

Defender

“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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August

November

March

June

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Speak the Word with All Authority (Part 1)

Lee Moses

Listening to much of what passes for preaching today, one is hard-pressed to discern any real authority behind the preaching. There are many talented pop psychologists in the pulpits, along with inspiring motivational speakers, skilled trainers in steps to business success, educated theologians, and gifted orators and storytellers. Some of them are much like those of whom the Bible speaks, who “speak great swelling words of vanity” (2 Pet. 2:18). That is, their words are pretty, but useless. When authority is lacking, preaching cannot be what God intends it to be; nor is it likely to do what God intends it to do.

As Paul addressed Titus, a Gospel preacher laboring on the island of Crete, he told him of a number of “things which become sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1ff). As Titus was in turn to preach those things to those on Crete, there was a specific manner in which he was to preach: “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (2:15). As the Lord’s church is entrusted with proclaiming the Gospel (Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 8:4;

2 Tim. 2:2), it is likewise imperative that the church speak the things which become sound doctrine, and that the church speak them with all authority. We will consider six requisites to speaking the Word with all authority.

Appeal to the Authority of God’s Word

Before authoritative preaching can occur, preaching must be backed by sufficient authority. Why should anyone give heed to a preacher who is merely expressing his opinions, regardless of how educated those opinions might be? A preacher is not authorized to preach his opinions; he is authorized to “Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2) and what authority that is! “For the word of God is quick [living—ASV], and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

Notice how the Old Testament prophets made clearly known that their Word was actually God’s Word, thus unquestionably authoritative. Micaiah implored

King Ahab, “Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD” (1 Kin. 22:19). Elisha told the king of Israel and his men, “Hear ye the word of the LORD” (2 Kin. 7:1). Other prophets similarly appealed to the authority of God as they spoke His Word; including Moses (Exo. 5:1; 10:3; 11:4; 32:27), Joshua (7:13; 24:2), Samuel (1 Sam. 10:18; 15:1-2), Nathan (2 Sam. 7:5; 12:7), Elijah (1 Kin. 17:14; 21:19; 2 Kin. 1:4), Isaiah (1:10; 28:14; 39:5; 66:5), Jeremiah (7:2; 10:1; 29:4; 44:24), Ezekiel (6:3; 25:3; 36:1), and Amos (1:3; 3:1; 7:16).

Christ’s apostles continued to make known the origin and authority of the New Testament, which they received from God and delivered to man. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, “we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16), and “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (14:37). Paul commended the Thessalonians:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye

Continued on Page 4



Notes From the Editor

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Salvation: The Need

The apostle Paul wrote, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). If God is going to save man by “the foolishness of preaching,” then it necessitates there is a need for salvation on man’s part. Let us study and consider the need for salvation on man’s part.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). The crowning part of that creation week was the creation of man. “So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (1:27). After man’s creation, “God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (1:31). During this time there was harmony and fellowship between God and man. It seems to have been the practice of God coming to meet with His creation on a daily basis as “they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (3:8).

Satan, however, was not content with the situation and as the adversary (1 Pet. 5:8) of both God and man brings temptation on this beautiful relationship and situation. “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Gen. 3:1). Satan uses the three avenues of temptation available to him: the desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes, and the vainglory of life (arrogance of material possessions—LEB):

Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

We see each of these temptations Satan used in Eve’s succumbing to the sin placed before her:

And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Gen. 3:6).

By Eve’s realization the “tree *was* good for food,” Satan was tempting her with the lust or desires of the flesh. Satan used the lust or desires of the eyes by letting her see the tree was “pleasant to the eyes.” When Eve saw the tree was “desired to make one wise,” Satan was using the pride or arrogance of life. Thus, by the use of these three temptations, Eve gave in to sin. She

then gave it to Adam, and he also sinned.

We should also mention that Satan tempted Jesus using these same three avenues in Matthew 4. When Satan attempts to get Jesus to turn the stones into bread, he is using the lust of the flesh. Satan shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and promised to give them to Jesus if He will fall down and worship him is the lust of the eyes. By tempting Jesus to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, Satan uses the pride of life. Jesus overcame each of these temptations by saying, “It is written.” Eve could have overcome the temptations in essentially the same way by repeating what she had already said, “God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die” (Gen. 3:3). Eve failed, ate of the tree, and sinned; likewise, Adam sinned.

God had stated to man they could eat of every tree of the garden, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (2:17). Thus, death was the punishment for eating of that one tree even as Eve stated to the serpent. The essential aspect of death is separation. Physical death occurs when the spirit separates from the body (Jam. 2:26);

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

likewise, spiritual death is when we are separated from God. Isaiah records, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2). After God passed judgment upon the three (Adam, Eve, and Satan), it records:

Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming

sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3:23-24).

Adam and Eve were separated from God, so they died spiritually. Also, being separated from the tree of life, they died physically. This sin of Adam did not change man's nature as some wish to claim. However, all accountable people do sin.

Even as Adam and Eve, prior to their sin, lived in a state of innocence, so even now when one is conceived and born into this world, he is in a state of innocence. As the psalmist rehearses Israel's unfaithfulness, he states:

Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, And shed innocent blood, *even* the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood (Psa. 106:37-38).

The Israelites were guilty of sin in sacrificing their children to idols. However, God gives us the insight that the children were *innocent*. This word means they were pure, clean, free. This word could not have been used by God if those children were conceived/ born in sin as some have taught.

On two occasions, Jesus taught the innocence of infants as recorded by Matthew. The first concerned entering the kingdom of God. He said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 18:3). *Little children* is a word that is used of infants as well as children below the age of puberty. Therefore, to enter God's kingdom, one must become as a little child or infant. The simple question then is do we become

wicked sinners or innocent to enter that kingdom? It is obvious that one must become innocent to enter God's kingdom. Thus, babies are born innocent and not guilty of sin or inheriting sin.

On another instance, Jesus said, "Suffer [Allow—LEB] little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (19:14). While in the previous passage one had to become as an infant to **enter** the kingdom, in this passage the kingdom **consists** of such infants. The question again would be if the kingdom consists of sinners or if it consists of those who are innocent? Again, the answer is obvious that the kingdom consists of those who are innocent showing infants are, themselves, innocent.

As a child develops, he reaches an age where they have a knowledge of right and wrong. As Moses rehearses Israel's journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, he reminds them of their failure and one of their excuses in not going immediately into Canaan and God's response. "Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it" (Deu. 1:39). Their children had not developed to the point of knowing the difference between good and evil. God would punish the adults (those who did have a knowledge between good and evil) while those who did not have that knowledge would be allowed to possess the land. If the *children* were sinners, then they would not have been allowed to take possession of the land just like

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their parents. There would be a time coming, however, when they would have that knowledge and thus be accountable for their actions.

In Isaiah's great prophecy of the coming virgin birth of Immanuel, Isaiah also gives a timeframe of the events Ahaz (and the house of David) was concerned about when he adds:

Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings (Isa. 7:15-16).

There is a time in which a child does not know right from wrong, but as he grows, he develops to where he knows to refuse evil and choose good. Satan tempts each one as they develop and learn to refuse evil and choose good. He tempts man today the same way he tempted Eve and as Eve, man succumbs to the temptation and sins. Solomon describes this

process by saying, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Ecc. 7:29).

Thus, the Bible states that all men sin. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). We do notice that sin is something we do and not something we inherit. Paul would also write, "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Gal. 3:22). Since the Scripture is God's Word (2 Tim. 3:16), it is the conclusion of God that all are under sin.

God, however, is holy (one of His basic attributes). The psalmist wrote, "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name" (Psa. 111:9). In Isaiah's vision of God, the seraphim cried one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his

glory" (Isa. 6:3). In John's vision of heaven, the four beasts continued saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4:8). Peter calls upon man to be holy because God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

Being a holy being, God cannot associate with the unholy or sin. Habakkuk would state of God, "*Thou art* of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). As such, man cannot remain in God's presence when he commits sin. Thus, even as with Adam, Eve, and Satan, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have *hid* his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2). The same separation takes place between God and man as man separates himself from God. That is the payment for sin. "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Being in such a state, man has need of salvation.

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Continued from Page 1

heard of us, ye received *it* not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 The. 2:13).

Peter told his readers that he wrote "That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour" (2 Pet. 3:2). John made clear that the final book of the New Testament was "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him" (Rev. 1:1). Evidently the Lord wants people who are hearing His

Word to know that they are hearing His Word.

However, merely saying, "This is the word of the Lord" is hardly sufficient. The Lord strongly condemns those who claim to be speaking His Word when they are not (Deu. 18:20; Jer. 14:14-15; 23:30-32; Acts 15:24; 1 Tim. 1:19-20). So, one must ensure that what he is preaching is God's Word. No, one speaking today will not receive his message directly from God as did the prophets and the apostles, but one can still preach God's Word. He is as certainly and fully equipped as a first-century preacher, if he will apply himself

honestly, sincerely, and wholeheartedly to his task (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3; 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:15). If one is to preach with authority, he will preach a Biblical sermon, not a speech lightly seasoned with Scriptures. He will show what the Scriptures say and teach. If one is to speak with "all authority," he must remember where "all authority" lies and it lies with Christ (Mat. 28:18; compare with 1 Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1:22-23).

Not only is the church to speak with all authority, but it is also to exhort and rebuke with all authority (Tit. 2:15). What is to motivate one to heed any

exhortation or rebuke unless there is convincing authority underlying that exhortation or rebuke? When an exhortation or rebuke can be shown to be based upon the authority of God's Word, those who are interested in doing what is right before God will be sufficiently compelled (Acts 2:40-41; 2 Cor. 7:11; Rev. 2:29).

Use Scriptures Correctly and Convincingly

Some preachers, while making it a point to use Scripture in their sermon, and thus to appeal to the authority of God's Word, fail to use their Scriptures correctly or convincingly. This writer recently heard a *televangelist* making a strange assertion regarding God's statement, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land" (Exo. 3:8). The speaker claimed that since God said He was going to bring Israel up, it meant He was going to encourage them before He brought them out of Egypt. This man then went on to *preach a sermon* about how we need to "lift ourselves up" before God will "bring us out" of our affliction.

The above illustrates how one can use Scripture in a sermon, sometimes even quite a bit of Scripture, yet fail to deliver a Scriptural sermon. What are hearers to do with a sermon that is filled with misapplied Scriptures? If they are "more noble" hearers, they will compare what the speaker says with what the Scripture says, realize that what the speaker says "ain't so and reject it" (Acts 17:11).

This is a danger not only for false teachers, but also for those who are essentially preaching the

Truth, yet misapplying Scriptures to get there. Some common misapplications of Scripture include saying Proverbs 22:6 teaches the impossibility of apostasy for a properly-reared child ("Train up a child in the way he should go: And when he is old, he will not depart from it"); saying 1 Corinthians 2:9 is about heaven ("eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"); and saying Revelation 2:10 merely means one must be faithful until he dies ("be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life"). One must be sure to use Scriptures with their intended meaning and show the hearers why any extended application follows. Remember, even the devil can quote Scripture correctly with false application (Mat. 4:6).

Correct use of the Scriptures is not limited to each individual reference. Sometimes individual Scriptures may be taught correctly, yet the sermon as a whole may fail to teach what the Bible teaches. If preaching topically, one must ensure that his approach is what the New Testament teaches on that topic. If preaching expositively, one must ensure that he teaches what that passage teaches.

For one to preach authoritatively, he must not only use Scriptures correctly, he must also use them convincingly. Once Apollos correctly learned the doctrine of Christ, "he mightily convinced the Jews, *and that* publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:28). Shortly after Saul's (Paul's) conversion, "Saul increased the more in strength, and

confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ" (9:22), and he continued to reason convincingly from the Scriptures through his missionary journeys (13:16-42; 17:2-4; 19:8-10). God intends for His Word to be preached convincingly, and the cynical people of today certainly need to be convinced, perhaps more than ever.

To be convincing, Scriptures must usually be set in their context. There may be times when a speaker familiar with his hearers can skip some background information, knowing they have heard it before. But, it is important that they know the context in which a Scripture is given. If hearers can know the background behind a saying of Christ, or behind an inspired verse from an apostle, they will be better able to see how that passage teaches what the speaker says it does. It is unfortunate and unnecessary when a hearer responds, "How do I know this Scripture means what this preacher is telling me?"

Also, to be convincing, preaching must be logical. Jesus was the Master Logician. Consider how He dealt with those advocating religious error (Mat. 22:15-33, 41-45). At the conclusion of His refutations, "no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any *man* from that day forth ask him any more *questions*" (22:46). One must consider the Scriptures, realize they teach by implication, and draw those conclusions which are warranted by the evidence. Then he must show his hearers why they should arrive at the same conclusions.

Union City, TN

Jacob's Vision of God (Genesis 28:10-22)

Robert L. Whiteside

It is most likely that Jacob slipped away without much preparation. If Esau learned of their plans, he might slay Jacob rather than let him escape, even if his father was still living. Whatever substance Jacob had gathered, he had to leave behind. The birthright which he had bought of Esau, and the blessings of the first born which he had obtained from Isaac by fraud, seemed now to be of no value to him, but only a source of trouble. Rebekah, who thought she was working a smart trick to be a party in the sending away of her beloved son, Jacob, with no prospects of ever seeing him again.

If the student will consult the map and compute the distance from Beer-sheba to Bethel, he will see that Jacob must have spent at least one night somewhere along the route. It does not seem that Jacob took any servants with him but made the journey alone—a lonely journey for a man who was not in the habit of making long journeys. Dangers from wild beasts and robbers beset every step of that long journey. “And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set” (28:10). This certain place was near Luz, or Bethel. For some reason, which is not recorded, he did not go into the city to spend the night, but slept out in the open country, with a stone for a pillow. It would not be hard for you to imagine some of the thoughts that passed through his mind before he dropped off to sleep. He was a fugitive from the wrath of his only brother. It must

have occurred to him that he, prompted by his mother, had played a sorry trick on himself. Nevertheless, his thoughts did not keep him awake—he slept.

There are dreams and dreams. In some dreams—too numerous to discuss here—special revelations were made. Some outstanding dreams are those of Joseph, Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar. Jacob's dream was not just an ordinary dream. In his dream, Jacob saw a “ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it” (28:12). What was the meaning of this ladder and the angels ascending and descending on it? The scene likely suggested to Jacob that there was a close connection between heaven and earth, and that heavenly beings were not so far away as to have no interest in things on the earth. Jacob doubtless went to sleep thinking that he was a lonely, forsaken man. This scene would remind him that heaven was interested in him—that Jehovah had not forsaken him. Was that ladder, as some think, a type of Christ Jesus, who, in His deity and His humanity, connects heaven and earth? No one knows, for the Bible says nothing on that idea. We are safe in letting it mean to us just what it naturally meant to Jacob.

Jehovah stood above the ladder, and introduced Himself or identified Himself, to Jacob as “the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac” (28:13). In those days it was a common idea

amongst the people that each race or nation of people had its god or gods. This may account for the way Jehovah identified Himself to Jacob; He was the God of Abraham and of those who descended from him through Isaac and Jacob. Jehovah renewed the land promise—the promise which had been made to Abraham and then to Isaac. “The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed” (28:13). Jehovah had said to Abraham: “All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever” (13:15). This land promise was to be fulfilled to their descendants, and not to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as individuals. Jehovah said to Abraham: “Unto thy seed have I given this land” (15:18). In this dream Jehovah also promised Jacob a numerous posterity, as He had also promised Abraham and Isaac. “And to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (28:14). In commenting on this same promise as made to Abraham (22:18), Paul says: “Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16). Christ Jesus was, therefore, according to the flesh, of the seed of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. Considering Jacob's loneliness and the cause of his flight from home, the following promise would be especially comforting to him: “I am with thee, and will keep thee,

whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of” (Gen. 28:15). This would give Jacob full assurance that no serious evil would befall him; to the extent that he believed Jehovah, fear would be banished from his mind. Later, his faith must have weakened somewhat; for he feared Laban (31:31), and he feared to meet Esau. However, even though his faith did not always show full strength, the promise would be a continued comfort to him. The promise would also give him comfort in that it assured him that he would some day be back in his native land.

When Jacob awoke out of his sleep, he was filled with fear. “Surely Jehovah is in this place.” “How dreadful is this place!” Men have always feared when they realized they were in the presence of a heavenly being. Most people are more or less nervous in the presence of a high official or a man of great fame. It is not possible for a man to meet Jehovah face to face with the ease and feeling of comradeship with which one meets a familiar friend. Even the beloved John, though he had been intimately associated with the man Christ Jesus, when he found himself in the presence of the glorified Jesus, was so overcome with fear that he fell at His feet as one dead (Rev. 1:12-17). Let no one, therefore, think he could meet the Lord with the same calmness with which he meets a friendly neighbor. It is not to Jacob’s discredit that he was afraid; any man would have been filled with awe. Jacob felt that he was in

God’s dwelling place—at the very gate of heaven. The memory of how he had so recently basely deceived his father in securing the blessing perhaps added to his fear.

“Jacob rose up early in the morning” (Gen. 28:18). It is not likely that Jacob slept any more that night. He would have been too excited, and there was too much to think about, for sleep to come easily. He set up for a pillar the stone which he had used for a pillow and poured oil on the top of it as a dedication ceremony. Using stones as memorials, or monuments, was common among the descendants of Abraham. Later, as Jacob returned from Padan-aram, he and Laban made a heap of stones as a witness between them (31:45-52). For another example, see Joshua 4:5-9. Jacob named the place of his dream Bethel, but formerly it was called Luz. Bethel means “house of God.” Moses speaks of Bethel in connection with Abraham, but he was using the name by which the place was known when he wrote. It was not known as Bethel till Jacob gave it that name. It is not likely that anyone knew for a long time that Jacob had given the place the name Bethel. It would, therefore, continue for some time to be called Luz.

In the age in which Jacob lived, and for centuries thereafter, the common idea was that each tribe or nation had its god, or gods, or that certain gods ruled over certain districts. With the whole world saturated with that idea, it would be remarkable if Jacob did not think of Jehovah as a local deity. His statement that the place of his dream was God’s house and the very gate of heaven, and that

Jehovah would be his God, indicates that he had a local idea of Jehovah. Also, he thought he had come unknowingly into the place where Jehovah abode. Now, if this Jehovah, the God of Abraham and Isaac, would go with him and keep him in the way and give him bread and raiment, so he would come again to his father’s house in peace, Jehovah would be his God, and the stone which he had set up would be God’s house, and he would give Him a tenth of all he possessed. To say, as some have, that Jacob’s *if* shows he was trying to drive a bargain with Jehovah, is a rather harsh criticism of him. We must seek to understand him, not in the light of present-day knowledge, but in the light of the thought of the day. Viewed in that light, his speech is rather a remarkable speech, and his vow was all that one could reasonably expect. His proposing to give a tenth was of his own volition; he himself named the amount. Also, there is not a hint that Jehovah was displeased with the manner in which Jacob made that vow. The very nature of a vow made it voluntary. The law of the vow as later given through Moses makes this plain:

When thou shalt vow a vow unto Jehovah thy God, thou shalt not be slack to pay it: for Jehovah thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt observe and do; according as thou hast vowed unto Jehovah thy God, a freewill-offering, which thou hast promised with thy mouth (Deu. 23:21-23).

Deceased

Gospel Advocate, August 13, 1942

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Speak the Word with All Authority (Part 2)

Lee Moses

“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Tit. 2:15). Although in recent years there has been a lamentable lack, and deliberate downplaying, of authority in preaching; it is imperative that the church speak the Word with all authority. In part 1, we began to consider some requisites to speaking the Word with all authority. We noted that one must appeal to the authority of God’s Word and use Scriptures correctly and convincingly. In this article, we will note two additional requisites to speaking the Word with all authority.

Limit Appeals to the Authority of Men

As has been previously noted, one preaching must appeal to the authority of God’s Word. Negatively stated, he must limit his appeals to the authority of men. Christ noted that there are only two possible sources of ultimate authority: “from heaven, or of men” (Mat. 21:25).

When the scribes and other Jewish leaders taught, they depended upon the authority of men. To them and their hearers, no sermon had any authority or value

until they added, “The Rabbis have a tradition,” or “The wise men say,” or some similarly-worded support. One rabbinical writing reads thusly: “Rabbi Zeira says, on the authority of Rabbi Jose bar Rabbi Chanina, and Rabbi Ba or Rabbi Chija on the authority of Rabbi Jochanan...” There are many who preach and teach the same way today. Their sermons are constructed almost entirely of “Lenski says,” “Barnes says,” and “Coffman says,” and because these men who seem to have a certain view on a matter, the hearers are expected to agree. This is not how the Lord taught. Discerning ears could tell a marked difference between the teaching of the prominent religious leaders of the first century and the teaching of Christ: “And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine” (7:28-29).

When men are the ultimate authority, communication between God and man is severed. This was what the religious leaders of Christ’s day had caused to happen. When they felt that His disciples had done something wrong, they appealed to the authority of men:

“Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread” (15:2). However, Christ responded, “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” (15:3). Their reliance upon human authority rendered void their attempts to commune with God, as well as the attempts of those who followed their teaching (15:5, 9, 14). Authoritative preaching strives to bring souls into communion with God, not to sever God’s call to the lost or precious fellowship with the saved.

That said there may be points within a sermon in which it might be appropriate to appeal to the authority of men in a sense. Paul once appealed to the fact that the men of Athens had erected an altar “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” as evidence of their religious ignorance and need for the One True God (Acts 17:23). In the same sermon, Paul appealed to one of “their” poets who attested that man is the offspring of God (17:28-29). To Titus on the island of Crete, Paul wrote, “One of themselves, *even* a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians *are* always liars, evil beasts,

Continued on Page 5



Notes From the Editor

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Salvation: God's Grace

Our omniscient God, creating man with free moral agency, knew man would commit sin. As such, He also knew man would need to be reconciled back to Himself. This could only be accomplished by having man's sins removed, forgiven, or washed away.

Grace has been defined in multiple ways. One could summarize that it is favor rendered by one who need not do so; a benefit or blessing to one who needs such; merciful behavior of a more powerful person toward another; a gift; favor; help. When looking at it from a Christian standpoint, it is God's mercy and favor in God saving man from sin by Jesus Christ. It is by God's grace that man is saved. Paul, in writing to the Ephesian brethren, states that they were "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). This condition was because of the way they lived. They committed trespasses and sins (2:2-3). "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us" (2:4) provided man a Savior. "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)" (2:5). This salvation is not something we could do for ourselves, "Not of

works, lest any man should boast" (2:9). Thus, as verse 5 states and repeated in verse 8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God."

This marvelous grace of God was not limited to the Ephesians but was universal in nature. So, Paul would write, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Tit. 2:11). The Hebrews' writer gives us the reason Jesus came to this earth when he states, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). Jesus shed His blood for every man, not just a select few. Thus, by God's grace, Christ died for every man; if we are saved, we are saved by God's grace.

In Genesis 3, Eve sinned in succumbing to Satan's temptations, and she give the forbidden fruit to Adam, and he also sinned. Since that sin, all men have sinned. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). However, God already had a plan in place from eternity to save sinful man.

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will (Eph. 1:4-5).

This does not teach, as some claim, that God preselected a group to be saved while the remaining are chosen by God to be lost. Instead, God chose that man would be offered forgiveness from the consequences of his own sin (Eph. 1:7;

Rom. 6:23). The means for achieving this redemption would not be based on personal merit or by means of stockpiling benevolent works (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5). The reception of forgiveness would be given to all who partake of the "in Christ" relationship (Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 2:10). This plan was in the mind of God before the world began (Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:20). This "in Christ" relationship is entered when the penitent believer is baptized into Christ (Rom 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27).

Peter would write:

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied (1 Pet. 1:2).

Peter is discussing those who are chosen by God's foreknowledge. The foreknowledge of God is simply God's plan and His preparations that He made from eternity and through time. However, this is not an individual choosing by God without any conditions and response by man. God did not select individuals to heaven or hell based upon his capriciousness. That election by God's foreknowledge was the saving of sinful man by the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross, as Peter would later write:

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1:18-20).

Christ, before the foundation of the world, was chosen to redeem man from his sin. This was the eternal purpose of God: "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:11).

From the beginning of time, God began revealing that plan as we see the prophecy that the seed of woman would destroy the power of the devil. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). Then God made a promise to Abram, "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (12:3). Throughout the Old Testament, God continued revealing His plan through the prophets He sent to the people.

The grace of God culminated in God sending His Son to this world to die on the cross for sinful mankind. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Paul would state: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). John would write, "In this was manifested the love of God

toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9).

The question we face is whether God's saving grace is conditional or unconditional. Consider if God's saving grace is unconditional. The result is that every person would be saved. Notice again what Paul wrote to Titus: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Tit. 2:11). God's grace that brings salvation has appeared to all men (not just some). Thus, all men would have to be saved. Additionally consider what the Hebrews' writer states concerning Christ: "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). Again, it is not some but every man. Thus, it would not matter how one lived, how evil or wicked they might have been in their life, they would still be saved. Certainly, this goes against our sensibilities as we know that it would not be just for the most wicked who have lived spending eternity in heaven. This idea also directly contradicts what Jesus said:

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Mat. 7:13-14).

So, we know that God's saving grace is conditional and not unconditional. However, let us consider further evidence of such. Going back to Titus 2:11 and God's grace that saves, Paul writes:

Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for

that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (2:12-13).

God's grace teaches us what we must deny, how we must live, and what our expectation must be. If we do not do these things, then God's grace will not save us. God's grace will save when we meet the conditions (deny, live, and look).

The first instance of the word *grace* in the Scriptures is the account of Noah. Moses records, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen. 6:8). When we delve into the situation, we learn that the grace Noah *found* was not unconditional but was conditional. The next verse tells us, "These *are* the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man *and* perfect in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God" (6:9). The reason Noah found grace in God's sight was because he was just, perfect (upright, blameless), and walked with God. If he had not lived this way (conditions), he would not have "found grace" in God's sight. Because the earth was "filled with violence" (6:13), and "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually" (6:5), God said He would destroy man. Because of the type of man Noah was, God instructed Him to build an ark and gave him the directions for this great boat. It then states, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (6:22). Noah doing what God commanded him (God's conditions) received God's grace to the saving of himself and his family (1 Pet. 3:20).

