

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 23

April 1993

No. 12

EDITORIAL

The Blood Religion

Christianity is the religion of blood. Take the blood out of Christianity and it will become a "dry religion." You can't read the Bible and miss the blood. Blood was shed to obtain tunics of skin to clothe Adam and Eve after they had sinned. The first worship offered by humans is recorded in Genesis chapter four where both Cain and Abel had brought their offerings to the Lord. Cain, the record states, had brought an offering of the fruit of the ground, but Abel, his brother, had brought the first-lings of his flock. God didn't accept Cain's offering, but He was pleased with Abel and his offering. All through the Old Testament Law one reads again and again animals being offered in the worship of God. Coming to the New Testament, the writer of the book of Hebrews explains in Hebrews 10:1-4: "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and the very image of things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purged, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." Then he goes on to show how Christ's death on the cross fulfilled God's will when He died on the cross and shed His own blood for the sinners of the world. Speaking about Christ, he wrote, "Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me. In

burnt offerings and sacrifices for sins you had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come-In the volume of the book it is written of me—to do your will God.' Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sins you did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), then He said, "Behold I have come to do your will, O God," He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of the Jesus Christ once for all." (Hebrews 10:5-10).

When Christians all over the world meet for worship on every Sunday, the day in which Christ was raised from the dead, one of the acts of worship they engage in is that of partaking of the Lord's Supper. It is called the Lord's Supper, because Christ, the Lord, had established it just before His death for the sinners. The Lord's Supper consists of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine or grape juice, which every Christian eat and drink to remember the body and the blood of Christ. As Christ prior to His death had instituted the Lord's Supper, He had asked His disciples to eat from the bread in remembrance of His body, and then He had presented the cup of the fruit of the vine and gave it to them saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matthew 26:27, 28).

Christianity is the only religion which teaches God became man through Christ and shed His own blood for the remission of sins. In Christ, God took my sins upon Himself, and died in my place for my sins. That is why I can say "God is love," He loves me and He loves all people in the world, because He shed His blood so that we could have the forgiveness of our sins. There are some beautiful passages in the Bible which speak of the blood of Christ and show what it does for us. Peter wrote, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18, 19). Paul wrote, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. . ." (Ephesians 1:7). "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13) "But God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." (Romans 5 :8,9) John said, "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son

cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). And at Revelation 1:5 he wrote: "And from Jesus, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

The Truth Is The Same Everywhere

J.C. CHOATE

Sometimes we are told that the gospel as preached in America is ineffective in India, Indonesia, or some other part of the world, and especially if it has to be translated into the local language. True, it might be better for local people to do the preaching or writing and not have to use translation. But the fact remains that the truth is the truth anywhere it is preached, and it is possible to translate it into any language anywhere in the world and for it to still be effective and understood. If this were not true, the Bible itself would be irrelevant in some places, and we could not translate it into other languages. If it is not possible to effectively communicate with people of other languages through translation then politicians would be out of business, as well as many other business and activities around the world.

There are those who advocate that when it comes to religion, the lessons must be changed and localized to fit the need of the culture you are presently dealing with. It is true that you can sit on a chair or on the floor, you can worship with shoes or without shoes, but you can't add local mechanical instruments of music to worship and have the Lord's approval. The fact is, the place of worship, and many other things may not matter, regardless of where you are, but the acts of worship as authorized in the scriptures must be carried out without addition, subtraction, or substitution regardless of where one is anywhere in the world if that worship is to be accepted by the Lord.

Christ met a Samaritan woman at a well of water and after some conversation about the water she had come for and the water he offered, the record says, "The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in

this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:19-24). What was Jesus saying to this woman? Simply that it didn't matter where one worshipped as long as the worshipping was done in spirit and in truth. "Spirit" involves one's attitude, understanding, and meditation on the things being done as worship to God. Truth would have reference to the will of God, engaging in those acts of worship as God has commanded. Now if one will worship in spirit and truth, directing his worship to the one true and living God, he can worship anywhere in the world with the Lord's full approval.

There are those who teach "situation ethics", that is, that one's behaviour may be permissible in one place but counted as a wrong in another place. They would say that where you are, who you are with, and the circumstances would determine whether a thing is right or wrong. We should say that the truth is truth anywhere in the world. If a thing is wrong within itself then it would be wrong to engage in it anywhere, any time, and under any circumstances.

