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EDITORIAL

Does It Make Any Difference?

In Mark 5:25-34, in the New Testament of the Bible, we read of a very revealing and thought provoking story about a woman who was diseased terribly for over twelve years and had suffered many things from many physicians, and had spent all her savings but was no better, but rather grew worse. However, we read: "When she heard about Jesus, she came behind him in the crowd and touched his garment; for she said, "If only I may touch his clothes, I shall be made well." Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude is thronging you, and you say, 'Who touched me?'" And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace, and be healed of your affliction." From this story, we make the following important observations:

The woman of our story had a strong faith in Christ. Her faith in Christ was so great that she was convinced in her mind that if only she would touch the clothes of Christ she would be healed! And, when she did that she was indeed healed! Her faith in Christ did make her well, but not until her faith made her to move and touch the garment of Jesus.

She had to do something by faith to be healed. Yet, she didn't say that I could touch anyone's garment in the crowd and could be healed. She didn't reason that a garment is a garment, and that by faith in Christ she could touch any garment to be healed. The woman gave importance to the garment of Christ. "If only I may touch HIS clothes," she believed. A multitude of people were thronging Christ, and all were wearing clothes, some were even better looking and more expensive than the clothes Christ was wearing. But the woman didn't say, "One garment is as good as another; it shouldn't make any difference, I can touch any garment, believing in Christ, that he would heal me." No, she didn't reason like that. She gave importance to Jesus' garments. And, of course, she must have contacted many many garments in the crowd, in trying in to reach the garments of Christ, but she wasn't made well until she actually touched the clothes Christ was wearing!

Now, there was no power in the garment or the clothes Jesus was wearing. They were ordinary clothes. But since they belonged to Christ that made all the difference! Notice too, the woman didn't touch Christ; but the Lord said that the power had gone out of Him! Luke, in his book, telling the same story, wrote, that Jesus said, "Who touched me?" And when his disciples were appalled at Jesus' query and replied to Him, "Master the multitude throngs you and press you, and you say, who touched me?" Jesus told them, "Somebody touched me, for I perceived power going out from me." (Luke 8:45, 46). The power of healing was in Christ, not in the garment. But that power did not go out of Christ to heal until the woman touched His garment!

What lesson should we learn from this story? We need to learn that there is power in the things which belong to Christ. The power is not in those things themselves; but because those things belong to Christ therefore there is power in them. There might be other things looking like the things of Christ or may be looking better than the things which belongs to Christ. But the power is only in Jesus' things; and when we contact those things of Christ by faith, then, and then only do we receive the benefit that is in Christ; the forgiveness of sins, salvation and the promise of the eternal life of heaven.

The preacher Paul spoke, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). The gospel of Christ is the message of the cross. Again, he said, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18). The gospel or the message of the cross, according to 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 is that Christ on the cross died for our

sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. When does the gospel power of Christ saves an individual? When it is contacted by faith! How? In Romans 6:17 & 18 the apostle mentioned, "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." To become righteous from sinners they had obeyed the form or the mould of the doctrine or the gospel that was preached to them! They, after believing in Christ, had died to their sins by repenting from sin; and then they were buried in the watery grave of baptism, and had come up out of it as raised and new born persons. They had contacted the gospel of Christ, not any other gospel. (Romans 6:3-6).

Prior to His death on the cross, Christ had promised to build His church, as we read in Matthew 16:18. He had said "I will build my church." The church of Christ is the household of God, according to 1 Timothy 3:15. According to Acts 20:28 Christ has bought His church with His own blood. The church of Christ is His spiritual body of which He alone is the head, as we read in Ephesians 1:22, 23 and Colossians 1:18. At Ephesians 5:25 we read, "Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." For the woman of our story, one garment was not as good as another when it came to her being healed. And, if we want to be saved and want to go to heaven then we must also give all importance to the church, to the one church, which belong to Christ. When a person is saved from sin by faith in Christ and obedience to His gospel, the Bible teaches that Christ Himself ADDS that person to HIS church. (Acts 2:47). There may be thousands of different churches on earth, called by different names and terms. But there is only one church of Christ, the church that He Himself established; to which He adds all the saved; which honours Him by wearing His name; (Romans 16:16) which follows his doctrine only (2 John 9-11). However, I am afraid, there are many people who have touched the wrong garment, though honestly and sincerely. Yet, we ought to learn and remember that one garment was not as good as another, and one church is not as good as another. There is salvation in the gospel of Christ; in His church and in His name (Acts 4:12; 11:26). If you have touched the wrong garment, it is not yet too late! Come back, touch the right one, that belongs to the Saviour, to be sure that you are spiritually healed!