Consider Israel's conquest of Jericho regarding God's grace. Jericho was a gift of God (God's grace) to the Israelites and Joshua. "And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I

have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, *and* the mighty men of valour” (Jos. 6:2). This city was God’s gift to Joshua and thus to Israel. Being a gift of God, that is a demonstration of God’s grace. Was this grace (gift) of God unconditional or conditional? The reality of the situation is that it would have been physically impossible for it to be totally unconditional. In that situation, God would have had to miraculously transported Israel into Jericho, while eliminating all those who lived there. God did not do that, instead He gave Israel conditions they had to fulfill to receive the city. Those conditions or requirements are listed in Joshua 6:3-5. Essentially, they would have to compass the city a total of thirteen times in seven days. At the end of the seventh time on the seventh day, they were to blow the trumpets, make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and shout a great shout, then they would go into the city and take it. These are conditions Israel must fulfill to receive the grace of God—in this situation, Jericho.

Today, to be a recipient of God’s saving grace, one must be a member of the church of Christ. Paul wrote:

Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:2-4).

He is writing the Corinthian Church of Christ and gives several descriptions of them. One of those

states the church is the beneficiaries of God’s grace that comes by Christ. The church is where “the grace of God” (1:4) is located and is given “unto you [the church]” (1:3). Therefore, if we want to receive God’s grace, we must become members of the church.

To the Roman brethren, Paul states:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God (Rom. 3:23-25).

He informs us (as we noticed in the article showing the need for salvation) that we have sinned. Our need, then, is to be saved/justified. This justification is by God’s grace, but it is “in Christ Jesus.” Thus, God’s grace is only found in Christ and outside of Christ we do not have God’s grace. Paul later reiterates this very point when he writes, “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:1). Thus, the condition of receiving God’s grace is being “in Christ,” and spiritually being outside of Christ there is no grace. The question remains as to how we get “into Christ”? There are only two passages in all the Bible that gives us the answer to this vital question. The first is found in Romans 6:3, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” Paul clearly states we are baptized to get into Christ. This is our response to the offer of God’s grace. He also revealed, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For

as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). It is literally that we are children of God by **the faith**. That is, we become children of God by God’s Word. When we are obedient to what God says, we become His children. When does that take place? It is when we are baptized into Christ.

God’s grace that brings salvation is “in Christ” and we are baptized to get “into Christ.” This also harmonizes with what we learned in 1 Corinthians 1:2-4 that God’s grace is in the church of Christ. Notice two aspects of this that harmonizes with how we get into Christ. First, later in the 1 Corinthian letter, Paul states, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). We are told that the body is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). This is not Holy Spirit baptism as some teach but by the agency (not element) of the Spirit we are baptized in water (the element) to enter the one body or church. The agency of the Spirit is the Word of God.

Additionally, this grace of God that brings salvation is seen to be conditional when the apostles began preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ after having received the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4) on the day of Pentecost of Acts 2. Peter and the other apostles preached that Word of God to those Jews convincing them of sin (specifically crucifying the Son of God who God raised from the dead). After being convicted of their sin and thus their need for God’s saving grace. They asked the

question, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?” They are instructed (the Word of God by the agency of the Holy Spirit) that they must repent and be baptized (the conditions God has given to receive His saving grace). “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (2:38). We find that about 3,000 met those conditions, “Then they

that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls” (2:41). We then find that these 3,000 souls who met God’s conditions were then added by God to the church. “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (2:47). The church is where the grace of God is located (1 Cor. 1:2-4) and they

were baptized in water to appropriate that grace.

Without doubt, we are saved by God’s grace and without that “grace of God that bringeth salvation” (Tit. 2:11) no one would be saved. However, we must meet the conditions God has established to receive His saving grace. Those conditions are the same as Peter preached on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. When we meet those conditions, we then receive God’s saving grace.

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Continued from Page 1
slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (Tit. 1:12-13). Paul here quotes Epimenides, known as one of the “seven wise men of Greece.” Epimenides accurately described the Cretans, and Paul used his description to emphasize to Titus the need for rebuking them. Likewise, one preaching today can appeal to what men have said without necessarily denigrating the authority of the preaching. Perhaps a word might need a lexical definition. Perhaps a commentator might be able to offer insight or helpful clarification regarding the background of a passage. When dealing with matters of a scientific nature, it might be essential to refer to those who are well-educated in that science. One might appeal to the authorities of a false religion to show the falseness of that religion, as O.C. Lambert did so admirably in his volumes pitting *Catholicism Against Itself*. However, any such appeals to the authority of men will be made in a very limited sense ul-

timately, such appeals point to the supreme authority of God.

Incidentally, appeals to the authority of men would include appeals to one’s own authority; such as one’s own prestigious education, superior intelligence, preaching tenure, and similar accolades of which some preachers enjoy reminding others. Biblical authority to preach does not lie in any of these achievements; it lies only in the message which is preached (1 Cor. 1:21). To meet the mandate to speak the Word with all authority, one must curtail the appeals to the authority of men, ensuring that any appeals that are made are limited to those that uphold the authority of God’s Word.

Leave No Gospel Truth Un-preached

When thoroughness is essential to the success of a quest, one might urge, “Leave no stone unturned.” One might well likewise urge, “Leave no Gospel truth un-preached.” Paul reminded the Ephesian elders, “Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. For I

have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27). The reason Paul cites for his innocence implies that if he had shunned to declare unto them any of the counsel of God, he would have been guilty of their blood. Thoroughness is most certainly essential.

There are some who fail to preach all the counsel of God because they are too lazy to study to learn all the counsel of God. They know the Scriptures on a few selected topics well enough to bring the house down when they preach them. Unfortunately, they remain stagnant in their own lack of knowledge and thus fail to build their hearers’ knowledge. However, Scripture admonishes, “Study [“give diligence”—ASV] to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

It is frightfully alarming, in light of the heavy responsibility incumbent upon those preaching the Gospel, that many so-called *Gospel preachers* deliberately avoid certain touchy subjects and Biblical pas-

sages. Actually, such men often will refer to themselves by more innocuous descriptions than Gospel preachers, and fittingly so, as the term truly does not describe them. Brother Dub McClish has aptly referred to such men as “semi-gospel sharers.” That is, they do not really preach, as preaching implies authoritativeness they *share*; much like each participant in a focus group has an opportunity to share his opinion. The message they bring is not truly the Gospel, it is merely a *semi-gospel* for those “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7).

Some will preach strongly against sin generally. They let it be known that sin is very, very bad. However, they rarely let the hearers know anything that specifically constitutes sin, and when they do, they certainly will not mention anything in which then hearers or their families are likely involved. They will not mention immodest dress, *social* drinking, or marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Such preachers deprive hearers of what they need. Because Paul had preached all the counsel of God, he was able to tell the Ephesian elders, “I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*” (Acts 20:20). Indeed, “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). If any Scripture is being withheld, hearers are not being properly taught, reproof, corrected, or instructed in righteousness, and thus cannot become complete Christians.

One must deal with issues facing the church. Faithful preaching of the Word comes from the Sacred Text, but it requires more than reciting the words of the Sacred Text. A preacher must also explain the meaning of the text (Neh. 8:8), derive the correct implications from the text (Acts 2:25-31), and make appropriate application of the text (2:36, 38-40). This ancient text deals in some way with any issue the church might face (2 Pet. 1:3), and so must the church deal with those issues. Bill Jackson accurately referred to those who “fashion lessons in careful avoidance of the hurtful issues before the church, and thus...further ‘Dale Carnegieism’ rather than the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ!” Yes, *hobby riders* have done damage to the body of Christ, but this does not excuse the omission of controversial subjects from the pulpit. There were obviously a number of people in Thyatira who did not agree with the false teacher “Jezebel,” yet nonetheless allowed her to spew her venom. Christ held their tolerance against them (Rev. 2:20). We must address issues that arise, and call names when necessary (Rom. 16:17; 2 The. 3:14). Sometimes people may hear a preacher addressing a serious problem but will have no idea what the problem is and will not perceive the seriousness of the threat until they are given specific examples. They remain insufficiently warned, and whoever knew, yet failed to warn, will be held accountable for that failure: “When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his

iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand” (Eze. 3:18). Authoritative preaching does not hesitate to address specific issues threatening the welfare of the bride of Christ.

While there are far too many who accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative of God’s Word, there are also some who are exclusively negative. However, one should bear in mind that the Gospel is “good news” intended to provide hope for those who will conform themselves to it (compare with Ezra 10:2; Rom. 12:12; Col. 1:5, 23; Heb. 6:18-19). Even the Old Testament prophets who often provided a gloomy message of impending doom would provide glimmers of hope and promise for the faithful. Just as with positive-only preaching, being always and only negative eradicates authority from preaching. As with the “boy who cried wolf,” eventually people will tune out and turn off. For one never once, or very little, to mention the grace, mercy, or love of God, is to leave significant Gospel truths un-preached. However, the exclusively negative preacher is a much rarer bird in this day and age than the exclusively positive preacher. Oftentimes preachers who are labeled “too negative” are merely guilty of addressing sins which are most prominent.

If one leaves Gospel truths un-preached, what does he do to the authority of God’s Word? (1) He rejects the authority of God’s Word, because he fails to do what it says (Mat. 28:20), (2) He de-means the authority of God’s Word, because he relegates portions of it as unimportant (contrast with Pro. 30:5), (3) He obscures the authority of God’s Word, be-

cause he fails to make it known (compare with 2 Cor. 4:4), and (4) He removes the authority of God's Word from his preaching,

because he serves as his own authority as to what is important, thus rendering his own preaching baseless and void. The church and

her elders must demand and stand by men who will leave nothing unpreached.

Union City, TN

One of Man's Greatest Privileges

Noah A. Hackworth

One of the greatest privileges God has ever given to His people is prayer. It is the *connecting link* between heaven and earth. A faithful child of God, unless he is unconscious or too ill to think, will never go through a whole day without prayer, whether it occurs at a set time (Acts 3:1), in public (1 Tim. 2:8), or in secret (Mat. 6:6); we must not forget to pray (1 The. 5:17). When Paul directed the Thessalonians to pray unceasingly, he used the word *adialeiptos* which means "without interruption, unceasingly, constantly." "The word was used of that which was continually and repeatedly done; e.g., the uninterrupted payment of hard taxes; the continual service or ministry of an official; a continual uninterrupted cough" (Reinecker & Rogers).

Unfortunately, prayer has become the victim of a wide range of thought. There are many who believe that (1) anybody can pray; (2) there are no restrictions on prayer; (3) God hears the prayers of sinners as well as saints; (4) there is no precise verbiage used in prayer; (5) prayers may be offered to God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. All five of these points are either partially or totally false. One cannot be living in deliberate rebellion against God and expect his prayers to be heard (answered); there is no Biblical evidence that God ever authorized a sinner to pray; verbiage is important because God is not a fellow human being, a good buddy to whom we can speak

any way we desire. We cannot come into the presence of God as though we were coming into the presence of a casual friend. God is holy, and when we approach Him, we need to "put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exo. 3:5). The Almighty does not permit man to approach Him on his own terms (Jer. 10:23).

In the New Testament, a variety of words are used with reference to prayer. *Proseuchomai* is always used of prayer to God and is the most frequent word in this respect (Rom. 8:26; Eph. 6:18; Phi. 1:9; 1 Tim. 2:8; Heb. 13:18); *dedomai* means to ask or implore; to desire (Mat. 9:38; Acts 8:22; 2 Cor. 5:20); *erotao* means to request or ask a question; *eucharisteo* means to give thanks (Mat. 26:27). Just as important as being familiar with the terms used with reference to prayer, is the need to know (1) what the Bible teaches about prayer; (2) that every Christian must learn what prayer is; (3) that every Christian must learn how to pray; (4) that prayer avails much in its working; (5) that prayers must be according to God's will; (6) that prayer is related to keeping the commandments of the Lord; (7) that Christians are to pray without ceasing.

Prayers Are to be Addressed to God the Father

Prayers are to be addressed to God the Father (Col. 3:17). Jesus demonstrated this in His prayer in John 17. Observe the following expressions:

"Father, the hour is come" (17:1); "And now, Father, glorify thou me" (17:5); "Holy Father, keep them in thy name" (17:11); "That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me" (17:21); "O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee" (17:25). Three times in Gethsemane Jesus said, "My Father" (Mat. 26:39-44); "My Father, if it be possible" (26:39); "My Father, if this cannot pass away" (26:42); "And he left them again, and went away, and prayed a third time, saying again the same words" (26:44). There is no question that Jesus taught His followers to pray to the Father through Him. "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in my name" (John 16:23). Coffman has said:

These words show that Jesus intended that his followers should pray, not to himself, but to the Father in Jesus' name...In all petitions to the Father, the name of Jesus Christ should be mentioned as the ground of the petitioner's right to be heard...Ignoring or by-passing the name of the One Mediator between God and man is presumptuously sinful.

Conclusion

Since God has given us the privilege of coming with all boldness before the throne of His grace, we must take advantage of every opportunity to pray. The world has lost the right to pray, but the saints have not. What a privilege! What a blessing! Let every Christian exercise this right.

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Speak the Word with All Authority (Part 3)

Lee Moses

The Lord's church has a Divine mandate to preach God's Word and how to preach His Word: "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke **with all authority**. Let no man despise thee" (Tit. 2:15). It is crucial that faithful brethren continue to speak the Word with all authority, lest others are given place to despise not only proclaimers of God's Word, but the Word itself. In the past two articles we have considered four requisites to speaking the Word with all authority: (1) Appeal to the authority of God's Word; (2) Use Scriptures correctly and convincingly; (3) Limit appeals to the authority of men; (4) Leave no Gospel truth un-preached. In this article we will consider two final requisites to speaking the Word with all authority.

Speak God's Word Urgently

Paul exhorted Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant [urgent—ASV] in season, out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2). The need of preaching the Gospel is urgent, and the urgency of the Gospel must be impressed upon its hearers if they are to regard it as authoritative.

The outspoken infidel Robert G. Ingersoll once told a group of denominational clergymen that they did not believe what they preached. As one can well imagine, they were all insulted and denied the charge, to which Ingersoll replied, "If I believed that there was a lake of fire called hell, and men who did not believe in Jesus would actually spend eternity in that fire, then I would walk these streets and take hold of every man; I would not turn him loose until I warned him of the wrath to come." Ingersoll had a point—those who are convinced of the truth of any message should act with urgency in proportion to the urgency of that message. Since the warning of judgment to come is so serious, a low level of urgency from the proclaimers of that warning detracts from the urgency of the Gospel. One preaching God's Word is not merely giving advice or suggestions. So, one denigrates the authority of God's Word by presenting it in a manner that implies it is uncertain, or that it is merely one of several possible good choices.

Upon reading of the preaching of such men as Peter, Philip, and

Paul, as recorded in Acts, one can immediately detect an urgency to their preaching—and it lent credence to what they said. Having convicted those on Pentecost of sin, Peter did not relent in his urgency: "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). These two words that describe Peter's actions bespeak dire urgency: (1) He *testified*, here the word meaning, "To exhort with authority in matters of extraordinary importance, frequently with reference to higher powers and or suggestion of peril," and (2) He *exhorted*, meaning, "To urge strongly." Those present could tell that Peter was not merely making a "dinner speech"; he was preaching an authoritative and urgent exhortation that demanded immediate and complete obedience. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (2:41-42).

The number of responses to Peter's preaching brings up another

Continued on Page 4



Notes From the Editor

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Salvation: Hearing

All men commit sin (Rom. 3:23). The wages or payment for that sin is death or spiritual separation from God (Isa. 59:1-2; Jam. 1:15). Man is incapable of doing anything to earn his salvation from sin, so he must rely upon the grace of God to save him (Tit. 2:11; Heb. 2:9). We also know the grace of God that saves is conditional (Tit. 2:11-13); so, man must comply (obey) God's terms of receiving His grace (Rom. 6:17-18; Heb. 5:8-9).

To be able to know God's conditions for our salvation, the very first thing is that we must hear. Jesus recognized the importance of hearing when He repeatedly stated, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Jesus established two aspects regarding hearing, both of which are important. Luke records Jesus as saying, "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke 8:18). They were to take heed **how** they heard because it is important to listen attentively. What Jesus has to say is of vital importance as it deals with the eternal destiny of man. Thus, what is being

said/taught is vital and needs to be given the greatest attention. We must not listen carelessly.

In Mark's account, Jesus is recorded as saying, "And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given" (Mark 4:24). Not only were they to take heed **how** they hear, but they were also to take heed **what** they heard. There are, no doubt, many things of a trivial nature; they simply are not important. Yet, things of a spiritual, eternal nature are far more important. Jesus' question goes to the heart of this, when He asks, "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?" (Mat. 16:26). However, even in hearing about spiritual matters, we must take heed "because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). We are not simply to believe "every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." Because false teachers abound, we must be careful **what** we hear as much as we are to take care **how** we hear.

Christianity, at its very heart, is a taught and learned religion. There is the need for teaching as man cannot guide himself. The wise man Solomon wrote, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death" (Pro. 14:12). When man attempts to live according to man's directions, he ends up in death. Man simply cannot direct himself. Isaiah would put it, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on

him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). As we live our lives, we turn away from the right way of the Lord and thus go astray. Jeremiah's conclusion of this matter is "O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Thus, man needs to be taught the "right ways of the Lord" (Acts 13:10).

Man must be taught the right way to come to Christ. In the midst of some "hard sayings," Jesus told His disciples:

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me (John 6:44-45).

Jesus is quoting from Isaiah where Isaiah is prophesying of the beauty of the restored nation. In that beautiful, restored nation, Isaiah says that God will lay the foundations of that beautiful city, "And all thy children *shall be* taught of the LORD; and great *shall be* the peace of thy children" (Isa. 54:13). Isaiah continues on to say they will dwell in peace, practice the righteousness that God has revealed so she has nothing to fear. What a wonderful prophecy but it rests on the people being taught of God so

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

they can come to the Messiah and into this city.

Previously, Isaiah had prophesied of the Lord's house being established in the top of the mountains and all nations flowing unto it. He then adds, "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (2:3). God will have to teach us His ways because God's "thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (55:8-9). Thus, there must be a teaching of the Lord's ways.

Before ascending to His Father, our Lord instructed His apostles what we call the Great Commission. In Matthew's account, he records, "Go ye therefore, and teach [make disciples] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world" (Mat. 28:19-20). The command is to go make disciples. *Disciple* is from a Greek word meaning, "a learner, pupil, disciple" (Thayer), or "1. one who engages in learning through instruction from another, pupil, apprentice... 2. one who is rather constantly associated with someone who has a pedagogical reputation or a particular set of views, disciple, adherent" (BDAG). We generally consider a *disciple* as

being a follower, it is because he follows what he has been taught. Matthew also shows how a disciple is made: by baptizing and teaching. Thus, we see that teaching (which implies our hearing and learning what is taught) is essential in becoming a disciple of our Lord. This also implies we must hear "whatsoever I have commanded you," as Jesus said.

Faith is essential to salvation. The Hebrews' writer states, "But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Additionally, we must believe that Jesus is the great "I am": "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

The vital question is, how does faith come? While some erroneously teach that faith is simply given a person by God based upon a misunderstanding of Ephesians 2:8. That passage, instead, is saying that salvation is the gift of God, not faith. So, how does faith come? Let God's Word tell us: "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Paul, by inspiration, says hearing God's Word produces faith. However, consider the context of this statement.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of

peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (10:13-17).

Paul says that faith comes by hearing God's Word within the context of salvation. The hearing produces faith so we can obey the Gospel and be saved (10:16).

This returns us to the opening that we are to take heed **what** we hear. We are to hear the Gospel as that is God's power to save. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (1:16). If the Gospel is God's power to save, then it becomes obvious that is what we need to hear. This is why in the Great Commission our Lord gave to His disciples as recorded by Mark, He said, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Consider what Paul, by inspiration, says regarding the Gospel:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

Notice just a couple of things about what he says here. First, is that he gives the specific details of the Gospel. Paul states the Gospel

is that (1) Christ died and that death was for our sins, (2) He was buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, and (3) He was raised the third day. All three of these things were prophesied in the Old Testament. This is the Gospel Paul preached and the Corinthian brethren received and to receive it they had to hear it. It is the same message we need to hear because just as with the Corinthian brethren were saved, if they met the condition (keep in memory that message), we will be saved based upon the same conditions. However, to be saved by this Gospel, we must hear that message. This is why Paul said:

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1:23-24).

Thus, the Gospel is going to save man and that is why the first century church preached it. The problem is that the Gospel is being

silenced and replaced by other messages. Today, philosophy, science, emotional stories, and especially social agendas have replaced the Gospel. However, these messages do not aid in the salvation of man.

One last idea regarding our hearing the Gospel, what happens to those individuals who do not hear that saving message? Since sin is what causes us to be lost and separated from God, and all men have sinned, and the Gospel is God's power to save man, then failure to hear the Gospel (and obey it) will result in man being lost. If our reasoning is correct, then we should see this confirmed in the Scriptures, and we do. Paul writes:

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the

presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 The. 1:7-9).

Those who never hear the saving Gospel, do not know God, thus they will be punished with an everlasting punishment, so says the apostle Paul. Those who never hear never come to a knowledge of God and do not have eternal life: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Thus, hearing is a vital part of man's response to God's marvelous grace that saves us. However, we must make certain we hear the right things, the Gospel of Christ, so we can properly respond to the grace of God.

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Continued from Page 1
point. Often brethren lament the lack of responses to the Gospel invitation in modern days when compared with bygone years. Twenty to thirty baptisms at a Gospel meeting, with just as many restorations, was fairly commonplace. Now, having more than one baptism or restoration is exceptional. This is usually attributed to the apparent impenetrability of the twenty-first century heart. While not denying that the spiritual soil has become more obstinate in recent years, one must recognize that

modern preachers' failure to preach the Word with urgency is also a contributing factor. Departed brethren such as Walter Scott, "Raccoon" John Smith, Jacob Creath, Jr., and Marshall Keeble would preach like they expected people to obey the Word they were preaching. They knew that what they preached was urgent business, and failure to comply would result in the damnation of the hearer's soul. They were like Paul, who said, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11; compare with Jude 22-23).

Today's preacher too often lacks that same urgency. When extending the invitation, he fails even to tell his hearers what they need to do to be saved. He merely says, "If you have a need, you may respond at this time." Imagine that—a preacher of the Gospel, knowing that there are non-Christians present, and he says only, "If you have a need"! Of course they have a need—although they may not know it yet—they are lost and their souls are in eternal danger! They must be made aware of their need, and of the urgency of meeting that

need. When Ananias came to Saul of Tarsus, a lost soul in need of salvation, he did not tell him, “If you have a need, you may respond at this time.” He implored him, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not to be proclaimed apathetically or apologetically. It is to be proclaimed to every creature (Mark 16:15), with great plainness of speech (2 Cor. 3:12), boldly (Eph. 6:20), laboring to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:28-29), not as pleasing men or seeking glory of men (1 The. 2:4, 6), and being affirmed constantly (Tit. 3:8). All this underscores the urgency of preaching God’s Word. Although less people are responding in obedience to the Gospel today, this does not change the church’s response—we must “be urgent in season, out of season.” The present time may be “out of season,” but we must be as urgent as ever if God’s Word is to be spoken with authority.

Live in Harmony with God’s Word

Sometimes preachers lose their urgency, boldness, and plainness, instead apologizing for the truth, because of their own shortcomings as revealed by God’s Word. People will indeed lose respect for a preacher whose actions are inconsistent with his message, and they may also lose respect for the message itself. If a preacher’s conduct is not according to the Word of God, he is responsible for bringing his conduct into harmony with the Word of God—among other reasons, so his preaching can be prop-

erly authoritative: “In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Tit. 2:7-8). This exemplary conduct goes beyond speech, as Paul exhorted Timothy, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

Children often lose respect for their parents because they fail to “practice what they preach.” People will do the same with anyone who exalts a standard of authority in word, but flouts that standard in practice. They will look more to such a person’s actions than his words. The priests Hophni and Phinehas may have had good things to say about the Law, but their self-serving actions with regard to the offerings caused others to have disregard for the Law, much to the displeasure of God: “Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD” (1 Sam. 2:17).

However, one who can demonstrate how to live godly in Christ Jesus can use his life as a precious ornament of the Gospel, not as a detriment to it (Tit. 2:10). While Paul told the Ephesian Christians all things they needed (Acts 20:20-21, 27), he also showed them all things they needed: “I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to” (20:35). To the Thessalonians, Paul was able to say, “Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and justly and un-

blameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe” (1 The. 2:10). Everywhere Paul had been people knew that he preached with genuine compassion and concern for the hearers, living what he preached.

This writer recalls attending the meetings of the church of Christ in Denton, Texas, before he became a Christian, wondering whether anyone could really live according to what was being proclaimed from the pulpit. Upon spending time with the saints of that congregation, this writer learned that it could be done; the Christian life could be lived. Indeed, the best sermons are often lived and not spoken. As the poem exclaims:

I’d rather see a sermon than to hear
one any day.

I’d rather one would walk with me
than merely show the way.

The eye’s the better pupil, more
willing than the ear;

Fine counsel is confusing but
example is always clear.

The best of all the preachers are the
men who live their creed,

For to see the good in action is what
everybody needs.

If you let me watch you do it I can
see just how it’s done;

I can see your hands in action, but
your tongue too fast may run.

And the sermons you deliver may
be very wise and true.

But I’d rather get my lesson from
observing what you do.

For I may misunderstand you and
the high advice you give,

But there is no misunderstanding
how you act and how you live.

Of course, one’s failure to live up to God’s Word does not ultimately detract from the authority of God’s Word, only from others’ perception of it. God’s Word is the perfect standard, and will remain at the Day of Judgment. While the

failure of others to live in harmony with God's Word does not excuse anyone from his own obligation to live in harmony with God's Word, there will be those who will have to answer for their inconsistent living—living that detracted from the authority of God's Word, and eventually led people astray (Luke 17:1-2).

Conclusion

In this modern era, there is plenty of milquetoast and soft-soap preaching, there are plenty of almost secular motivational speeches that are called sermons, and there is plenty of error-filled preaching based on shallow reasoning. There is more than enough to detract from the authority of God's Word.

What the world needs is Biblical, authoritative preaching. The Holy Spirit could not have expressed it any clearer when He inspired Paul to instruct us to speak the Word "with all authority." Let the church do all that it can to exalt the authority of God's Word—let us speak the Word with all authority.
Union City, TN

The Book of Salvation and Life

C. V. Allen

The Bible contains the infinite wisdom of God revealed to man—to you and to me. There is no other book on earth comparable to it; none so beautiful; none so helpful; none so powerful to bring joy, peace, courage, and security to man's life; none so wonderful, awe-inspiring, and soul-searching.

