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EDITORIAL



The Most Expensive Thing On Earth

It is true that costs of almost everything has skyrocketed around the world today. Transportation like train journey and air travel has gone up, and food items, clothings, education, rent, etc., are costing much more now. Yet the costliest thing on earth is not food, clothings, shelter or any of the above mentioned, but it is sin which is the most expensive thing on earth.

In fact, sin has always been the costliest and always will be the most expensive. Remember Adam and Eve, the first man and the first woman on earth, parents of all humanity. God had created them, and had blessed them with both physical and spiritual life. In his love and kindness our Creator had placed them in the most beautiful and comfortable place, called the Garden of Eden, where they had no worries and no problems, because there was no pain and no suffering and no death. Moreover, they enjoyed the fellowship of God. But when they allowed sin to come in their lives by going against God's will, sin robbed them of their happiness and peace. They were driven out of the presence of God, spiritually they became dead because they were

cut off from the fellowship of God. And not only that, but living away from God in sin they began to face sickness, sorrow, decay and death. What a great cost of sin!

Sin is still the costliest thing. Because of sin whole humanity is suffering. Wherever there is man there is pain and suffering and death. Because wherever there is man sin coexists with man. Sin is present in the lives of people and in every home and family. We read about it every day in our newspapers and see it right in our homes on T.V. We hear about sin on our radio sets and see it on our streets. There is no place on earth where there is no sin. Where there is man, sin is there. People talk about the power of money. But there is no power greater than the power of sin. Money can corrupt people. Diseases can eat man's body. Accident can claim lives. And if a powerful bomb explodes it can wipe away physical existence of a multitude of humanity. But the power of sin is so great that it not only robs man of peace and happiness, and not only destroys man physically, but sin also destroys man spiritually and leads him to face eternal death in hell. That is why Christ gave this warning, He said: "And if your hand makes you sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. And if your foot makes you sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. And if your eye makes you sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire—where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:43-48). Such is the deadly power of sin.

Man fears many things on earth. We fear floods and fire. We fear earthquakes and disasters. Most people get frightened when they see a snake or a wild animal. We dread diseases like cancer and AIDS. But the thing that we should really be afraid of is, in fact, SIN. Because there is nothing more terrible; dreadful, frightening, and destructive than sin. Again, Floods and

fires, earthquakes and calamities, wild animals and diseases can only harm man physically, but sin destroys man spiritually and eternally in hell, in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. (Revelation 21:8).

Such is the immense power of sin that it did not only make humanity to suffer on earth, but it also moved God to suffer in heaven for the sins of His creation. Just as many parents on earth suffer shame and disgrace when their children go wrong, so did our Father in heaven suffer for the sins of his creation, whom He had, in the beginning, made after his own likeness and in His own image. God knows the great value of each soul. He did not will that any soul might Perish in hell because of sin. He wanted to save each and everyone from the eternal consequences of sin, and He was willing to pay the highest cost, even His own blood, to save man from hell. To retrieve man from sin God became man and came on earth to live with men. He was called Christ Jesus, which means Anointed Saviour. Concerning Jesus the Bible says: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." "Therefore, Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be the just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:24-26). The Apostle Paul thanked God when He said, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:56, 57). Yes, thanks be to God for His Son Jesus Christ who is the way and the truth and the life who gives us victory over the love and power of sin and over eternal death of hell. The greatest question is: Have you accepted Jesus as your Saviour? Have you believed in Him?

Have you repented from all sin; and have you been baptised to receive forgiveness of your sins? "For what will it profit a man", asks Christ, "if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange of his soul?" (Mark 8:36 & 37).

Keeping Our Identity

J.C. Choate

Have you ever been in a train station and seen the masses of people that are there? Unless you see someone that you know, they are all just faces, anonymous people, that mean nothing to you. If you returned there again and again, they would all look the same. The same is true on a busy street or wherever you see people. They become important to you, and recognizable, and identifiable, only if you know them.

One's identity means a lot. To cash a check, or to do lots of things, you have to produce some identification, that is, to prove that you are who you say you are. If they already know you, then of course that makes all the difference. Solomon said, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold." (Proverbs 22:1). He said again, "A good name is better than precious ointment." (Ecclesiastes 7:1).

If our physical identity and our good name are worthwhile, then what about our spiritual identity? It is very important that we know God's will, that we obey it, so that we may be what the Lord would have us to be, and therefore for him to recognize us as belonging to him.

