

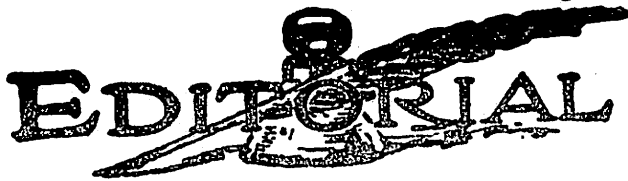
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When Jesus Comes

One of the most important teachings of the Bible is that Christ will come back again one day. Christ taught about it, (Matthew 25) and even promised to His disciples that He would come again. (John 14:1-3). When He was going back to heaven after His death and resurrection, the disciples were reminded by two angels who appeared to them and said that; "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11). Once when the disciples wanted to know from Jesus when He would come back again, the Lord told them, "Of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Mark 13:32). From this it is evident that God wants the lack of information for us concerning the time of Christ's second coming to motivate us to watch and be ready at all times. But why is Christ coming back? What will take place when He comes? Christ is going to come to judge the world in righteousness. (Acts 17:31). Several things will take place on that great day, however.

1. At Christ's coming all things will be burned up and destroyed, including earth and all that is in it. Hear what it says: "But the day of Lord will come as a thief in the night, in

which the heavens will pass away with a great noise; and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10). Some teach that when Christ will come He is going to reign in Jerusalem for 1000 years. The Bible, however, says that earth and every thing on earth will be destroyed when Christ comes.

2. When Christ comes again there will be a resurrection of all the dead. Adam and Eve will be resurrected and all who have died or will die until that time will be made alive. There will be a general resurrection of both righteous and unrighteous at the same time. (John 5:28, 29). Physical bodies, and not solus, for souls need no resurrection, will be resurrected and changed into immortal bodies to live forever. At 1 Corinthians chapter 15 the Apostle Paul replies to several questions concerning the resurrection of the body. At verse 22 he says, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive." Then he goes on to say, "But someone will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Foolish one," says he, "what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.....So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.. it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Corinthians 15:35-44). In this chapter he also shows that the resurrection of Christ is the proof of our own resurrection. As he was raised, so shall we will be made alive.

3. When He will appear, Hades (unseen place of the departed souls) (Luke 16:19-31), will give up all the dead (souls) in it, and Hades and death will be no more in existence. The Apostle John who was shown a glimpse of the future things wrote in his book of Revelation, "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life, and the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were

judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." (Revelation 20:12-14). The lake of fire here is identified as the second death, as also in Rev. 21:8, and both death and hades were cast in the lake, because they had served their purpose and were no longer needed. At the coming of Christ all bodies will be raised incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:52) and changed, hades will give up souls in it, so that the souls might reunite with their own bodies, and face the judgment of the Lord in that great day.

4. Judgment will take place. Both the righteous and the unrighteous will face the judgment of the Lord. (Matthew 25:31-46). "...that each one may receive things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10). At this point both condemnation and reward will be announced for the unrighteous and the righteous. Christ will say, "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:45). The unsaved will go into hell, the lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 21:8), and the saved will enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 7:21; Revelation 21:27;). While in hades there were only the souls of those who had died, but in heaven and hell both soul and body will be there. These will be resurrected, changed, and incorruptible bodies, as we have seen from the 15th chapter of I Corinthians, Notice what Christ said in Matthew 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." In hell both soul and body will be there and likewise in heaven soul and body both will be there.

5. When Christ will come back He will surrender His kingship to God the Father and to Him he will hand over the kingdom and will Himself become subject to Him. Hear what the Scriptures say: "Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For He has put all things under His feet. But when He says, "all things are put under Him", it is evident that He who

put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, , then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." (I Corinthians 15:24-28). From this we learn the great importance of the sacrifice of Christ that He has made in leaving heaven and coming on earth and dying on the cross to become the propitiation for our sins. In the beginning He was with the Father and had all the power and authority with Him, He was coequal with Him (Genesis 1:1, 26; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17). But to save man from sin and to reconcile man with God He did not cling to His prerogatives as God's equal, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant and came in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:6-9). He emptied Himself when He came on earth and lived like a man. (Hebrews 4:15). He was obedient to the Father in all things and was perfected through suffering. (Hebrews 5:8,9). After His resurrection God gave Him all authority in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18). He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). His kingdom is His church (Matthew 16:18,19), He rules now and will continue to rule until He comes back when He will receive His kingdom and will give it to the Father so that His kingdom and He Himself will be subject to God the Father that He may be all in all.