Again, the truth is the truth anywhere in the world. Christ said that the gospel should be taken into all the world and if one will believe it and will be baptized, he will be saved. (Mark 16:15, 16). There is one church, and that is the Lord's church, whether one is in one part of the world or another. (Matthew 16:18). Whether dealing with worship, the Christian life, death, the Lord's return, or whatever the subject, the Bible, the one book of God which is directed to all mankind, teaches the truth on all of these subjects. The beauty of the truth, of God's will to man, of the gospel, and of Christianity—is that it is the same to everyone all over the world. How confusing it would be if you had to do it one way in one part of the world, and in another way in another part of the world. There is one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one church, one way to live, and one hope for all mankind.

It is true that it may be helpful to know the religious thinking of those people among whom one is working. But to say that lessons presenting the Biblical concepts alone are not applicable in one place as they might be in another is to question the wisdom of God in giving one Book for all cultures and people, for all time.

"The Domineering Woman"

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

I know a woman who loves to boss her family. Her husband does exactly what she tells him. Her children go to her for permission to do whatever they want to do. She has a sharp tongue and a quick temper. If she runs into temporary opposition, she can develop a "headache" or some other "sickness" so that her wishes are obeyed because she is "not well."

Sadly, this woman thinks she is right in her behaviour. She does not realize that she is defying God's plan for the family, so she is wrong. Ephesians 5:22 teaches, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife. . . ."

When a woman makes herself the head of the house, what does she do to her family?

(1) She robs herself of the natural softness and loveliness that should be characteristic of a woman. Instead, she becomes demanding, intolerant, and quarrelsome in temperament. These are traits that will become worse as she grows older. Few domineering women are deeply loved. They are tolerated, but no one really enjoys being in their company.

(2) She robs her husband of self respect and initiative. Perhaps early in marriage she sensed an element of insecurity and uncertainty in her husband. By dominating him, she has continued to chip away at his self confidence until his development as a husband, a leader, and a man is permanently inhibited. Lacking in confidence, he does not progress in his work or other areas of involvement as he would have if he had been encouraged by his wife.

(3) She robs her husband of the respect their children and others should feel for him. Because her strength has dominated and he has grown more submissive through the years, the children probably feel contempt for him. If he tries to discipline them or to guide them, they are more likely to ridicule him than to obey.

(4) She robs her children of the proper perspective in home life

and family relationships. So when her sons grow up, the example they will have seen in their father day after day was a poor one, and they will have no training in the way they should behave as husbands and fathers. Usually children will go to one extreme or the other: they will be like their father, or they will be tyrants over their wives and families, being as domineering and intolerant as their mother was.

The daughters also will have problems. Their training will have been to control their husbands, yet the men they marry may not submit to this. The result may well be a life time of contention and struggle for authority within the family.

God knew what He was doing when He set the order of the family. The husband who has grown to maturity in self confidence and leadership ability, whose wife respects him and whose children love and obey him, is a happy man. The woman who is loved and cared for by her husband and who is respected and adored by her children will be a joy to those around her because she herself is happy. The children who feel secure in their father's care and their mother's training and love will be well adjusted and able to develop balanced lives of their own.

How sad it is when any of us make the mistake of thinking that we know best and that our way is an improvement on the plan God designed for the family. We can only be the losers.

How To Win By Losing

W.A. HOLLEY

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. for whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:24-26).

The foregoing quotation is a paradoxical statement. What is a paradox? According to the dictionary, it is "a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true." One famous preacher defined a paradox as "truth standing on its head to attract attention." What Jesus taught in our text may not be apparent

to all, but when understood it presents a great and fundamental lesson.

To illustrate our lesson: Two men were given an equal number of grains of corn. They were ordered to save their corn. One man took his grains of corn and wrapped them in cellophane and stored them in a drawer, the other took his grains of corn and planted them in the ground. How long will it be before the grain locked in a drawer sprouts and bring forth fruit?? The answer is obvious . . . N E V E R!! The second man saved his grains of corn by planting them in the ground that they might reproduce themselves. He lost the grain but gained a harvest!! Here is the lesson Jesus wants men to learn.