To begin with, God has revealed his will to us so that we might know the truth. His word, his will, has been given to all and therefore all may understand it alike. The gospel, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), and the commands of the gospel to believe in God, and to believe in

Christ as the Son of God, to repent of our sins, to confess Christ as being the Son of God, and to be baptized for the remission of sins, is very clearly set forth in the scriptures. ((Hebrews 11:6; John 14:1; Acts 17:30; Matthew 10:32; Acts 2:38). Now when one believes the gospel, and obeys the commands of God, then the Lord saves that person and adds him to his church. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47).

The Lord's church has numerous marks of identification. Christ built it (Matthew 16:18), he is its foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11). It began in Jerusalem in approximately A.D. 33 (Acts 2), Jesus shed his blood to purchase it (Acts 20:28), he is the head of it (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23), and is the saviour of it. (Ephesians 5:23). To enter it, one must believe and be baptized or buried in water. (Mark 16:16; Romans 8:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 12:13). It wears the name of Christ (Romans 16:16), and its members are called Christians. (Acts 11:26). It meets each first day of the week (Acts 20:7) to worship (John 4:24) by studying God's word (2 Timothy 2:15), praying (Acts 2:42), singing (Ephesians 5:19), partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-29), and giving as prospered. (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Now those that know God's will, and have obeyed the Lord to be saved, and to be added to the church that we can read about in the scriptures, and meet to worship the Lord, and strive to live the Christian life, then they know who they are and what is scriptural and what is unscriptural. They have a definite identity as the Lord's people, and they know if a church belongs to the Lord or if it does not. They also know if one is a true Christian or not, and if a worship service is being conducted according to God's will or if it is not. Knowing who they are and who the Lord's people are, then this is a safe guard against false doctrines and being deceived by the teachings of men.

Locally then, or wherever, one may go, if he knows what the Bible teaches about the Lord's church and his people, if he comes across various religious groups, then he can very quickly tell whether that church, or that person who claims to be a Christian, is indeed what they claim or if they are not. As far as a church is concerned, he may know whether it is of the Lord or not by the

name it wears, by the way it worships, and by what it teaches. Also, with an individual, one may enquire as to how he was "saved", what church he is a member of, the name he wears, and how he worships, and by the answers given, he can very easily tell whether he is a true Christian or not.

Now as Christians and members of the church of Christ, we may keep our identity as long as we continue to read and study God's will, obey his teaching, and continue faithful to him. In our personal study, and in our worship, we will continue to need to study and hear lessons on God, Christ and his death, burial, and resurrection, the plan of salvation, the identification marks of the church, what the Lord requires in worship, and the need to live the faithful Christian life. We will need to keep these truths fresh in our minds, continue to teach them to our children, to new Christians, and even older Christians, and to people in general. When we grow tired of hearing these truths, get away from the basic and first principle teachings of the Bible, then we are beginning to lose our identity and to slip away from the Lord. When we cease to read and study God's word, and to preach and practice definitive Christianity, then we are in danger. It is not that we can't read and study, and hear lessons directed to the Christian, to help us to grow in the Lord, but what is being stressed is the fact that neither can we ever grow to the point that we don't need to continue to study, hear, and appreciate those basic teachings that have made us who we are and what we should be.

We must never grow weary and tired of hearing God's will. We must never forget that we are Christians only and that we are members of the one church that belongs to the Lord. Should we forget that, and begin to become indifferent, willing to compromise our position, and begin to become like our religious neighbours, then we have lost it all and we no longer have any purpose of existing. In that case, we have fallen away and we need to be brought back to the Lord and restored to our first love.

This is the way therefore that we obey our Lord, that we may be identified with him, and the way that we can keep our identity.

Only as we do that can we be worth something to Christ and his cause, and only in that way can we ourselves be saved.

Attitudes Toward God's Word

Kenneth L. Jones

God declared, "...but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:2). This attitude we must possess if we desire God to look with favor upon us. We must realize our own inability and unworthiness, and bow in complete subjection to his will. His word is authoritative, and as children of God our attitude should be: "God said it, therefore I believe it; and that settles it"! With Samuel we must say, "Speak; for thy servant heareth" (I Samuel 3:10). We must hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6), and desire to know all that God has said. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

How different is the attitude of some who set their own wisdom, judgment and values as the highest authority, and accept the Bible only as long as it agrees with them. And of others who accept as final authority the theories of modern science, and "interpret" (pervert) the Scriptures in an effort to 'harmonize' them with these theories. As for the wisdom of men, the Bible says: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God..." (I Corinthians 1:20). "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

We should not feel ashamed of, nor apologize for, God's word. It is "truth" (John 17:17) and will never be successfully contradicted. In every instance where the theories of men have

contradicted the Bible, when the true facts were known the Bible has always-without exception been vindicated. Worldly "science" has often changed, and will continue to change, its views because of its admittedly incomplete knowledge; but God's word is changeless because it is "truth" and was written by one who has all knowledge. Remember Christ said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

God's word will never fail or pass away, but will judge us in the last day (Isaiah 55:11; Matthew 24:25; John 12:48). We pray that all may realize these truths, and manifest always the proper attitude.

