I am here to tell you that what God, in the form of Jesus Christ, accomplished 2,000 years ago, is not only *good* news; it is the best news possible for all of us and for all time. But to give you the details about all of that *best* news is beyond the scope of this simple message. But just on a personal level, it is the best news that you as an individual will ever hear. And you can believe that. You can take it to the bank, and I don’t mean the Federal Reserve banks which will one day collapse. I am talking about the rock-solid assurance that you will have immortality just by claiming, by grabbing hold, by believing in Jesus Christ and what He did on your behalf.

So let’s define this gospel—this good news—a little further. To truly appreciate the good news just on your own personal level, we must first inform you of your status—the same status of every person who has ever lived. Here, again in its briefest form, is what God tells us about our situation. He actually states it in two different ways in the same chapter.

**Romans 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:**

**Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**

Two questions would immediately come to the mind of the non-believer who is curious about Christi-

anity, and the first is: You’re telling me that God informs us that nobody is righteous, that everybody has sinned; so my question is: what does it mean to *sin*? I hear Christians use that word all the time. I gather that it is not a good thing, but what exactly does it mean? Well, the basic answer is found in ...

**1 John 3:4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.**

To sin means to break the law. In this case, of course, it is referring to God’s laws, which are spelled out in considerable detail in the first five books of the Bible. And yes, you are correct, sin is not a good thing; in fact, it is really BAD news. So if you want to see where you stack up, just start reading from the beginning of the Bible there in Genesis and by the time you reach Exodus, chapter 19, you will begin to see the various ways that men and women have broken God’s laws, ...including yourself.

And by the way, if you hear some Christians telling you that the law has been put away and nailed to the cross, just tell them that I said they are confused. And if they don’t believe it, ask them if it’s okay then if I come over this evening and take their cars, and everything out of their house and claim it as my own. Chances are, they will then agree that at least God’s law forbidding theft is still in effect, and maybe that will get them thinking about the rest of His law as well. Now where was I? Oh yes, so we have answered your first question concerning just what is sin.

God tells us that we have all sinned. “Okay,” you say, “I guess I have sinned, just like everybody else. So my second question then is: So what? So I’ve sinned. So what’s the big deal, since everybody else has sinned also?” Well, my friend, I told you that sin is really BAD news. Here is why I said that: because of six little words found in Romans, chapter 6, and verse 23: Those six little words tell us that “the wages of sin is death;...” I told you it was bad!

So now you know why everyone dies, why we don’t automatically have immortality. All humanity has been under the curse of the death penalty ever since Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden. And when you read the story in Genesis 3, you will see that God warned Adam and Eve that if they disobeyed, they would surely die. Now, I think I know what you’re thinking. You are thinking: “Hey, maybe He did warn them, but that still doesn’t sound like a very good God. I mean, that’s just not very nice of Him to kill *everybody* that has ever lived, just because Adam sinned back there in the Garden.”

I understand that sentiment. But actually, when you get into it somewhat deeper, which is beyond our discussion right now, you will find that it was actually a tremendous act of mercy and compassion on the part of our heavenly Father to give us all the death penalty. And the short reason is simply because God knew that once Adam sinned, that it would necessarily result in all manner of evil, sickness, pain, sorrow and suffering; and that to allow man to live forever in *that* condition would not be very loving at all in the long run. And since God dwells in eternity, He looks at the really long run, the big picture, His Grand Plan.

So He made the provision that He Himself would pay the price required so that everyone could have that immortality that I spoke of earlier—eternal life without disease, without pain, without suffering, without sorrow. So that is why God became one of us in the form of Jesus Christ, to accomplish that work of salvation for the whole world. That’s a lot of love for His creation, isn’t it?

Now back to the requirements to become a Christian, so that you, too, can receive the free gift of salvation-immortality. The first step is for us to actually admit that we are a sinner—which you’ve done. And you now realize that we die because of sin. The only way around death would be if you could keep the laws of God absolutely perfectly your entire life. And I am 100% confident in saying that it is too late for all of us. We have already sinned more times than we could count. Even so, let me hasten to add, it’s not just the external acts you do or don’t do. Sinning also includes your thought-life. Quite frankly, no one yet has been able to live a sinless life—not even close. So the plain fact is that we—the whole world—are lost from the possibility of eternal life. But here is where the good news comes in. Jesus Christ is the only exception. Because while He was born of a human mother, His Father was not a man, but the Most High God. Jesus was therefore born with the ability to not sin, and that is what He did. The good news continues ...

**Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**

You see, there was not one spot of sin in Jesus before the point where He willingly took on himself the sin of the whole world and went to the cross. Therefore, according to God’s own law, Jesus was the perfect and acceptable sacrifice who paid the price for sin. And now I will quote the entire verse 23 of Romans 6, of which we quoted only the first half previously.

**Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

That is why that verse so popular now in the end zones of football stadiums is so powerful. Listen to John 3:16 now with new ears. Because even while we were still lawbreakers, sinners...

**John 3:16 ... God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

We’re halfway through this basic teaching. To be continued...

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