The application? One man lives selfishly, thinks only of himself and his selfish needs. Such a person saves his life by living only for his material possessions. Such an one focuses attention on himself, working for his own satisfaction, being little concerned about the welfare of others (Galatians 6:10; II Corinthians 9:12-13). This sort of a person shuts God out of his life and, as a result, God turns his face against him (Matthew 19:16-22; I Peter 3:8-12). The Rich Farmer of whom Jesus spake was a very successful man in one sense but a total failure in another (Luke 12:13-21). The Rich Farmer reveals his true character when, in his speech, he uses the pronoun "I" six times but says nothing about others. His use of the word "MY" (five times) reveals his covetous love of material possessions. What this man tried to save he lost, for "God said unto him, Thou fool, this night (not after many years) thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

Another man lives an entirely different life. Unselfishness characterizes his journey through this world. One can lose his life in helping others but gain immortal glory for himself and for others. The Apostle Paul is a fine example as shown in Philippians 3:1-11. In this passage Paul gives up every thing that he might gain Christ. It is interesting to read II Corinthians 11:22-28 which graphically describes the toils, suffering, and hardships that Paul endured for Christ Jesus.

Dear Christian friend, forget about yourself and spend your time in helping others. Open the door of service to humanity. Open the door of mercy; leave the walls of seclusion and go about doing good (Acts 10:38; Galatians 6:10; John 9:4; James 1:27).

What is the result of following such a course through life? In so doing one makes friends with God and man (John 15:13-15). Such people become more useful, more contented and happy, and more

fruitful (John 15:1-8; II Peter 1:5-11). He who "sits in the stool of do-nothing, and whittles on the stick of do-less," is a total failure. Cease to be fearful, resist the feeling of helplessness, resolve to offer excuses no more, grab yourself by the nap of your neck, get off the seat of your pants, and go to work for the Lord God Almighty. You will be surprised at what you can accomplish. Brother C.A. Wheeler learned to read the Bible after he was married and had a family, but, because of his determination and zeal for the Lord, he was instrumental in leading more than 6,000 souls to obey their Lord.

Hell is filled with people who tried selfishly to save their own lives, for example, those who are uncharitable toward the less fortunate (Matthew 25:31-46). And, then, what about those religious people who slavishly followed the doctrines and commandments of men? (Matthew 7:21-23; 15:9). Those who rebel against God, even though they are honest and sincere, lose their souls (I Samuel 15:22-23; Hebrews 5:8-9). Even some preachers who have gained everything here will find they have lost everyone in the Great Judgment (Philippians 1:15-18; Acts 1:24-25).

Good moral people, lukewarm church members, and backsliders may think they have saved themselves through their own endeavors will learn, too late, they have lost all that really matters.

Writing to Timothy, the preacher, Paul said, "But godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, neither can we carry anything out; by having food and covering we shall be therewith content" (I Timothy 6:6-8, ASV.).

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him my Father will honor" (John 12:25-26).

Down With The Tree!

CONNIE LEE KRUTE

The yard surrounding my workplace is filled with majestic pine trees. Towering proudly above the house, these trees are beautiful to

behold. They sway gently in a soft breeze and emit a somewhat eery sound when stronger winds pass through their green needles.

You would think with an abundance of trees around that one would not be favored over another, or that one would not be missed should it be removed. But for the last two years, out of my office window, I could see one particularly tall pine which seemed to stand out from the others. You could tell it had been there for many years and the pine looked healthy and strong. Upon closer examination, the tree was actually leaning to the South and it appeared to be fatigued and ready to retire. There have been many days that I watched it toss to and fro during a wind storm, as though it were trying to release itself from the soil which has held it captive for so many years. Even though it is a beautiful tree, I've known for some time that it would need to be destroyed to protect the house and power lines nearby from an accidental fall.

Of all people, I should not worry about the fate of any pine tree. In the first place, I am allergic to the yellow pollen emitted from these trees. Plus, their needles fall into everything—the rain gutters the car vents, lawn, everywhere! Then there are the “zillions” of pine cones which must be collected or mowed over. Realistically, the “cons” outweigh the “pros” over this situation, in spite of the beauty of the tree. It should be simple to dismiss the thought of grieving over one old pine tree.