Thank The Lord For The Church

J.C. CHOATE

Thank the Lord for the church, and I am referring to the one and only church, the one that Christ built, the one that belongs to him. This church is the only one that you may read about in the Bible, and only that church exists today with the Lord's approval and blessings. Yes, there are many churches, but that means only that there are many false churches, many man-made organisations that claim to belong to the Lord when He does not recognize them as being His. If you are a member of some church that you do not read about in God's word then you need to leave that religious body and seek to know God's will, obey the Lord, so that he may add you to his church, and you can be assured of the fact that he will not make any mistake but will add you to the right church, his church. Read Acts 2.

Let me make it clear to you that the church is not the saviour, since the church is made up of the saved. (Acts 2:47). Christ is the saviour and only Christ can save us. (Titus 2:13). At the same time, Christ built the church (Matthew 16:18), died for it (Ephesians 5:25), and purchased it with his own blood. (Acts 20:28). Then we are told that he is saviour of the body, and the body is the church, Paul said "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church, and he is saviour of the body." (Ephesians 5:23). He goes on to explain, "And he is head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead: that in all things he might have the preeminence." (Colossians 1:18). Then we are told that as there is one God, one Lord, and one Spirit, there is only one body. (Ephesians 4:4-6). Now if there is only one body, and that body is the church, then that means that there is but one church. Also, if Christ is the saviour of the body, the church, then it follows that if we expect to be saved then we must be in that body or church. Of course when the Lord saves one, he adds that saved soul to his church, meaning then that the church is made up of the saved. Then as members of that church we are to practice pure religion, strive to walk in the steps of Christ, living good moral lives, and being faithful to the Lord in all that he requires of us as his children. The Lord wants us to do that as his church so that one day "that He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:27). We are told that the Lord will send his angels in the last day to "gather out of his kingdom all things that offend,

and them which do iniquity" (Matthew 13:41), and the kingdom here is the church. (Matthew 16:18,19). So keep in mind that one must obey the Lord to be saved to be added to the church, and then in order to go to heaven that member of the church must be faithful to the Lord unto death. (Revelation 2:10). Don't think you can become a member of the church and live just any way and still go to heaven. Remember that Christ is saviour of the body, the church, and one must not only be saved to become a member of it but must remain saved, faithful to the Lord, to be eternally saved.

How thankful we should be to able to be members of that church, the very church that Christ built, the one that he died for, the one he gave his blood for that it might be saved. As members we have all of the privileges and rights that accompany membership. We are the children of God, have access to God the Father through prayer by Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26,27; 1 John 5:14), have the Lord's promise to be with us always (Matthew 28:19,20), enjoy all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), and above all, the hope of eternal life. (John 14:1-3). Not only that, but as members of the church, we have brothers and sisters in Christ locally and throughout the world. We are able to worship with and associate with the finest people in the world. We are in position to have fellowship with one another, help one another, encourage one another, and to work together for the greatest cause. In our worship to the Lord, and in our Christian lives, we are able to get spiritual training and benefits that will carry over into our jobs and relationships with those with whom we live and work. Even our marriages or our children's marriages may be involved with members of the local congregation or those of other congregations in the area or in the country. We may be, however, too close to these things or to these individuals to even be aware of the effect they are having on us. We would be wise from time to time to sit down and reflect on these matters and to count the many blessings that have come to us as a result of being members of the Lord's family, the church.

Then think of the church in relation to the world as a whole. The Christian is said to be the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14,15). That being the case with one such person, think of all of the members of a local congregation, and the Christians in the whole world, and all of the light they would represent, being the only lights that shine in a world of darkness. (1 John 1:5-7). Now what if those lights were not there? Then the world would be in complete darkness, there would be no one to represent the Lord, and there would be no purpose for the Father to allow the world to stand. That means then that the world continues to

exist today because of the Christians, members of the church, and the church itself that live within it. The world cannot imagine such, and even many members of the church are not aware of this, but it is true itself. If one and all only knew the value of the Lord's people in the earth then how thankful they would be for the existence of the church.