Death—As God Views It

Joe E. Galloway

Man, limited in so many ways, often does not see things as God sees them—thus, as they really are! God told Samuel, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (I Samuel 16:7). Not only is man limited by only seeing the outward appearance, he is also limited by time, seeing only that which is temporal. Paul wrote, "For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Corinthians 5:18). In the same verse he suggests that we can look at "the things which are not seen." Of course we may do this only by means of what God has revealed to us in the Bible.

Apart from what God has revealed, man tends to view death much differently than does God. We tend to think of the death of a good man as a horrible tragedy. We seem to consider only how much better it would be if this good person were still alive and were still a positive influence to his family, friends, and all with whom he would be in contact. In contrast, we often think

It good when a wicked person dies, thinking that surely heaven rejoices. But, God does not view death as we view it.

The Death of the Wicked

God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. When a wicked person dies his eternal doom is sealed. God does not want a single person to perish (II Peter 3:9), but wants all to be saved (I Timothy 2:4). "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11).

The Death of the Righteous

The death of a faithful Christian is precious to God. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15). The purpose of our being here on earth is to prepare for living with God eternally. We make such preparation by learning God's will and living by it to the best of our abilities. The "whole duty of man" is to "fear God, and keep his commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). When one has faithfully lived for the Lord, his death transfers him from this realm of preparation into the realm of being with the Lord, which is a far better situation (Philippians 1:23; II Corinthians 5:8). No wonder such a death is "precious" in God's sight! "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Lessons for Us

First, since God views the death of the wicked as a tragedy, we need to do our best, not only to live righteously ourselves, but to teach and influence as many others as possible to be saved! James wrote, "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).

All of us have opportunities to influence many toward salvation. We have our immediate families. Some Christians have husbands or wives who are not saved; with some it is a brother

or a sister, and we have our children to bring up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). We must teach these loved family members, or arrange to have them taught. To not act on this need is to callously let them live and die without doing the most loving thing we can possibly do for them: to try to help them prepare for their eternal happiness!

We also have close friends, acquaintances at work, and neighbours who need salvation. As those saved by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-10), we are "debtors," as was Paul, to do our best to teach the gospel to all who are lost (Romans 1:14-15). One cannot have the "mind of Christ" (Philippians 2:5) and not be concerned for the salvation of all who are lost.

Second, since God has pleasure in the death of the righteous, we need to "rejoice in hope" (Romans 12:12) when a faithful Christian dies, even though we may grieve because of our separation from him at this time. Paul wrote, explaining the future hope of those in Christ, in order that Christians would "sorrow not, even as others who have no hope" when their beloved Christian friends die (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Finally, we need to look forward to that time when We can depart this world to be with the Lord. Paul wrote, "For in this [body] we groan, Earnestly Desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (II Corinthians 5:2). As the faithful Christian grows older, and more and more of those whom he has loved dearly have died in the Lord, he will have less attachment to this life, and a growing desire for the life to come.

We all need to heed these words of Paul: "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:2-4).

"Born Of The Spirit"

Guy F. Hester

Jesus talked about the birth of the Spirit in his conversation

with Nicodemus. "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, 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. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:1-8).

It cannot be denied that in the process of becoming a child of God one is "born of the Spirit."

At first, Nicodemus did not understand. He thought Jesus was talking about a Natural birth. He asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

Jesus explained, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Thus it is the "spirit" (the invisible man) that experiences the birth of the Holy Spirit. Jesus used the wind to illustrate: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is Every one that is born of the Spirit." Just as one cannot see the coming and going of the wind, neither can one see the spirit of man when it is born of the Holy Spirit into the kingdom of God.

Let us now look at another passage. Paul said, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God" (Romans 8:14). In other words they have been born into God's family. Who are sons of God?

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God."

But how are we "led" by the Spirit? Are we led by a direct operation of the Spirit, separate (and apart) from the word of God? Or, are we led by the Spirit through the word of God? It is by the Spirit that we are "led!" It is by the Spirit that we are "born" again!