To me, that particular tree represents my former life. There were many positive—even admirable—aspects to it, ones which were applauded by the world and Christians alike. Yet, I knew there were drawbacks which threatened my soul's salvation. Even though I was well-liked and encouraged by those around me, I struggled daily to escape from the clutches of the world. Eliminating my “tree” was difficult to do. Just like the big pine, I couldn't do it on my own. I was literally tired and worn out from the world's worries and cares which are brought on from a life of lukewarmness and too much involvement in the world's disease of materialism. However, once I committed to follow Jesus instead of the world, I found it easier than I once thought. With God's help, anything can be accomplished, even a complete change in one's life.

The life I left behind appeared to be lucrative and acceptable, but it was literally jeopardizing my eternal soul. Friends and associates, who could help me prosper in the business realm, were also abandoned because they had dragged me into their sinful world of materialistic

judgment and priorities, little by little.

Sometimes as we go through the process of repentance and turning to follow God's way of life we must also leave behind some of the good aspects, perhaps even moving away from family and friends. After all, God can sow His seeds in new places when they are willing to go! But it seems that the Lord provides a way to reunite us with our loved ones in unexpected ways. Plus He brings more and more blessings our way than ever anticipated!

The old pine tree is now gone, blown over during a Spring storm. Somehow, as it fell, the tree did not damage the house or power lines. It did not even crack the driveway where it landed. One could almost see the hand of God "guiding" this gigantic tree to a safe resting place. Now that the old pine has been cut up and cleared away, the view from my window has opened up to show a young pine tree nearby, just beginning a fresh, new life.

As you let your "tree" be felled and begin to seek the Truth, you will witness Jesus guiding you carefully in His way. He will free you from the clutches of Satan and a new life will spring forth, ready to grow and mature in the way of the Lord. And your reward for getting rid of your old "tree" is a home in heaven! The Bible states:

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:32, 36).

For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life (Romans 6:22).

Is your life like the old pine tree? Are you struggling daily to let go of the world, knowing you must put away your old life in order to gain eternal salvation? Won't you trust in Jesus' promises and let Him tear down your old "tree"?

The Sun Is Almost Down

EDSEL BURLESON

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32). The size of a man is measured by the size of the thing that makes him angry. Someone has said, "Raised voices lower esteem. Hot tempers cool friendships. Loose tongues stretch truth. Swelled heads shrink influence. Sharp words dull respect."

The reason anger is a dangerous thing is that it has a tendency to make the mouth work faster than the mind, or to run along ahead of the mind and stab people with hot pitch-fork words, and to make the blood of grief drip from a wounded heart for hours to come. Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret. Anger is a state that starts with madness and ends with regret.

"Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:26, 27). Two good men had a very heated discussion. Late in the afternoon, one of them remembered the exhortation of Paul and went to the home of the other. As he knocked on the door, he was anxious but worried about the reception he might receive. His offended friend opened the door, and seeing who was there, withdrew in astonishment and surprise. The other at the same moment cried out, "The sun is almost down." The unexpected statement softened the heart of the offended so that he opened wide the door and said, "Come in brother, come."

An unknown author said it this way:

When I have lost my temper.
I have lost my reason, too;
I am never proud of anything
Which angrily I do.

When I have talked in anger,
And my cheeks are flaming red,
I've always uttered something
Which I wish I hadn't said.

In anger I have never done
A kindly deed or wise,
But many things for which
I feel I should apologize.

In looking back across my life
And all I've lost or made,
I cannot recall a single time
When fury ever paid.

Distinctive And Restrictive

WINFRED CLARK

There is always the need to try and keep things in their proper focus. In this manner things can be clearly seen and easily identified. When differences exist, then those differences should and must be taken into account. In the business world you will find this practice. When a company spends a vast sum to produce a product; they want to be sure people are able to identify that product. They will not hesitate to point out the distinctive qualities related to such. They do not operate from the thesis that one thing is just as good as another. They will spend great sums of money trying to educate men to see the differences. This they will not hesitate to do.

Sometimes we will find that such distinctions are not that popular in the religious affairs of men. People want to be appreciated by those with whom they work. They like to be like the people around them. This is often seen in the matters of dress. We know this kind of desire raised it's head in the days of long ago. There was a time when God's people came to one of his prophets and made a request. It was, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8:5). What was at the root of this request? Why would those people make such a request? Take a look at what they later said. They said, "we will have a king over us; that

we also may be like all the nations." (1 Samuel 8:19-20). Now you have it. They wanted to be like those around them. Do you think any of them might be able to say, "We are just another one of the nations anyway"? Do you think some might even apologize to the other nations saying, "we have been sectarian to remain separate"? Would they decry the distinctive things that made them a distinctive nation?

