

## Half-Baked Followers of Christ – Part One

"Ephraim is a cake not turned." Hosea 7:8

God said Ephraim was half-baked and unfit for consumption. Paul words it this way: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."<sup>1</sup> This was true of Israel from the beginning. Moses said at the end of his life, "Well I know how defiant and stiffnecked you are: even now, while I am still alive in your midst, you have been defiant toward the LORD; how much more, then, when I am dead!"<sup>2</sup> Joshua, at the end of his life warned, "Then put away the alien gods that you have among you and direct your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."<sup>3</sup>

Idolatry is a manifestation of autonomy; when man rebelled he became an idolater. "Thus said the LORD, the God of Israel: In olden times, your forefathers – Terah, father of Abraham and father of Nahor – lived beyond the Euphrates and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from beyond the Euphrates. . . ." The only kinds of people God saves are idolaters. However when He saves a man He expects him to put away his idols and be faithful to Him. This Israel refused to do, and I fear the same is true for many Christians today.

As Israel began conquering the Promised Land, all went well. God gave them victory after victory. During one of their great battles, "While they were fleeing before Israel. . . the LORD hurled huge stones on them from the sky. . . more perished from the hailstones than were killed by the Israelite weapons."<sup>4</sup> War, under the best of circumstances, is a horrible enterprise, and evidently the nation tired of it. "However, they failed to dispossess the Canaanites. . . they imposed tribute on the Canaanites; but they did not dispossess them."<sup>5</sup> Finally, they came to the place where they could no longer remove the pagans, even when they tried: "Know for certain that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out before you; they shall become a snare and a trap for you, a scourge to your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land that the LORD your God has given you." God would no longer allow them to obtain victory.

Paul said, "Brethren, do not be weary in well-doing."<sup>6</sup> The Christian life is continuous warfare. Like Israel, you can tire of it and make peace with the world, compromising in what you think are unimportant areas of life. You notice in Israel that their partial obedience led to idolatry, for the remaining pagans negatively influenced them. You can call a half-baked commitment to Christ idolatry, or you can say that it leads to idolatry; it makes no difference. In either case, you are an idolater. There comes a time in every man's life when his lack of total commitment to the will of Christ results in God no longer granting him the chance for victory. I do not know when a man crosses that line, but it is a line you do not want to cross.

<sup>1</sup> I Timothy 3:5 <sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 31:27 <sup>3</sup> Joshua 24:23 <sup>4</sup> Joshua 24:2-3 <sup>5</sup> Joshua 10:11

<sup>6</sup> Joshua 16:10; 17:13 <sup>7</sup> Joshua 23:13 <sup>8</sup> II Thessalonians 3:13

## Half-Baked Followers of Christ – Part Two

"Ephraim is among the peoples; He is rotting away. Ephraim is like a cake – Incapable of turning." Hosea 7:8

Commenting on the nation of Israel, the Psalmist said, they "...mingled with the nations and learned their ways. They worshiped their idols, which became a snare for them... Thus they became defiled by their acts, debauched through their deeds."<sup>1</sup> These words are a fitting commentary on Ephraim. Ephraim was half-baked; she was burned on one side and uncooked on the other.

This in turn is a fitting commentary on most Christians today. Their lives are so intermingled with the world that they are "defiled by their acts, debauched through their deeds." They have deceived themselves in believing that they can serve God on their terms. They pursue the values of the world, evaluating their personal worth by their wealth, position, and intellect.

Nothing in Scripture suggests that God will accept people with this attitude. He rejected Israel on the Exodus, and later the northern tribes of Israel (referred to as Ephraim by Hosea), because they insisted on serving God on their terms. Such thinking is a contradiction of terms; it is like saying, "Honest men are liars," or "It was so hot that I froze."

God did not create you so He can help you obtain what you want. He created you so that you can do what He wants. To think that you can accept Christ as your personal Savior, and then proceed to live your life as you please is to emulate Ephraim, "a cake incapable of turning." As Jesus so clearly warns: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 106:35-36, 39 <sup>2</sup> Matthew 6:24