How does the Spirit "lead" us to become "sons of God"? Or, how does God's Holy Spirit cause man's spirit to be "born" into God's family?

The apostle Peter answers: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (I Peter 1:23). Since the Holy Spirit gave the word (John 14:26; 16:13; I Corinthians 2:9-13), when one is "born" (or "begotten," A.S.V.) by the "word", he is "born" (or "begotten") of the Spirit.

In every birth there must be a begetting. Just how is one begotten so as to be born again? The apostle Paul gives us the answer: "For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel" (I Corinthians 4:15). Just as in the natural (or fleshly) birth there is first a begetting, and then a bringing forth, so also in the spiritual "birth"; one is "begotten" by the gospel, the word of God; and is later brought forth from the waters of baptism—thus, he is "born of water and of the Spirit."

Someone may ask, "Do you mean then that the word is the Spirit?" No, the word is the medium or instrument through which the Holy Spirit operates or works to produce the new birth today. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles "into all truth" (John 16:13). He taught them "all things" and brought "all things" to their remembrance that Jesus had said unto them (John 14:26). Thus when one is led by the word as it was given by God's Holy Spirit to the apostles, and was written down in the New Testament, he is "Led of the Spirit;" and "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

To further show that the word is the instrument through which the Spirit works, Peter said, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in Obeying the Truth through the Spirit. . . Being Born

Again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, By the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (I Peter 1:22-23).

If the Holy Spirit operated miraculously upon the hearts (spirits) of sinners to bring about the new birth, then All men would be saved without any condition on that part; or, else the Holy Spirit would be a respecter of persons—because some are born again, and others are not! Peter declared, "Of a truth I perceive that God is No Respector of Persons: but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).

When one believes in Christ with all his heart, when he repents of his sins, confessing Christ to be the Son of God, and is baptized for the remission of his sins, he then has been "born again, . . . born of water and of the Spirit".

Paul wrote to the Galatians brethren: "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" (Galatians 3:26-27). Paul said they were children of God after they had been baptized into Christ. One becomes a child of God through the new birth, and these Galatians became children of God when they were baptized.

Thus it is in water baptism of penitent believer of the gospel that we have both elements of the new birth: "Water and the Spirit."

Born Again By The Word

Timothy E. Hester

There are many false theories being taught in the religious world concerning the Holy Spirit and the way in which he operates or does his work. The birth of the Spirit is one of the most popular subjects being talked about and written about today. In religious bookstores one may find any number of books such as: "How to be Born Again", "A Born Again Christian", and

many others. All who believe the Bible believe in the new birth. Jesus said, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). This statement was made to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, who had come to Jesus by night and said, "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" (John 3:1-2). Jesus said to him, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Then as an explanation of this statement, showing that he was not talking about a physical birth, but a spiritual birth. Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). He further said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (Verse 7).

We must not close the Bible with Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus; we must look at other passages to get a complete understanding of the new birth. Paul said, "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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible serves as its own best commentary. We need not purchase a book from a religious bookstore to learn how to be born again. The Bible "thoroughly furnishes" us with this information.

The inspired apostle Peter said, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the Truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being Born Again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, By the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (I Peter 1:22-23). So now we have it from the pen of inspiration: we are born again by the word. Nothing could be more clearly stated.

But how does the Spirit work through the word in bringing about the new birth? The word is the "seed". In the spring of the year the farmer plant a seed of grain with the expectation of reproduction. God has put life in the seed to reproduce. Grain cannot be produced without seed, because the reproductive life is in the seed. The reproductive life that God has put in the

gain is the same to the seed of grain that the Holy Spirit is to the word of God, which is "seed" of the kingdom. The Holy Spirit gives life, regenerating and reproductive power to the word of God. Jesus declared, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). The word is the vehicle through or by which the Spirit operates.

What purpose could an independent operation of the Spirit serve? The Spirit does not save apart from the word—"Who shall tell thee Words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). Not to purify the soul—"Seeing ye have purified your souls in Obeying the Truth" (I Peter 1:22). Not to "quicken" or mark alive—"It is the Spirit that quickeneth...the Words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Not to sanctify—"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth" (John 17:17). Not to give faith—"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10: 17). Not to convert—"The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7). By the same token, not to produce the new birth—"Being born again, not of corruptible, seed, but of incorruptible, By the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (I Peter 1:23). To be born of the "Word" is to be born of the "Spirit"—"The words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63).