This book is so simple that the lowliest can read, find, and understand the way of salvation and life, and yet so fathomless that the wisest cannot plumb the depths of its meaning.

Someone has well said: "The bible is a stream so shallow that the most timid swimmer can swim in perfect safety, and yet so deep that the most expert diver cannot reach the bottom."

In this blessed book, God has poured out Himself and revealed Himself in His Son. God in His Son, God and His Son revealed on the printed page of a book that you, I, and all men may see and read.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt

among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." "I and the Father are one" (10:30). **Think of it!** God and Christ are one. Christ and the Word are one. Thus, you and I (poor, sinful, unworthy creatures that we are) are blessed with the privilege of seeing, understanding, and building into our lives the will of the very God of heaven and His blessed Son, in whom, and whom only, are salvation and life.

This book tells how that when Jesus commanded His apostles to go "make disciples of all the nations," He also said, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mat. 28:20). Whatever else He may have meant in making this promise, which comes down to us today, and however else He may have fulfilled this promise, I know that in giving us the Bible, He has placed the fulfillment of that promise within easy reach of every child of God. What a grand and glorious fulfillment it is! For in this book we may find our Master, His teachings, and that way of salvation and life He brought to us. We have but to

open the pages of the New Testament to behold His blessed face, hear His gentle voice, see the wonderful works of His divine hands, stand before the cross as He hangs bleeding and dying for our sins and in our place, and then to walk beside the holy inspired apostles as they go about "their Master's business" of making known the way of salvation and life to a lost world and promoting the church Christ died to establish.

This book unfolds to us God's great plan to bring us salvation and life through His Son, Jesus Christ. It begins with the creation of all things, climaxed in the creation of man in the likeness and image of God, sinless, perfect, godlike, and fit to walk and talk with and have full fellowship with God in a perfect Garden of Eden; and how man was not content to live by God's standard of righteousness, and by disobedience and sin fell from His holy estate and brought upon himself the condemnation of death—separation from God. Then we are told that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Eze. 18:4) and "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of

God” (Rom. 3:23) and “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22) of sins. What a sad, sad picture—man condemned to die for his own sin!

Is that all? Does the Bible leave man there? No! Hear this Good Book: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). This love of God was manifested in Christ’s death upon the cross, in your place and mine—the death you and I were doomed to die for our sins. Concerning this, Paul witnesses: “we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead” (2 Cor. 5:14); “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (5:21). John testifies: “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2). Think of it! Surely the sins of one life—yours or mine—are more than one soul should have to bear, and yet He who knew no sin died for the sins of the whole world—all the mean, ugly, debasing sins of the whole human race. What a load for one soul to bear! What a price for one soul to pay! What love for God and Christ to pour out upon unworthy, sinful you and me! No wonder Paul was made to say, “the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor. 5:14), and indeed, we may from the depths of our hearts say, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:20).

Thus, this book presents the way of salvation and life in presenting Christ, God’s Son, as

man’s Redeemer, who said, “Know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:29), and who, praying to the Father, said, “Thy word is truth” (17:17). He again said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (14:6). Peter testifies: “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). In presenting Christ as “the truth” and as “the way” of salvation and life, the Bible tells of the Gospel (the story of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; His religious life and sacrificial death), and how the glad tidings as preached by the apostles is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). Too, this book tells how that, despite the fact that Christ died for all men and despite the fact that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, all men will not be saved—only those who meet the conditions of that Gospel. The Gospel in the Bible, in the mind of the preacher, in the message preached and heard and understood by the sinner is not the power of God unto salvation; but the Gospel **heard, believed, and obeyed** by the sinner.

Then this book teaches that every saved person must live a new life in and with Christ: “Therefore is any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). When the sinner in faith, repentance, confession, and baptism obeys Christ, he arises to a new life. Christians are reborn and made-

over men and women. Is your life new? Is it different to that of non-Christians around you? Is it different to what it was before you obeyed the Gospel? If not, then you need to read and obey the teaching of 1 John 1:9 and Acts 8:22.

Finally, this book tells us of the judgment: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done in his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). Christ said: “And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:47-48). His words offer salvation and life. When man refuses to accept them, he rejects Christ and His words will face him in the judgment to condemn him. I do not know what the book of life is like. It may be a sort of ledger, with names at the top of pages on which God posts “the things done in the body,” and by divine accounting balances each page as we depart this life, as some think. However, I wonder what more it can be than the testimony of the Bible (God’s Word) concerning “the things done in the body, ...whether it be good or bad”; for I know that how we have kept His Word, herein recorded, will determine what the judgment will be. I know that His words to us are in this book of salvation and life.

Deceased

Gospel Advocate, Oct. 8, 1942

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Reactions to the Word

Winfred Clark

When one reads Matthew, he will find a record of various reactions to the Word of God. Jesus gave a great deal of time and attention to this serious matter. You will find that our Lord considered this matter to be of paramount importance. On one occasion, He had some things to say that introduced us to our study for this time.

There was an occasion when some of the scribes and Pharisees would confront Him about the conduct of His disciples. They wanted to know why His disciples transgressed the tradition of the elders. They said this was being done when they did not wash their hands when they ate (Mat. 15:1-2). Jesus responded with a question. “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition” (15:3)?

Jesus then proceeded to tell them which commandment He had in mind. The commandment had to do with honoring father and mother (15:4). But how were they reacting to this word?

Some Would Seek to Make It of None Effect

What was being said by these scribes and Pharisees would result

in saying this commandment was not in effect. Their tradition would say to a father or mother, “It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*” (15:5-6). In this case, a human tradition would set aside the commandment of the Lord. Thus, what was in effect to them was without effect or power. They would deprive the commandment of its authority or power. They will use in its stead the doctrines and commandments of men. I am persuaded that this same kind of thing occurs in our day. This can be seen when you discuss the subject of baptism with some of our religious neighbors.

Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). This is a plain statement of our Lord. There can be no doubt about the place of baptism in the plan of man’s redemption. Yet, how many times have we seen people who will take this plain passage and seek to break the force of it by saying, “Man is saved by faith alone”? In so doing, they seek to make of none effect the Word of God. That is, by this and other

statements, they seek to say that baptism is unnecessary and of none effect. Nevertheless, what would the difference be between this statement concerning baptism and the one the scribes and Pharisees made concerning the responsibility to honor father and mother? I fail to see any at all. They would be the same in principle. These seek to make the Word of God of none effect concerning baptism.

Some Practice That Which is No Longer in Effect

One can read some of the epistles of Paul and find several people who sought to continue to observe the law of Moses after it had been taken out of the way. Listen to an argument he used with the Hebrew Christians, some of whom were returning to the law. You will see him trying to help some of his brethren at Colossae. Some men were trying to beguile them (Col. 2:4). Some would take them captive by vain deceit (2:8). Some would seek to bind upon them the law concerning meats and drink, holy days, new moons, and sabbath days (2:16). Paul would have them to know that such a law was not now

Continued on Page 4



Notes From the Editor

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Salvation: Faith

Faith is one of the most discussed subjects in the religious world. All religious groups claiming to be Christian accept the need for faith. However, few know what faith actually involves. Thus, let us consider in this study of salvation, faith.

First, the Scriptures present for us the absolutely necessity of faith. There are so many passages in the New Testament alone that shows the need for faith that we will not try to take the space in listing all of them. However, let us look at a few of them.

But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6).

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

To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43).

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house (Acts 16:31).

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8-9).

These passages, along with many others, show the unequivocal nature of faith's relationship to salvation. One must believe in God and that He will reward those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6) if he has any hope of salvation. To deny faith's relationship to salvation is foolish and a rejection of what the Bible teaches.

How does a person come to have faith? What is faith's origin? There are many who teach that faith is a gift of God. They begin with a false premise that babies are born in sin, totally depraved. Being totally depraved, man can do nothing that is pleasing to God, including having faith. Yet, they know that man must have faith to be saved. Thus, God is the one who must give faith to those whom He has predetermined before the foundation of the world to save. (This also means that God predetermined some people to eternal damnation with no choice on their part.) To justify this position, they must twist the Scriptures and in particular Ephesians 2:8 which reads, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God." The claim goes that "the gift of God" refers back to "faith." This would make faith a gift that God gives to man. However, to take such a position violates the grammar of the passage. The *that* in the phrase "and that not of yourselves" is neuter gender while *faith* is feminine gender; so, *gift of God* cannot grammatically refer to *faith*. Instead, the *gift of God* (gift is also neuter gender) refers back to *that* which refers to one's salvation. Salvation is the "gift of God," but that salvation is on a conditional basis (see the article from last month).

If God does not directly give us faith, then how does one come to have it? Allow the Scriptures to speak for themselves as the apostle Paul writes, "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). It would be difficult to state any plainer than how Paul puts it here that faith comes from hearing God's Word.

While this one verse from Paul shows the origin of faith, we have additional evidence of such. The apostle John gives the theme of his account of the life of Christ at the end of his book by saying, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31). John states that the reason he is writing and specifically writing about the miracles Christ performed so those who read it will believe or come to faith. Faith comes or originates from what John has written.

Also notice the noble Bereans and what the beloved physician, Luke, writes about them.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scrip-

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

tures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few (Acts 17:11-12).

Paul and Silas had come to Berea from Thessalonica and were preaching and teaching there. These Bereans did not simply accept what was taught, instead they diligently searched the Old Testament Scriptures to make sure what Paul and Silas were teaching was true. Through the study of the Scriptures, they were brought to believe. Thus, their faith originated by the Word of God.

Thus, the Scriptures give clear confirmation that the way faith comes is by the Word of God. There is no other avenue for a person to come to believe.

However, what is faith? Many believe *faith* or *belief* is nothing more than a guess (an educated one) or a hope so based on probability or assumption. For example, the *New Oxford Dictionary* gives as its second definition: “strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof.” Among *Merriam-Webster’s* definitions is: “firm belief in something for which there is no proof.” Likewise, *Dictionary.com* has “belief that is not based on proof.” This is the basic idea of a “leap of faith” which originated with the Danish philosopher of the 19th century, Soren Kierkegaard (although he did not use the phrase but instead used “qualitative leap”). This “leap of faith” refers to having trust in something despite its lack of reasoning, logic, and rationality. The denominational world as a whole accepted this philosophy of a “leap of faith” long ago. There is a total

dichotomy between faith and knowledge. However, is this dichotomy true? The clear answer of the Scriptures is: No!

Instead of faith having no proof, there must be proof for there to be faith. No proof means no Biblical faith. Consider Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The writer says faith is the substance which literally means, “To place or set under.” *Substance* is found in the papyrus documents to property deeds that, thus, support the claim of ownership. So, faith is the basis or guarantee of our hope; it stands as a form of deed to the promised land. Without any proof or evidence, there can be no basis or guarantee and thus no hope. Faith is also spoken as the evidence of those things not seen. As we have noticed, faith comes by the Word of God, so the Word gives evidence that supports our faith which then stands under and undergirds the hope of the promised land which we have. It also states faith is the evidence of those things not seen. God’s Word provides the proof, or the evidence needed for a person to have faith. So, faith is not blind and something we have without proof but is based upon tangible evidence.

As further evidence of this, consider the events with Thomas (often referred to as doubting Thomas). The record of these events is in John 20. Jesus had been crucified and raised from the dead by the power of God. He makes several appearances, one of them to His apostles; however, Thomas was not present the first time He appeared to them. John writes, “But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when

Jesus came” (John 20:24). When the other apostles told him they had seen the resurrected Lord, he did not believe them (he did not accept their evidence). He demanded empirical evidence for him to believe by saying, “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe” (20:25). Jesus appears to them again this time with Thomas present. Jesus said to Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing (20:27). Here the proper evidence was provided and Jesus told him not to be faithless but believe. After seeing the evidence Jesus provided him, Thomas responded by saying, “My Lord and my God” (20:28). Because of the evidence, Thomas now believed as Jesus says, “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed” (20:29). However, Jesus also recognized the value of those who look at the evidence that is not empirical (knowledge not gathered by the senses such as sight) and rightly conclude that Jesus is Lord and God and the blessing they will receive.

In John 6, Jesus gave some “hard sayings” causing many of His disciples to forsake Him. Jesus turned to the apostles and asked them, “Will ye also go away?” Peter responded for the rest by saying, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (6:68-69). The word translated *sure* in the KJV is more accurately

translated *know* in other translations. The apostles were able to believe because they knew that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Their faith rested upon their knowledge.

In going back to Hebrews 11, we find some other interesting facts regarding faith. We first find that faith is rational; we understand because God has made us rational beings. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (11:3). Through the evidence provided to us, we are able through contemplation to understand or perceive the worlds were framed by God's word.

In connection with our contemplating the evidence, we also observe faith is based on revelation.

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went (11:7-8).

Noah was "warned of God" was simply God revealing to Noah about the flood and what he had to do to escape death in the flood. Abraham was "called to go out" again was God revealing to him to leave Ur and go to the land God would promise to give him. In both these, and others, their faith was based on the revelation God gave to them.

We also note in these two verses faith leads a person to trust in God and His revelation and thus will act according to that revelation God gave. Faith is an action word for without action, faith is dead (Jam. 2:26). Later in the chapter we learn faith discriminates in that it chooses the spiritual over the material, the eternal over the temporal. It says of Moses, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (11:26). He chose the spiritual over the material. Then there is a motive given for one's faith as Abraham, "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (11:10 see also 11:13-16). There is the motive of an eternal home with God in heaven.

One final question needing to be discussed: Are we saved by faith only. The quick and definitive answer is, No! This is the discussion of James 2:14-26. In speaking of the need for works with our faith, James states of faith by itself: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (2:17). He repeats this thought a few verses later, "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (2:20). He then uses the phrase, "faith only" (the only time it is used in the Bible) and says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (2:24). Man is not saved (justified) by faith only. It takes works (works commanded by God) joined with our faith to save us. However, as James concludes, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (2:26). Faith only is a dead faith which will save no one.

Faith is essential to one's salvation; we cannot be saved without it. However, true faith is based upon God's Word producing within us a trust and confidence in Him to do what He says to do in faithful obedience.

MH

in effect. Notice what he had to say about what Jesus did concerning the law in His death upon the cross: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (2:14).

Again, you will find him making the same observation, differently, in the Galatian letter. Here he will

tell them not to go back to the law. Notice that he will have to say: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1). There can be no question that he is speaking of the law of Moses (5:2-4). Here he shows that if one goes back to the practice of the law concerning circumcision, Christ

will profit him nothing, he makes himself a debtor to do the whole law, and he would fall from grace. So, for them to seek to practice that which was no longer in effect would place their souls in danger.

Would this not be the same with those of our day who would return to the law for a day to observe, such as the sabbath or the use of the mechanical instrument? If not,

what would be the difference? The principle is the same. Would this not be an attempt to practice that which is not in effect?

You would have the same thing as those who would follow John's baptism after the baptism of the Great Commission became effective. Take the case of those twelve disciples at Ephesus. We know that Paul would encourage them to be baptized properly according to the directions of the Great Commission (Acts 19:1-6).

Some Pay No Attention to that Which Is in Effect

We have this being played out before our eyes this very day.

There is no question about the Biblical injunctions against homosexuality and lesbianism. Notice the language of Paul in his letter to the church in Rome. Here he said, "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature" (Rom. 1:26). Did you notice *change*? Does this not point to the fact that such a practice is a perversion of that which is right? However, this statement will tell you how far they had gone; when he said, "even their women," he means they are now doing the same things the men

did. But there is no endorsement found in Paul's writing. You will find him commending some who had ceased such practices (1 Cor. 6:9-11). If you read verse 11, you will find that he classes these kinds of people as those who will not enter the kingdom of God. Yet, men pay no attention to the inspired attitudes toward such sinfulness.

So, when we observe the reactions to the Word of God, we find men seeking to make it of none effect, some practicing that which is no longer in effect, and some ignoring that which is still in effect.

Deceased

Premillennialism (Part 1)

C. R. Nichol

National Israel Divides

From Abraham's loins a great nation, the Hebrews, sprang. Jacob's name was changed to Israel. He was the father of the twelve sons whose descendants were known as the "twelve tribes." For a period of years, the experience of this people in Egypt was heart-rending, and at other times they enjoyed such protecting care that they had grounds for great rejoicings. They were a people selected by Jehovah through whom the Redeemer of the world came.

Human nature has undergone no change through the ages. Man has never been able to project himself into the unborn years and know what would be best by his own power. He is often influenced by his surroundings and not infrequently, seeing the seeming success of others in certain fields of endeavor, he throws discretion to the winds and dares to follow the lead

of those who feel their self-sufficiency.

Obsessed with the desire to be like the nations surrounding them, Israel cried for a king, appealing to a recognized counselor among them. They were told that such a course would be unwise; that they were the objects of the protecting care of Jehovah. Though they were warned of the certain regrets they would meet and disasters which would overtake them, they were swept off their feet by the apparent success attending other nations with kings and made demand that a king be given them. They rejected Jehovah from ruling them and were given a modified kingdom. They were not permitted to name their king, but accepted the man God named Saul, the son of Kish.

For forty years Saul was king of Israel. Our first introduction to Saul presents him in quest of some of his father's stock which had

strayed. Not having found them, he appealed to Samuel, the prophet, and was entertained at a banquet with some thirty others in the prophet's home, and before he separated from Samuel he was anointed as king over Israel. Elevated from the humble walks of life, Saul became jealous, ambitious, and cruel. His reign was far from peaceful, and finally he died by his own hand.

David succeeded Saul as king in Israel and became the outstanding hero in the history of Israel. He brooked no opposition from the nations who were unfriendly. After forty years, attended by military success, David was succeeded by Solomon, who ruled for forty years, and then Rehoboam's stormy reign began. Dissatisfaction among the twelve tribes over their king became so pronounced that division came, resulting in ten tribes rebelling and forming the northern

kingdom with Jeroboam as their king. Rehoboam, with two tribes, remained at Jerusalem, where the royal palace and the temple were located. The temple was the pride of the Hebrew race, and to it they came to worship at stated intervals, for there was God's altar.

When the division came and ten tribes formed into the northern kingdom and were known as Israel, some of the number did not find themselves happy and associated with the southern kingdom—the kingdom of Judah, coming to Jerusalem to worship (2 Chr. 11:13-17). Knowing that his subjects would have a place to worship and to prevent them going to Jerusalem, Jeroboam built an altar at Bethel and another at Dan, far to the north, and priests he appointed who were not of the tribe set apart for priestly service. He fortified cities in the land where he ruled, becoming belligerent, as is usually the case with usurpers. Satan is no exception.

In the third century, after the ten tribes rebelled and formed the northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel, Samaria fell (722 BC), and with her fall, the northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel, ended. Since that time the ten tribes as a united people have ceased to exist; they have disappeared from history as “ten tribes” as well as a kingdom. No, they were not wiped from the earth as a people; descendants of these tribes have existed, but they do not exist as “ten tribes,” and all talk about the “ten tribes” as such having an existence is contrary to the facts of history.

What has become of the “ten tribes”? This question first came to the fore, so far as I have been able to discover, and was somewhat fea-

tured in the Book of IV Esdras, a book placed by some as part of the Old Testament apocryphal writings; but IV Esdras was likely written in the last part of the first century or the early part of the second century. No, the book is not inspired, nor do I find either Jew or Gentile giving any weight to the book. Searching history, I find almost a dearth of references to the “ten tribes” for centuries after the destruction of the kingdom of Israel. That kingdom came to an end.

In the ninth century AD, a Jew named Eldad, claiming to be a member of the tribe of Dan, insisted he had located the “ten tribes,” but his story is without historical credibility.

Much speculation has been indulged in by many writers about the “ten tribes” and their future. No one group has been more fanciful than premillennialists; even the Mormon theory is not one whit behind the theory of the premillennialist chatter about the “ten tribes.”

Premillennialists insist the “ten tribes” have had a continued, separate existence through the centuries, and as “ten tribes” they are to return to Jerusalem, with the two tribes, and be established in the land before the “millennial kingdom” is established. The theory demands such, and without fulfillment of their prediction the theory breaks down. The theory demands that the “ten tribes” must be brought to Jerusalem, with the two tribes, before the new covenant God promised (Jer. 31:31-34) can be established. Read carefully the promise God made:

Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not ac-

ording to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

I call your attention to the statement (31:31) that the new covenant is to be with the “house of Israel, and with the house of Judah”; and then in verse 33 it reads: “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel.” Why is it that it is with the house of Israel and house of Judah in one place, and then only “Israel” is mentioned? To me it appears clear. Both houses are mentioned in verse 31, for the people of both factions are included; and then in verse 33 the name “Israel” only appears, for the reason that such was the name of the united people before the division occurred; and when the new covenant was made, He viewed them as one people only! This being true, just so certain as the new covenant has been made, just that certain is it that there are no such people on earth today as the “ten tribes”—that is, as a people known by Jehovah as such! When the new covenant was made, the descendants of Jacob

were simply “Israelites,” or Jews, and Jehovah did not recognize Judah, or Israel, as a people separate from the other descendants of Jacob! Hence, all the ado that is being made about the “ten tribes” being returned at some future date to Jerusalem is without one iota of

foundation. Not only so, but the new covenant has been made; and since that is true, and it was to be made with all the people of lineal descent from Abraham, it must follow that they were included. Hence, Jehovah said it was made with “Israel,” the term by which

they were called before and since there was a division amongst them.

Who says the new covenant has not been made? What became of the “ten tribes”? See the next article in this study.

Deceased

“Inspired of God” *Michael Hatcher*

The Scriptures declare a plenary verbal inspiration. It is plenary in that it is complete and all-inclusive. It is verbal in that it applies to words. Thus, every word of the Bible is inspired of God. This is the statement of the apostle Paul when he writes, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). While Paul no doubt had the Old Testament in mind when he wrote this, he must have also had the New Testament Scriptures in mind (see 1 Tim. 5:18 and 2 Pet. 3:16 regarding the New Testament as being Scripture just as the Old).

Inspired is from a word literally meaning, “God breathed.” As God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2:7), so He breathed into the words of the Bible spiritual life (John 6:63). Thus, inspiration is God through the Holy Spirit exerting His influence upon the prophets and apostles to enable them to communicate without error or omission those truths that God deemed necessary for man. The result is the Scriptures.

Peter describes this by writing, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:20-21). He is saying the writers of

prophecy did not come up with their own material (interpretation) but received it from the Spirit.

The Scriptures are, therefore, spoken of as the Word of God. Obviously a study of all the times the Bible claims such is not within the nature of this article, suffice to say, the Bible claims such several thousand times.

Notice what Jesus says to His apostles: “But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost” (Mark 13:11).

Prior to His crucifixion, Jesus speaks with His apostles and promises them the Holy Spirit (another Comforter), and said “he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). Later in that conversation, He adds:

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you (16:13-14).

The Spirit was revealing to the apostles all truth, all that Jesus said, and things to come. Thus, when they

spoke it was the words which the Spirit gave them (1 Cor. 2:13).

In addition, consider Jesus’ view in His debate with the Sadducees recorded in Matthew 22:23-33. After giving a scenario in their attempt to discredit the resurrection, Jesus says:

But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (22:31-32).

Jesus’ entire response centers on the Inspired statement by Moses and the tense being present as opposed to past: “I am,” not “I was.” If the tense of the verb is not inspired of God, then Jesus’ argument is of no value.

Galatians 3 gives us another insight to the inspiration of the Bible, when Paul makes an entire argument upon whether a word is singular or plural. Paul is speaking of what Moses wrote and calls it *Scripture* (3:8, 22). In the midst of this, Paul makes the argument, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (3:16). Paul’s entire argument regarding the cessation of the Old Testament Law for the New of of Christ is null and void if the Scriptures are not word-by-word inspired of God (including whether a word is singular or plural).

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Premillennialism (Part 2)

C. R. Nichol

The New Covenant and the Ten Tribes

Do I misrepresent R. H. Boll in what he has said about the “new covenant”? Does he hold that the new covenant has not been made? Let the answer be made in his own words. In speaking of the “new birth,” he said:

It is the universal requirement of acceptance with God, and characteristic of the new covenant which now in its principle applies to the church, and which the Lord will make with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah “after those days” (Heb. 8) (*The Kingdom* 54).

He affirms: “The new covenant which now in its principle applies to the church.” He further declares that the Lord will make the “new covenant” with the “house of Israel and the house of Judah.” If, in this quotation, he does not affirm the *new covenant* has not been made, I am unable to understand what he does say! That he is wrong in his contention is shown by positive statements of the Scriptures. Paul says that God “hath made us able ministers of the new testament” (2 Cor. 3:6). Again, it is declared that Jesus is “mediator of the new testament” (Heb. 9:15); and again,

“Jesus the mediator of the new covenant” (12:24). Evince no surprise because the theory drives men to deny the plain statements of the Bible; it does just that in more than one place. The theory calls for the restoration of the ten tribes, with the two tribes composing the kingdom of Judah, to Palestine before the “new covenant” can be made!

The blood of Christ is the blood of the new covenant by which blood Christians are cleansed from their sins.

What About the “Ten Lost Tribes”

I think a short study of the captivity of the house of Israel and the house of Judah will prove profitable in this connection. So many think only of the captivity of Judah in Babylon when the captivity of the descendants of Abraham is mentioned. For such a view there is no excuse.

Ahaz was the twelfth king in Judah, while Pekah was the eighteenth king in Israel. For a time, they were contemporaneous as kings, and Rezin was king in Syria. Tiglath-pileser was king in Assyria. When Pekah became king in Israel,

the kingdom was in hard lines financially, due to the exorbitant taxes exacted by the Assyrians. Pekah thought to replenish his treasury by forming an alliance with Rezin, of Syria, and together they would make war on Judah. The war proved, in a measure, successful for Syria, for territory was acquired and a colony established. Though Pekah captured a large number of people and property, on the advice of Oded they were returned (2 Chr. 28:8-15).

The alliance Pekah formed with Syria, a foreign nation, ultimately brought grief to Israel. Ahaz, the king of Judah, resented the invasion of his territory by Israel and Syria, and though he refused to take the field in battle, he busied himself in making stronger his fortifications. He thought to strengthen himself by gaining the good will of the mighty Assyrian kingdom, and, with that in view, sent to Tiglath-pileser, the king, saying: “I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel” (2 Kin. 16:7-9). He also sent a large sum of money. The king of

Continued on Page 4



Notes From the Editor

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Salvation: Repentance

In the process of man's salvation from sin, repentance is an important step in that direction. Yet, this necessary step is probably the most difficult command God has given to man. Let us consider this vital step in the process of man's salvation.