6. Lastly, when Christ will come back that will be the end of time. There will be no more time but one eternal day—eternity. Speaking about the saved in heaven, the Holy Spirit inspired John wrote, "And there shall be no night there; they need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever." (Revelation 22:5). Both righteous and unrighteous, saved and unsaved will live eternally in their respective places—heaven or hell, forever and ever. Are you ready to meet Jesus?

God Works Through People

J.C. Choate

From the beginning of time, there have been times that God

spoke directly to man, performed miraculous works, and sent his angels to represent him. Of course we know that eventually he sent his own Son to the world to die for the sins of all mankind.

Regardless of how God has communicated, he has worked mainly through man to accomplish his purposes. We cannot forget such great servants as Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, and many others of the Old Testament period. There were also women like Esther.

After Saul had been rejected as King over Israel because of his disobedience, God replaced him with a young man by the name of David. The prophet Samuel broke the news to Saul, by saying to him, "But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee." (1 Samuel 13:14). Paul referred to this in Acts 13:22 in one of his sermons showing how that Christ has come through the seed of David. But what is meant when it says that David was a man after God's own heart? It means that God saw David as a man who loved him, that was submissive to his will, that was a true servant of his. As a young man he had risen to prominence in defeating the giant, Goliath. Once he was made King over Israel, he made a great nation out of the Jews. Although he had his weaknesses, he was willing to repent of his sins. In reading through the book of Psalms, one cannot help but be impressed with his dependence on God and his utter devotion to him. Truly, he was a man after God's own heart.

In the days of Christ, we read about characters like Joseph, Mary, John the Baptist, the Apostles, and many others. One of the interesting features about the book of John is that it refers several times to the disciple that Jesus loved. For example, we read, "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." (John 13:23). At the time of the crucifixion we read, "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the

disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." (John 19:25-27). After the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, we are told, "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him..." (John 20:1, 2). Of course as the record continues, it shows that the Lord was missing because he had come forth from the grave. Later, after Christ had appeared to the disciples, and had spoken to them, we have these statements: "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord..." (John 21:7). "Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?" (John 21:20).

There are several things that would indicate the disciple that Jesus loved was John. John of course wrote this book and perhaps did not want to use his own name in these passages. He is also the one that Lord looked to see after his mother, and this may be too the reason that he is spoken of as the disciple that Jesus loved. In other words, Jesus had a special love for him, a love like the father might have for his son because he is expected to carry out certain responsibilities in the absence of his father. This doesn't mean that the Lord didn't love the other disciples or that he didn't love all others. It is only natural for one to have a greater love or a closer relationship with some than with others, depending on service rendered, etc.

Prior to the giving of the New Testament in written form, there were great characters like Peter, Paul, Steven, Philip, Timothy, Titus, Acquilla and Priscilla, and many others. During this time the Lord appeared to Saul, angels were sent on special missions, and the Holy Spirit was given to the Apostles, and those they laid their hands on, to enable them to perform miracles, to speak in other languages, and to write down God's word.

Since the New Testament has been given, then God speaks to us through Christ as set forth in the scriptures. (Hebrews 1:1, 2). Even if an angel came from heaven, he could not preach another gospel lest he be condemned. (Galatians 1:6-9). We are not to add to God's word, subtract from it, or change it in any way. (Revelation 22:18, 19). Such is to say then that God works through people, human beings, today, that is, as he speaks to them through his written word. He calls them through Christ and Christ calls through the scriptures. (Matthew 11:28-30).

God is not going to speak directly to us, and neither will Christ do so. He is not going to send angels to do our work for us. He is not going to give us the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to do miraculous things. He has already done all that he needs to do. The gospel has been placed in earthen vessels, human being, and it is up to them to deliver it. (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Down through the ages, right up to now, as man has responded to God, submitted to his will, and has been willing to obey him and to serve him, then God has worked through them to accomplish his purpose. What great things he has done through them. Why did he choose them? Why did he use them? May be we should ask, why did they choose God and submit to his will?

God can use you and me today, and any others who will submit to him, to accomplish great things. There could be others to rise up like Moses, David, Daniel, Paul, Peter, etc. Not that we could ever be like them in every circumstance, but like them, we could be used of God, according to his will today, to accomplish great things for him and his cause. But who are we? We are nobodies. What would we be worth to the Lord? Who were all the others before they gave themselves to the Lord? God can take us, if we will but give ourselves to him, and re-shape us and mould us and make great preachers, teachers, elders, and servants out of us. Do not underestimate what God can do? And do not underestimate what you can do for God if you will but allow him to live and work in you and through you.

Read and study God's word. Attend the assemblies. Take part in worship and the work of the church. Get involved. Give yourself to the Lord. Be faithful to him. Encourage your family to be faithful. Speak up for God. Fill your life with good works. The more you give yourself to the Lord, the more the Lord will be able to do great things through you.