When one receives the word of God into his heart, the "seed is planted. The faith that the word of God produces in heart leads him to be baptized for the remission of his sins. Thus he has been "begotten" of the Spirit, through the word of God, and has been baptized in water for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38)—"Born of water and of the Spirit" by the word.

"Children Of God By Faith"

Flavil H. Nichols

"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. (Galatians 3:26-27).

It is self-evident that whatever causes us to be "born again," thereby makes us "children of God." But the inspired apostle declares that we are God's children: "By Faith." Hence "Faith" is essential to the new birth.

But, What Is "Faith?"

Our English word "Faith" is translated from the Greek word (Pisteuo), which is defined as the "conviction, full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah. ...conjoined with obedience to Christ" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, page 511). These three elements (1) conviction, (2) joyful trust, and (3) obedience, constitute Bible "faith." Without either characteristic, it falls short of being "faith", in the New Testament sense. And without Bible "faith" one cannot become a child of God. (Galatians 3:26).

(1) This "conviction that Jesus is the Christ" is produced by the facts recorded in the New Testament: his virgin birth, his sinless life, his teaching, his confirmation of his claims by indisputable miracles, climaxed by his resurrection the third day after he was officially declared dead. Honest inquirers today—like thousands in the books of Acts—are forced to believe he is exactly what he claimed to be—the Son of God.

(2) "Joyful trust" results from our reliance on, and our confidence in Jesus as the Christ. We happily rely on the fact that "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). He promises forgiveness of sins through his blood (Matthew 26:28), and a home in heaven hereafter (John 14:1-3). Christians rejoice in these glorious promises and prospects because of what Christ has done—and is doing—for us!

(3) But all the intellectual concurrence or mental assent in the world with the New Testament record will avail nothing, if we do not obey him. Jesus himself asked: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). He declared: "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" (Matthew 7:21). So, Bible "Faith"

involves not only conviction" and "joyful trust," but these must be "conjoined with obedience."

By definition nothing short of this New Testament "Faith." This is the kind of "faith" by which we are children of God. (Galatians 3:26).

How is Faith Produced?

After our Saviour prayed for his apostles, he then prayed for all "them also which shall believe on me Through Their Word" (John 17:20). The apostle Paul said, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). The apostle Peter said that "the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe" (Acts 15:7). The apostle John affirmed that the written word of God produces faith: "...These are Written that ye might Believe... (John 20:30-31).

The noble Bereans Believed because "they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so. Therefore Many of Them Believed. ..." (Acts 17:11-12). This also explains why Jesus, after he commanded the Gospel to Be Preached in all the world to every creature, said: "he that Believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).

Man is "lost" because of his sins (Isaiah 59:1-2), and without the gospel he will remain "lost" in his sins: "For if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are Lost..." (II Corinthians 4:3). Therefore The "Gospel of Christ" Is Called "The Power of God unto salvation to every one that Believeth" (Romans 1:16).

Where there is no "seed", there can be no harvest. Since Jesus said, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11), it follows that where there is no spiritual "seed" (the word), there can be no spiritual 'crop' of "children of God" produced by that "seed."

Must Believe to be Saved

Powerful though it is even the "gospel of Christ" will not save an unbeliever in his Unbelief!!! The apostle says: "For I

am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation To Every One That Believeth..." (Romans 1:16). There is no power on earth that will save an unbeliever so long as he refuses to become a believer! Jesus himself affirmed: "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). He also declared: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). The facts of the gospel will change an honest unbeliever into a believer, and then he can become a child of God "by faith."

Children of God "By Faith."—Where?

The new birth, which is "by faith" (Galatians (3:26) makes us "children of God"—where? "In Christ Jesus". In the Greek, the phrase translated "in Christ Jesus" is "locative"—that is it "locates" where this benefit is obtained. In the Revised Standard Version this passage reads: "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith." Not until one gets "into Christ" does he become a child of God "in Christ."

Read again: "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" (Galatian 3:26-27, King James Version). Herein the apostle Paul answers a series of questions:

Question 1: What are you?

Answer: "Children of God."

Question 2: How did you become children of God?

Answer: "By faith."

Question 3: Where did you become children of God by faith?

Answer: "In Christ Jesus."

Question 4: Why did you become children of God by faith?

Answer: Because "you were baptized into Jesus Christ."

Introducing the reason why they are children of God, by faith, in Christ, "For" (Galatians 3:27) is from the Greek word (GAR) of which Thayer says: "It adduces the Cause or gives the Reason of a preceding statement..." (Ibid, page 109). The apostle Paul had just written: "Ye are all the children of God by faith

in Christ Jesus." Then he used this Greek word (GAR), translated "For" (Galatians 3:27). The reason they are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus is because they have been baptized into Christ.