When studying about *repentance*, several aspects must be considered and not just a definition of the term. Yet, a definition of *repentance* gives us a good start. One lexicon defines it as "change one's mind, feel remorse" (BDAG) while Zodhiates states, "change the mind, relent. Theologically, it involves regret or sorrow, accompanied by a true change of heart toward God." He goes on to state, "In a religious sense implying pious sorrow for unbelief and sin and a turning from them unto God and the gospel of Christ" which gets more to the heart of true repentance.

For there to be true repentance, there must be a realization that I have sinned. I am the one who violated God's laws and offended the holy nature of our Creator and Sustainer of life. It is not something that some other person (Adam, parents, or anyone) did, but what I, myself, did. I sinned. I am person-

ally responsible for the sin and no one else.

I also need to realize the destructive nature of sin. From the beginning of time, we learn the devastating nature of sin when Adam and Eve sinned. They had been told not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). *Surely die*, is literally "dying you shall die." Indeed, there are two deaths under consideration. They died in that they were separated from God and the fellowship they had with Him, and they also were separated from the tree of life, so they died physically. Yet, their death was not the entire story as God curses first the devil, then Eve, and last Adam. We observe thus that all pain, sorrow, shame, and all the dark experiences of life are associated with sin. Thus, when I sin, all those things come upon me. As Paul states, "Destruction and misery are in their ways" (Rom. 3:16).

Realizing the destruction and misery sin brings, there must be a desire to escape from this destruction. Notice what God says through the prophet:

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Eze. 18:30-31).

Sin brings ruin and death, and we must repent to avoid such. We are motivated to repent because we can see the goodness of God. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and

longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4). When the prodigal son left his father's home to go into a far country, he "wasted his substance with riotous living" (Luke 15:13). However, he remembered back to his father's home and the good things he had there.

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants (15:17-19).

Remembering his father's goodness and prosperity caused the prodigal son to return. This parable is not only of the prodigal son and his return, it also is of the loving father who represents God the Father. Consider many of the other blessings of living a righteous life and it should create in us a desire to repent and be with God.

Living a righteous life, one that is being obedient to God, gives one purpose of life. Moses made an interesting statement to Israel when he said:

And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? (Deu. 10:12-13).

What God has commanded is for man's good. God, who created us, knows what is best for us. He knows what man's purpose is. As Paul is speaking to the Athenians on the Areopagus would say of God:

And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us (Acts 17:26-27).

He gives us a view of the purpose of man when he says that we "should seek the Lord." John reveals that all things (including man) were created for God's pleasure, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). Paul would state regarding his own life, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ" (Phi. 3:8). Without God, there is no true purpose in life.

Those who obey the Gospel and become Christians have God as their spiritual Father. There are only two spiritual fathers: Satan (John 8:44) or God. Jesus instructed His disciples to pray in this manner, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Mat. 6:9). We have the promise that when we "come out from

among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*" (2 Cor. 6:17) that He "will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (6:17-18). We become a child of God through the faith when we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27).

There is the blessing of having peace in one's life, true peace. Jesus said to the apostles, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). This is a peace the world does not know or understand. It is a peace described by Paul: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phi. 4:7). This peace only comes when we are right with God, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

We also have the blessing of having joy in our life. Notice where Paul would say our joy is when he writes, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice" (Phi. 4:4). Our rejoicing is when we are "in the Lord," that is, when we are Christians. John would say, "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:4). John wrote (and all the writers of the New Testament) so we might have joy. The Bible, when followed by man, produces joy in one's life.

Jesus promised rest to those who would come to Him.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest

unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Mat. 11:27-30).

What a wonderful blessing Jesus has offered us, but it is conditioned upon our taking His yoke and learning of Him.

There is the promise of the forgiveness of sins and having those sins washed away by the blood of Christ. Paul would write, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7). We have that forgiveness when we are baptized in water, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Tied closely with the forgiveness of sins is the eternal salvation and the hope of those who are faithful. Jesus would say, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). Thus, a blessing of true repentance is the hope we live in. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Tit. 1:2). Those who do not repent, are described as having "no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). While there are, no doubt, many blessings that result from repentance, these few make the point of a better life when one repents.

Repentance is essential. When John the Immerser came on the scene "preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 3:1-2), he warned the people of his day to "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (3:8). Likewise, Jesus preached, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (4:17).

He would also state, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3 and repeated in verse 5). We could summarize that as repent or perish. This shows the importance of repentance.

When Jesus sent out the apostles on the limited commission it says of them, "And they went out, and preached that men should repent" (Mark 6:12). After the establishment of the Lord's church (the only one He promised to build in Mat. 16:18), the apostles per Jesus' instructions to them (Luke 24:46-47) preached repentance.

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead (17:30-31).

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

As with John, they also taught "that they should repent and turn

to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20). Without repentance, we can never be right with God. It is essential for salvation.

What is repentance? To the Corinthians, Paul wrote his first letter to correct many of the errors found in the congregation there. When he writes the second letter to them, he acknowledges and rejoices they repented.

Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death (2 Cor. 7:9-10).

They had an honest, fervent, sincere desire to seek God's favor. Because they would be out of favor with God, the letter produced sorrow, but it was not a sorrow of the world. This sorrow was godly sorrow. Godly sorrow in the Corinthians (and us) was produced by a realization of their (and our) guilt and condemnation, a knowledge of God's law along with an abiding faith for God and His Will. They also had a sense of personal responsibility in what they had done. As a result of this godly sorrow, they turned from their sinful way of life, and they turned to God in the way He had appointed. This

turning was based upon their desire to do and be right. This turning leads to a change in life for without this change in life there is no repentance. That change of life demands that one get out of any sinful situation they might be involved in.

Repentance is also putting things back in their proper order as much as is possible. Zacchaeus was one who understood this principle as salvation came to his house (Luke 19:9). Prior to Jesus announcing that salvation, Luke records, "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold" (19:8). He understood that one must make restitution if possible in whatever righteous way one can. If a person steals something, they cannot simply say they are sorry and keep what they stole; they must return it. Obviously, there are some things that cannot be restored, but one does if at all possible.

While repentance might be the most difficult command in one's salvation, it is essential. The question comes to each one of us; have we truly repented, not with the sorrow of the world but with a godly repentance to salvation (2 Cor. 7:9-10).

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Continued from Page 1
Assyria accepted the gift, and soon his army was afield. Damascus was captured and Rezin killed. Extending his operations, it is said: "In the days of Pekah king of Israel came

Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria" (15:29).

Political alliances such as Ahaz formed with Tiglath-pileser cannot endure, for they are not founded on principles of righteousness. Temporary relief Ahaz brought by depleting the treasury of his

kingdom, and, in addition, by becoming the vassal of a heathen king. He went to Damascus, paid homage to the heathen king, and made sacrifices to idols. Not only so, but he sent a blueprint of the altar he saw in Damascus to Jerusalem, and ordered a replica made to take the place of the altar there standing to Jehovah, and the land was filled with idolatrous wickedness.

The outlook for Israel, the northern kingdom, was becoming darker with each passing day. Pekah was assassinated by Hoshea, who became king after some years of anarchy in the land. He had been king but a few years when the doom of Israel was sealed. Shalmaneser, who succeeded Tiglath-pileser, waged war on Israel and reduced it to a state of vassalage. Hoshea, king of Israel, found his position galling, and secretly communicated with So, Sabaco I, king of Egypt, proposing a form of alliance with him. His duplicity became known to the king of Assyria, and he called Hoshea to Damascus and confronted him with the evidence of his plans to rebel. Hoshea was imprisoned; Assyria threw her armies into the land of Israel, and she resisted with courage for three years, during which time a revolt, led by Sargon, arose in Assyria; and Shalmaneser, the king, returned to Damascus and surrendered his crown to Sargon. Without delay, Sargon completed the conquest of Israel, and the kingdom of Israel came to an end forever in 721 BC. Large numbers were taken captives; yet numbers of them were left in the land, but the kingdom as such ended, though the people who one time composed it were not wiped from the face of the earth, but the

possibility of them again rising into a kingdom was ended.

Israel Never Again to be "a People"

The term *Israel* as applied to the "ten tribes," or those who composed the northern kingdom—the "kingdom of Israel" as contrasted with the "kingdom of Judah"—will never again exist as "a people"; not that they have been annihilated as individuals, but as "a people" their end came! Indeed, yes, Jehovah declared such would be.

Jeroboam, the first king of the ten tribes, was of the tribe of Ephraim, and that tribe was the strongest tribe in the entire group and rival of the tribe of Judah. Indeed, at times the ten tribes were referred to under the name of Ephraim (See Isa. 7:8; 17:3; 28:3; Hos. 4:17; 5:3; 9:3). But read and know the prediction of Jehovah touching Israel—Ephraim:

Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have purposed evil against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set up a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeel; thus saith the Lord Jehovah, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken in pieces, so that it shall not be a people: and the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son (Isa. 7:5-9).

What did Jehovah say would take place? He declared that within sixty-five years Israel would be "broken in pieces, so that it shall not be a people." Within forty-five years Israel suffered defeat, and though there may have been some

who were not at that time taken captives and may have maintained some semblance of a separate people, it remains a fact that within the time limit of sixty-five years Israel ceased to exist "as a people" separate from other nations. In captivity, they became Jews with Judah. As a nation, or as a separate people, they have ceased to exist. It is the height of folly to talk about gathering the ten tribes to Jerusalem, when no such people have an existence—God said they would not exist!

Tiglath-pileser settled some of the Israelites he took captive—"the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river of Gozan" (1 Chr. 5:26). When Israel fell, the captives were settled in "Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes" (2 Kin. 17:1-6.)

During the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, made a raid into Palestine, capturing the fortified cities of Judah. Jerusalem only seems to have escaped (18:13). Sennacherib reported more than two hundred thousand captives, besides considerable property. Hezekiah in a measure placated Sennacherib by paying him a handsome sum of money and making a promise to pay taxes annually.

Some two hundred years elapsed between taking the first captives from Israel and the fall of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian captivity, and when that came, many of the Jews escaped to Egypt, and some of them remained in Palestine (Jer. 43, 44; 2 Kin. 25:12).

Deceased

Jeremiah and the False Teachers

Gary W. Summers

It was a time of national crisis. When Zedekiah came to the throne, his righteous father Josiah had only been gone about a dozen years. His older brothers, Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim had reigned three months and eleven years respectively, followed by his 8-year-old nephew Jehoiachin, who was deposed after three months.

Whereas the people of the land had chosen Jehoahaz to succeed his father Josiah, the king of Egypt removed him and made his brother Jehoiakim king. It was King Nebuchadnezzar, however, who removed him to Babylon in bronze fetters. He also removed Jehoiachin to Babylon and made Zedekiah king. Egypt liked to think of herself as a major power, but Babylon would prevail (see 2 Chr. 36).

Although Nebuchadnezzar had made Zedekiah king, no one enjoyed being a puppet king. Each one sought a way to rebel or to find a nation (such as Egypt) to help them win independence. The prophet Jeremiah spoke to King Zedekiah: “Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live” (Jer. 27:12).

Of course, anyone can understand why such a prophecy would not be popular any more than if someone were to tell us to serve the Chinese. But no realistic expectation of deliverance existed; Babylon was too powerful. The only way to save a multitude of lives was to comply. Some might have viewed Jeremiah’s message as treasonous, but: (1) it came from God, and

(2) it was designed to avoid needless deaths.

Surely a wise leader could see the advantage of heeding Jeremiah’s warning, but more was at work than just weighing the two options of compliance or rebellion. To be sure, patriots encouraged the king and the people to rebel and fight for their land, but they received further support from another source.

False Prophets

Rallying the inhabitants of Jerusalem was a chorus of men passing themselves off as the prophets of God. Anyone could claim to be a prophet back then, just as anyone can claim to be a preacher or *pastor* today. People are not so much concerned with the soundness of the message as the **appealing nature** of it. Jeremiah told King Zedekiah:

Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you (27:14-15).

Unfortunately, Jeremiah’s word did not settle the matter because false prophets do not give up just because the truth has been proclaimed. The same is true today. The fact that some preach the truth does not mean that those who teach error are closing up shop. If anything, they redouble their efforts. The false prophets of Jeremiah’s day, the religious *leaders* of Jesus’ time, and the false teachers of today all

have one thing in common: they want to retain their power over others. They cannot do so by admitting they are wrong concerning what they teach.

Therefore, they utilize a number of tactics. First, they accuse prophets like Jeremiah of lying. Second, they accused Jesus of teaching things that He never said. Third, they appeal to people’s emotions rather than presenting a factual, scriptural argument, which may include name-calling and other attempts to prejudice people against those upholding truth. The one thing false prophets and teachers never do is admit that they are teaching error. They defend it, though it costs them their physical lives and their souls as well.

False Promise (Hananiah)

Prior to one of the first waves of captivity, the false prophets were promising that no one would be captured. Now they were saying that everyone would be returned shortly. If they were wrong the first time, why would anyone want to listen to them the second time? The answer is that the message was what they wanted to hear (2 Tim. 4:1-5). People do not like to hear a negative message, such as, “We’re going to be destroyed by Babylon.” How much more palatable is it to declare that everyone shall be released from captivity? If wishes were true, no one would ever experience sadness—or feel the need to repent. A false prophet named Hananiah arose with a positive emphasis:

Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon (28:2-4).

Jeremiah, who was wearing a yoke of wood around his neck responded to Hananiah, and this false prophet took the yoke off his neck and broke it, prophesying that his action symbolized that in two years the yoke Babylon had placed upon Israel would be broken. God responded to Hananiah's presumptuous actions by giving a command to Jeremiah.

Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also. Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD (28:13-16).

One wonders how the false prophet felt to hear that bad news. Since Hananiah had claimed to speak for the Lord but was saying

only what people longed to hear, how must it have felt to have heard a death sentence from a genuine prophet of God? Of course, it might be that he did not believe in God, period. Many use religion to manipulate people—and for their own selfish gain. Many today likewise “make merchandise” of people in the name of religion (2 Pet. 2:3). Regardless of what he thought, the text says: “So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month” (Jer. 28:17).

False Promise (Shemaiah)

Another prophet was assuring those in captivity that they would be released shortly, thus giving them false expectations of deliverance. God told Jeremiah to prophecy to these deluded Israelites:

Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie: Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebellion against the LORD (29:31-32).

We should not get the impression that every false prophet was treated the way Hananiah and Shemaiah were, just as all sinful priests were not consumed with fire, as Nadab and Abihu were. God chose them as objects of His wrath. It reveals God's attitude toward all false prophets—even though He withholds punishment from most of them. If the people were aware of these prophecies, they would understand that God spoke the truth through Jeremiah.

Think of how many television *evangelists* would not see 2025 if God destroyed those speaking false doctrine. If those who had written erroneous tracts that are deceiving people, along with books and other publications they have penned, were treated as Shemaiah's family were, *Christian* bookstores would have to sell even more coffee mugs and gift cards.

The Solution

But God does not work in the same fashion today as He did then. How are people to know, then, who is telling the truth in an age with so many varied messages? Since the Bible is the complete revelation of God (2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3), seekers of truth have all they need to discern the truth. Jesus said that we can know truth **if** we continue in His Word (John 8:31-32).

We are not to go by our feelings or what someone has taught us or especially what we would like to hear. We must be certain that what we believe is taught in the Scriptures—clearly. God put into His marvelous Book all things that pertain to life and godliness, so we can know what pleases Him.

God is not going to designate false prophets to us specifically, as He did in the days of Jeremiah. He has provided Truth for us and a mind with which to think, reason, and evaluate. He gives us the choice to use our mental faculties or to ignore them. Those who merely take someone's word concerning truth perish (1 Kin. 13); serious Bible students search the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). We shall be judged by the words of Jesus in the last day (John 12:48).

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“Scouting America” for What?

Marvin L. Weir

What type of *scouting* is done by foxes, weasels, raccoons, opossums (technical term), skunks, and snakes? The above creatures are happy and later satisfied when they find an open door of a chicken house. It is the responsibility of the owner of the chickens to provide a **safe** place for the chickens to roost for the night. Does a rational person shut up a skunk, weasel, fox, or possum (country term) with the chickens for the night? Nope, never on purpose! Any rational thinking person knows what the outcome of that situation will be. Nevertheless, these creatures continue to search for accessible “hen houses” so they can have their way with the chickens during the night. This writer has seen the devastation caused by these creatures looking for an easy meal.

One thing is certain; no one with any concern for their chickens’ safety and welfare would purposely place a skunk, weasel, fox, or possum in the “hen house” to guard, teach, or comfort the hens.

This leads us to the rebranding of the *Boy Scouts of America* and to February 8, 2025, when they will be known as *Scouting America*. The

group **claims** the name change has been done to “foster a more inclusive organization.” Ah, red flags should immediately be raised in one’s mind. In “Scouting America,” what are they going to include? This question will be answered in this article, but first let us examine the official claim that the goal of the name change is to make everyone feel welcome. While this may sound noble:

many people see this as an attempt to move on from bankruptcy following a flood of sexual abuse claims. Last year BSA agreed to pay \$2.46 billion to settle claims by some 82,000 (some reports say 90,000) former Boy Scouts who said they had been sexually abused by BSA officials and volunteers.

What caused such chaos? Homosexual youth were allowed to join the Scouts in 2013, and the organization ended a “blanket ban on gay adult leaders in 2015.” In 2018, girls were accepted as *Cub Scouts* and into the *Boy Scout* program renamed Scouts BSA — in 2019. Angelique Minett, the first woman chairperson of Scouts BSA “says the organization is much more than just camping We are actually teaching kids a much bigger

thing.” Indeed! Some 90,000 young people, instead of just learning decent skills and focusing on merit badges and leadership, were **sexually molested by human skunks, weasels, and snakes!** [Some information and stats were published in a May 7, 2024, article by Michael Dorgan of *Fox News*.]

Many parents today may not have chickens to protect but most have children for which they are responsible. Even if a child might be struggling with their sexuality in some way, why would any concerned parent allow that child to be in close proximity and under the *guidance* of an avowed homosexual? Why will an organization that once stood for what was decent and right now accept as members young people who identify as homosexual? It is a proven fact that these people living such wicked lives have a desire to influence as many others as possible to partake of their abomination. Yes, God declares sodomy and lesbianism to be just that—an abomination. The law of Moses stated, “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination” (Lev. 18:22). The Old Law also declared, “And if a

Continued on Page 5



Notes From The Editor

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Salvation: Confession

It has been correctly stated that a faith not worth confessing is a faith that is not worth having. Since this is true, what is confession? It comes from a Greek word which literally means to say or speak the same thing. It was in secular usage as well as religious. In a religious application, confess is to speak one and the same thing as God said. There are two applications of confession in the Scriptures and there is the need to consider both.

The first is regarding sin. The Scriptures state clearly that all men have sinned. Paul, in writing to the Galatian brethren, states, "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Gal. 3:22). Since the true author of the Scriptures is God (2 Tim. 3:16), then God hath concluded "all under sin." From the beginning of time, we see this is God's conclusion. God gave Adam and Eve the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but they transgressed God's command (Gen. 3) and thus sinned (1 John 3:4). We are then introduced to Cain's murder of his brother Abel (Gen. 4). We come to the flood where "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and

that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (6:5) so God destroyed the world with a flood. Sin continued to be the lot of man as David wrote:

The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.* They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is none that doeth good.* The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and seek God.* They are all gone aside, they are *all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good,* no, not one (Psa. 14:1-3).

Paul quotes from this in Romans 3:10-12. Paul concludes by saying, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (3:23). So, God has said that each individual who has reached an accountable age has sinned.

Another clear statement God has made regards Jesus of Nazareth. We see this statement made by God when Jesus first comes on the scene. John the Immerser was baptizing people in the Jordan and Jesus comes to him to be baptized. While John did not wish to baptize Jesus as he had no sins of which to be forgiven, Jesus explained that He needed to be baptized to "fulfil all righteousness" (Mat. 3:15) which is to obey all of God's commands since all God's "commandments are righteousness" (Psa. 119:172). God had commanded the Israelites to be baptized of John, so when Jesus obeyed the Father's command, Matthew records:

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And

to a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Mat. 3:16-17).

This is a clear statement from the Father saying Jesus is His Son. This is not the only time the Father would state this as later when Jesus took Peter, James, and John into a mountain and was transfigured. After Peter said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias" (17:4), Matthew records:

While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him (17:5).

This is the second time the Father had said that Jesus was His Son. In both statements by the Father, He added that He was well pleased with Jesus, no doubt because He always did the will of the Father.

Let us now make the application to man and man's confession because both of these have an application to man.

Let us first consider confession in the process of being saved. Paul would write:

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10).

This confession is saying the same thing as God regarding Jesus of Nazareth, that He is the Christ the Son of God. Consider when Jesus first asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" before asking them, "But whom say ye that I am?" (Mat. 16:13-15). We are then told, "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (16:16). This is the rock upon which Jesus built the church (16:18; 1 Cor. 3:11). Notice Jesus' response to what Peter had stated, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Mat. 16:17). Jesus said that the Father had revealed the answer to Peter. How? First, the Father revealed it at Jesus' baptism when He said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (3:17). Second, He revealed it through John the Immerser, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Notice John states that he had seen the Spirit coming upon Jesus, so he "bare record that this is the Son of God" (1:34). Then it is revealed, "Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" (1:35-36). We find out that one of those two disciples was Andrew, Peter's brother.

One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was An-

drew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone (1:40-42).

Thus, by John the Immerser's testimony to Andrew who then tells his brother Simon Peter they had found the Christ, John bare record of Jesus being the Christ. A third way the Father had revealed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God is through the miracles (works) Jesus did. Jesus would answer the Jews who asked Him if He was the Christ, "I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me" (10:25) then would later state to them when accusing Him of blaspheming:

Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father *is* in me, and I in him (10:36-38).

Then, when speaking to His apostles after Philip had stated "Lord, shew us the Father" (14:8) responded by saying, "Believe me that I *am* in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake" (14:11). The miracles led to a ruler of the Jews saying, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (3:2). There is no doubt the

Father had revealed to Peter, the apostles, and to all that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

In writing to his son in the faith, Timothy, Paul would make this observation, "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession" (1 Tim. 6:13). As Jesus was standing before Pontius Pilate, he asked Him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" (Mat. 27:11). Jesus gave him an affirmative response by saying, "Thou sayest" (27:11); He is King of the Jews. In John's account of Jesus before Pilate in response to his question:

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice (John 18:36-37).

Jesus affirmed being "a king" by His agreement with Pilate's question. Thus, going back to Paul's statement to Timothy, Jesus "witnessed a good confession" before Pontius Pilate.

Likewise, in the process of being saved, we are expected to make a confession. However, if we notice in Romans 10:10, Paul states that confession is made unto (a word always dealing with something toward or in the direction of) salvation. The confession does not give one salvation, but it is essential in obtaining salvation. We must say

the same thing that God said: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

We view an example of this when Philip was instructed to join himself with the Ethiopian who was returning home from being in Jerusalem. The Ethiopian was reading from Isaiah and Philip “preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35). The Ethiopian asked, “See, *here is water*; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (8:36). Notice how Philip responded, “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (8:37).

(While most modern versions omit this verse to a footnote, I believe it should be in the text. The Ethiopian asked a question, and it is only reasonable for Philip to answer it.) He confessed what the Father had said and what he believed. This confession is necessary for our salvation.

This is not a confession of our sins and that Jesus has saved me from them, as many teach. Instead, it simply means saying (or affirming), just as the Ethiopian or Peter said, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

However, for one who is already a Christian, there is another confession, and this is a confession of sin. As the apostle John is writing to Christians in his first epistle and reminds us that “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” (1 John 1:7). So, John is discussing one who is walking in the light, his lifestyle is according to God’s nature (1:5). The person John is describing is one who is a Christian, yet even as a Christian whose lifestyle is ac-

ording to God’s nature, we find he will still commit acts of sin (even though that is not his lifestyle): “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1:8, 10). Thus, even though a child of God and walking in the light, we will still commit sin. To have the blood of Christ cleanse us of our sin as a child of God who sins, John gives a condition that must be met. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1:9).

We must recognize that we have sinned which means we have a realization of what sin is. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (3:4). Those might be sins of omission or commission. Realizing that I have transgressed God’s law, I say the same thing as God has said regarding it. God said, man has sinned, thus, I say, “I have sinned.” It is not saying things like, “If I have sinned,” or “If I have offended someone,” or that someone else did me wrong. It is a statement that I have sinned.

Saying “I have sinned” without the proper action to go with it is futile. Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21). Repentance, in all that means, must take place regarding that confession. To the Christian who had succumbed to sin, Simon the sorcerer, Peter said:

Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the

thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me (Acts 8:22-24).

After David’s sin with Bathsheba, David confessed his sin as he said, “For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me” (Psa. 51:3). Through the first twelve verses of the Psalm, David is admitting his sin and asking for forgiveness. After pleading for God’s forgiveness because of his sin, notice what David then says:

Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (51:13-17).

Consider three things he says that will follow his forgiveness: (1) He will teach others, verse 13; (2) he will sing of God’s forgiveness, verse 14; (3) he will praise God, verse 15. In concluding this section, David reminds us that a repentant heart is what pleases God, verses 16-17.

To become a Christian, one must confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God with that confession based upon sincere faith in God and repentance of our sins. While confession does not make a child of God, it is a necessary step in becoming God’s child. Then as a child of God, and one doing his

best to live according to God's will, he will at times commit sin and then he must confess that sin with the attendant repentance and

prayer to God for forgiveness. Let us always be humble enough to confess Jesus to be saved, and then when we as a Christian commit sin,

be willing to confess that sin with the proper actions following.

MH

Continued from Page 1
man lie with mankind, as with womankind, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them" (Lev. 20:13). These abominable acts were forbidden by God under the Law of Moses and are also forbidden under the Law of Christ. Romans 1:24-27 reveals the mind-set of God towards homosexuality in saying:

Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in

themselves that recompense of their error which was due.

The sin of homosexuality must be repented of—not practiced—to save the guilty one's soul. This is made abundantly clear when Paul taught the Corinthians, saying:

Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

Some incorrectly teach today that God accepted these people in their sins, but one needs to carefully note Paul saying, "And such were some of you: but ye were washed...sanctified...justified in the name of the Lord Jesus." Godly repentance precedes baptism, sancti-

fication, and justification (Luke 13:3).