Even many Christians sit and do nothing. They show no interest. They put forth no real effort for the Lord. Is it any wonder then that eventually they may completely fall away from the Lord. Even if they manage to hang on, they may wonder why they are passed by, they are left sitting, they have not borne any fruit for God. A lot depends on one's attitude, his willingness to give himself to the Lord, and his desire to serve. Faith, zeal, initiative, determination, and involvement are all synonyms of work, service, and accomplishment for God. Moses, David, Paul, and others were not chosen and used of God because they were lazy, indifferent, and unconcerned about God and their fellowman. To the contrary, God saw in them great potential and when called they responded. We can too. God works through people even today, and we are people. Let us therefore allow God to work through us according to his will to accomplish his work. God calls but we must answer. It is up to you and me as to what we will accomplish for the Lord.

Are You Complacent In Your Spiritual Life?

G.N. Chauhan

Being complacent in matters of religion could be dangerous for you, especially if you have not followed the tenets of the purity of the New Testament teaching or doctrine upon which your faith should rest. Many people in the world treat their religion haphazardly and have but a poor knowledge of the truth of God and His precepts as to one's salvation. The faith they have is a weak, blind and doubting kind, or a sort of conviction

that all goes well with them. Many have insufficient knowledge of the Bible and a serious neglect to study and learn from God's holy Book. Notice a Scripture that points to this very neglect. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have neglected knowledge, I also will reject you. . ." (Hosea 4:6).

One thing is dead sure: there can be no salvation without proper knowledge of the will of the Lord. This knowledge is absolutely essential. There are no two ways about it. The malaise is that the average person makes no effort to study the Bible and search the Scriptures. Some think that leading an honest and good life free of immorality and being kindly disposed to people they come in contact or being social will save them in the end. Great emphasis is placed on a form of a social gospel and the need to be charitable. No doubt these are welcome traits, but these won't save alone. One must have a knowledge of the Lord to be saved. There is a Scripture which shows for the fact that knowledge justifies. Please look up Isaiah 53:11.

On discovery that your religious faith is dissonant with God's way of faith, would you be ready to give up that faith? You should. You need to change your religion. If you should discover that the church in which you are is not in accordance with the church of the Bible, would you get out of it. You should. All churches do not have Christians in them. All churches cannot be right. Either your church is right or the church of the Bible is right. Both cannot be right. God wants that you change from your wrong church to the right one.

The great apostle Paul changed. He was a man of zeal, a religious person. He had a clear conscience, yet he was wrong and in his confrontation with Christ he realised he was wrong. In changing he found salvation and peace with God. As a result he became the greatest disciple (Gal. 1:14; Acts 23:1; 22:16).

We have another example in the person of Apollos. He was a deeply religious man and an eloquent preacher, yet he was mistaken. He was taught the Lord's way more perfectly and as a result he became a great worker for Christ (Acts 18:24-26).

The Bible tells of a whole church changing their religion. When Paul showed the need to do so, they immediately changed to the right cause (Acts 19:1-6).

If you also wish to be saved then you need to change your religion and the complacency in which you are, You need to bring your life in complete harmony with the will of God as per the New Testament teaching. Compare yourself and the church in which you are with the church of the Bible and the Christians mentioned in the Bible and see where you stand. Do not, as Paul pointed out, measure yourself with yourself (2 Cor. 10:12). Compare your worship and service to God with that of the early Christians. If yours is not identical with theirs, then you need to get out of that church and be in the right church of which there is only one true one. Offset your complacency. Will you?

Meet the members of the church of Christ and see whether they teach you according to the New Testament law of Christ, the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25). Be added to the right church and be saved in obedience to the gospel. Salvation is the prerogative of those who obey Christ. (Heb. 5:8, 9).

There is a beautiful Scripture in the book of Jeremiah 4:22 which reads, "For my people are foolish, They have not known Me. They are silly children, And they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil, But to do good they have no knowledge." Another Scripture is in Job. 21:12-15. "They sing to the tambourine and harp, And rejoice to the sound of the flute. They spend their days in wealth, And in a moment go down to the grave. Yet they say to God, Depart from us, we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways. Who is this Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?"

Walking Worthily

Steve Williams

Many Christians have misunderstood Paul's prohibition

against taking the Lord's Supper "unworthily." Unworthily "does not refer legalistically to a moral quality" (W. Foerster, *TDNT*). In the strict sense, none of us is worthy of taking the Lord's Supper, of Jesus' death for us, of salvation, or of sonship. Like the prodigal son we can all say, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Lk. 15:19). The Greek terms translated "worthy" or "deserve" mean *corresponding* or *comparable*. In reference to prices and weights they refer to something being of *comparable* value or weight. So in reference to the Lord's Supper, Paul is not saying we must be worthy individuals before we partake. He is saying our manner of partaking ought to *correspond* to the dignity of the occasion. Since the Lord's Supper is a holy and reverent occasion, our behaviour must be *comparable* in dignity and respect. We should not partake "in an unworthy manner" (1 Cor. 11:27; RSV), "carelessly (Mofatt), "in a way that dishonors it" (TEV), or without proper reverence" (Phillips). We should not cut ourselves off from the fellowship experienced in the communion, because we do not feel worthy enough.