This harmonizes exactly with the definition of Faith, from the Greek Pisteuo, (quoted at the beginning of this article): "... a conviction, full of joyful trust that Jesus is the Messiah, ... conjoined with obedience." In obeying the gospel, the Galatians, like Paul and the Romans, "by faith" had been "baptized Into Jesus Christ" (Romans 6:3). And because they are now "in Christ," they are children of God "by faith."

Unless "conjoined with obedience" Conviction and Joyful Trust do not constitute Bible "Faith." And without our obeying from the heart (Romans 6:16-18) "that form of doctrine"—which includes being baptized into Jesus Christ (Romans (6:3), one is not a child of God "by faith in Christ".

Faith is essential to the new birth! Dear Reader, are You one of the "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus?"

"Born Of Water..."

David W. Hester

"Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). In this passage, Jesus told Nicodemus the terms of admission into the kingdom. The elements of this birth are water and the Spirit; and a man must be born of both to be born again. Please notice, though, that Jesus said one must be "born of water." Much speculation has centred upon this phrase; and men have twisted its meaning to fit their own theories. What does God's word say about the subject?

First, one must see what the Saviour does Not mean. Contrary to the teaching of many, Jesus is not speaking of the physical

birth. This position is widely held in the denominational world; albeit sincerely. If this be true, then Jesus is not saying that water baptism is essential for entrance into the kingdom. However, a simple reading of the context refutes this view. Nicodemus asked Christ, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born" (John 3:4)? This inquisitive Pharisee thought that the new birth was of a physical nature. Jesus had said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). When Nicodemus asked his question in verse four, Jesus specified the elements involved—"water" and "the Spirit."

Christ further said, "That which is born of flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). This statement by Christ answered Nicodemus' question, "Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus is referring to two different births in verse six. The new birth, which is spiritual, is nothing like the birth of flesh which Nicodemus had in mind in verse four.

Some denominationalists will actually claim that "water" in verse five is the "Water" (or, Amniotic Fluid) of natural birth. However, Jesus is speaking of a "man," not an unborn child. Christ further says that a man must be born "again." Jesus referred to natural birth as being "born of flesh" (verse six). Also, this erroneous view would make Jesus a babler. A spiritual birth, not physical, is what Christ is describing. The "water" involved is literal, not figurative.

Many compare the "water" of verse five to the "living water" of John 4:14, and try to say they both are figurative. This view is false. When Jesus used the word "Water" figuratively, he used an adjective to modify it, calling it "Living water." But there is no such modifier in John 3:5. Jesus says simply, "water" not "The water."

Many contend that one must "get religion" at one point, and then be baptized with the Spirit, and subsequently be baptized again in water. This theory requires two births where there should be but one. The language is "born again," not "again

AND again"—not once at the altar, and once more at the baptistry! Note also that Jesus said: "born of water and the Spirit"—not vice versa.

What does Christ mean when he says, "born of water?" The answer is simple, He is referring to the act of baptism. Baptism is the means by which one is immersed in, and delivered from, water, according to the teaching of the Spirit: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him" (Colossians 2:12). Romans 6:3-6 describes how a man contacts the benefits of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—by baptism! Paul also writes that "our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6).

The same apostle also describes how Jesus sanctifies and cleanses the church through the "washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:25-26). The Hebrews writer exhorts, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22).

The essentiality of baptism for man's salvation shines forth from the pages of the New Testament. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Contrary to the opinion of many, Saul was not saved on the Damascus road. The Lord told him, "Arise, and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:6). When Saul had come into Damascus, after three days Ananias came to him. To the persecutor of Christians, Ananias said: "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 same conditional relationship that existed between Naaman's leprosy and dipping seven times in the river Jordan (II Kings 5) exists between water baptism and man's salvation. Also, the children of Israel were commanded to look upon a brass serpent on a pole to be healed of poisonous snakebites (Numbers 21). Again, the same conditional relationship exists. Jesus

commanded baptism; it is his way. He did the bleeding, suffering, and dying. He alone has the right to set the terms for the salvation of mankind. When the Lord says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," then one must comply in order to obtain citizenship.