With the foregoing in mind, no wonder Paul said, "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Ephesians 3:21).

Especially for Women

The Responsibilities Of Being Parents

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

In the beginning God said to Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it . . ." (Genesis 1:28)

In Psalm 127:3-5 we are told, "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is His reward, Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them . . ."

In the list of things that are "never satisfied", named in Proverbs 30:15, 16, "the barren womb" cries out its lack of fulfillment.

The necessity for procreation has not changed. God placed within man and woman the longing for children, the joy over the birth of a child, and grief when there is no offspring to gladden the hearts of young parents and to care for the needs of aged parents.

Added, often, to this natural longing for children is the pressure of culture. In many places a woman who has borne no child is greatly shamed and may even be ostracized from society. Her in-laws may physically and emotionally mistreat her, and in some societies she lives in fear of being divorced. This stigma is attached to her, as a motherless woman, whether she is the one who is unable to bear children or her husband is unable to father them.

Such primitive prejudices are tragic in their consequences. Punishing a person for a problem of nature which cannot be remedied is a useless hurt. How much better it would be if society encouraged the childless couple to adopt an orphan or some other un-cared-for child to fill their empty hearts.

Looking at the rapidly-growing population of the world, though, the

more common problem is not one of childlessness but of families in which there are too many children. Even in this modern age, it is not unusual to see six, or ten, or even twelve children born into one family.

There is a great difference, though, between being mere biological parents and being parents in the sense of providing the care and training so necessary for the welfare of a child. Tragically, millions of children are born simply as the result of union between a man and a woman, not because they are planned and wanted, and not because the parents have equipped themselves spiritually and in every other way to provide for the needs of the baby they are bringing into the world.

God says through the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 5:8, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." It is vitally important, therefore, that a man and a woman be aware of their responsibilities to the children they bring into the world, and that they limit their family to a number they can care for. This is not simply a *wise* thing to do, or an *opinion*. It is a command of God! God's pronouncement is that *a man who does not provide for the needs of his family is even more wrong in His sight than a person who does not believe in the existence of God.*

Why? Because the unbeliever condemns only his own soul. But the man who fathers children, knowing that he will be unable to feed and clothe and educate and spiritually train them, is guilty of bringing hardship and probably spiritual death on those innocent and helpless new souls he has brought into existence.

And certainly this would include the knowledgeable woman, as well, if she shares—as she should be allowed to do—in the planning of the family and the number of children to have. How much better to have one or two children and to rear them well, than to have many who live and die in want.

Young couples, looking toward having a family—take heed!

Imitating The Christ

DAVID THURMAN

I was reading about a very interesting congregation of the church of Christ the other day. It seems they have several speakers in their assemblies. In fact, any one of their preachers may get up at any time and begin to preach, without even waiting for the others to finish!

Meanwhile, the various song leaders are starting songs whenever they feel like it, even if someone is preaching or another song is being sung. These spontaneous outbursts may interrupt a prayer that is being led.

A closer look behind the scenes in this church tells us where their real problems lie. These Christians don't get along! There are various cliques in the congregation. Each group dislikes and looks down on the other groups. Some are very talented speakers, others very talented elders or deacons. But none of the groups get along with each other. They are so chaotic in their assemblies and ministries that they even have the reputation for tolerating a sexual situation that appalls the local community. Even the morally corrupt society around this church cannot tolerate its actions.

Welcome to the Corinthian Church of Christ. This church was afflicted with all these problems, and more. Paul writes the first letter to the Corinthians to address these problems. In so doing, the apostle offers many solutions. Among those solutions is this one: *"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ"* (1 Cor. 11:1). Paul tells the church that they are to imitate him, but only as he imitates Jesus. Paul knew that a life lived as Jesus lived would defeat the problems in Corinth. A life lived like that of Jesus will defeat all of Satan's plans. A life lived like Jesus lived will satisfy God in all situations and will soothe the problems any church might face.

IMITATE HIS COMPASSION

One of the great characteristics of Jesus was His ability to feel tenderness toward those around Him. *"And a leper came to Him, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying to Him, 'If You are willing, You can made me clean.' And moved with compassion, He stretched out His hand and touched Him, and said to him, 'I am willing Be cleansed'"* (Mark 1:40-41). Touching lepers was considered both evil and foolish. It was evil because it made the person who touched the leper unclean according to the law. It was considered foolish because of the risk of catching the disease. Jesus was willing to risk both dangers by reaching out to a man who had not been touched, perhaps for years. He had not been hugged by a child or a wife. He had not shook anyone's hand. Who knows how long he had gone without human contact. But Jesus was too compassionate to heal him from afar. He touched him to heal him.