Should one apologize today for the restrictive things he may be called upon to teach and practice? Should one feel that he is sectarian in spirit because his practice is distinctive? I do not believe for a moment that such is the case, and neither do thousands of others who are attempting to follow the will of the Lord. They know there are some restrictions that will make them a distinctive body of people. But this is not something drawn from their imagination. This is clearly set forth in the word of the Lord. There are some restrictive and distinctive propositions found in God's word. Take a look at some of these.

I. THERE IS A "NONE OTHER"

Peter would use this kind of language in a very dangerous place and before people who would kill. Listen to what he would have to say to some of the very same people who put Jesus to death. He would declare, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Here is very clearly defined a "none other" proposition. That is very restrictive. That term will rule out any other name by which we are saved. It limits the matter. We cannot be saved in any other. Would the use of such language make Peter sectarian? Does it breathe a sectarian spirit? Would the failure of Judas or Ananias and Sapphira mute such a declaration? Absolutely not. Peter still had a responsibility to teach the truth of God in the right and proper fashion if every person in the church failed. It was still a "none other" proposition.

II. THE "NO OTHER"

You will find this phrase in Paul's language to Timothy when he said, "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other

doctrine" (I Timothy 1:3). That will restrict what is to be taught and will also make it very distinctive. There is to be nothing taught in the name of the Lord that would differ from the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). Any other kind of teaching is surely excluded in the term "no other." That just means no other than the gospel. Now we need to stop and ask ourselves if Paul was being mean or sectarian to give such a charge? Would such make Timothy unloving and unkind? What should be the view of Timothy and others who would teach something that differed from the apostles doctrine? Should there be an effort to find a "hermeneutic" that would allow them to teach something contrary, yet still be considered as God's children? Such an idea would have been considered blasphemous in that day and should be seen in that way today. Timothy and Paul knew the apostles' doctrine was restrictive and such would make them distinctive.

III. THE "NOT ANOTHER"

In spite of the fact that there is a "none other," and a "no other" proposition, you will still have men who will act as if the church ought to be considered as just another religious group among others like it. Paul would never countenance any such idea. Such would be foreign to all that he taught and practiced. He never saw the gospel as just another message. Listen carefully to what he would have to say about the situation in Galatia. "Which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7) Yes, there might be some who would call a perverted gospel, the gospel. This Paul would not do. Paul knew the gospel would produce the church. That which was a perverted gospel would surely not produce the church of the Lord. You would not want to classify that which is produced by a perverted gospel with the church that is produced by the gospel. The idea of the church being just another with the denominations would surely be alien to all that Paul had to say.

One does not need to be fearful when he respects that which is restrictive and the which makes him distinctive. As long as he does that which pleases God, that is all that matters.

God Wants No Less Than All Your Heart

DAVID WADE

The heart of man is mentioned 830 times in the King James Bible. By using a concordance and investing about two hours, one can greatly bless himself by reading these passages. One fact really stands out; God desires no less than all your heart. Let us be impressed with the great truths found in some of these passages.

First, we should be impressed with the fact that the inclination of our hearts determines what we do with life. "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). "Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

Furthermore, God knows our hearts whether good or bad. "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, And according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:9-10). "For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). "For He knows the secrets of the heart" (Psalm 44:21).

God's word is given to direct our hearts in His paths. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). "With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:10-11). "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19:8).

If one refuses to heed God's revelation, he becomes guilty of all kinds of sins. "The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God" (Psalm 53:1). "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man" (Matthew 15:19-20). "This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me, And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7; cf. Isaiah 29:13). "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily,

while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion" (Hebrews 3:12-15).

In order to give our hearts totally to God, we must obey the gospel and live a faithful Christian life. "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:16-18; cf. vss. 3-6; Acts 2:38). "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. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:22-23).

We must love God supremely Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38).

We must love our fellow man, especially our fellow Christian. "And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). "since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:22-23).