What about purposely mixing maturing girls and boys together as they "camp out?" It is not a brilliant idea as failure to control hormones can become an issue in spite of legitimate scouting activities. Long ago it was the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts for a reason. However, *womeness* and *inclusion* have intervened, and common sense and God's Word no longer seem to matter!

Let us now return to the question asked earlier: "In 'Scouting America,' what are they going to include?" Easy answer—The entire LGBTQ+ crowd. If one can see the need not to expose their chickens to skunks, weasels, possums, and foxes, why cannot one see the need not to expose their children to homosexuals, lesbians, and transgendered people? Parents beware! "Are chickens more important and precious than our children?"

Blossom, TX

"All Things Work Together for Good"

H. Leo Boles

And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, *even* to them that are called according to *his* purpose (Rom. 8:28).

This familiar Scripture has been quoted and applications made of it to many and various circumstances. It has been the text for

theological doctrines that contradict each other. One theological school gives it the interpretation that God orders and directs everything that pertains to His children, while another school gives an entirely different interpretation to it. Again, it has been made to com-

fort the distressed and sorrowing and to encourage those who are in prosperity. There is no circumstance in life to which someone has not attempted to make an application of this Scripture. There is comfort in it for the Lord's people; no one would dispute this. Paul, if

he had not been guided by inspiration, could have spoken from the many experiences in his own life to the truthfulness of the statement. His life had been varied; his career had been checkered. He knew the hardships and persecutions of life; he knew the keen joy experienced in seeing people accept the Gospel.

Good in Adversity

The child of God may rejoice in that God has the wisdom, power, and goodness to make “all things work together for good...to them that love God.” These do not just **happen** so, but God **makes** them “work together for good.” We may not see the hand of God in these affairs, but through His overruling **providence**, He brings a blessing to those who love and serve Him. Paul had learned this valuable lesson and had received spiritual blessings even in the midst of trying situations. There are many things in life that are not of themselves good. No one is glad when he is compelled to suffer and languish on a bed of affliction. Sorrows may come into our lives, due sometimes to the sins of others, which cannot be classed as good. However, even sorrows, troubles, distresses, and disappointments may work out for good to the faithful child of God in that they may be the means of drawing them closer to God and of developing patience, strengthening faith, and furnishing an opportunity for sympathy. Paul’s thorn in the flesh was not of itself good, and Paul desired that it should be removed, yet it worked out for good in that the grace and power of God were more abundantly be-

stowed upon him (2 Cor. 12:9). This furnished the occasion for God to extend to Paul blessings which he would not have otherwise received. Many of the wise of earth have learned that good may come out of the adversities of life

Sweet are the uses of adversity
Which, like the toad, ugly and
venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his
head.

Real Calamities

No one is justified in saying that everything which enters into the life of a Christian is the best possible thing for him. Paul does not teach that, and we are confident that it is not true. There are many things which one might properly wish were different. Ill-health, a lack of opportunity to obtain an education, unjust opposition, hindering circumstances, wayward and rebellious children—all of these may be a source of regret. Every one of us would strive to change such conditions, if possible. This is what Paul attempted to do concerning his thorn in the flesh (12:9). It was not best that Paul should be shut up in prison in Caesarea; he could have been out at liberty preaching the Gospel to the unsaved. However, while he was in prison, he wrote a portion of the New Testament which is rich in spiritual nourishment for the Lord’s people. If we live close to God, these things will work out for us a development of character that God will approve. The one who fails to trust in God cannot claim that these things are working together—for his good. Calamities are real; they come both to the godly and the ungodly. Sometimes the ungodly get more

rain or less rain and more heat or less heat than the godly; however, this may be a blessing to some and a distress to others. Yet, whatever may come to the child of God who is faithful to Him, even in the hour of serious financial loss, the soul that loves God and trusts Him may receive some spiritual blessings therefrom. The child of God need not hope to be spared from all of the distresses of this life. Jesus said to His disciples: “Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:32-33)

The Providence of God

All believe that in some way the overruling providence of God is working together for the good of His people. Sometimes we may be mistaken as to what is the providence of God. Many Christians recount incidents and circumstances as the providence of God. These may or may not be. How can we know? Many will tell their experiences out of which they have come and have received blessings. On the other hand, the wicked have been brought out of the same set of experiences with the same results. They do not attribute the results as the blessings of God. When Paul spoke of all things working together for good, he may have had in mind the providence which had shaped his own life and the lives of others. Examples of such providences are almost limit-

less. We have confidence in the wisdom, goodness, and power of God to take care of His children, and we believe that He will make “all things work together for good”

to those who put their trust in Him. Whether we can prove by logic that any particular set of circumstances was overruled by God for our good or not, we still be-

lieve in Him as our Father and that nothing can separate us from His love.

Deceased

Gospel Advocate, Oct. 8, 1942

The Authority Respecting Moral Right and Wrong

Charles Pogue

In the worlds of politics and journalism, while the left and the right disagree on certain issues, they have one serious thing in common, sadly; both set up the individual's own inner being as the source for his position on whatever stand he takes. There is one basic difference in philosophy between the left and the right. The left seeks to dismiss debate and force their view on everyone, while the right recognizes the value of debate. That difference being recognized, still, both sides are in error when they assert the right or wrong position originates within the individual. Both, for the most part, leave God and His Word out of the process of determining right from wrong.

We are seeing an increasing number of those who are identified by society as being conservative accepting homosexuality, transgenderism, and even abortion in some cases. More and more, those on the right are leaving the argument of it being murder where the issue of abortion is concerned. Because they are doing so, the left is now ludicrously claiming the right to choose to kill one's baby in the womb is moral while opposing abortion is immorality.

The cost to America for leaving the Bible out as the authority on moral issues will bring on the downfall of America, which some of us see as a thing that could hap-

pen in the not-too-distant future. God either is, or He is not. If God is, the Book He has inspired must be the sole authority on all religious doctrine including moral matters. If God does not exist, every individual, a majority of individuals, or a group of individuals are the three possibilities for who determines right and wrong.

God does exist. The evidence found in the material universe, along with the internal evidence within the pages of God's Word proves without any doubt that God does exist. This being said, the words of Jeremiah in Jeremiah 10:23 must be accepted by everyone for the right to win against the wrong. Jeremiah wrote, “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” As it refers to nations or kingdoms, Solomon wrote the absolute fact, “Righteousness exalteth a nation: But sin is a reproach to any people” (Pro. 14:34).

The founding fathers of our nation, while not New Testament Christians, were, for the most part, men who respected God and viewed the Bible as the authority for matters of morality. There was a time when laws were determined accordingly. This nation held to that respect for the Bible for many years, but as happens with all people who allow themselves to be deceived by the wiles of the devil, we

began to drift away from God's authority and right to rule in all things, which involves the question of right and wrong.

While even some of the younger generations are old enough to see some of the present drift away from God over their few years, those who are sixty years old and older and who still honor the Bible as the inspired Book of God are, for the most part, astounded at the condition of our nation.

The day is drawing closer all of the time when those who believe in the existence and authority of God, whether they are Christians as the New Testament describes a Christian or not, may very well be physically persecuted and imprisoned for their beliefs. Because this is being evidently set forth among us, it is even more important than ever that we stand fast and contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3).

The apostles counted it worthy to suffer for the name of Christ when they were commanded to speak no more in the name of Christ (Acts 5:40-41). They did more than pay a mental attribution for the worthy suffering. Acts 5:42 reads, “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” We must do the same for God, the Creator of all things, exists, and He is the authority in all matters of right and wrong.

Deceased

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The Message of Christ to the World

Guy N. Woods

The most casual observer of men and events must surely be impressed with the fact that ours is, truly, a day of confusion and chaos. Principles long believed to be inviolable are surrendered daily, institutions the most sacred are despised, and governments for ages considered invincible now totter on their foundations. The spirit of restlessness hovers like a heavy cloud over the earth, and bewilderment and doubt characterize a significant portion of the race. Men with fear in their eyes and terror in their hearts plead piteously for an opportunity to live at peace with themselves and with each other.

Vast segments of society live in daily want of life's necessities, and little children, gaunt with hunger, their bodies wracked with pain and disease, move helplessly toward an inevitable destiny they do not deserve, but cannot avoid.

Throughout the earth, the wisest and most intellectual men among us, instead of devoting their energies toward making the world a better place in which to live, are engaged in a mad race to create fearful engines of destruction capa-

ble of annihilating whole peoples in a matter of moments.

Here and there, discordant voices rise above the din of confusion that swells through the world and offer their vain philosophies, each of which, when tried, mocks the hearts of the hopeful and teaches again the age-old lesson of man's utter inability to direct his steps.

Must we accede to the cheerless doctrine of fatalism and conclude in the light of these facts that we are nothing more than the creatures of a blind, inexorable fate, worthless pawns in the hands of unreasoning forces, individuals. Without purpose or design in the world? Have we no other destiny than to stand helplessly by and see ourselves drawn inexorably into the maelstrom of destruction without hope of salvation or deliverance?

It is indeed a sad but revealing commentary on human nature that in our search for the *summum bonum*, the supreme good, we choose deliberately to close our eyes to a philosophy of life that has never once failed to satisfy all of the longings and aspirations of the human heart.

Jesus said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Christianity, therefore, offers us **abundant life**.

Is this, too, nothing more than a vain and empty promise, destined to create hopes and expectations it can neither satisfy nor fulfill? Let us examine it carefully and see what it has to offer to the world.

Its Founder and Head is the revealer of all spiritual truth. Before He left the earth, He assured His disciples that provision had been made for them to be guided into all the truth. Years later, one of His disciples asserted that all things pertaining to life and godliness had been delivered. Therefore, it follows that Christianity does not seek to solve life's difficulties by applying human plans or efforts, but to them applies principles heaven-born and hence fully adequate to accomplish that for which they were originated.

Only the most thoughtless today believe that the world in which we live is without intelligible direction. Those who **really think** have no difficulty accepting the reasonable conclusion that the order and per-

Continued on Page 6



Notes From The Editor

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Salvation: Baptism

Baptism is one of the most controversial subjects in Christendom. Views vary widely regarding baptism in various areas. We want to take a look at what the Bible says on this vital topic.

Mode

The first area of concern is often erroneously called the *mode* of baptism. By *mode* we mean the way or manner baptism is done. We say this is erroneous because baptism is the mode. *Baptism* is a transliteration (not translation) of the Greek word. When one looks at the definition of the actual Greek term, he will find the word means: “dip, immerse” (AG), “consisting of the process of immersion, submersion and emergence (from *bapto*, ‘to dip’).” (Vine), “to dip in or under; ‘to dye,’ ‘to immerse,’ ‘to sink,’ ‘to drown,’ ‘to bathe,’ ‘wash’” (Little Kittel), “to dip repeatedly, to immerge, submerge” (Thayer), and others would say the same basic thing. If the writers wanted to express the action of dipping or pouring, they had words they could use to express those thoughts; however, they did not use those words in expressing the action of baptism.

Notice the emphasis of the Bible regarding this action. Much water is needed as John reveals, “And

John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized” (John 3:23). When Luke describes the baptism process, he says Philip and the Ethiopian went down into the water and came up out of the water, “And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38-39). Neither sprinkling or pouring requires “much water” or going down into the water and coming up out of the water. Only in immersion are these needed.

The Bible also describes baptism as a burial in Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12. A burial is not simply pouring or sprinkling a little dirt on the object being buried. When a burial takes place, it is putting something under the ground or completely covering so it causes it to disappear or become inconspicuous. This action is not done when sprinkling or pouring takes place.

Element

While there are various elements mentioned in the Scriptures as into what one is baptized, when speaking of New Testament baptism regarding salvation, the element is water. In the two previous passages (John 3:23 and Acts 8:38-39) we learn the element involved is water.

Some, however, want to insist the baptism of the New Testament is Holy Spirit baptism. The basis for Holy Spirit baptism is John’s state-

ment regarding Jesus, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with fire*” (Mat. 3:11). Later, Jesus narrows this promise to the apostles as Luke reveals to us.

And said unto them [the apostles], Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye [apostles] are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you [apostles]: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:46-49).

This “promise of my Father” is the promise of Holy Spirit baptism. In Luke’s other account of this he identifies that promise for us:

And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them [apostles] that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye [apostles] shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence... But ye [apostles] shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you [apostles]: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:4-5, 8).

Since Jesus told the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for baptism of the Holy Spirit, we would expect them to receive such as they waited in Jerusalem for it.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they [apostles] were all with one accord in one place.... And they [apostles] were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (2:1,4).

Also, Holy Spirit baptism was a promise and was never a command as is water baptism. So, some turn to the discussion with Nicodemus and Jesus' statement of the new birth. Jesus told him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Since it mentions a part of the new birth process is the Spirit, they read into what Jesus said Holy Spirit baptism. However, if we allow the Scriptures to define what it means, we learn something very different. Paul explains it when he writes, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *have ye* not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). The new birth (begotten you) is through the Gospel, not Holy Spirit baptism. James would put it, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (Jam. 1:18), using Word of Truth which is the Gospel. Then, Peter would put it this way: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23). This incorrupt-

ible seed is the Word of God which is how we are born again. Thus, that new birth process is by God's Word being taught and instilling in man life which culminates in water baptism. Therefore, the new birth has nothing to do with Holy Spirit baptism which was promised to the apostles and only to them.

For the Penitent Believer

Prior to one being baptized, the Gospel must be preached to them (Mark 16:15-16). Part of the process of making one a disciple of Christ is "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" Jesus said (Mat. 28:19-20). As we have noted in previous articles, that teaching process is what produces faith (Rom. 10:10) which is essential to saving us (Heb. 11:6). True faith leads one to repent as it is impossible to turn to God in God's appointed way without belief in God and a knowledge of what God's way is. Also, we have seen the need to confess Christ when the Ethiopian asked to be baptized, Philip asked him about his faith to which he confessed his faith in Jesus (Acts 8:35-39). Thus, we learn baptism is for those individuals who have believed and are penitent.

This makes infant (and young children) baptism invalid; an action that God has never authorized. These young ones cannot believe. Faith, by its nature takes reasoning correction (Isa. 1:18) from the evidence provided (the Word of God) to draw the proper conclusion that God is, and then place their trust in Him and the Gospel. Infants cannot speak so they cannot make a good confession of their faith as is necessary.

Prior to baptism one must also repent of their sins. However, infants and young children have no sins of which to repent. Babies are conceived and born without sin in a state of innocence unlike what many teach that they are born sinners. Solomon would declare, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Ecc. 7:29). The psalmist would state, "Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, And shed innocent blood, *even* the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood" (Psa. 106:37-38). While the parents sinned in what they did, "their sons and their daughters" were innocent. When speaking of the king of Tyre, Ezekiel said, "Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou *wast* created, till iniquity was found in thee" (Eze. 28:15). These are not ways (upright, innocent, perfect) that would describe someone who is totally depraved as many teach.

Jesus described the kingdom using the word *little children* but it is a word that could be translated *babies*. Jesus said that one must become such to enter the kingdom, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 18:3). Later, He said that the kingdom consists of such, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (19:14). The question must be asked as to which idea fits what Jesus said better? Must one become a little sinner or innocent one to enter the kingdom?

Does the kingdom consist of sinners or ones innocent? The answer should be obvious, to enter the kingdom and that kingdom is composed of those innocent and not sinners that are totally depraved. This is why the New Testament never gives an account of babies or little children being baptized.

For Remission of Sins

The Scriptures tell us remission (forgiveness) of sins is found in Christ. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7). “In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14). Since forgiveness (remission) is found in Christ, it would behoove us to find out how we get into that location (in Him). There are only two passages in the Bible that informs us how to get into that location. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6:3). “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). Both passages tell us to get **into** Christ is by means of baptism. As we have already noticed, New Testament baptism is water baptism, therefore, water baptism is the means by which we receive forgiveness of sins.

Let us notice another aspect of this latter passage. Previously we discussed the new birth and Jesus’ statement that unless one is born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom. We showed that water involves baptism and Spirit is referring to the Word of God. Now consider what Paul says here that corresponds with what Jesus said there: “For ye are all the children of God

by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). Becoming a child of God is going through the new birth process whereby we are born into the family of God becoming His child. Paul states that it is “by faith.” Even though not translated, it literally reads, “through (or by) **the** faith,” as *Young’s Literal Translation* translates it. The definite article (*the*) is in the original text and thus Paul is saying we become children of God by the Word of God (the faith). Then Paul explains how we become a child of God through the Word of God and that is by being baptized into Christ. Thus, we have the new birth process explained to us.

Consider also Jesus’ statement to His apostles in what we call the Great Commission as recorded by John Mark. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16). Jesus is sending His apostles out to teach men what they must do to be saved. As observed previously, there must be a teaching that takes place, so Jesus commanded them to preach the Gospel. That preaching is intended to instill faith which Jesus says is essential to be saved. Here Jesus also informs them that to be saved an individual must not only believe but he must be baptized. There is no way to be any clearer that baptism comes prior to salvation even though many teach that it comes after salvation. They teach Jesus as saying, “He that believeth shall be saved and should be baptized.” However, all can clearly see Jesus did not say that but instead said, “He that believeth and is baptized

shall be saved.” To teach one is saved prior to baptism is to teach that Jesus was wrong in what He said.

We also need to turn to Acts 2:38. The Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles (2:1-4) which draws a crowd (2:5-13) who are confused as to what is taking place. Peter, along with the other apostles, begins by saying what is not taking place (they are not drunk; 2:15), and then explaining what is taking place—the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (2:16-21). He then proceeds to establish that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God and they had by wicked hands crucified Him, but God raised Him from the dead (2:22-36). This sermon caused the Israelites to realize their sin in crucifying the one who is “both Lord and Christ.” Having their hearts cut through with the pains of their sin, they asked Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?” (2:37). They are asking what they need to do to receive remission of their sin. Peter’s response is again very clear as to what they must do: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (2:38). For the Israelites (and us) to have the remission of sins, they must both repent and be baptized. Remove either one, repentance or baptism, and you do not have the remission of sins.

Some have attempted to oppose this by saying *for* can mean “because of.” Thus, they would have Peter’s answer to the Israelites as to what they must do to have the remission of sins as being, “repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ because you have the remission of your

sins.” That makes no sense at all. The context and situation do not allow this novel view. Additionally, the word translated *for* is used over 1700 times in the New Testament and it never looks back but is always forward looking (while the English word can look back, the Greek word never does). We also have the exact same phrase (both in English and Greek) when Jesus said, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mat. 26:28). Did Jesus shed His blood because people already had the remission of sins or so they could receive the remission of their sins? The answer is that *for* is looking forward and not backward so Jesus shed His blood so people could (in the future) receive the remission of their sins. Then, whatever *for* means regarding baptism, it must also mean regarding repentance. Yet, most agree that repentance is an action that is necessary to be saved (Luke 13:3; 24:46-47; Acts 17:30). If repentance is necessary to be saved, then baptism is also an action necessary to be saved. Thus, the clear conclusion is that Peter, by inspiration, taught that for a person to receive forgiveness, he must both repent and he must be baptized. Without either one, there is no forgiveness.

Saul of Tarsus (later the apostle Paul) had received letters to Damascus from the high priest to find anyone who was a Christian and bring them bound back to Jerusalem (Acts 9, 22, 26). As he neared Damascus, there was a blinding light from heaven and a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (9:4). Saul responded by saying, “Who art thou, Lord?” Whereupon Jesus re-

sponded by saying, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*” (9:5). After identifying Himself, Saul responded by saying, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Many teach that Saul by calling Jesus Lord, would have been saved at that moment. Yet, the Lord did not tell him such but told him to “Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (9:6). The Lord told Ananias to go to him and when Ananias arrives he sees a man who now properly believes (John 8:24) and who is penitent of his sins by virtue of his praying (9:11). Yet, his praying did not take away or forgive his sins, as he was still accountable for them. What was now needed? Ananias tells him. “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (22:16). He was still needing his sins to be washed away by the blood of Jesus (Rev. 1:5) by being baptized in water for the remission of his sins. In that act of obedience in being baptized for forgiveness of sins, Saul would be calling on the name of the Lord. The way one calls upon the name of the Lord is not by saying something, but it is by obedience in water baptism.

Peter, the one who on Pentecost of Acts 2 said to the Israelites they must repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, when penning his first epistle wrote:

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of

the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:20-21).

Even though many reject baptism saving us, Peter clearly states that baptism does save us. We know this is water baptism by the context. Peter is speaking of Noah in the days of the flood. Noah and his family “were saved by water.” This is a type of the salvation when one is baptized. If the baptism that “doth also now save us” is anything other than water baptism, then there is no type/antitype relationship and Peter was wrong when he said “the like figure” that baptism saves us. The clear teaching of Peter here corresponds to what he said in Acts 2:38 for them to “repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”

The purpose of baptism is for the remission of sins or for salvation (to have the remission of sins is to have salvation). To be baptized for any other reason or purpose causes one not to have the remission of sins or salvation.

Conclusion

One cannot obey God accidentally. There are four elements regarding obedience: (1) Doing what was said to be done, (2) Doing how it was said to be done, (3) Doing it when it is said to be done, and (4) doing it for the purpose one is told to do it. If one looks at all four elements of obedience regarding baptism: (1) the what is being baptized, (2) the how is immersion, (3) the when is after one believes, repents, and confesses, and (4) the purpose is for the remission of sins or salvation. Unless all four of these elements are present, one has not obeyed God regarding baptism.

Likewise, if we change any one of these elements, one has not obeyed God and thus is not saved but needs to be saved from their sins.

While faith, repentance, and confession are necessary to salva-

tion, it is the act of baptism itself where we go from being lost to being saved. Prior to obedience to God in baptism (all four elements), one is not a Christian and only in obedience in being baptized (im-

mersed in water after he believes, repents, and confesses his faith) for the remission of his sins does one become a Christian. We plead with all to truly obey the Gospel.

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Continued from Page 1
fection everywhere manifest in the universe must be the result of purposeful and intelligent planning. “In the beginning God created” is the first article of faith of those who have thought things through regarding the material universe about it. A divine superintendency, preceded by a miraculous creation, is a postulate few today have the hardihood to deny.

These facts premised, it is highly significant that Christ, founder of Christianity, is the public declaration of the great Jehovah to the world. Said He of Himself: “No man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and *he* to whom the Son will reveal *him*” (Luke 10:22). Again: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:8). And still further: “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*” (1:18). *Declared him* mean literally “made him plain.” To *declare* is to make manifest, to bring out into the open. Christ, therefore, has as it were, brought God out into the open—**made him plain!** No longer may men refuse to obey God on the pretext that He is too obscure to be known. Christ is His public announcement, the open and official revelation of His glory to the world. Hence, to know Christ is to know the Father; to acquaint oneself with

the principles He enunciated is to know the will of Jehovah.

It is, then, pertinent to inquire: What is the message of God through Christ to the world?

Overshadowing all else is the boundless, immeasurable, passionate love which He felt for the wayward children of the earth as manifested in the supreme sacrifice of His Son to die the shameful and ignominious death of the cross for their redemption. *Redeem* was used frequently in the first century of the transaction by which one went into the slave market and purchased freedom for another. Thus, our Lord went into the slave market of sin and purchased our complete freedom with His precious blood, thus delivering us from the bondage of sin and giving us liberty and freedom in Christ Jesus. In describing the wondrous love that prompted such a sacrifice, Paul does so in this manner:

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2: 4-7).

That is, God plans to put the redeemed **on exhibition** throughout all ages as a continual demonstra-

tion of the “exceeding riches of his grace” as manifested to fallen and sinful man.

However, we cannot conclude that Christianity is simply an “another worldly” affair, designed to govern and regulate man in another sphere, but with little practical benefit here. This charge, though often lodged against it, is false in every detail. Every relationship of life is recognized and regulated in the New Testament. It is impossible for a child of God to find himself in any situation that he can be in wherein he cannot find explicit directions touching his conduct as a Christian therein.

Before He ascended, the Lord laid plans for a divinely purposed order of society, which He designated as the kingdom of God. The first word of His public teaching was, incidentally, “Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”; and His last words, spoken just before He returned to His Father, were concerning this kingdom. This institution was the dominant thought in all of His teaching, the center of His plans and purposes, touching the redemption and final salvation of all men. Its principles are of the most exalted nature, superior to any ever formulated before or since. Adhered to and faithfully followed, they would turn the world into a veritable paradise. Were all men everywhere willing to submit themselves to it, war would immediately cease

and be ever thereafter impossible. He revealed the fact of human brotherhood, urging through one of His disciples that God hath made of one blood all the nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth.

In His view, all men were destined to be brothers, not enemies; friends, not fighters of one another, but following always and implicitly the Golden Rule: “All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them.”

The followers of Christ invariably make the best citizens, for they “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s”; the most faithful husbands, for “they love their wives, and are not bitter against them”; the best wives, for they obey their husbands in the Lord; the best parents, for they bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; the best children because they honor and obey their parents all of their days; the best employees, who with good will render service, not as unto man, but as unto Christ; and the best employers, who, forbearing threatening, give to their servants that “which is just and equal.”

In a word, Christianity gathers up every human relationship and ordains that those who profess to adhere to its principles conduct themselves in such fashion as to reflect credit on the institution to which they belong and to him who founded it. Recently, an able jurist observed that “the teachings of Jesus contain those principles that must solve all the social and economic problems of our time.”

Christ taught the sanctity of the marriage relation, honored a wedding with His presence, and estab-

lished the indissolubility of the marriage bond, allowing it to be broken for one cause only. He taught the right of private property and forbade an improper desire for that which belongs to another. He visualized a state of society wherein all hate is eliminated and where men love one another and seek each other’s good. His were indeed the highest ideals of human life, the most sublime fellowship ever launched. He taught that the supreme good is in rendering the greatest service to the largest number of people. He made it plain that the way up is first down in pointing the way to true greatness! “Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them,” He once said to His disciples. “But so shall it not be among you,” He wanted them to know, “but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all” (Mark 10:42-44).

“Not I, but others” was, and remains, the watchword of His standards, the slogan that motivates His faithful followers, the fundamental principle governing and regulating the lives of those who are indeed His own.