It was just this sort of love that moved Jesus at the Last Supper. *"Jesus rose from supper, and laid aside his garments; and taking a*

towel, girded Himself about. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet" (John 13:4-5). Jesus understood the needs of His disciples. He knew of their arguments over greatness and status. He wanted them to see what love could do. He wanted them to see what love must do. Jesus was moved by love to give up His status and humble Himself to serve others, even men who did not appreciate or understand His actions.

To imitate Christ in this way would solve all the Corinthian's problems. Compassion would compel them to see beyond their own wants and perhaps understand the needs of others. Love would make them humble and wait their turn in the assemblies. Love would make them kind, and gentle toward their weak brothers.

To imitate Christ in this way would solve church problems today as well. If church members could risk reaching out to the unworthy, even those shunned by society, perhaps the church would solve its problem of not growing. If members would find way to "wash the feet" of other members (especially those who don't appreciate or understand the effort) perhaps church squabbles would end. Most of all, if people could see that the compassion of Jesus was much more powerful in His life than His sense of status, perhaps Christians today could learn to be humble.

IMITATE HIS SUBMISSIVENESS

When Paul encouraged the Corinthians to imitate him as he imitated Jesus, he must have had in mind the Lord's constant submission to the will of God. When Jesus was baptized, John was unwilling to be the one to immerse Jesus. John knew Jesus was pure and did not need baptism. *"But Jesus answering said to him, 'Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness'"* (Matt. 3:15). Jesus went to John not for the purpose of being forgiven, but because it was the right thing to do. Jesus was always committed to doing what was right, even if it didn't make sense to others. The Lord was going to submit to God in all things, no matter what others thought or what it did to Him.

The attitude of submission is most clearly seen in the Garden of Gethsemane. *"And He said to them 'My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.' And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground, and began praying that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, 'Abba! Father! All things are possible for Thee. Remove this cup from Me; yet*

not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (Mark 14:34-36). Jesus was agonizing over his impending death. Obviously, He was unsettled about the task ahead. He even asks God to let Him off the hook. But, while asking for a reprieve, He still wanted God to make the choice. He was going to obey God, not give in to His own wants.

Wouldn't that attitude fix just about every church problem? If believers could only do what is right then the Corinthian types of problems would disappear. If believers would merely submit to God's will instead of doing what they want, church squabbles would end. There is no Christian anywhere that believes it is right to be hateful, or right to be cruel, or right to back bite. If we would only do what is right, then we would treat each other right! Christians who don't treat each other right are not imitating Jesus, but Satan.

IMITATE HIS LOVE FOR THE LOST

Somehow the Corinthians had gotten real busy arguing among themselves. This must have distracted them from reaching out to the lost. One great characteristic of Jesus was that He never let traditions keep Him from His mission: saving the lost. This grew out of His love, "*He saw a great multitude, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd*" (Mark 6:34). Jesus couldn't look at lost people without feeling a sense of tenderness for their condition. On this occasion He was trying to get away to be alone with His disciples. Yet when the crowd followed, Jesus took time to teach and feed them. Jesus knew His work was for people just like that, people who were without direction in life.

Jesus' hunger for the lost was greater than His concern for His reputation among the religious. "*Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay in your house. And he hurried and came down, and received Him gladly. And when they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, 'He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner'*" (Luke 19:5-7). Jesus found Zaccheus sitting in a tree just to get a glimpse of the Christ. The Master was delighted to go to him, enter his house, and eat at his table. This put Jesus in hot water with the religious people. They thought a real follower of God would not do such a thing. But Jesus loved the lost too much to let traditional thinking stop Him from His work. As He says, "*The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10). As He sat at a sinner's table, Jesus explained that this was where He belonged!

Christians today would do well to imitate Jesus in this attitude. We

need to put aside any thinking, any tradition, any attitude that would prevent us from seeking the lost. As we submit to God's will in all things let us learn to put away our thinking and tradition that keep us from going to sinners. Let us put aside any human methods that keep the lost from responding to the Savior. Jesus taught us by His lifestyle that saving the lost is more important than our traditions.