We have touched only the "hem of the garment" on this subject. Surely, we must be impressed with the fact that God wants no less than all your heart.

"A Friend Is A Present You Give Yourself"

CECIL CORKREN

Robert Lewis Stevenson gave us this famous line. What is a

friend—in one word? "Honesty." No greater compliment has ever been paid man than when Jesus said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you" (John 15:14). Someone has said, "If you have at least ten close friends you are the exception to the rule." To have a true friend is to have one of the sweetest gifts that life can bring. A friend is a person who knows you and likes you. Shakespeare said, "A friend bears his friends' infirmities." Friends favor and support each other in all areas of life. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). When Jesus spoke at the graveside of Lazarus in John 11:11 he said, "Our friend sleepeth." Lazarus was not only a friend of Jesus, but of many others.

What is a friend? Honesty is the present you give yourself. In an article in *Old Paths* under the title "Friend," a young school girl was asked what is a friend? One wide eyed, innocent third grade girl defined the word 'Friend' as "someone who says nasty things to your face instead of behind your back." We may well question the first part of her novel definition, but the last part is both apt and accurate. A friend does not gossip!

Drink from the waters of heaven's wisdom: "He that repeateth a matter separateth very (or chief) friends," (Proverbs 17:9). "A talebearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Proverbs 11:13). "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out; so where there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Proverbs 26:20-22). "A friend loveth at all times" (Proverbs 17:17), and thus follow the golden rule of love which teaches. "All things whatsoever ye would that man should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). He does not spread or fuel ugly rumors about others, for he would not want others doing such behind his back about him. A loving friend does not keep an account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, (he) is glad with all good men when truth prevails. (1 Corinthians 13:5-6, Phillips translation). No, a friend does not gossip. Are you a friend or a foe?

When Abraham believed God and obeyed his voice, "the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham BELIEVED GOD" (James 2:22-23). We sometimes hear the expression, "fair weather friend." "A friend loveth at all times," not just in fair weather. A friend is always there when we need a friend. A real true friend is shown in Jonathan. "The soul of

Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1). For friendship to be permanent, it must be spiritual. To be a permanent friendship, "there must be fellowship in the deepest things of the soul, community in the highest thoughts, sympathy with the best endeavors." A.C. Benson said, "The friend is the person whom one is in need of and by whom one is needed."

We sing "What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear" and "There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus, No friend so high and holy, There's not an hour that he is not near us, did ever saint find this friend forsake him? NO, NOT ONE!"

"Take the world, but give me Jesus." Jesus is a gift from God. Jesus will not force himself upon anyone. Why not give your friend the best gift of all—Jesus. A young lady, upon graduation from high school had entered college, wrote this note to her parents, "Dad, you and mom have given me something every child needs, that is, through your teaching you've given me a Saviour (Christ)." So in all your giving, give yourself the greatest gift of all, A FRIEND AND A SAVIOUR—THE LORD JESUS CHRIST!

The New Way Is Best

JOHN GIPSON

Some people long for the old days and the old ways. Not me. I'm convinced that it's a mistake to always say, "the old is better." For example, a new bridge has been built spanning the Arkansas River, and a new four lane highway will be opened in a couple of weeks. Do you think for a moment that I will continue to take the old road with its hills and curves, traffic lights and snarled intersections? Not on your life. Why should I take that road when the new one will save me at least thirty minutes in crossing the river? The new way is best.

But some folks, who are supposed to have perfectly good sense, are continuing to travel an old, old road even though a new one is open. What about you? "Will you keep to the old way which wicked men have trod?"

The old way is a way of rebellion against God. From Eden till this

present day, men have shouted "I shall" to God's "shall not." They have answered, "I will not" to His plain commands.

The old way has been one of selfishness. Why did Eve partake of the forbidden fruit except that she thought it would delight her appetite and make her wise? There is nothing new in man seeking his own pleasures, interests and goals.

Pride has marked the old way. Eve would become as God. Those at Babel would ascend to heaven. Nebuchadnezzar would acknowledge none greater than himself. Pride abounded.

The old way is one of unbelief. Ancient sinners refused to believe the voice of Noah when he called them to an ark of safety. John the Baptist came in the way of righteousness and yet was not believed. "Let us therefore fear, least a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:1, 2).