A final consideration must be dealt with. Exactly what is "the kingdom" which Christ refers to in (John 3:5)? First, one must realize that "the kingdom" has been established. Jesus told a group of listeners, "There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). Some claim the kingdom is yet to come, and even try to pinpoint the day when Christ will come and set up an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem. If true, then let them deal with Christ's own words, as recorded by Mark. Let them find those individuals present when Jesus made that statement! They would be over 1950 years old! When Jesus spoke of "the kingdom" he equated it with his "church." In Matthew 16:18 Christ said he would build his "church;" the next verse records that Jesus would give Peter the keys of "the kingdom." Clearly, they are the same. John said that he was "in the kingdom" (Revelation 1:9). To be in the kingdom-church is to be in Christ. Christ is king of his "kingdom," and he is the "head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18). Salvation is found only in Christ. "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ with eternal glory" (II Timothy 2:10). "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life in his Son" (I John 5:11). When one becomes a Christian, he is added to the kingdom-church at the same time. "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" (Galatians 3:26-27).

The Saviour's command to be "born of water" must not be overlooked, nor taken lightly. If man wishes to receive eternal life in heaven, he must trust and obey. "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). He makes the "new birth"—a birth of "water and of the Spirit"—essential to our salvation!

Nadab And Abihu

R.W. Gray

"And Nadab and Abihu . . . took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Leviticus 10:1-2).

A brother writes that he has, after many years of misunderstanding the account of God's wrath kindled against these sons of Aaron upon the inauguration day at the new tabernacle, finally identified their sin. It was, so he states, the sin of intoxication, to which the inspired writer refers in Leviticus 10:9. He thus reasons that the familiar account of these disobedient priests should not be cited as an example of offering unauthorized rites in worship, but that it may be cited only as a prohibition against drunkenness when appearing before God.

In response, may we not recognize the possibility of "implied" intoxication as a background for the greater sin for which these men were punished? But, at best, it is an assumption; as the record does not state—neither by "necessary implication", nor by direct statement—that these priests were intoxicated when they offered "strange fire" before the Lord.

When we "assume", however, that Nadab and Abihu had imbibed wine to the point of loosing their senses, we have not yet answered the stated cause for their punishment. The record states specifically that these men offered "strange fire" before the Lord, which he commanded them not." The very next statement in context is that as a consequence, fire went out from the Lord and devoured them (Leviticus 10:2). One translation renders verse 1: "and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command." The A.S.V. has it that they "offered strange fire before Jehovah, fire which he had not prescribed for them." Neither strange fire nor strange incense would be tolerated by Jehovah by those who proposed to come before him in

worship (Exodus 30:1-9).

That they should secure fire for their censors from a source unauthorized by Jehovah apparently must have seemed of little consequence to Nadab and Abihu. However, it obviously was a great thing in the eyes of the Lord! The 'law of exclusion' precluded their right to act presumptuously, or to assume that will worship, worship originating in finite minds apart from a divine warrant for such action, would be acceptable to Jehovah (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6). Every action in connection with their priestly functions was to be performed precisely "as the Lord commanded Moses" (Leviticus 9:10). Their crime was not in doing what Jehovah had specifically forbidden, but in doing what he had not enjoined.

The lesson of Nadab and Abihu is obvious. No man or body of men has any business attempting to decree rites, ceremonies, or any approach to Jehovah in worship which he has not authorized in his written word. A fire of our own kindling or choice God will not approve. We cannot afford to trifle with his will, for God "will be sanctified in them that come nigh to him" (Leviticus 10:3). No wrath is more terrible than the wrath of him who "is a consuming fire" (Exodus 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29). We would doubtless be inclined to think a lesser penalty than immediate, violent death would be sufficient for such presumption but for the example of God's response, as herein revealed.

In an obvious effort to help father Aaron accept this tragedy, Moses stated immediately, "This is that that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Leviticus 10:3). Whatever else may have been included, Moses makes it plain that offering before God a strange fire was a violation of his previous instructions. God would be sanctified either by obedience or by the punishment of priests as they drew near unto him (Exodus 19:22). All who observed, including the bereaved father, Aaron, would witness the glory and power of Almighty God. (Hebrews 12:28-29).

Following this event the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying,

"Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die" (Leviticus 10:8-9). In the following verse Jehovah implies that a clear head, free of all intoxication, would be necessary to an understanding of the difference between things holy and unholy, clean and unclean. For whatever reason, whether by the cloud of intoxication, by determined self-will, or a combination of the two, Nadab and Abihu had not made such a distinction, and were therefore punished by death.

That intoxication was forbidden a priest in his priestly functions one cannot deny. And whether or not Nadab and Abihu were intoxicated one cannot determine absolutely. But one thing is certain. These priests died because of the crime of offering a strange fire before Jehovah which he commanded them not. From this conclusion there is no escape.