The church of the New Testament purchased with His precious blood and vitalized with His Spirit—the kingdom of God on earth—is the divine conservator of His principles, the agency through which He has elected to operate here below. As such, its place in man’s redemption is essential and irreplaceable. Only as it can function in harmony with its divine purpose is it able to accomplish that for which it was established in the

earth. Far from minimizing its importance, it should be elevated to its rightful place and sphere in life and allowed to perform its Divine obligation of bearing the message of life and salvation to the world. Just before His ascension into heaven, Jesus bade the disciples to “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” He admonished them that “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Moreover, repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in connection with the same message—all of it to go forth from Jerusalem. In pursuance of that Divine order, they assembled in the city appointed as the New Testament church’s birthplace. Faithfully the message was preached; thousands heard and obeyed and were thereupon added to the church. Adequate for all the human family’s needs then, it remains so today and awaits only an opportunity to demonstrate its all-sufficiency for our age and time.

It points us to Almighty God; it offers to reclaim the human soul for an immortal destiny; it reminds us of Jesus Christ; it comforts broken hearts; it is a friend of education and culture; it exhibits the highest type of brotherhood; it stands for social justice and civic righteousness; it is the greatest builder of morals; it stands ever before us as an implacable foe of evil; it inspires to health and happiness; it expounds our duty to our God, to our neighbor, and ourself; it is a big brother to every needy soul and worthy cause; it is the mother of all that is best in our civilization; it is a guardian of the home, herald of the Lord’s day, and defender of the Bible.

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Why Christians Who Have Fallen Away Refuse to Return to the Lord

Mike Demory

Introduction

Although there is a common belief that men cannot fall from God's grace, the Bible teaches otherwise. Why else would the Holy Spirit include such things as the pig returning to the mud hole (2 Pet. 2:22), or the warning to the Galatians that if they chose to follow the Old Law, they would fall from grace (Gal. 5:3-4)? There is little that we know of Hymenaeus and Alexander, other than the fact that Paul had turned them over to Satan so they would learn not to blaspheme (1 Tim. 1:19-20). It is very possible that Hymenaeus joined with another man by the name of Philetus to continue to overthrow the faith of others, which shows his resolve not to return to the Lord (2 Tim. 2:17). Prayers are sometimes lifted up for such wayward brethren in hopes that they will repent and return to the true path of righteousness, however many times our prayers go unanswered, not because of God, but because the heart of the individual no longer loves the truth. While a multitude of excuses are offered as why men and women will not repent, the follow-

ing are the real reasons why they refuse to return to the Lord.

Love of Sin

Rejection of the Gospel is the number one reason why people never become Christians in the first place or refuse to return to the Lord. The devil is very good at packaging sin as something pleasurable without aftereffects. Sin always appears to be something other than what it is, a cruel taskmaster. Paul reminds us that we should never allow sin to rule our lives to the point that we obey its every lust (Rom. 6:12). Christians who have turned away from the Lord have forgotten that they once were made free from sin and had become servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:18-20). Peter warned of those who had gone astray by forsaking the right way, because they became enticed by sin, particularly the lusts of the flesh (2 Pet. 2:15-20). How sad that those who once had known the way of righteousness now love the ugliness of sin.

Love of Ease

Jesus spoke of two paths, one is narrow and requires dedication,

while the other is wide and is easy to go through (Mat. 7:13-14). Many have turned their back on the Lord due to pure laziness. Taking the easy way, is the path of those who commit suicide, which backsliding Christians are committing spiritually speaking. Jesus never said that being a Christian would be easy. In fact, He said it would be just the opposite (5:10-11). While unrepentant brethren have believed the lie that unfaithfulness is easier, God said, "the way of the unfaithful is hard" (Pro. 13:15).

Love of Lies

The prophet Jeremiah described the shame of Israel's unfaithfulness to their God, when he wrote, "Because you have forgotten Me and trusted in falsehood therefore will I uncover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear" (Jer. 13:25-26). God had hoped that shaming them would open their eyes to their fallen condition, but like so many unrepentant Christians today, they instead hardened their hearts. Some brethren do not even realize they have fallen away from the Lord, while attending

Continued on Page 5



Notes From The Editor

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Salvation: Faithfulness

Having obeyed the Gospel by being baptized into Christ for the remission of one's sins, one has changed his state from being lost and a child of the devil, to being saved and a child of God (Gal. 3:26-27). Some erroneously conclude that being saved, having the remission of past sins, is the end of everything; there are no more requirements to be met. However, there is nothing further from the truth.

Possibility of Falling

It is possible that one who has become a child of God can so sin as to lose any reward they would have received if they had remained faithful to God. The Bible makes it clear that one can "fall from grace" or apostatize. In fact, while some say it is impossible to "fall from grace," Paul would state to the Galatian brethren, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). While some teach one cannot fall from grace, Paul shows it is not only possible but some of the Galatians had fallen. Paul gives a warning to all when he says, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). If there was no possibility of

falling, this admonition would be senseless.

The Hebrews' writer warns, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12). Surely, no one would think that someone who has an "evil heart of unbelief" would be able to enter into heaven. However, notice that the inspired writer called them *brethren*. Was he wrong for calling them such and they were not really brethren? To become a brother, they must have done those things to become a child of God. They were at one time in a state of being right with God. He said they could *depart from the living God*. It is impossible for one to depart from God if they were never with Him.

However, notice the context of this verse. The writer is showing Christ's superiority over Moses, but in doing so, he shows the greatness of Moses. "Moses was faithful in all his house" (3:2). The writer goes back to the *provocation* to make the point not to harden your hearts (3:7-10). There needs to be an understanding about the *provocation*. Those who provoked the Lord and whom God said they would not enter His rest (3:11) are those who had accepted God's covenant as is seen in Exodus 24 (see especially verses 3, 7-8). These Israelites who had accepted God's covenant with them were the ones whom God said would not enter into His rest. The reason they could not is because of their unbelief, and they did not know God's ways (Heb. 3:10), thus, did not know His Word. However, Exodus shows they knew it, agreed to obey it, were in a covenant relation with God, yet when they tested God,

they were not able to enter God's rest because of their unbelief. He then makes the application to those who are Christians and their need to take heed lest the same thing happen to them showing we can so sin that we can lose our rest. Then there is the warning "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4:11).

One of the most powerful statements of the Scriptures regarding the possibility (not necessity) of falling away and losing one's salvation is given by Peter:

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 (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Here we have one who was lost but escaped that lostness (the pollutions of the world) to be in a saved state. This one who had escaped those pollutions (sin) is not entangled with them and he is

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

overcome, he ends up in a worse state than being lost.

Illustrations of Falling

The Scriptures give us several illustrations of individuals falling away from the Truth. Paul writes, “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:19-20). There were some who “put away” or cast aside faith, making shipwreck of literally *the faith*. These *some* are ones who had not remained faithful to God and *the faith*. Paul mentions two specifically: Hymenaeus and Alexander. These two had blasphemed, so Paul had “delivered unto Satan.” Paul told the Corinthian congregation to do that to the brother who had sinned in having his father’s wife (1 Cor. 5:5). So, we learn these two had been at one time faithful, but now they were blaspheming and causing others to shipwreck their faith.

The first of these two (Hymenaeus) was mentioned by Paul in his second epistle to his son in the faith, Timothy. “And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:17-18). Here are two brethren who now are teaching false doctrine that the resurrection had already taken place. Their false doctrine cause some to have their faith overthrown. They had faith, but that faith was ruined or destroyed. Here are brethren (those who have faith) whose faith had

been destroyed. There is no way for one to be saved eternally who has had their faith overthrown.

Later in this book to Timothy, Paul states, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia” (4:10). Demas forsook Paul, yet Paul had previously referred to him as a fellow laborer (Phl. 24; Col. 4:14). Paul does not leave it at Demas forsaking him but adds the damnable words that he “loved this present world.” Thus, we have a man who was a faithful brother and coworker with Paul who now, instead of loving the Truth, loved this world. John reveals one who loves the world does not have the love of the Father in him (1 John 2:15).

A tragic situation took place in Samaria. Philip went there and “preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5). Luke records for us, “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (8:12). These Samaritans were saved by God’s grace when they obeyed the Gospel by being baptized into Christ. We are then introduced to one specific individual who had used sorcery to amaze others so he could claim to be a great one (8:9). After stating the Samaritans salvation, it states about him, “Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done” (8:13). If you compare what the Samaritans did and what Simon did, they did the same thing. Look *at also*, as it shows that whatever the Samaritans did, Simon did. It

also shows us that since the Samaritans were saved, Simon was saved. The truth is, both the Samaritans and Simon were both saved by God’s grace. The account does not end there regarding Simon, however.

When the apostles heard the Samaritans had obeyed the Truth, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. Peter and John being apostles had the power to pass miraculous powers to others (something Philip did not have the power to do since he was not an apostle) by the laying on of their hands. Simon saw this and offered Peter and John money to have that power.

But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity (8:20-23).

Peter lets Simon know he had committed a grievous sin. His statement that Simon’s money perish with him shows he was now in a lost condition; he would perish or be destroyed with his money. So, Simon was one who was saved, but then because of sin, his heart was not right in God’s sight, he was in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of sin. If he was left in this condition, he would have gone to eternal torment. However, Peter informs him that he can have his sins removed and be in a saved state again by repentance and prayer. This is different than in his becoming a Christian as he is now a child

of God who has returned to sin, so the conditions of forgiveness change to repentance and prayer.

As we come to the last book in the Scriptures, Revelation, we see it is being written specifically to “to the seven churches which are in Asia” (Rev. 1:4). As he addresses each one of them individually (Rev. 2-3), five of the seven churches he rebuked for their sin: Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea. Two of the congregations only had commendation: Smyrna and Philadelphia. To each of those five congregations, he told them to repent (even as Peter told Simon to repent). Why did they need to repent? Because a once faithful congregation was no longer doing as the Lord required and they needed to change their ways. The Lord told one congregation (Ephesus) that if it failed to repent, He would “remove thy candlestick out of his place.” This means they would be rejected by Christ as being one of His churches and He would sever His fellowship with them. If they are no longer in fellowship with Christ and no longer one of His churches, then while they were once in a saved condition, they would then be lost eternally in torment. Yet, God was still giving them time to repent (2 Pet. 3:9).

Warnings and Admonitions

If a Christian cannot so sin as to lose their salvation, then there would be no warnings and admonitions for them. However, the New Testament is filled with warnings and admonitions to Christians. These warnings and admonitions are useless unless one is able to lose their salvation (apostatize or fall from grace). There are far too many of these warnings and

admonitions to discuss in this short article. The phrase, *take heed* is found 26 times in the New Testament. There would be no need to take heed if there is no possibility of apostatizing from the Truth. Likewise, *beware* is used 16 times in the New Testament. There would be no need to beware if there is no possibility of falling from grace.

The conditional *if* statements also show the possibility of losing one’s salvation. For example, Paul writes, “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain” (1 Cor. 15:1-2). These Corinthians knew the Gospel message that Paul had preached; they had received them (a completed action); they were standing in that Gospel (completed action with continuing results); they were saved (continuous action). Yet, Paul places that saved condition which they presently possessed with a conditional *if*. That saved condition would only continue on the condition that they continued holding onto the Gospel. If they failed to, then the faith would have been *in vain*, or worthless, it would mean nothing.

This corresponds with what Paul had previously written to them about himself (9:24-27). He says it is possible to run in a race and still not receive the prize. Paul speaks of his need to discipline his body so he would not be a cast-away or disqualified (a word when used in the New Testament always refers to a state of being lost). Paul could lose his salvation if he did not properly discipline himself. He

then goes into a discussion of Israel and how they were all baptized unto Moses, at that same spiritual meat, and drank that same spiritual drink drinking from the spiritual Rock that was Christ. Thus, Paul powerfully illustrates the Israelites he is speaking about were in a right relationship with God, “but with many of them God was not well pleased” (10:5). He then lists several of their sins (10:6-10) which resulted in their destruction. Paul tells us these things happened as examples to us (10:11) to teach us the important lesson, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (10:12). A warning to us of the possibility of falling (even though some teach we cannot fall). This is one of those *take heed* statements that is only sensible if there is the possibility of sinning and losing one’s salvation.

Paul writes, “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:12-13). Paul is speaking to those he describes as *we* and *ye*. We are debtors to not live after the flesh and those who do will die. One can only live *if* they put to death the deeds of the body (another *if* statement making it conditional, yet some say it is impossible for them to die). Thus, there is a warning for all not to live after the flesh.

Peter would write, “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Pet. 3:17). One of the beware statements. He is speaking

to *ye* and calls them *beloved* showing he is addressing those who are Christians (1:1). He warns them they can be led astray and fall from their steadfastness. Warnings that are ridiculous if one cannot be led astray and fall. He thus admonishes them, "But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (3:18).

There are so many other passages that we do not have space to cover, but one other warning and admonition is from John, in writing to those who are Christians, says:

Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

We must love God first and foremost (Mat. 22:37-38). However, one cannot love the world and still love God. Thus, John warns us not to love the world because it is passing away and only by loving

and doing the will of God can we abide.

Conclusion

Once a person changes his state in the act of baptism from being lost to being saved, it is possible for that person to so sin as to lose their salvation. God has provided a way to regain that salvation by repentance and prayer. While it is possible to apostatize from the Truth and be eternally lost, it does not mean he has to. We can live so as to be saved eternally with God in heaven.

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Continued from Page 1
congregations that have long taught contrary to the Word. Paul warned the Galatians about the lies they had accepted when he said, "I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel" (Gal. 1:6-9). Children of God who have fallen away often opine that they see the Scriptures in a different light than they once did. In other words, they have swallowed the lie that one doctrine is as good as another. Whether the lies of different interpretations, or that God is responsi-

ble for one's situation, the love of lies has reaped multitudes for the cause of Satan.

Love of Man's Approval

Possibly one of the primary causes of Christians falling away from the truth has to do with the approval of others. Caring more about what others think, than what our Lord thinks. Paul reminds us that as Christians we are to *transform* our minds or thinking (Rom. 12:2). John warned that caring more about the world proves a lack of love for God (1 John 2:15), and James says it makes us God's enemies (Jam.

4:4). The reason that many continue to please others, is because they are no longer servants of Christ (Gal. 1:10).

Conclusion

There are many reasons why some Christians have chosen to fall away and refuse to return to the Lord, and these examples are just a few. How truly sad, despite the encouragement and prayers of the faithful to get the unfaithful to return to their Lord, they continue to "crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame" (Heb. 6:6).

Mexico, MO

"We Cannot Tell"

Don Tarbet

There are many types of questions that can be asked in the religious world. The enemies of Jesus often asked questions to trick Him into an answer they could use against Him. Sometimes Jesus asked probing questions that could put to silence His op-

position. In Matthew 21, we read about the chief priests and elders who came to Jesus as He was teaching in the temple. They asked Him "By what authority doest thou these things?" (21:23). Jesus turned the tables on them and asked them a question,

with the statement that if they would answer His question, then He would answer theirs. This seems fair enough, as He had nothing to hide, and by making this arrangement, He would be able to ask them a question that would be thought provoking and

put them to silence. As a result, He never even had to answer their question, for His question put an end to their treachery. He asked them if the baptism of John (which they rejected) was “from heaven, or of men” (21:25). Before they answered, they “reasoned with themselves,” to attempt to find a way out of their predicament. They knew that if they said it was from “heaven,” that He would want to know why they had not believed it, but if they said, “from men,” they would arouse the anger of the people. So, they said, “We cannot tell” (KJV), or “We know not” (ASV). They were either lying or trying to evade giving either answer by simply refusing to answer. They knew they were in a predicament and would be in trouble with either answer they gave, so their *answer* was simply a refusal to answer the Lord.

There is a philosophy of men that the Greek term *monogenes* in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18, and 1 John 4:9, which is translated “only begotten” with reference to Jesus, should actually and properly be translated *unique* or *one of a kind* instead of “only begotten” as found in the KJV, NKJ, ASV, and NASV. It is clear from Matthew 1 and Luke 1 that indeed Jesus **was** begotten by God by means of the Spirit, so He would be born of a virgin, as Isaiah prophesied in the Old Testament (Isa. 7:14). There could be no birth without a begetting, and the begetting of Jesus was the *only* time that anyone would be *begotten* in this manner in the history of the world, and it was by “God” (or the Father). So, it makes good sense to think or to say that Jesus is “the only begotten Son of God,” or “of the Father,” as these good translations render the meaning of the original Greek. Those who maintain that it should be *unique* are not willing to

tell us **why** Jesus was *unique* as God’s Son as a gift to the world. He is unique because of the way He came into the world, through a miraculous conception and birth through a woman that had not *known* man. **Why** are so many afraid to say or believe this?

I heard one young preacher refer to Jesus as “God’s one and only Son.” After his sermon I asked him why he said that, and he said that he was doing so to try to destroy the concept that Jesus was “the only begotten Son.” He had just come out of one of our brotherhood preaching schools. In studying and communicating with some who maintain that *monogenes* should be, or can be translated *unique*, I have pressed them to **say** one way or another, that (1) Jesus **was** the only begotten Son, or (2) Jesus **was not** the only begotten Son. I wanted them to **put into print** either one of these two statements. If they would actually **say** Jesus **was not** “the only begotten Son of God,” they know that the tables would be turned on them. They would know that not only were they discrediting the four fine translations we have in the world but would be going against the context of Jesus’ conception and birth as plainly revealed in the New Testament. Then, if they would actually **say** (or admit) that Jesus **was** indeed “the only begotten Son of God,” they would be in disagreement with their preaching brothers who deny this truth. They realize their quandary, so they “cannot tell,” or they “do not know.” Either answer they give (other than saying they cannot tell, or do not know), would get them in trouble with other preachers, or with the one asking the question. I would like to point this out to the *unique* or *one and only* crowd in our brotherhood. I have, in correspondence, asked some

to answer either way, and I am still waiting for their answer. Why cannot they answer, except to say, “I am convinced that ‘unique’ is the correct translation”?

Jesus was **not** the “one and only son of God,” for Adam is said to be His son, in Luke 3:38. Adam was *unique* because he was the only man God ever created miraculously as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. Jesus was not merely *unique*, but He was the only One who became the Son of God by means of the Spirit causing a virgin to conceive and give birth to One who would be “called” the Son of God (Luke 1:30-35). Why is this something to refuse to believe? In view of the context of Jesus’ birth, the term *monogenes* correctly describes that Father-Son relationship. The Greek word *monon* means “only,” and *gennaō* (changed to *genes* when combined with *monon*) is related to “beget” (to become the father of). The translators of the KJV, NKJ, ASV, and NASV were correct in their work.

The deity of Jesus begins with His miraculous conception and did not begin at the actual birth of Jesus. To deny the miraculous conception is a strike against the virgin birth and the deity of the Lord. What modernist would say he denied the virgin birth, but believed in the miraculous conception? They go together as Siamese twins. What believer is consistent when he denies the miraculous conception, but believes in the virgin birth? I suspect that there are preachers who would **say** they believe in the miraculous conception, who at the same time refuse to **say**, “Jesus was the only begotten Son of God.” I am not one of those. Brethren ought to wake up and get out of the bed of the chief priests and elders who say, “We cannot tell,” or “We do not know.”

Deceased

On the Matter of Judging

Bill Jackson

“Judge not, that ye be not judged!” (Mat. 7:1). How we used to hear this from denominational sources! A thousand and one religious conversations were held, with the child of God making precise and telling points from God’s Word, and then, it all ended when the denominationalist, knowing he could go no further, warned, “Judge not, that ye be not judged!” His ultimate conclusion was that no one could actually be certain that any Biblical point was so concrete that one could stand on it, so let each one do his own thing without criticism from the other.

We thought that pitiful, and we still think it so. The problem is even more aggravating today, sadly, because now we are hearing this from members of the church. There is hardly a fundamental Bible point that can be made today but that some on the liberal side of things will rise up in opposition, and if met with firmness, he will charge that you are “judging” him. He makes the judgment that you are judging him.

On the entire matter of *judging*, we offer these items: (1) Even away from the religious connection, accountable men make judgments daily. If one is responsible, the conduct of his life will be such that he will judge matters, make decisions on the judgment he has rendered, constantly.

(2) The making of judgments, religiously, is not only permissible, but is commanded! The Lord warned His hearers, “Judge not according to the appearance, but

judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). This relates directly to Matthew 7:1-5, where it is clear that the Lord was condemning the harsh and hypocritical judgment wherein one faulted another when he himself was guilty of the same, or worse. That is clearly seen in the point made on the mote in the brother’s eye, seen so clearly by you, but you ignore the beam in your own eye! All judgment was not condemned, as John 7:24 also clearly shows. Indeed, every step in the plan of salvation must be taken after one has made a judgment in the matter—to do or not to do. Putting the kingdom first (Mat. 6:33) will be done after one has judged that which is of worth and value. Every item of Christian duty, worship, and service will be done only after one has made the judgment as to its value, and then determines to so do.

(3) Paul censured the Corinthian congregation for not making some judgments in a given area. In 1 Corinthians 6, and on the matter of the brethren taking one another to court, Paul chastised them as being saints who shall judge both the world and angels (6:2-3), and make judgments continually in the things of this life (6:4), and yet failed to judge in the matter of difference between the brethren (6:2, 4-5). Someone was needed there to judge, and Paul rebuked them for such not being done!

(4) At the heart of it all is the fact that in all things, we must make judgments, and in the

things pertaining to the spirit, we must ensure that we render **righteous judgment!** It must involve two things: (a) I must be righteous in my motivation, and thus not hypocritical, and (b) I must make the judgment by God’s righteous standard, the Word! (Psa. 119:172). This is the key: **righteous judgment!**

This is what some have yet to understand. Believing the Gospel is the Gospel is the power of God to save (Rom. 1:16), and that men are lost who are not obedient to the Gospel (2 The. 1:7-9), I am not making a personal and hypocritical judgment when I state that men are lost if they reject the Gospel! Seeing the demands of Matthew 6:33 and Hebrews 10:23-25, I am not making a personal and hypocritical judgment when I state that these are unfaithful who are absent from the worship and study services in the kingdom. Indeed, we will never try to teach anyone the truth, and will never talk to a wayward brother, unless we render a judgment as to his spiritual condition. God gives us the basis for doing so—His Word—and when I cite His Word, He is making the judgment and it does not reside in some hypocrisy on my part. Judgments must be made! Judgments are commanded! We must insure that “we allow God to speak,” and then **righteous judgment** is rendered!

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“God Makes the Decisions”

Jerry C. Brewer

The above title was used a few years ago in the western Oklahoma shopper, *The Penny News*. While the truth of the title is without dispute, the writer’s conclusions opposing Bible teaching concerning the church that Christ established are far from the truth.

The writer, a woman, purports to answer an article by, “a young minister” (whom I suspect was me) who said, “his belief was the only and ultimate one.” No documentation was offered for that allegation, but the writer may have aimed that missive at some article I wrote which said Christ established only one church (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). I have never said my “belief was the only and ultimate one.” I have preached and written that there is only one church revealed in the New Testament and that is borne out by the Word of God.

In the first paragraph, the writer says, “I will tell you right off the cuff that I have no patience for any minister or lay person of any denomination who expounds continuously on this ‘only church thing.’” Her thesis is that all denominations are approved of God and are “churches of Christ.” Yet, her thesis

is mere assertion and cannot be found within the pages of the Bible. In fact, she offered not a single Scripture in her article to prove any of the assertions she made.

Like most people in this post-modern age, she offered only personal opinion and speculation as *truth*. Yet, the plain truth of the New Testament is that Jesus promised to build His church, and He used the singular *church* in so promising. “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat. 16:18). Jesus did not say, “I will build my churches.” His use of the singular form of the word is as plain as the nose on one’s face. The **only** church Jesus built is the one for which He died (Acts 20:28), for which He gave Himself (Eph. 5:23), and which He sanctifies and will save (5:23, 25).

This writer who has, “no patience for any minister or lay person who expounds continuously on this ‘only church thing.’” needs to take up the matter with Jesus Christ Himself. It was He who promised to build only one church

and that is “un-getoverable” unless one simply closes his eyes to Bible Truth. Yes, “God makes the decisions” and that is the decision He made and revealed in the New Testament, and one’s personal opinion of what that means cannot change God’s Truth.

Furthermore, the distinction the writer made between a *minister* and a *lay person* is without Biblical foundation. The Bible makes no distinction between *clergy* and *laity*. Those terms were devised by men and indicate a class distinction that does not exist among God’s people (Gal. 3:27-28; cf. Mat. 23:8-10).

The writer further declaimed, “And I don’t want to hear that old cliché they give as an answer from the Bible that they feel only they have the intelligence to discern and interpret.” One wonders if she would accuse Jesus of using an “old cliché” when He answered the Scribes and Pharisees (15:7-9) or explained His use of parables in teaching the multitudes (13:13-15). After all, He used Scripture from the Bible. This statement may have revealed more than she intended—a closed mind toward the Scrip-

Continued on Page 5



Notes From The Editor

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Salvation: Faithfulness

Without a shadow of a doubt, one who becomes a Christian can so sin as to lose his salvation. While man can apostatize and be eternally lost, he does not have to be lost. A Christian can so live as to inherit eternal life. This takes faithfulness on the part of the Christian.

To be faithful, a Christian must develop the proper attitudes. Paul would tell the Philippian brethren, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phi. 2:5). Peter also tells us to develop the mind of Christ when he wrote, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (1 Pet. 4:1).

First, consider Paul's statement to have the mind of Christ and its context. As we begin Philippians 2, Paul continues the thought of unity at the end of chapter 1. However, to have unity, there must be humility. Unity is to be *likeminded*, and to be *likeminded* takes individuals who have lowliness of mind. To illustrate this humility, Paul uses the example of Jesus. Preincarnate He was God having the form of God (the inner essence or reality of being God) and being equal to Him

in every way. Yet, this one who was Deity, had a mind of humility to humbly submit to the will of God.

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (2:6-8).

Notice how the apostle John repeatedly quotes Jesus as saying He is only doing the will of God.

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work (John 4:34).

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise (5:19).

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me (5:30).

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me (6:38).

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*, and *that* I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things (8:28).

But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him (10:38).

He also stated this submission in relation to what He taught:

Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me (7:16).

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*, and *that* I do nothing of myself; but as

my Father hath taught me, I speak these things (8:28).

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak (12:48-50).

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works (14:10).

Without doubt, the Second Person of the Godhead submitted Himself (His will and teaching) to the will of the Father. Paul says we are to have that type of a mind, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phi. 2:5).