Before you decide that you will continue to walk in the old paths, look at those who have gone before you. "They were snatched away before their time; their foundation was washed away" (Job 22:16). Is that what you want?

There is a new way. It begins with a new birth, follows a straight course, and leads to eternal life. It's not as popular, but it is new . . . and best.

The Lord's Day

JOE SPIVY, JR.

"This is the day which the Lord hath made, I will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24).

All days are made by our God, thus all days rightly belong to him. Still, as the revelator John wrote, there is something special about the "Lord's Day" or Sunday (Revelation 1:10).

Christians realize that Sunday is now the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7; 1

Corinthians 16:2). We do not observe the same prohibitions as were placed upon Israel concerning their day of worship, the sabbath day. We would do well to remember that the ideas of enhancing relationships, caring for others, and worship are still valid (Exodus 20:8-11).

Sunday should be a day dedicated to God and his service. At times it may be necessary to work, perform chores, or simply rest (the Jews did). But they should never cause a neglect of assembling, of encouraging others, and even of our own families. If that's happening, then we need to ask, "Why?" Lest we forget; remember Matthew 6:33.

Do we find time through the week to eat out, enjoy entertainment, be involved in community activities, work extra hours to enhance our "standard of living," etc.? There's nothing wrong with any of those activities . . . EXCEPT when they push us to the point that the Lord's Day becomes "catch-up" day.

If that happens, we might need to have a priority check. If there's no time for God, then something is definitely wrong! Let's give the Lord His day back and live for Him every day.

That "Jonah Complex"

JOE T. SPIVY, SR.

God commanded Jonah "Go . . . cry against Nineveh, for their wickedness is come up before me" (Jonah 1:2). Jonah's reaction was to rise up to "flee . . . from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:3). What we should have is a picture of one running FOR God, but rather it portrays Jonah as running FROM God. His flight was a flight from duty. The motto of one rather famous civic club is "service before self."

Jonah knew well what his duty was. God had spoken to him and graphically told him exactly what he was expected to do. The reason that Jonah fled was not a want of understanding what God expected, but a dislike for the work he was expected to do. We might rationalize that the journey was long, or that the Assyrians were foreigners who hated Jews and were hated by Jews, or possibly he really felt unable to complete the task (as did Moses). If we look for the real reason for his rebellion at the task, we find that his heart was not right. He had no love

for the Ninevehites, no concern and no willingness for sacrifice for their welfare.

Jonah chose to go toward Tarshish. Because it was in the opposite direction of where God instructed him to go, we might well imagine that it represents a place of ease, a place where he could have his own way and do his own thing. Circumstances were conducive to his flight as he found a boat ready to sail and he had money for his fare. Jonah found that when we run from duty satan makes it too easy!

We must remember that the Christian life is a life of duty and service. We find the word "duty" only two times in the KJV of the Bible, and that in Luke 17:10 and Romans 15:27, BUT WE FIND OUR DUTIES on virtually every page of the word of God. We find such words as "owe," "ought," "must," "necessity" and "I command you" over and over. Can we not see "DUTY" in such?

Our duty is outlined so often in the New Testament or New Covenant of the Lord Jesus Christ that we dare not forget or "run away." Let us notice some of that which it is our duty and remember the words of Christ in Luke 17:10 "when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was OUR DUTY to do." As Jonah's duty was crystal clear to him, so ours is, IF WE WISH TO DO THE WILL OF GOD!

It is our duty to LOVE ONE ANOTHER. John said in I John 4:11 "beloved, if God so loved us, we OUGHT to love one another." One cannot read Paul's letter to the Corinthians, especially I Corinthians 13, without realizing that love for one another is enjoined upon God's people. In John 13:34 Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye LOVE ONE ANOTHER; as I have loved you, that ye also LOVE ONE ANOTHER." A flight to Tarshish is no substitute for love.

Again, we are commanded to worship Jehovah. In John 4:24 Jesus declared, "God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." We cannot take our flight from the reality of the commandments of God which point out our duty to worship. Notice Hebrews 10:25, Acts 20:7 and I Corinthians 16:1, 2 and our duty is evidently made clear. We must worship God, not just if we wish to.