There is a very serious side to the New Testament concept of worth. Although our worth is due to the grace of God, this does not mean we have to do nothing. We must live a life that *corresponds* to or is *comparable* with the salvation God has given us. We are "to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Eph. 4:1; 2 Thes. 1:11). "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27), "worthy of the Lord" (Col. 1:10), "worthy of God" (1 Thes. 2:12), and "worthy of the kingdom of God" (2 Thes. 1:5; cf. Mt. 10:11, 13; 22:8; Acts 13:46; Eph. 4:1). Because of sin or divided commitments, one can become unworthy of salvation and deserving of death (Mt. 10:37-38; Rom. 1:32). We are saved by grace, not because of moral worth; yet, we must be found worthy of God's grace.

The Gospel Is For All

Prentiss Spivey

Gospel (Anglo Saxon, godspell, "good story"); good news, is used as the equivalent of the Greek, *evangelion*. This word in the

earlier Greek language signified "a present given to one who brought good tidings" or a sacrifice. In later Greek: it was employed for the good tidings themselves. It is used to signify:

1. The good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

2. The gospel then is full and free deliverance from sins through faith and obedience to the Saviour. (Ephesians 2: 8-10.)

My text is from Mark's account of what we commonly call the great commission. This commission is great because of its far reaching mission.

I. All saints of God are commanded to go into all the world.

Every person that has been born of water and the Spirit should feel the impact of this command. When I speak of all saints, I speak of all members of the church of Christ. We must remain busy, we must get busy, we must be about the greatest business in this world and that is taking the gospel to the whole human race. Usually when we think of the word go, we think of some far place, but the Lord is also telling his people to preach wherever they are! But, we must also go into all the world preaching the gospel. It is amazing to me how the Saviour could say so much in such few words. His statement covers both our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8).

II. Preach the gospel to every creature.

The text says those that go must preach the gospel, not opinions, trends, or philosophies, but preach the gospel—God's power to save. (Romans 1:16).

To effectively preach the gospel to every creature involves having some insights of ethnic groups. One would do well to know some things about another culture in order to enhance his appreciation of that person or group, and increase his ability to communicate the message.

The great battle scarred servant of Jesus Christ confronted various cultures and ethnic dimension, yet was very successful in reaching them with the gospel. He gives points on how this was possible. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Paul said, "I made myself servant unto all, unto the Jew I became as a Jew, unto them under the law as under the law, to them without law as without law, to the weak as weak." All this he did for the gospel's sake, or in other words that the gospel message may be viewed and received without human barriers.

III. Our Lord inferred a guarantee that the gospel will get results—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

I am a firm believer that we should spend our time where people are receptive to the gospel. But, the Lord infers that wherever the gospel is preached, someone would believe it. So, our work is to preach it and baptize those that believe it, and then continue to teach the baptized. Therefore, I conclude this message in saying to the saints of God, let's go into every geographical location without excluding any. Let's take God's message of hope. Let's tell every race of people, every ethnic group, the rich, the poor, the educated, the uneducated, and the young and old, the good news of salvation. Let's tell it not in word only but in deed also.

After they have been baptized, Matthew's report says, "teach them to observe all things." (Matthew 28:20.) This part of teaching requires a constant relationship of teacher and student, so, we must learn to live together like Christians should: The Psalmist said, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (Psalm 135:1).

God Commands All To Repent

Dennis Jones

In Acts 17:30, 31 Paul teaches that God commands repentance, Jesus said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all

likewise perish." (Luke 13:3). Repentance is so important that Jesus said it again in Luke 13:5, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

What is Repentance?

Repentance is a turning. (Acts 9:35). It is a change in the direction you are travelling in life. Repentance is a change of mind. (Genesis 6:6). Jesus illustrated repentance in Matthew 21:28-32 as a change of mind or a change in attitude. Repentance is also an essential ingredient in the conversion process. The apostle Peter said to the Jews, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. . ." To be converted means to turn around or to be transformed.