We - all Christians—are serving in the capacity of priests, entering into the holiest by means of the blood of Christ. We are through him to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually" (I Peter 2:5, 9; Hebrews 10:19; 13:15). We serve our God in a greater tabernacle not made with hands, that which the Lord has pitched; and we must remember the example of God's consuming fire whenever we come before him in divine worship (Hebrews 9:11; 12:28-29). All we do as priests must be authorized by Christ. We dare not act in word or in deed without his directions (Colossians 3:16-17; 1:18; Ephesians 5:23-25). This is why we sing, offering the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to God through him (Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 13:15). We do not offer praise upon a mechanical instrument of music, as this would represent a "strange action" before the Lord.

Does The Bible Condemn Drinking Alcohol If You Do It "In Moderation"?

Bob Prichard

While very few people would question the fact that it is

wrong to get drunk, many imagine that if you drink "in moderation," or not enough to get drunk, then there is nothing wrong with it.

While there is a difference in Degree, there is no difference in kind between the so-called "social drinker," and the drunkard. Whether the person drinks much, or little, he is impaired by the alcohol. Drinking "moderately" makes one "moderately drunk." God has never allowed "mode rate" sin. Sin is sin in his sight.

The wise Solomon said, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1). He asks, "Who hath woe? who hath sorrows? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of the eyes?" Then he answers: "They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder" (Proverbs 23:29-32). Solomon vividly depicted one of the great dangers of consuming alcohol; it "bites like a serpent" in the end.

People drink for many reasons, including loneliness, pain, and failure—although they may tell themselves they just want to have a "good time." But the problems that the drinker wants to forget may be overcome through Christ. Among the Christians at Corinth were former drunkards. Paul wrote to them, "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 mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor Drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:9-11).

Christianity can fill the void in people's lives, a void they often try to fill with alcohol. Paul writes, "Be not drunk with

wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:18-19).

Many say that drinking is not really that bad, compared to other sins; but this does not excuse it in God's sight. The drunkard is classed with idolaters, fornicators, and thieves in God's sight. The millions of families devastated by the effects of alcohol testify to the fact that the use of alcohol, moderately or immoderately, is a serious sin.

Do It Now!

B.G. Langston

Who among us has not been guilty of living as if we wonder when life is going to begin? We are not always certain what it is that we are waiting for, but we persist in waiting till life slips by—leaving us waiting for something that has been going on all the time.

Fathers are waiting until their work is less demanding; then they are going to get acquainted with their sons. But one day the sons are grown and gone—and the best years for knowing them are gone, too.

Mothers are going to be more attentive to their daughters, and be more companionable—sit down with them, and talk; yes, even tease and have a little fun with them as though they were glad the daughters are around. But time passes, and distances widen, and one day the daughters are gone!

Men and women are going to give serious thought to eternity "some day." There is no reason to doubt these good intentions.

But when are we going to live as if we realized that this is Life? This is our time. This is what we come here for, whether we are thrilled, or disappointed, or happy, or bored. This is Life!

A Heart Of Gold

Landon Samuel

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." (Philippians 2:4).

Courtesy. Sensitivity. Compassion. These are at the very heart of the Christian; "a heart of gold." They are not the sum total of living for Christ, but they are central to it. But how do they translate into daily living? What does it mean to have a heart of compassion? What did Paul indicate when he instructed Christians to tend to "the things of others?" How do we "bear one another's burdens" in order that we may "fulfill the law of Christ?" (Compare Galatians 6:2).

Perhaps the best summary response to these timely questions is recorded by Matthew from Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount." Jesus 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". (Matthew 7:12). The Golden Rule. Four verbs (action words) may help us better honour this "rule."

Glorify. Be thankful for the blessings and joys God has given you; more mindful of life's benefits and less of its sorrows.

Observe. Look around, taking note of others' hardships. Our world is filled with disadvantaged, outcast, poverty-stricken, love-starved, troubled individuals. Do not simply "pass by on the other side," nonchalantly overlooking their tragedy, Rather, like the good Samaritan, have compassion and reach out. (Compare Luke 10:30-37).

Love. Among the numerous qualities evident in Christian love are kindness and selflessness (Compare 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5.) And, if we indeed love others, these qualities will be exemplified in our actions towards and associations with them.

Determine. Make a conscious decision and commitment to seeking out and meeting the needs of those around you. Christian service is no accident, it is a decision of the heart; a determined approach to others' burdens.