In developing the mind of Christ, we must cultivate the attributes and characteristics of God. This must begin in becoming a Christian. In becoming a Christian, we go through the new birth process (John 3:1-7) which is a birth of water (water baptism for the remission of sins) and Spirit (begotten by the Word of given by the Spirit). In this new birth, we become a new creature. Paul writes,

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

“Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is a new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). As a new creature, having been born again, we are now children of God (instead of children of the devil). “For ye are all the children of God by [the] faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). John would write, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1). Being a child of God, even as our children take on our characteristics, we must take on the characteristics or nature of our Father. This is what Peter states by writing:

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet. 1:3-4).

By studying the Scriptures (what God’s power has given to us), we can learn what God has revealed about His nature (characteristics, disposition, attributes, or qualities). We then partake or share in that nature by adding those qualities and attitudes to our life. We must take on God’s very nature as a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Paul tells us to “be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:23-24). He says much the same thing to the Colossian brethren, “And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed

in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:10). Those having obeyed the Gospel and become that new man having a new attitude. Their thinking is no longer according to the futile way of lusts that deceive but is now after the image of Christ. During our time living as Christians, God chastises and corrects us. The Hebrews’ writer uses the illustration of a father chastening his son and writes, “For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness” (Heb. 12:10). Let us consider some of the characteristics of God that we must develop in our lives.

God is a God of truth. Jesus says, “Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not” (John 7:28). God cannot lie as all lies are of the Devil (John 8:44). All truth is grounded in God, whether physical or spiritual, as He is the essence of all truth. Thus, our attitude must be truth and never falsehood. Divine truth extends to God’s words and actions and they must also extend to our words and actions. The one who is a new man must always speak truth as Paul writes, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25). Thus, we are to be like our God regarding truth as James writes, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures” (Jam. 1:18).

Our God is holy. There are more passages that speak to God’s holiness than any other part of His

character. The seraphim in the temple cried one to another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:3). The Psalmist writes, “He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name” (Psa. 111:9). Later in the Psalms we find, “The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works” (145:17). Likewise, the New Testament also emphasizes this characteristic of God when John, in speaking about the four beasts (living creatures) who are before the throne of God were saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Rev. 4:8). Peter recognizes the holiness of God and applies it to man also. “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:15-16). Because God’s character is that of holiness, we are to be holy. Holiness is total and complete freedom from sin. Only God is holy in an unlimited way and is totally free of sin (Jam. 1:17; 1 John 1:5). Man can be holy only in a limited way because he has been freed from his sin by applying the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7) to them to wash them away in the act of baptism (Acts 22:16).

Regarding holiness, there is a secondary meaning implying a separation or setting apart from the secular to sacred and Divine usage. In the Old Testament there was a holy anointing oil (Exo. 30:24), holy garments for the high priests (Lev. 16:4), and even certain places as the holy ground Moses was standing on (Exo. 3:5). All these, and other things and places, were

set apart for sacred usages only. They were never to be used in a secular way. So, we must set our mind to have the characteristic of being holy in setting ourselves aside to Divine usage. After Paul says Christians are to have no fellowship with evil, he then states, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:17). Thus, we must set our mind to have that Divine characteristic of being holy.

God is the standard for all that is good. James would state, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam. 1:17). God’s goodness flows from several of His characteristics.

First, consider God’s love. John twice states, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). Notice these attributes of God’s love (there is not space to develop each one). First, God’s love is **universal** (John 3:16-17). No one can get to the point where God does not love him. Second, God’s love is **altruistic** (Rom. 5:8). *Altruistic* is putting the interest of others before one’s own interest. It is a love that is not influenced by others; it is unselfish. One who loves altruistically loves because he is within himself desirous of giving love, must give love, does not give it on the basis of someone warranting it (doing something for it), and not expecting anything in return. Third, God’s love is **sacrificial** (John 3:16). The Father sacrificed Himself in giving His only begotten Son to die on the cross and the Son gave Himself to die for our sins. Fourth, God’s love is **per-**

sonal. God loves me and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20). Fifth, God’s love is **special**—for His children. God loves His family separate and apart from all mankind (John 14:23; 1 John 3:1). Sixth, God’s love is **unending** (Jer. 31:3). It is truly an everlasting love. We must also learn to love as God loves, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

God’s goodness also flows from His grace and mercy. These two concepts are two sides of the same coin, as some have expressed it. Grace is that God’s goodness toward those who deserve judgment, while His mercy is that which is expressed in His kindness to those suffering; it offers relief from the punishment or suffering one might be in at the time. The Hebrews’ writer states, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). Luke applies this to God and encourages us to have it because of God’s nature: “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:36).

God’s goodness causes God to be longsuffering or patient. Peter expresses the thought this way, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). The Old Testament often mentions God is “longsuffering” or “slow to anger” when listing His attributes (Exo. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; et.al.). While God’s patience will delay His wrath, it will not eliminate it. God’s patience leads man to repent (Rom. 2:4). God’s patience brings about patience in man. It is among the

virtues the Christian is to put on (Col. 3:12; 2 Pet. 1:5-7). Paul, in giving the characteristics of love, includes patience (longsuffering) as one of the characteristics (1 Cor. 13:4).

God’s goodness also flows from His faithfulness. A great example of God’s faithfulness is the bond between God and the northern kingdom of Israel. In spite of their unfaithfulness, God remained faithful. It is illustrated in Hosea’s love for Gomer and how God will betroth Israel to Himself in faithfulness. God will remain faithful no matter what man does. “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:13). God will reward those who do His will (Mat. 6:4, 6, 18), provide man a way to escape temptation (1 Cor. 10:13), and will fulfill His promises (2 Cor. 1:18-19). Christians are to respond to God in faithfulness which is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). We are encouraged: “Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)” (Heb. 10:23).

God is also just which includes His being righteous, fair, or honest. This is treating others with fairness or a correct treatment of others. Justice is rooted in God’s character. Moses wrote of God, “*He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he*” (Deu. 32:4). The Psalmist says of God, “Justice and judgment *are* the habitation [foundation—ASV, NKJV] of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face” (Psa. 89:14) then would add, “The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works” (145:17).

When Abraham thought God was going to “destroy the righteous with the wicked” (Gen. 18:23), he asked God, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (18:25). Abraham knew that would not be just or right to destroy both right and the wicked, and he always knew God did that which was just. This quality of being righteous, just, fair, or honest. Likewise, as God’s characteristics are that way, He expects His children to do the same. “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth right-

eousness is righteous, even as he is righteous” (1 John 3:7). Micah sums up the primary message of the prophets when he writes, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic. 6:8). We are always to treat others in a right manner; to be fair and honest with them.

So, we learn that in becoming a Christian, we must learn to control our thoughts, our mind. We must

take God’s nature and make it our own. Paul expresses this attitude well when he writes that we must think on certain characteristics. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phi. 4:8). Let us make sure we think on the proper things.

MH

Continued from Page 1
tures. The writer also makes an assumption about the motives of those who appeal to the New Testament as authority. The only people I know who, “feel only they have the intelligence to discern and interpret” Scriptures are the pope of Rome and Protestant denominations who create their own Manuals, Disciplines, Creeds, and Traditions.

I have never believed or asserted that I am the only person with such discernment and intelligence. In fact, the writer of that article has as much intelligence as the next person in understanding Scripture and I am sure Matthew 16:18 is no exception to what she can understand. I merely pointed out that Jesus promised to build only one church because that is what He said in Caesarea Philippi. There was no *discernment* or *interpretation* used other than to read and understand what Jesus said. I did not say that—the Son of God did.

Taking issue with Jesus, the writer asserted that, “All churches which follow the teachings of

Christ and believe that He is Lord and Saviour because He is the Son of God and the only way to God the Father, and to salvation, are churches of Christ. Yes, they are the Baptist churches of Christ, Presbyterian churches of Christ, Lutheran church of Christ, United Methodist churches of Christ, Disciples of Christ churches of Christ, Assembly of God church of Christ, or Whatever church of Christ.” Now that is a colossal assertion, without a single syllable of proof from the New Testament. Nor do we expect any such proof to be forthcoming from one who considers, “that old cliché they give as an answer, one scripture from the Bible.”

Consider the beginning of the above quote: “All churches which follow the teachings of Christ and believe that he is Lord and Saviour because he is the Son of God and the only way to God the Father, and to salvation, are churches of Christ.” She speaks truth here. No church which fails to follow the teachings of Christ is a church of Christ. Now, let us consider her

names ascribed to denominations as “churches of Christ.” They all fail the test of the first phrase of her statement—“which follow the teachings of Christ.”

Her “Baptist churches of Christ” teach that baptism is not necessary for a person to be saved. The teachings of Christ say, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). “Baptist churches of Christ” do **not** “follow the teachings of Christ.”

Her “Presbyterian churches of Christ” practice pouring, or sprinkling, water on a person and call it *baptism*. The teachings of Christ say, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death” (Rom. 6:3-4). “Presbyterian churches of Christ” do **not** follow the “teachings of Christ.”

Like the Baptists, her “Lutheran church of Christ” “does not believe that baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation” (www.lcms.org). The teachings of Christ say baptism is necessary for salvation (Mark

16:16; Acts 2:38). The “Lutheran church of Christ” does **not** “follow the teachings of Christ.”

Her “United Methodist churches of Christ” teach, “Wherefore, that we are saved by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of Comfort” (*Methodist Discipline*, Art. 9). The teachings of Christ say, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jam. 2:19-20, 24). “United Methodist churches of Christ” do **not** “follow the teachings of Christ.”

Her “Disciples of Christ church of Christ” Scripturally recognizes that baptism is a burial in water, but says, “other baptism traditions are honored.” The teachings of Christ say, there is “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5) and that one baptism is a burial (Col. 2:12). The “Disciples of Christ church” does **not** follow the teachings of Christ.”

The writer’s, “Assembly of God church of Christ” teaches that,

“You don’t need a great amount of faith—just enough to call on Him in prayer and to believe that when you ask Him for salvation He gives it to you as He says He will” (www.agchurches.org). Not a single instance, implication, example, or direct statement to call on the Lord in prayer for salvation is recorded in the New Testament. To “call on the name of the Lord” is **not** the same thing as praying. The “Assembly of God church of Christ” does **not** “follow the teachings of Christ.”

All of the denominations she describes as “churches of Christ” refer to their preachers as “Reverend.” The teachings of Christ forbid wearing religious titles.

But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no *man* your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, *even* Christ (Mat. 23:8-10).

None of those she called “churches of Christ” follows “the teachings of Christ,” according to her own definition and none can be

found within the pages of the New Testament. They were not planted by God but by men and, as such, will be rooted up at the last day (15:12-14). Not a single denomination on her list can be described as a “church of Christ” and not a single one of their names can be found in the Bible.

It was the apostle Paul, speaking by the authority of Christ, who said Christ is, “the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23), and explained at the end of that epistle that Christ will save that body (Eph. 5:23). There you have Biblical documentation from “the teachings of Christ” regarding the church of Christ. Everyone on the face of the earth has a right to his own opinion, and we would not change that in the least. However, opinions in religion carry no authority. Peter said, “If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). One who claims to speak God’s Truth ought to be able to find what he speaks in the Bible, but the writer of “God Makes the Decisions” cannot do that.

Elk City, OK

Created in Christ

G. K. Wallace

We are new creatures in Christ. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). The way we become new creatures is by the creative power of God. How then does the power of God create us again?

The Calvinist takes this fine passage and tries to make it teach that a

man is saved without doing the will of Christ. He will repeatedly ask, “What did you have to do with your salvation?” Then he will take the creation of Adam and Eve and show how, by the power of God, they were created. To Genesis 1 he will go, with great confidence, and read Genesis 1:27 where it is said, “And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him;

male and female created he them.” He will then ask over and over. “What did Adam have to do with his creation? Did he have to believe? Did he have to obey? What did Eve have to do with her creation? Did she have to obey God to be created?” After such questions he will assert that Adam and Eve obeyed only after they were created. Then he will conclude that one can do

nothing to be saved as he is created in Christ Jesus. "Any act of obedience," says the Calvinist, "is the act of obedience by the child of God."

After the above use of Ephesians 2:10 and Genesis 1:27, he will go to John 3:1-5 and assert the new birth is wholly a work of God without any action on the part of man. As he ridicules the acts of obedience, he will continue to ask questions, which he thinks are in harmony with what he believes. Never shall I forget the first debate I ever had, with an old Hardshell Baptist, in which he repeatedly asked me, "What did you have to do with being born?" He then would take John 3:5, "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God," and make it parallel with a physical birth. Having drawn what he thought was an exact parallel between a physical and a spiritual birth, he would ask, "What did you have to do with your physical birth? Just name one thing you had to do with your physical birth." He then would chide me for not telling the audience what I did to be born into this world. Of course, I had nothing to do with my physical birth. However, it does not follow that I had nothing to do with being born of water and the spirit. There is a **similarity** between the new birth and a physical birth but not an **identity**.

To the above we reply that God created Adam and Eve by His power. They were made by miracle. Too, today, God creates every soul who comes into this world. Mothers used to tell their children, "God made you and gave you eyes of blue out of the sky as you came through." It is true that God did make your child? That part is so. God makes every boy and girl who comes into this

world. A boy, today, is as much a creature of God as was Adam. A baby girl is created by Jehovah. However, God made Adam and Eve by special miraculous power. God makes children today by His natural power. Natural power is as much God's power as is supernatural power. There are some who seem to think that if God does not do a thing by miracle, He is ruled out. All that God does by His natural law is as much His work as what He did by supernatural law. Too, law is always greater than miracle. The natural laws of God are greater than the supernatural laws. It took the personal presence of God to make Adam and Eve. Today, God makes men and women without His personal presence. When Jehovah created Adam and Eve, He put within their bodies the power of procreation. The power of procreation is greater than the power of creation.

Today, I drive a little Chevrolet automobile. It was created by the maker of the car. That was a great feat and one that is beyond my power but within the reach of General Motors. However, if I could put within my little Chevrolet the power of procreation, I could put General Motors out of business. Suppose, some morning I go out to the garage and find that my little Chevrolet has built a nest. I look in the nest and find six or eight little Chevrolets. I get some bottles of gasoline and nurse them along until they are grown. Then the grown ones reproduce again. In this way I would soon put General Motors out of business. Thus, you can see that the power of procreation is greater than the power of creation. Too, we see how God creates man by His natural law today. By the power of procreation God makes men and women today.

With that in mind, we can surely see how God uses His power to make members of His spiritual body. The power by which God makes us His children is the Gospel. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16.) One cannot be created in Christ except by the power of God. The power God used to create one in Christ is the Gospel. "For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, . . . I begat you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15.) There cannot be life in either the physical or spiritual realm without first a begetting. The power to beget in us a spiritual life is the Gospel. Without the Gospel there cannot be spiritual life. Unless the Gospel is heard and believed one cannot be begotten. So, when it is asked, "What did you have to do with your physical birth?" I reply, "I did not have a thing to do with it." However, when it is asked, "What did you have to do with your spiritual birth?" I reply, "I heard the Gospel and obeyed it." That is how God created me in Christ. In Ephesians 2:10 Paul states a fact about being created in Christ. Paul does not state the how of creation in that verse. Ephesians 2:10 states the **fact** of our creation but **not the method** of our creation in Christ. In the very next chapter of Ephesians, Paul states **how** we are created in Christ. "*To wit*, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (3:6). Let us observe that we are partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. The Gospel then is the creative power of God by which we are "created in Christ."

Deceased

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Going Back to Jerusalem

Fred E. Dennis

When Jesus was twelve years old, His parents took Him up to Jerusalem. When they returned, Jesus tarried in Jerusalem. His parents knew not of it. They supposed Him to have been in the company. How true that is of religious people of our day! They travel along without Jesus. It seems never to occur to them that Jesus is not with them. They just **suppose** that He is in their company, or, rather, that they are in His company. His parents went a day's journey before they discovered He was not with them. So many today go through life and never discover that Jesus is not in their company.

Joseph and Mary sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. How natural this would be! If we succeed today in getting some honest person to believe that Jesus is not in his company, then we have the added duty of trying to convince him that Jesus is not with any of the human sectarian bodies. Jesus said: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men" (Mat. 15:9). And again: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let

them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (15:13-14).

But it is not impossible to have Jesus with us. He never leaves us. We leave Him. He had not left Joseph and Mary. They left Him. They had gone on without Him. That is the trouble in our day. People run on without Jesus. Joseph and Mary did not find Jesus until they went back to Jerusalem. There they found Him. We are not going to find Him until we return to Jerusalem.

We should return to Jerusalem to find the beginning of the New Testament church. There for the first time the Gospel was preached after the death, burial, resurrection, and the ascension of Christ. The inspired apostles were preaching to the very ones who less than two months before had betrayed and murdered the Prince of Peace. Christ was preached plainly, kindly, and positively. They were made to understand that they had crucified the Son of God. This kind of preaching brought results.

The preaching caused them to see their undone condition. They

were led to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Faith comes by hearing. They wanted to know what to do to be saved. They were told in no uncertain terms that they must repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:37-38). This they did and were saved.

Why not return to this kind of preaching? Such preaching would destroy every denominational and sectarian body on earth. And God knows they ought to be destroyed. Not one truth would be given up by anybody. Truth cannot be destroyed. We can crush the truth to earth, but it will rise again. Truth is as eternal as God. The Gospel needs to be preached. It has lost not one bit of its power. It is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16). People need to be convinced that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Then they need to repent of their sins and be buried by baptism for the remission of sins. In this way only can they be saved; in this way only can they become Christians. May God help us back to Jerusalem.

The church needs to go back to Jerusalem for discipline. There were hypocrites in the Jerusalem church, but they did not last long.

Continued on Page 4



Notes From The Editor

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Salvation: Faithfulness

Realizing that it is possible for a Christian to so sin as to lose their salvation, we always need to remember that it is possible for the Christian to live in such a way as to achieve an eternal home with God in heaven. To do so we must develop the proper attitudes which are the attributes and characteristics of God (2 Pet. 1:3-4). However, without applying those attitudes to life, it will be of no value to us. It is just like faith without works, as James says.

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone....Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?...For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (Jam. 2:17, 22, 26).

We must have faith with works for it to avail. So, we must have the divine characteristics coupled with actions guided by the Word of God.

James aptly puts it:

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves....But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (1:22, 25).

The idea of a *doer* is one who puts into practice God's Word; it characterizes one's life. It is only the one who puts God's Word into action that is going to be blessed by God. Between these two verses James illustrates the man who does not do God's Word by saying:

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was (1:23-24).

This is the man who glances at his face in the mirror and then forgets what he saw. It is "out of sight, out of mind" when a man leaves the reflection in the mirror. It has no value for the man. However, when we are doers of God's Word, then we are bringing our lives in harmony with the Gospel.

Likewise, Jesus shows the need to put His words into action when He concludes His masterpiece, the sermon on the mount. Jesus concludes the sermon by saying:

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it (Mat. 7:24-27).

Jesus shows the need to not simply hear His words but to do them also. The one who puts Jesus' words into action in his life is a wise man. The man who fails to do His words

is a fool. In being a doer of Christ's sayings, we are building upon the rock (the definite article is in the original, referring to the one Rock, Jesus Christ, Mat. 16:16-18).

To this end, Jesus left Heaven's home and His eternal equality with the Father (Phi. 2:6-7) and came to this earth not only to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world, but to be a perfect example for man, not only in what we think (2:5) but how we act (2:1-4). After Jesus washed His apostles' feet, He said to them, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15). That epitomizes the life of Christ, He gave us an example for us to do as He did. Thus, John would tell us, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). We are to walk in Jesus' footsteps as He is our perfect example to walk or live as He lived.

Paul would write, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). Paul wanted the Galatians, and us, to be filled with Christ and His doctrines. He wants us to be thinking and living according to Christ's teachings, so we reflect His glory. As Peter describes the life of Jesus, He said, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and heal-

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

ing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38). Jesus went about *doing good*. A good illustration of doing good is Dorcas in Acts 9:36-42. She is described as being full of “good works and almsdeeds” (9:36) but she had died. Peter was called to raise her from the dead (which he did) but when he went to where her body was, “all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them” (9:39). She had put into practice the *doing good* even as Jesus did. We need to “consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Heb. 10:24).

Even as God loves us, we need to love one another. In John’s first epistle, he wrote often of the need to love each other.

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another... And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.... Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us (1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7-12).

In this message written by John, he reminds us that God’s nature is that of love and because of that na-

ture, we are also to love one another. He informs us that because God’s nature was love, He acted in response to that love in sending His only begotten Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins. His conclusion is that we must love one another as God has loved us. Even as God’s love prompted Him to give; so, our love must prompt us to give. God did what was in man’s best interest (even while we were sinners; Rom. 5:8), we love in such a way we will always do what is in other’s best interest. That attitude of love is put into the action of love. Paul, in that great chapter on love, gives us certain characteristics of love when he writes:

Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth (1 Cor. 13:4-8a).

Let us make sure we apply these characteristics of love to our lives.

Another action which followers of Christ will have is, what we have termed, the golden rule. Jesus stated it in the sermon on the mount when He said, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mat. 7:12). This deals with the way in which we treat others. We treat them as we would like to be treated. We do not treat them the way they treat us, or if one is strong enough, he can take whatever he wants. Christians are to always treat others right, fair, merciful, kind, and gracious as that

is the way we want others to treat us.

The fruit of the Spirit gives attitudes but also actions that the Christian should live or walk by. Listen as Paul writes:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25).

Notice we are to live and walk in the Spirit, that is living or walking with these attributes and actions of the Spirit. Peter, in giving the Christian graces, give five graces that pertain to one’s inner life and relation with God then the last two pertain to one’s relation to others.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

These graces we add, including the relations we have to others, are part of becoming a partaker of the divine nature (1:4).

In Peter’s first letter, he shows practical applications of our “obeying the truth through the Spirit” (1 Pet. 1:22). In those practical applications, he deals with numerous relationships we have, and as he deals with our relationship with others, he tells us:

Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life,

and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it (1 Pet. 3:8-11).

When we treat others in this way, then we will inherit a blessing. This shows the principle that we are what we think, as Solomon stated, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Pro. 23:7). Jesus would express this same idea by saying, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Mat. 15:19).

In being faithful to Christ, we will change our life to conform to God and His nature. Paul would state, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2). While the world is always trying to get us to think and act like they do, the Christian has a different mind that results in our actions not being like the world. That lifestyle is delineated throughout the Bible. In the New Testament, the first four

books of biography of Christ's life is giving us an example as to how to live. While Acts is the book of conversions, even in that book we see a certain lifestyle change in those who become Christians. Then in Romans through Jude, we are instructed in the life of a Christian with Revelation giving us the motivation for living the Christian life and encouragement to "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). Let us continue to strive to attain that eternal reward in heaven so we can have that inheritance that is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4).

Paul speaks of God's saving grace by saying:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Tit. 2:11-14).

In being faithful to God, there are certain things we must deny, and we must live a certain way. The two things we must deny are un-

godliness which is impiety or lack of reverence which causes one to live contrary to God, and worldly lust which are desires that originate with and belong to this world. They are desires that separate one from God. Then Paul mentions three things regarding how we are to live. *Soberly* is to be of sound mind. While it includes being free of alcohol (or other mind-altering drugs), it is more dealing with the ability to think and reason properly that will bring self-control. *Righteously* is to be upright, fair, or right. This deals specifically with others and our relationship with them. Then we must be godly. *Godly* is to render to God the reverence and worship coming from a holy life. Xenophon asked the question, "Can there be any better or more reverent way to honor the gods than by doing what they command?" We do what God commands of us as Christians because we love Him. As Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). James would inform us: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (Jam. 1:12). Let us make sure we live in such a way as to prove we love Him so we might receive the crown of life.

MH

Continued from Page 1
The Lord took them out. They were not elevated to places of prominence in the church to keep peace in the family of God. Peace is not brought about by departures from the Word of God. Ananias and his wife were hypocrites and

liars. They lied about their contribution. They pretended to be giving something that they were not giving. The Lord was highly displeased. These two were struck dead for their sin and hypocrisy. How can we hope to fare better for sin and hypocrisy? The brethren

may keep our name "on the book," but the Lord will not. We might as well make up our minds to clean up or clean out. Those who will not thus do ought to have the added impetus of the brethren helping them to do it. The Lord never meant for His church to be a ren-

devious for hypocrites. Back to Jerusalem!

We need to go back to Jerusalem for examples of steadfastness in the faith. The powers that be could shut up Christians in prison, but they could not shut their mouths from preaching the truth. They could threaten Peter and John, and they could charge them to speak no more to any man in the name of Christ. But men of God cannot be stopped until their tongues are cold in death. “But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20). Such boldness and humility are truly refreshing in this age of softness and compromise. Lord, help us to go back to Jerusalem and get the spirit of boldness and true humility.

We need to go back to Jerusalem to learn how to solve hard problems. Murmuring arose in the congregation. Some said that certain widows were being neglected in the daily ministrations. It

seems that this complaining arose from the minority group. Did the apostles ignore this murmuring? They did not. They called the multitude of the disciples unto them. They are going to show a way out of the difficulty. And the brethren wanted to be shown. They wanted peace. The apostles told the brethren to look out seven men. You will note the brethren were to look them out. That might be a good lesson for preachers today. So many times, they want to look them out, or put them out! These Spirit-filled apostles trusted the brethren to look them out. There was no politics. The apostles laid down the qualifications these men must possess. They were to be men of honest report. What fearful mistakes are made in setting up men for elders and deacons who do not have a good report! They were to be men of wisdom. They must have good judgment; they must have common sense. They were to be full of the Holy Spirit.

Back to Jerusalem in this. Let the elders be men of good report. Let them be men of wisdom. Let them be full of the right spirit. In

other words, allow the Word of God to be the guide in selecting them. The apostles said they would do the appointing. “And the saying pleased the whole multitude” (Acts 6:5). They were looking for a way out of their difficulties. They had found it. They rejoiced. It is no wonder “the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (6:7).

We need to go back to Jerusalem for lessons of unity and liberality. “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (4:32). There were thousands of these disciples, but they were of one heart and of one mind. Blessed consummation! Oh, happy day! Brethren, may God help us to have for our watchword, “Back to Jerusalem.” Let us call for the old paths and walk therein. God will pour out blessings upon us beyond our fondest dreams.

Deceased

Is Full Preterism a Matter of Fellowship

John Chowning

In Scripture, there are a few heresies which are explicitly identified by one of their distinctive doctrines. The Roman Catholic Church’s teaching of celibacy and dietary restrictions are explicitly mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:1-3; it is identified as a departure from the faith because it has given heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.