National or Individual

There can be both national repentance and individual repentance God called for national repentance in 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Internal or External

But let us give attention to individual and personal repentance. Individual repentance can be both internal and external. David showed evidence of internal repentance in Psalm 51:10-12. The Philippian jailer exhibited external evidence of repentance in Acts 16:25-34 when he washed the wounds of Paul and Silas and then took them to his house for a meal. A person who repents internally will not keep it a secret. Repentance is such an obvious change that it shows externally in a person's life.

Repentance is more than just quitting sinning. It is a complete turn about in a person's life. Repentance involves emptying our lives of sinful ways and filling that void with good Christian activity. (Matthew 12:43-45).

What Causes Repentance?

The Bible says the goodness of God leads us to repentance.

(Romans 2:4). God is so good and Satan is so evil that the contrast between the two causes us to want to reject sin and embrace the forgiveness of God.

Conviction of Sin

Having been convicted of sin causes us to repent. Jesus said the Holy Spirit, through gospel teaching, would convict the world of sin. (John 16:7, 8.) When the gospel was preached on the day of Pentecost the people were convicted of their sins; cut to the heart and earnestly asked what they needed to do in order to be forgiven of their sins. (Acts 2:36-38).

Godly Sorrow

Godly sorrow worketh repentance. (2 Corinthians 7:8-10). David expressed a sorrowful and penitent attitude for his sin. (2 Samuel 12:1-13). The Publican showed an attitude of godly sorrow as he prayed. (Luke 18: 9-14).

People who are happy in their sin are not likely to repent. One must be sick and tired of the pain that sin causes . . . disgusted with Satan and his lies. A broken heart and a contrite spirit is a fertile field for repentance.

Alcoholics Anonymous has been instrumental in helping many alcoholics get, and live sober. The AA knows that before you can help the alcoholic get sober he must realize his predicament and admit that he desperately needs help. He must want to change more than anything in the world.

This is the same kind of attitude that will cause people to repent. Do you need to repent? God commands all men everywhere to repent. In 2 Peter 3:9 the Bible says, "The Lord is . . . not willing that any should Perish but that all should come to repentance."

Confessing Christ

Vernon Shuffett

If you are a believer in Christ, surely you would want Jesus

to confess your name in heaven. Consider the triumph and the joy of such an occasion! The wonderful fact is that the Son of God will indeed confess your name, and mine, if we will confess his name before men. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32).

Unto Salvation

The importance of confessing Christ cannot be over-emphasized. Paul joins confession with the great doctrine of faith as he writes to the Romans; "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 shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:9-10). What a mockery one's "faith" would be if it did not lead him to declare his faith in the Lord to others!

When the Ethiopian eunuch responded to Philip's preaching Jesus unto him, he said: "See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized? 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." (Acts 8:36-37.) After completing his obedience in baptism, the eunuch continued his journey rejoicing. Our journey through this present life can be with true joy if we have made that confession and rendered that obedience.

What is Involved

By confessing Jesus as Lord, one recognizes that Jesus has become the master of his life. He looks to him, through the word he has given us—the Bible—for guidance and strength. No longer does he follow creeds and doctrines of men, or his own selfish desires, but he seeks above all to please the Lord he has confessed.

For Jesus himself, the good confession involved his being crucified. (1 Timothy 6:13; Matthew 27:11-26.) It is possible that our confessing Christ would cause us to suffer, even to die, for

his sake. More pertinent perhaps, for most of us, that it should cause us to live (devote our life) for him. "For the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

The Confessing of Christ involves fighting the good fight of faith. (1 Timothy 6:12). One who has confessed Christ and become a Christian certainly will uphold the good news of God's gracious provision for saving men. "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." (Romans 1:16).

Now—Or Later?

A time will come when all will confess Christ—even those who refuse to do so in this life. "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:10-11).

After this life is over, however, it will be too late for the confession to bring salvation. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27.) "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." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

If you are one who has not yet made that good confession, will you not determine to do so even now? "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Revelation 22:14).

Be-Attitudes to Be Like Christ

Clem Thurman

Jesus never tried to fit the mold, in either His life or His teaching. He didn't live as the religious leaders thought that he should. And His teaching was certainly not what they expected or wanted from Him. His "sermon on the mount" in Matt. 5,6,7 has been called "the constitution of Christianity," but it is much more like "the Declaration of Independence." In this sermon, the Lord sets forth a code for our conduct that is nothing short of revolutionary! It calls for loving our enemies and doing them good, for turning the other cheek, for treating people like we WANT to be treated instead of as we ARE treated. But one of the revolutionary things about this code of conduct is that it works strictly on the person, the individual. It doesn't tell society how to act, nor government, nor your neighbor: it gives each person a code of behavior for himself.

Jesus knew that if people were to change, it would have to come from within. So at the very outset of this sermon, he begins to work on the attitudes that we have. The term, "beatitude" shows that attitude we are to develop.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3-10).

"Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit"

The emphasis in this first beatitude is stated this way in 1 Pet. 5:6. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." We must recognize our inability

to chart our own course, and allow God to direct us, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). If we would be like Jesus, we must recognize our need for His leadership in our lives. That quality of child-like humility and openness to God's will was often commended by the Lord (Matt. 18:3-4), and He set the example for us: "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5). Only when we are willing to "deny self" (Matt. 16:24), can we really become like Jesus. Even as He prayed, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Lk. 22:42), so we must live.

"Blessed Are They that Mourn"

Solomon wrote that there is a time to cry (Eccle. 3:4). Unless our heart are attuned to the hurts and needs about us, we can never be like the Lord. When Jesus came to the tomb of His friend, Lazarus, the Scripture says, "Jesus wept" (Jno. 11:35). He cried not for Himself, nor even for Lazarus (whom Jesus knew would be raised from the dead in a moment); He wept with those that wept (Rom. 12:15), Jesus had compassion (Matt.9:36), which means He felt what those around him felt. Are you ever lonely, hurt, feel rejected? "He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3). Jesus cried again when looking over the city of Jerusalem, knowing the terrible fate that awaited "the holy city" because of the sins of people (Matt. 23:37). It is right and proper that we mourn over the right things: "Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, but sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor.7:10). Until we learn to mourn our own sins and also hear the cries of others, our cries for help will not avail: "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." (Prov. 21:13).

"Blessed Are the Meek"

Too often today, people think of "meek" as being weak. But two of the strongest men of the Bible were the meekest; "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the earth" (Num. 12:3), and Jesus said, "I am meek and lowly in

heart" (Matt. 11:29). This word "meek" means "gentle" and is simply the opposite of arrogance. A man who is meek is a "gentleman," and that is the source of the word. The proper picture of meekness is that of a life that is controlled, one of self-discipline: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth the spirit, than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16:32). The apostle Paul wrote of the Christian life, "Every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" (1 Cor. 9:25).

"Blessed Are They that Hunger and Thirst"

The dietician says, "You are what you eat." In the spiritual sense, our appetite determines what we are, also! If we fill our minds with pornography, greed, lust, envy and hate, our lives will reflect that: "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). If we seek after the right things, God sees to it that we are satisfied (Matt. 7:7-8), and we will prosper spiritually. Jesus met a sinful Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well, and because of her sincere heart, promised "the living water" (Jno. 4:10). When hungry people were looking for a handout, Jesus said, "Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you" (Jno. 6:27). Those who want to be like Christ have a true spiritual appetite that causes them to "long for the sincere milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2) in order to grow more like Him. Hunger and thirsting after righteousness means we seek to know God by learning His word (1 Cor. 2:11-13; 2 Tim. 2:15) and being "conformed to His image" (Rom. 8:29) through "obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26).

"Blessed Are the Merciful"

To become like the Lord, we must learn to understand and accept other people. When we realize how much we need the mercy of God, we should be disposed to show that quality to the people about us. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Not while we were righteous, but while we were in rebellion to Him,

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (Jno. 3:16), That is the kind of love Christians must develop a love that offers mercy instead of judgment! As James wrote, "For judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment" (Jas. 2:13). In a day when tensions seem to abound, when prejudice and hate overflow men's hearts, and even good neighbors have difficulties, Christians should be motivated to set the highest of standards in dealing with others. Instead of seeking to criticise, judge and condemn, we should manifest the reaction of Jesus and show mercy and compassion to all.

"Blessed Are the Pure in Heart"

The apostle exhorts up, "Love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. 1:22). It is the heart that determines the kind of life we live. Jesus said, "For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings: these are the things which defile the man" (Matt. 15:19-20). Sin will not be in the life unless it is first in the heart. Solomon exhorted, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). The gospel cleanses the heart when one responds to it with obedient faith (Acts 15:9), and that heart that is thus regenerated will produce a good life: "Love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned" (1 Tim. 1:5). The Christian is to know where he is going, how he is going to get there and the power he needs to do it, for he knows the source of his strength: "The God whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts 27:23). By keeping his purpose singular and his vision clear the Christian is able to keep his heart pure for right thoughts and motives.

"Blessed Are the Peacemaker"

In God's creation we see order, beauty and harmony. Following Christ means that we strive for the harmony and peace that brings beauty to the society in which we live. It is not simply that we be peaceful, we must be peacemakers! Jesus is called the "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6) because He made possible our peace with God (Rom. 5:1) and peace with other people (Eph. 2:14-16).