Other areas could be discussed; such as personal evangelism, personal Christian growth and development, benevolence, etc., but these are sufficient to point up the idea that Christians have a Duty! It is spelled out on every page of the New Covenant and may we never

forget that God expects us to respond to DUTY. Like Jonah we might find it easy to RUN AWAY from duty, but it is very difficult to contend with God. God is omnipotent and we are very impotent in contrast. Let us run TO God, run WITH God, and run FOR God. Let Jonah be an example of one running in the wrong direction.

Changes And Challenges Of Life

JEANETTE JACKSON

Many of us "accept ourselves as we are" to such a great extent that we close our minds to new challenges or changes of any kind. This is very true as we begin to grow older. We become content and satisfied and we refuse to grow or change in any way. Many times it is because we think we cannot, but as Christians we need to remember Paul's words in Philippians 4:13 which say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

Many of us need to pray thusly, "O, God, if thou seest me in danger of nesting, push me out of my nest so I will not get comfortable." This is a very dangerous thing for a Christian, We cannot become "at ease in Zion" (Amos 6:1). God gave us both brains and muscles, but he expects us to have the initiative to go out and use them. We know that if we do not use them, we will soon lose them!

We cannot sit back and wait on God to do our work. Many great works for the cause of Christ go undone, simply because no one is willing to accept the challenge; because there are no workers (Luke 10:2).

When Constantinople fell to the Turks, it was not because there were no able-bodied citizens who could have helped in defending it, but rather it was because they were depending upon the Lord to deliver them without giving Him any help whatsoever. Does this not sound like many of us today? We who are in the church, the body of Christ, need to possess a "mind to work" (Nehemiah 4:6) and that regardless of the change the work may bring about in our lives. The historians tell us that when the great city fell there were plenty of strong men with calloused knees from hours of praying when they should have been on the walls helping defend the city.

God's people are to be a praying people. "Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17), but they are to be a working people too! God does not mean for us to take life easy or retire from working in his church. We must not be afraid of the changes that life brings, but we must be growing in grace and knowledge, and we must "continue to bear fruit" (John 15:2).

All of us with help from God (Psalm 121:2) can continue to meet life's challenges and remain faithful to him.

Truth And Freedom

CECIL MAY, JR.

"You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). This is itself a widely recognized truth, with application to freedom in many areas of life.

It is true politically. It is almost impossible to enslave a well-informed people. That is why a government controlled press and strict censorship of all other informational media is one of the earliest objectives of any dictatorial power.

It is true economically. Societies with a vested interest in an existing pool of cheap labor often discourage and sometimes forbid the education of that work force. Knowledge bring liberation from bondage to low-paying jobs in unskilled occupations.

It is true spiritually. This, of course, is the application with which Jesus was concerned when he spoke these words. His hearers objected that they were no man's slave. Jesus reminded them that whoever commits sin, whoever has sinned and is not forgiven or whoever makes a practice of sin, is the slave of sin. It is from this enslavement that the Son came to make us free indeed (John 8:34-36).

All of the above applications are true and relevant to man's condition, but none has caught the real point of this memorable saying of Jesus. All of the above discussions of the passage ignore a vital part of the context. They start in the middle of the sentence.

As usually read, the passage is a conditional promise with one

condition and one result: Condition: Know the truth; Result: Be made free. The fact that the promise perceived that way is so true and so universally applicable obscures an important fact: that is not what the passage says.

Rather, the passage is a conditional promise with one condition, and three results. What Jesus said was, "If you abide in my word, then you are my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Condition: Abide in Jesus' word; Results: 1) Be his disciples, 2) Know the truth, 3) Be made free.

He is not first and foremost reminding us of an advantage of knowing the truth. He is telling us how to know the truth, where the truth is to be found.

In a prayer to the Father for his disciples Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The gospel is "the word of truth (Ephesians 1:13). We purify our souls by "obeying the truth" (I Peter 1:22).

Abide in his word, and you will be his disciple, you will know the truth, and you will be made free.

A Religion To Die By

A father on his death bed called his sons. They gathered around him and to one he said "Goodnight, son;" and to the other he said, "Good-bye, son." The second boy noticed the difference and asked his father, "Father, why did you say goodnight to John, and good-bye to me?" The dear old man who loved both of them said, "Son, John is a Christian; I will meet him in the morning of eternity, so it is just "good-night" to him. But you son, are not a Christian. I will never meet you again unless you change. It is good-bye, son, throughout all eternity."