IMITATE HIS DEATH

Jesus willingly went to the cross. He did this out of love for others. He did this because God commanded it. He did this to seek the lost. Now Jesus asks everyone of us to submit to the same sort of death. *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me"* (Matt. 16:24). Jesus asks each of us to follow in His steps, to do as He did. We do this by denying our wants and submitting to God's will. We do this by loving people and seeking the lost. But the process begins with self denial and death of self.

Paul tells the Romans about this process. *"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life"* (Rom. 6:3-4). Imitating Jesus means accepting death as the way to life. But the death He asks of us is not physical, it is spiritual. This death is accomplished by submitting to the will of God (as Jesus always did) and being baptized. Once immersed into His death, you too can have a new life, a life built on your imitation of Jesus. Come to Him today!

Searching Together For God's Way

STEVE HALE

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, men have longed to know the pathway to God. Various methodologies have arisen specifying what to do to be saved.

The most important place to look for salvation is the Bible. It is the inerrant, inspired word of God (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). It contains all we need for life and godliness (II Pet. 1:3).

It is the fervent hope of the writer that, as we begin our search together, the Bible will be the binding tie, the road map by which we find God's way. Feel free to check scripture references. Read, search, and investigate!

Truth has nothing to fear from scrutiny. Only tradition and man's will does.

Be a Berean (Acts 17:10, 11) as we begin our search together.

Salvation is found only in Jesus (Jn. 8:24). He is the focal point we can all surely agree. (Jn. 14:6).

Yet, it was this same Jesus that sent the Holy Spirit to guide inspired writers to pen His message (Jn. 16:13, 14). The Lord has promised to judge us by this inspired message (Jn. 12:48).

Therefore, it is essential to come to Jesus by His criteria, and not that of any man. May the Lord bless us on our search together!

THE AUTHORITY OF GOD

Let's say the holiday season is approaching and it's time for you to order presents from a mail order company. This year, you decide to buy your teenage daughter the dress she's been wanting.

The dress is a size 7 blue print, with matching size 6 shoes. You order items from the company.

A week later, the company returns with a huge tractor trailer rig. The driver begins unloading a lawn tractor, a boat and motor, an electric generator, and many other items.

Finally, he brings to your door the bill along with the dress and shoes. You respond quite forcefully that you did not order all of this, but just the dress and shoes.

The driver responds: "Yes, we know this is all you ordered, but you did not tell us not to bring these other things." How long would a company like this stay in business?

We understand that when we order something from such a company, we eliminate everything else. This is known as "the authority principle."

The same is true in the Bible. When God orders something, he eliminates everything else. Paul said: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). To prove the validity of this reasoning, let us go to a familiar example from the book of Hebrews. Under the Old Law, priests could only come from the tribe of Levi (Num. 1:49, 50).

Yet, the New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus would be the

High Priest, and that He would be of the tribe of Judah (Bethlehem was in Judah, Matt. 2:1; Heb. 7:27, 28). Since He could not have been a High Priest under the Law of Moses, a change in the Law was necessitated (Heb. 8:1-7).

With this in mind, note this statement: "For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests" (Heb. 7:14). In other words, to eliminate Judah from having priests, the inspired writers did not have to say "thou shalt not be from Judah, thou shalt not be from Benjamin . . ."

When God through Moses authorized the tribe of Levi, He eliminated all the other tribes, for of Judah " . . . Moses spake nothing concerning priests." The Lord, therefore, need not tell us what he doesn't want, but merely what he does want! By the authority principle, everything else is eliminated.

This is a vital principle when we search for God's way to salvation. When the Lord tells us what to do to be saved, He will eliminate all other ways. Therefore, when someone differs from God's way, we know that it is false. Jesus asked: "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not do the things which I say" (Lk. 6:46)? That question is as legitimate to ask today as it was then.

OUR SEARCH BEGINS

Can you imagine finding a man so noble that he would travel a thousand miles to worship God? Not only that, but when he gets there, he cannot enter into the place of worship because: (1) a castrated man could not enter into the congregation of the Lord (Deut. 23:1); (2) a Gentile (Ethiopian) would only be allowed in the Court of the Gentiles, and not into the Temple proper.

We find just such a man in Acts 8:26-40. He was an Ethiopian eunuch over all the treasury of Queen Candace, and was a man of great authority (Acts 8:26,27). His purpose in coming to Jerusalem was to worship (Acts 8:27).