The great biblical theme of "reconciliation" (Rom. 3:23-26; 5:8-10; 2 Cor. 5:20; etc.) is the theme of peace. The apostle Paul tells us, "Give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Unity and harmony are not just by-products of a good life, they result only from great conscious effort of one seeking to live the good life which Jesus directs for us. As God hates one who "sows discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:19), He loves as a Father those who bring brethren together in loving fellowship. The Christian can "overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21) because he possesses that quality of life that promotes peace and harmony.

"Blessed Are the Persecuted"

No one like to suffer. But the Christian knows that various kinds of trials are going to come: "All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). We are in the midst of a total, all-out war, with eternal consequences (Eph. 6:10-13). Jesus said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (Jno. 15:19). But whether we are called on to suffer a little or much, there is a great assurance given: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that be revealed" (Rom. 8:18). Every trial, every difficulty, should make us stronger and better: "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold trial knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (Jas. 1:3). Peter writes that the suffering brings refinement to our faith (1 Pet. 3:14-15). Because of God's abiding comfort, life and strength in our lives, victory is ours—even in the midst of turmoil: "But thank be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

If we really want to follow Jesus, to be like Him, we must have "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). And to do that, we must develop the attitudes that makes us like Him. But such a life must have a beginning point, which the Bible shows is faith in

Jesus as the Son of God (Heb.11:6; Jno. 20:30-31). The faith which "comes by hearing" (Rom. 10:17) will lead to repentance (Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38) and submission to the Lord in complete obedience (Mk. 16:15-16). Why not obey Him now, and then grow to be more like Him every day?

We Have Stayed Where We Were

Garland Elkins

To the Corinthians Paul wrote: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, *and wherein ye stand*" (I Cor. 15:1). To the Ephesians he wrote: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, *and having done all, to stand, Stand therefore...*" (Eph. 6:13, 14). He gave the following instruction to the Philippians: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state *that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel*" (Phil. 1:27).

The world has a right and certainly a need to know the truth concerning the Lord's church. Salvation involves such knowledge (Acts 2:38, 41, 47).

People generally have become so accustomed to thinking in terms of denominationalism that, in the minds of some, it is almost impossible to disassociate the church of the Lord from denominationalism. Yet, when we read about the Lord's church in the New Testament, very few, if any, think of a denomination. I use the word denomination in the sense in which it is used in religion when referring to a sect or party.

Neither Catholic Nor Protestant

First century disciples were neither Catholic nor Protestant,

for none of these denominations existed, and they did not exist until hundreds of years later.

A person can be an American without joining any political party, Democratic, Republican, etc. Even so, one can be a Christian without joining any sect.

In our day many think of the word "Church" as synonymous with the word "denomination." It is extremely difficult to get people to see that they can be Christians without being a part of any sect. In our country alone there are between two and three hundred sects.

The church of Christ is not a sect. Paul, though a member of the Lord's church, denied that it was a sect (Acts 24:5, 13, 14).

The Lord's Church is Superior to Denominations

The church for which our Lord gave his blood is far superior to any and/or all denominations (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23). All denominations have come into existence by human rather than by divine authority.

It is a fact both from the Bible and history that the church of Christ was established and existed in the world for several centuries before Catholicism or Protestantism were known; and before the followers of Christ were divided into various denominations (Acts 2:22-47; Rom. 16:16).

Preaching the same gospel and urging obedience to the same conditions of salvation will reproduce the church of Christ in any given community today. The seed of the kingdom is the word of God (Lk. 8:11). The good soil is the "honest and good heart" (Lk. 8:15). When the word of God was planted in the first century, it produced Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28), and churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16). Since seed always produces after its kind (Gen. 1:11, 12; Gal. 6:7, 8), it will produce in this century what it produced in the first century. If not, why not?

"Skepticism is the Basic Issue Now"

From about the middle of the 1950's to the middle of the 1960's, the main issues with which the Lord's church was plagued were those of radical (erroneous) conservatism. Among those issues were such questions as: (1) simultaneous Bible classes, (2) women teachers of classes of women and/or children, (3) individual drinking cups for the fruit of the vine, (4) "located" preachers, (5) orphan homes, (6) local churches giving benevolent assistance to non-Christians (especially orphan children), (7) one church assisting another church in preaching the gospel. Of course, to some extent all of the above matters are still problems, and I, for one, would not minimize the importance of any Bible question about which any honest person is concerned. However, by and large, the above problems are not the truly crucial issues presently before the church.

Presently, among the most crucial questions facing the church are the following: (1) Is truth absolute (objective)? (2) Can we learn truth-can we really be certain about any point of Bible teaching? (3) Can we be certain that God exists? (4) Can we be certain that the Bible is the word of God? (5) Can implicit teaching (of the Bible) ever be binding on men living today? (6) Can "examples" (accounts of action) ever be binding on men living today? (7) Does the Bible contradict itself? (8) Can men be saved out of the church? (9) Is the church merely a denomination among denominations? (10) May instrumental music be used scripturally in worship?