In like manner, Full Preterism’s cardinal doctrine of teaching that “the resurrection is already past” is also explicitly identified by inspiration. For those who may not be familiar with the term Full Preterism, it is the hermeneutical approach to Scripture which is built upon the belief that everything spoken of in the Book of Revelation—including the resurrection and judgment of

all the wicked (20:11-13); the casting of the devil (20:10), death and Hades (20:14) into Gehenna/the lake of fire and brimstone; the coming of a new heaven and new earth (21:1); and the eternal fellowship of the righteous with God in the holy city/new Jerusalem (21:2)—occurred in A.D.70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. (Thus, in some places it is

called the “A.D.70 Theory.” It has also been called “Realized Eschatology” or “Covenant Eschatology” among other terms.)

This heresy was introduced into our brotherhood by Max King in Ohio in the 1970s. (Thus, it has also been called King-ism.) Don Preston and William Bell have been promoting it for the past couple of decades. And, about ten years ago, two preachers in Michigan—Steve Baisden and Holger Neubauer—began touting this heresy which contains as a cardinal doctrine that “the resurrection is past already.”

Like the current “New Heavens and New Earth” advocates in our brotherhood, the advocates of Full Preterism introduced their heresy by proclaiming their doctrine is “not a matter of fellowship.” When this claim is examined against the words of Scripture in just one New Testament passage, it is found wanting in at least six ways.

It is written:

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of the God standeth sure” (2 Tim. 2:15-19).

This passage identifies the following six glaring and fatal flaws of Full Preterism:

One, in contrast to the diligent, proper, and unashamed handling of God’s Word (2:15), this cardinal doctrine of Full Preterism is used

as an inspired illustration of mishandling God’s Word.

Two, Full Preterism’s cardinal doctrine—that “the resurrection is past already” (2:18)—is given as an inspired example of what happens when “profane and vain babblings” are embraced instead of shunned (2:16).

Three, the influence of a faith void of the “one hope” (Eph. 4:4) is the increase in ungodliness (2:16). On the other hand, Biblical hope—which anticipates with confident desire the resurrection and transformation of our earthly body into Christ’s glorious body (Phi. 3:21) when all who are in the graves come forth to either a resurrection of life or a resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29)—produces purity (1 John 3:3) by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Tit. 2:12-13).

Jesus Himself taught that every false teacher and his doctrine are known by their fruits (Mat. 7:15-20). Any doctrine which produces evil fruit and increases ungodliness is a corrupt tree which produces converts which say “Lord, Lord” but were never known by Christ (Mat. 7:21-23). Being a worker of iniquity (Mat. 7:23) is a matter of fellowship for the faithful (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

Four, the seriousness of this heretical and shameful mishandling of God’s Word is clearly stated by Paul in verse 17; it eats like a “canker.” The Greek word here is *gangraina*. Yes, that is the precise word from which our English word *gangrene* comes. If your body has a case of gangrene, would you and/or your doctor treat it as “not a matter of fellowship” with

the rest of your body? Full Preterism is to your soul what gangrene is to your body. Unless Hymenæus and Philetus in the first century excised this heresy from their faith and practice, they died of a horrible, spiritual disease.

Five, there are two Greek words which are translated *erred* in the New Testament. One, *planao* is the word from which the English word *planet* comes. It denotes the idea of someone who gets out of the proper spiritual orbit a Christian should be in. It is found in James 5:19: “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him.” The second word, *astocheo* (like the word *harmatia*, “sin”) means “to miss the mark.” It denotes the idea of someone who is way off spiritually.

Think of these two words in terms of driving a car on a highway. When your car veers out of its lane on either side, you have *planao-ed*. A course correction must take place before something more catastrophic occurs. If your car is driven off the side of the road and has plunged hundreds of feet over the side of a hill, you have *astocheo-ed*. You are not “just a little off” about an inconsequential matter. To claim that believing and teaching something which God calls *astocheo* is not a matter of fellowship is to be a workman who has not come close to rightly dividing the Word of truth; he ought to be ashamed and repent.

Six, the Spirit of God expressly says that the doctrine which teaches “that the resurrection is past already” results in the overthrow (i.e. destruction) of the faith God requires for a person to be saved. The God of heaven knows the end from the beginning (Isa.

46:10). There may be a way which a false teacher can convince himself and others is right, but its end is the way of death (Pro. 16:25). The doctrine that “the resurrection is past already” is polar opposite to

the firm foundation which Biblical faith has (2 Tim. 2:19).

If a doctrine which (1) arises from mishandling God’s Word and failing to shun profane and vain babblings and (2) results in in-

creased ungodliness, spiritual gangrene, erring from the truth, and the destruction of the faith that saves is not a matter of fellowship, then what is?

Cookeville. TN

Apostasy

Roy H. Lanier, Sr.

During a little more than sixty years of preaching I have seen a lot of changes in church programs. However, through all these years, we have believed and taught that the New Testament authorizes only three areas of activity. These are evangelization, edification, and benevolence.... Things that are worldly in their nature cannot produce spirituality. Worldly activities produce worldly mindedness; spiritual activities produce heavenly mindedness.... Brethren made the argument one hundred years ago and divided the church that they might have musical instruments and missionary societies, which they said are necessary now though not in the first century. When they took one step into worldly activities there was no place to stop. And when churches of Christ today go into the entertainment business to get and hold people, there will be no place to stop until churches are engulfed by the world.

Deceased

[Editor’s Note: Even though written close to fifty years ago, this which brother Lanier stated then is still true. When the church takes the first step toward compromise (whether in doctrine or practice), there is no place to stop. The old fable of the camel and the tent. One of the many variations goes:

One cold night, a camel asks his master if he can put his head in the tent for warmth. “By all means and welcome,” said the man; and the camel stretches his head into the tent. Soon after, the camel inquires if he may also bring his neck and front legs inside. Again, the master agrees. Finally, the camel asks, “May I not stand wholly within?” With pity, the master beckons him into the warm tent. But when the camel comes forward it becomes clear that the tent is too small for them both. “I think,” the camel said, “that there is not room for both of us here. It will be best for you to stand outside, as you are the smaller; there will then be room enough for me.” And with that, the man is forced outside of his tent.

This is the way of apostasy, when we compromise in the small matters, there is no stopping point. Satan is ever trying to get his nose or head into the tent. How far can we allow him in before we are no longer what God wants us to be?

The denominational world let Satan in and compromised regarding God’s requirements for man’s salvation. They taught faith only salvation or praying through along with other false doctrines. When they compromised regarding what God said to become a Christian, the doors of the floodgate were opened. Where could they stop? If they were willing to compromise on what God said is necessary to become a Chris-

tian, then what is stopping them from compromising in remaining a Christian. As a result of letting the camel get its head in the tent, Satan moved right in so now they compromise in morals. Once that began, there was again no stopping so now all types and forms of perversions are accepted. Why? Because they allowed compromise in the beginning.

Brother Lanier mentioned those who divided the church over musical instruments and missionary societies. Neither of these are authorized in God’s Word, so those who divided the church over (the Christian Church denomination) compromised the Truth to do so. Yet, they found the same problem, once they compromised, there was no stopping point. The Christian Church finally divided with the ultra liberal Disciples of Christ denomination. The Disciples simply continued down the path started by the Christian Church as they had provided the principles of the continual apostasy.

When we leave the safe moorings of doing everything by the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17) and only those things authorized by Him, then we endanger both ourselves and others. Once we compromise those principles, there is no stopping point. Let us make sure we never take the first step into apostasy.]

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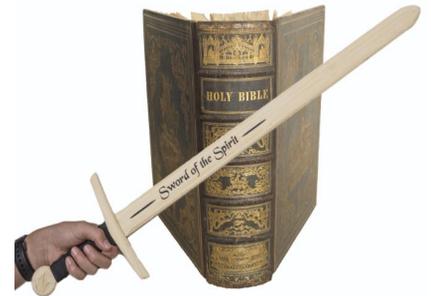
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Peter Preached a *Feel Bad* Religion

Jerry C. Brewer

In the circus of life that is modern America, denominational religion is the cotton candy. Those big balls of fluffy stuff that are eagerly consumed by circusgoers promise a lot but have no real substance. Cotton candy is fun to eat—while it lasts—but provides no substantial nourishment. That is a fair description of the denominational industry’s version of *Christianity* today. It is all about preaching a *feel good* religion for the moment, with no substance for spiritual life. That is not the kind of religion Peter preached. He preached what folks today would call a *feel bad* religion.

Consider Peter’s words in the first recorded sermon in the Gospel dispensation. He began his sermon by explaining the phenomenon the multitude had witnessed—the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, accompanied by the “sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” and the appearance of “cloven tongues like as of fire” (Acts 2:2-4, 14ff). After he explained those things, he reminded them of events with which they were familiar—that Jesus of Nazareth had been approved of

God by the mighty works He did among them (2:22).

Having reminded them of those things, he immediately charged his hearers with murder in their deliverance of Jesus to the Romans to be crucified. “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (2:23).

Peter’s aim was **not** to make his auditors *feel good* about themselves, as is the case in today’s denominational industry. His purpose was to lay before them the bare facts of their sin, Christ’s sacrifice for their sins, and to bring them to repentance of their sins. No *cotton candy* platitudes proceeded from Peter’s mouth.

Then, after proving from their own Scriptures that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah who was crucified, buried, risen, and had ascended to heaven, he capped his message, saying, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (2:36). The Gospel message Peter preached had its desired effect on those who

heard him. “Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?” (2:37).

Answering their anguished question, “Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins... And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (2:38, 40). Responding to Peter’s words, the record says, “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (2:41-42). That has no resemblance to the *cotton candy* sermons preached by denominational preachers today.

Had Peter been a modern spokesman for the denominational industry, his speech, and their response, in Acts 2:14-42, might have gone something like this:

Men and brethren, there is some validity to your belief that some of us

Continued on Page 7



Notes From The Editor

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Salvation: Faithfulness

One described the Christian life as a life of (1) purity, (2) service, and (3) worship. **Purity** begins in the mind and being a quality of God, we must do so. “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). **Service** is an attribute of Jesus, as He came to serve. Jesus said, “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mat. 20:28). Thus, He had told them, “But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (20:26-27). The characteristics listed previously is doing service to others.

However, this aspect of faithfulness would not be complete if **worship** to God was not included. When God created man, He placed within man the need to worship. This is why as one studies the history of man; he will find that every society in history worshipping someone or something.

What Is Worship

The first question we must ask is, “what is worship?” The English word is from the middle English word meaning “worthiness, re-

spect.” It is defined as “reverence offered a Divine being or supernatural power, also an act of expressing such reverence.” When one considers the Old Testament word translated *worship* he finds its primary meaning “to bow down, prostrate oneself.” In *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, it adds, “The verb describes the act of bowing or making oneself bow before a superior. It was the custom in the ancient Near East to bow before a perceived superior as a sign of respect.” As we come to the New Testament, we find much the same idea being presented. BDAG says of the Greek term (προσκυνέω—*proskuneo*):

used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before persons and kissing their feet or the hem of their garment, the ground... **to express in attitude or gesture one’s complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure, (fall down and) worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself before, do reverence to.**

Spiros Zodhiates defines it as: To worship, do obeisance, show respect, fall or prostrate before. Literally, to kiss toward someone, to throw a kiss in token of respect or homage. The ancient oriental (especially Persian) mode of salutation between persons of equal ranks was to kiss each other on the lips; when the difference of rank was slight, they kissed each other on the cheek; when one was much inferior, he fell upon his knees and touched his forehead to the ground or prostrated himself, throwing kisses at the same time toward the superior. It is this latter mode of salutation that Greek writers express by *proskuneo*. In the NT, generally, to do reverence or homage to someone, usually by kneeling or prostrating oneself before him. In the

Septuagint it means to bow down, to prostrate oneself in reverence, homage.

In all these definitions the idea is expressed of bowing down and prostrating oneself in showing respect to one who we consider superior. There are far too many today who have an improper view and attitude of God and it results in improper worship. When we have a proper view and respect of God, we will worship Him and do so acceptably.

Yahweh is Worthy

Yahweh (Jehovah) is worthy of our worship as **Creator**. He created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1; Exo. 20:11). Each day of the creation week, God was preparing a place for the crowning glory of His creation—man. He created a beautiful garden in which He placed man. Man sinned and lost access to that garden, but we still see the beauties of His creation. The 24 elders fell down to worship God saying, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4:11). An angel flying in the midst of heaven said, “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

waters” (14:7). He is worthy to be worshipped because He created such a marvelous universe for our existence.

Not only did Yahweh create all things, He also **sustains** them. God did not leave man and the universe to itself as Deism contends. He continually sustains the existence of all things including man. Without God and His providing what is necessary, this world would cease to exist. The Psalmist would write, “Thy righteousness *is* like the great mountains; thy judgments *are* a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast” (Psa. 36:6). We also read, “Thou, *even* thou, *art* LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas, and all that *is* therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee” (Neh. 9:6). Yahweh is worthy to be worshipped because He preserves all things.

While man is generally awed by power and strength, God has all power—He is **omnipotent**. Children (and adults alike) thrill at the historical account of the strong man Samson. Yet all the strength of all the people who ever lived would not come close to comparing with the great power of God. This great power is demonstrated in at least three ways. (1) God’s creative power. Nothing existed and Yahweh, by speaking the word, created everything. “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:3). Jeremiah stated, “Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy

great power and stretched out arm, *and* there is nothing too hard for thee” (Jer. 32:17).

(2) We observe God’s great power by His sustaining power. Just as it took His power to create the universe, it must also be sustained which is also done by His great power as previously noted. (3) In His ability or power to recreate, i.e., creating in man a new life. Paul speaks of the power of the Gospel saying, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). The Gospel is God’s power to save sinful man and gives man the ability to live by faith; thus, creating a new man in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Paul would also write, “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:24). Paul, himself, is a perfect example of this power when we first learn of him, he is a persecutor of the Lord’s church. However, he was recreated into a new man that was persecuted for the cause of Christ. God’s spoken Word brought about the creation of all things at the beginning, and God’s spoken Word (the Gospel) has the power to bring about creation spiritually.

God’s Nature

There are some attributes of God which when considered will cause man to worship Him. One of those is the fact that God is **holy**. There are more passages which speak of God’s holiness than any other part of His nature or character. The psalmist writes, “He sent redemption unto his people: he commanded his covenant for ever:

holy and reverend *is* his name” (Psa. 111:9). Then we find, “The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works” (145:17). Peter speaks to His nature when He encourages the Christian as to how to live, by saying, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

Holy when applied to Yahweh carries the idea of being separate or free of sin. John writes of this by saying, “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). James uses the same figure of God being light by writing, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam. 1:17). The prophet Habakkuk spoke of this sinless nature saying, “*Thou art* of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13). Yahweh is worthy of being worshipped because of this holy nature.

But God is also **righteous** as was mentioned in Psalm 145:17 along with His holiness. **Righteousness** has as its basic meaning, “doing right.” It was expressed by Abraham’s question to God, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25). Yahweh **always** does right in everything He does, and as such, He is worthy of being worshipped.

God’s **love** provokes man to worship Him. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him

should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). We previously noted six aspects to God’s love: (1) universal, (2) altruistic, (3) sacrificial, (4) personal, (5) special, and (6) unending. God is worthy to be worshipped because of His love for man.

God is worthy to be worshipped because He is the **Savior** of man. God created man without sin and placed him in a garden created for man. Man committed sin so was cast out of that garden. Since that sin, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Later Paul would add, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (5:12). Every person of accountable age commits sin. Sin separates man from God, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:2). Since man cannot save himself (Eph. 2:8-9), God provided for man a Savior, “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14). Because He sent His Son into the world to be our Savior, He is worthy to be worshipped by all men.

God’s Glory

When we see Yahweh’s glory and majesty, it will provoke in us a desire to worship Him. Isaiah is a wonderful example of this. In what is called Isaiah’s call, he saw Yahweh’s glory:

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had

six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory (Isa. 6:1-3).

Upon seeing such magnificence, Isaiah realized his own unworthiness. “Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (6:5). Seeing Yahweh’s glory and majesty lead Isaiah to worship Him.

Another example is in John’s vision. In Revelation 4, John sees God sitting on a throne in heaven and He reigns from the center of the universe and is in control.

And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were* four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within (Rev. 4:2-8a).

These four living creatures (beasts in the KJV) are around the throne of God. Figures are used to show their strength, service, intelligence, and swiftness. The wings show their mobility and being full of eyes represent their all-seeing nature. These living creatures constantly proclaim God’s holiness, “and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (4:8b). The result of seeing the majesty and holiness of God is they worshipped Him.

And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders **fall down before him** that sat on the throne, and **worship him** that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created (4:9-11).

Let us consider Israel and their seeing God’s majesty. While in bondage in Egypt, they cried to God for deliverance. God raised up Moses to go to Pharaoh and say, “Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness” (Exo. 5:1). The omniscient God knew Pharaoh would not accept His demands, “And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand” (3:19). The ESV has, “unless compelled by a mighty hand” while the NASV has “except under compulsion.” God compelled Pharaoh to release the Israelites by ten plagues showing His total power over the various gods of Egypt. Israel saw all the plagues and even experienced the first three, but God separated them from the fourth plague on so

only the Egyptians were afflicted. Later, “when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What *is* this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage” (13:14). The Israelites were seeing God’s greatness, but it did not end there.

Upon their release from Egypt, Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, so he followed after them (14:10). God prevented Pharaoh and his army from coming near the Israelites (14:19-20), and God provided for Israel’s deliverance:

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry *land*, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry *ground*: and the waters *were* a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left (14:21-22).

When the Egyptians tried to follow, the water swallowed them up destroying them. God continued to show His power and greatness to them.

They come to Mount Sinai, and God calls Moses up to the mountain. Yahweh says to him, “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself” (19:4). God dispatches Moses to prepare the people for Yahweh speaking to them.

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the

mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice (19:16-19).

God expected Israel to have a proper respect for Him and wanted them to see His great glory and power. God speaks to them giving them the Ten Commandments (20:2-17). Notice Israel’s reaction:

And all the people saw the thunders, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God *was*. And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold. An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee (20:18-24).

In all this, they were getting a glimpse of the glory and greatness of God. It resulted in a proper fear (dread and respect) for Yahweh. Notice how worship is connected with it. The first two of the Ten Commandments and again the

fourth deal specifically with worship: (1) Do not make any graven image, (2) Do not bow down and serve them, and (3) Remember the Sabbath. After giving the Ten Commandments and requesting Moses to speak to them instead of hearing God directly; God tells Moses to reemphasize the aspect of worship. They were not to make idols but to worship Yahweh and Him only. All altars and sacrifices shall only be to God.

The majesty and glory of God made an immediate impression on the Israelites, but sadly it did not remain. They soon lost sight of the awesomeness of God and forsook Him. After He brought them to the Promised Land, they sent spies into the land and ten of the spies came back with a negative report. Israel, because of that negative report, showed their lack of faith in Him. “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb. 3:19). The result is they could not enter into the Promised Land because they lost sight of the greatness and majesty of God, their unbelief.

Worship Yahweh

It is our responsibility thus to worship God. Jesus stated to the Samaritan woman, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). Thus, we are to worship the Father because He is eminently worthy of such. However, not all worship to Him is acceptable. Cain worshipped God, but God did not accept his worship (Gen. 4) while He

did accept Abel's. When David was returning the ark to Jerusalem, because he did not do it "after the due order," God "made a breach upon us" (1 Chr. 15:13) in the death of Uzzah (2 Sam. 6). Doing things "after the due order" in worship is worshipping God in truth (John 4:23-24). God rhetorically asked Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" (Gen. 4:7). *Doest well* is doing things "after the due order" and is worshipping God in truth (John 4:23-24).

Likewise, we must worship God according to Truth, God's Word. That Word teaches us there are five avenues through which we worship Him today: singing (no mechanical instruments authorized), prayer, preaching, giving financially to the church, and weekly, first day of the week communion. When we recognize the majesty and greatness of Yahweh, we will worship Him with the proper attitude (*spirit* in John 4:23-24), but we will also worship Him as His Word instructs.

Conclusion

We need to get a view of the awesomeness and majesty of God. When we do, we will desire to worship Him and worship Him as He has directed. It will also lead us to change our lives to a life of service and dedication to Him. We will put our entire being into putting God first (Mat. 6:33) and loving God with our entire being (22:37), but also putting our entire being into worshipping the One who is worthy of such and doing so in the proper way.

MH

Entertainment on Steroids

Gary W. Summers

Back in 1959, in a book titled, *Revival*, Martin Llyod-Jones (A Welsh Congregationalist minister—and Calvinist) issued a warning about the direction in which some churches were going: "Let us beware of this subtle temptation to entertain the people, thinking that we can thereby attract and save them" (63). While we would not agree with much of his theology, he did observe what was happening with the appeal of denominational churches to unbelievers. Fast forward 65 years to what was reported in a *Newsweek* article. Bruce Daugherty described what occurred in his Daytona Beach bulletin (April 28, 2024):

A couple of weeks ago, a megachurch sponsored a men's conference in Springfield, MO. The conference opened with a young man who ripped open his shirt, climbed a pole acrobatic-style like some-

thing from Cirque du Soleil and then swallowed a sword. The host of the conference said it was designed to be a celebration of physical human achievements and is aligned with the James River Church's purpose in bringing others to the light of God. It's essential to approach such performances with an understanding of their intention rather than reducing them to mere entertainment ("Christian Even Showman Hits Out at Pastor Over 'Strip' Show Remarks" *Newsweek*, April 16, 2024).

Another "pastor" pumped on stage afterwards to courageously condemn the action of a half-naked former male stripper doing a circus routine on the stage of a church filled with men who were there to learn more about what it means to take up their crosses and follow Christ. And the critic was quickly ushered off stage. I simply ask,

"What are those conference leaders thinking?"

That is an excellent question.

What were some brethren thinking when they built gymnasiums to convert the lost? Or developed a softball team? Or a soccer squad? It is painful to try and envision the saints in Jerusalem in the first century offering classes in being a mule skinner. Or giving out the Sophocles award for the best religious drama. The way evangelism is supposed to work is for others to see pure Christian lives—men and women who are the salt and light of the world (Mat. 5:13-16). This is to be the attraction so they will want to know more about The Way. The Gospel of the first century was proclaimed and shared, and it was effective in reaching people. The Gospel of Gimmickry will always fail.

Winter Park FL

Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

James 1:21: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

Continued from Page 1

may be drunk. And though we have a diversity of opinion on this matter, we can continue to be brethren because I believe we can find strength in diversity and in our love for each other. Indeed, most of us have been drunk at one time or another, or, at least done other things that were just as indiscreet. But I cannot condemn any of my colleagues, nor would I presume to judge any of you for thinking we are drunk, because we have different interpretations of this event and there is certainly room for diversity among all of us. Besides, truth is what you **think** it is, even if what we think is opposed to your truth.

However, though we have different interpretations of this event, that is not the case today, and I can still call you “brother.” What you have witnessed today is a great revival of Holy Spirit renewal that some ancient scribe researched and wrote about in a scholarly work that the Rabbis generally attribute to Joel, though some scholars differ.

Now listen, all you good Jewish brothers! I have some good news for you! Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by the love he showed in recent years by feeding the hungry, washing feet, and generally being nice, as most of you are aware, him, being approved of God, even though some may have made mistakes in judgment about him, was crucified on a cross. But that is in the past. After all, we all make mistakes and nobody is perfect, so you are no worse than anybody else. But now the great news is that the Holy Spirit has come to tell you that God loves you, and to get inside you and give you a warm fuzzy feeling about yourselves and your intimate relationship with him.

Now when they heard this, they felt good about themselves and asked Peter and the other apostles, Men and brethren, glory hallelujah! tell

us what else to do. Then Peter said unto them, **‘Do?! Do!’** There is **not one whit** you **can** or **need** to do. Jesus did it all. We are just telling you the good news so you can continue to live like the heathen in all manner of debauchery and still feel good by knowing that you’ll be saved regardless of how you live. Just ask Jesus to come into your hearts, be nice to each other, love each other, tell the Romans, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod that you love them and forgive them for killing Jesus, and make sure your kids have plenty of food, fun, and fellowship.

Get involved in a blood drive, build buildings for aerobics and AA meetings, and let the Holy Spirit direct you to parking places for your mules. And with many other soft, balanced, sweet, and gentle words did he testify and exhort, saying, Form Family Ministries, Youth Ministries, Outreach Ministries, and Children’s Ministries. Pass out candy from the trunks of your chariots on Halloween and call it “Trunk or Treat.” Send your kids to camp, let Youth Ministers take them to Six Standards Over Jerusalem for fun rides, and busy yourselves with lots of programs to make folks feel good.

Then they that gladly received his soft words really felt good about their own lives and had their self-esteem raised, and about 3,000 formed a Church Family that day. And they continued to shout and clap their hands, and they formed an *a cappella* singing group that could make sounds with their lips just like the harps and lyres of the Romans. And they accepted all into their Church Family and called all men “brothers” who called God “Father” or even “Dad,” and recognized Jesus as a good buddy and they all dwelt under the umbrella of egalitarianism.

No, none of the apostles wanted men to *feel good* in their sins. The

tragedy of sin will cause souls to be lost in an eternal hell. The religion of Jesus Christ is not designed to make men *feel good* as sinners. It is designed to make one sorrow for sin (2 Cor. 7:10). The man who *feels good* about himself while remaining in sin is lost and will be ultimately lost in hell unless he genuinely sorrows for his sin, repents, and is baptized for the remission of sins. Peter did not sugar-coat the Gospel of Jesus Christ on Pentecost. He plainly pointed out that those in his audience were sinners who had murdered the Son of God and told them how they could be forgiven of their sins.

The *feel good* religion of today’s denominational industry is daily sending millions to a devil’s hell. What the world needs is more *feel bad* religion, as Peter preached on Pentecost. To preach an, “I’m OK, You’re OK” religion is like telling a man in a burning house that he is safe and needs to do nothing.

“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), and “The wages of sin *is* death” (6:23). That is not a *feel good* message, but that is what the world needs to hear. To genuinely feel good, one first needs to feel bad about his sinful condition, believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24), repent of his sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30-31), confess his faith in Christ (8:37) and be baptized “for the remission of sins” (2:38) Having done that, one can *truly feel good*, knowing his sins are forgiven and, as the Ethiopian nobleman did in Acts 8:39, he can “go on his way rejoicing.” The *feel good, cotton candy* religion of denominationalism saves no one.

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