It is seen that the issues facing the church from the late 1960's to the mid-1980's are quite different from those which faced the church from the mid-1950's to the mid-1960's. The issues of the earlier period were concerned basically with general question: What does the Bible teach? But, while the current issues (as set forth by "liberal" thinkers) present a facade of being concerned with Bible teaching, the basic premises of these liberals imply such positions as render the question as to what the Bible teaches practically meaningless.

A Contrast of Men Who Teach the Various Positions

On the one hand, the men who uphold the "anti" positions (I mean no unkindness in using this term) are men who believe in God and Bible as His inspired, inerrant and authoritative word. They hold that truth is absolute (objective) and is attainable (can be learned). In all of this (and more) they are right. But, they disallowed what God has authorized (cf. I Tim. 4:1-5) and thus caused great trouble to the church.

On the other hand, the men who uphold the "liberal" positions (again, I mean no unkindness in using this term) are men who question the possibility of our knowing: (1) that God exists, (2) that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, authoritative word of God, (3) that (Bible) truth is objective—that (Bible) truth can be learned (thus known), and so on. These issues strike at the very foundation of Christianity. Although both issues are serious, it is clear that the "liberal" issue is the more fundamental one. (cf. II John 9-11).

Why The Change of Issues?

There are number of reasons for the change of issues in the two periods. Among these are: (1) extremes feed on extremes—men tend to react from an erroneous extreme to the erroneous extreme at the other end of the pole (even while we are opposing Anti-ism, some of us discussed the likelihood of this sort of reaction toward Liberalism), (2) we live in a world which is dominated largely by skeptical philosophy and "liberal" (modernistic) theology (and, thus, every member of the church faces the possibility of being influenced by such), and (3) we have had many young men (who apparently lacked maturity in Bible knowledge) to study in prestigious universities which set forth the basic positions of atheism, agnosticism, and modernism.

A Real Tragedy

Johnny Ramsey

It is a definite spiritual tragedy that we have become so soft

and compromising in regard to overt wickedness that wars against the God of heaven. More and more we see folks who claim to be Christians who have no conscience or shame regarding worldliness such as immodesty, social drinking, improper language and sordid entertainment. How can we be pure morally when we feast our minds and eyes on salacious literature, suggestive television programs and the filth that emanates from the film industry? The Bible still tells us to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5) and think or meditate upon proper values (Psa. 1:2). As Paul wrote in Phil. 4:8, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, 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."

Shakespeare had a cogent reminder on the value and power of the conscience: "O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me." Paul, inspired of God, in Acts 24:16 pungently stated, "I strive to have a conscience void of offence before God at all times." Izaak Walton wisely reminded mankind that good health and a clean conscience are two of the greatest blessings. I believe that far too many preachers have condescended to weak brethren by not teaching plainly on moral purity so as to accommodate conscience that are already "seared as with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2). In terms of popular acclaim, however, it is true that moral purity does have a high price tag. We would not be telling the truth if we left the impression that Christianity does not cost us something. It is also a lie to suggest that sin is never appealing. For does not Heb. 11:25 clearly speak of "the pleasures of sin"? Satan is not dumb; he knows how to dress iniquity in bright appealing colours. Read the description of the harlot in Rev. 17 for the glitter of gold and the beauty of scarlet! But long after the glamour and prestige of worldly pomp has died out (Jas.5:1-3), the pristine glory of pure Christianity not only endures but magnifies the reward of holding to God's unchanging hand! Praise the Lord for the precious peace the gospel brings.

Jesus made it very clear in Mk. 7 that evil proceeds from the

inside of man. Unless we purify our thoughts, attitudes and motives we will never receive the rich dividends of moral purity. We learn in 1 Pet. 2:1 that we are to "put away all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking" if we would ever grow spiritually. A gospel song we ought to be more familiar with tell us:

Purer yet and purer
I would be in mind.
Dearer yet and dearer,
Every duty find.

Years ago, in my hometown congregation, an old brother would lead this stanza of another hymn:

Break down every idol,
Cast out every foe,
Now wash me
And I shall be whiter than snow.

Our blessed Lord made it clear in Rev. 3:1-5 that unless members of the church cleanse their garments by purging sin out of their lives, they would have their names blotted out of the book of life by the Lamb of God. Heaven demands moral purity. The licentiousness of modern society is sadly parallel to Sodom and the decadent Roman Empire of centuries ago. The world has overflowed into the church. We need to count the cost of such foolishness and pay the price of getting rid of it or the Lord will "come and remove the candlestick" (Rev. 2:5).