On his way home from Jerusalem back to Ethiopia, he was reading about Jesus from Isaiah 53:7, 8:

"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb, So he openeth not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: His generation who shall declare? For his life is taken from the earth" (Acts 8:32, 33).

In the meantime, the Spirit of the Lord brought Philip the Evangelist to where this Ethiopian was. This eunuch asked Philip: "... of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself or some other?" (Acts 8:34).

Philip began where the eunuch was in his knowledge of Jesus, and preached to him. Luke, the author of Acts, tells us: "... beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35).

Knowing Jesus is the beginning of salvation. Without Him, there can be no salvation. Examining compelling evidence about Jesus produces faith: "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Philip wanted to convince the eunuch of the Messiahship of Jesus.

As Philip taught the eunuch about Jesus, this great Ethiopian came to believe. The eunuch confessed: "... I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). Therefore, the way of salvation begins by examination that produces faith.

As they were riding along they came to a certain water. The eunuch asked Philip: "... Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized" (Acts 8:36). This eunuch obviously wanted to change his life, and give it to the Lord Jesus. This desire to change is evident by the question about baptism.

As with the eunuch, faith must cultivate a desire to repent or change. This spiritual change was evident in the life of the great apostle Paul as he told King Agrippa of his conversion (Acts 26:18-20). When we come to the King, our lives become different. Our direction and desires are different. We repent or change when we are truly converted.

Not only was this eunuch going to change, but he told Philip of this change when he confessed Christ (Acts 8:37). When we become Christians, we want others to know of the change we have made so they might make it as well (Matt. 10:32, 33). This confession of Christ is a lifelong confession, and not just at the point of baptism (Matt. 10:32, 33; Rom. 10:9,10).

Finally, this eunuch asked to be baptized (Acts 8:36). When Philip asked him to confess Christ (Acts 8:37), he took this eunuch into the water and baptized him (Acts 8:38). Why baptism?

The word baptism comes from the Greek word baptizo which means: "to dip, to plunge, to immerse." The substance into which he was baptized was water. Does this water wash away our sins?

No! This Bible clearly teaches that only the blood of Jesus can cleanse us from our sins (Rev. 1:5). Therefore, we must ask when does His blood cover our sins?

Jesus shed His blood when he was crucified for us. Since the life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev. 17:10,11), He literally shed his life for us. Obviously, this blood was shed when he died.

Therefore, we must die with Him for His blood to cover our sins, for His blood was shed when He Himself died. But, how do we die with Him?

Paul said: "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death" (Rom. 6:3)? Paul tells us that baptism is the means by which we die with Christ (Rom. 6:3) and thus have His blood cover our sins!

Baptism is also the means by which we are buried with Christ (Rom. 6:4), and raised with Christ (Rom. 6:5). It is when we are dead in Christ (Rom. 6:7) we are loosed from our sins!

We die with Christ in baptism. In fact, Peter said: "which after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21).

The eunuch knew he was saved after his baptism, because the Bible says: ". . . he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). Why should he rejoice? Because he had been saved! If we will do what this eunuch did, we too will be saved!

DO YOU BELIEVE JESUS?

This writer does not doubt you believe in Jesus, but in the same breath, do you believe Jesus? Jesus said:

". . . Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mk. 16:15, 16).

Wait a minute. I have heard different. My preacher told me another way. A relative shared with me something that contrasts from this.

Remember a few minutes ago, we began by talking about the authority principle. If the Lord authorizes something, he eliminates everything else. Jesus does not lie (Heb. 6:18). His way is truth, not error (Jn. 8:32). Do you believe Jesus? If you do, then you will, as did Saul of Tarsus: ". . . arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16)

As you ponder your relationship with God through Jesus Christ, ask yourself these question:

1. Do I believe the Bible is the inspired word of God?
2. Do I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?
3. Do I want to go to heaven?

If you have answered yes to these three questions, you are ready to respond to the message of this article and put Christ on in baptism (Gal. 3:27). Why wait a moment longer (2 Cor. 6:2)?

The Way Of The Cross

JOHNNY RAMSEY

"Jesus our Lord . . . who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). This passage gives the basic anchor for our souls, when we learn that Christ died for us and was raised for our justification. Oh, what a marvelous grace (Acts 20:24)—heaven came down and glory filled my soul!

The law of Moses required that every animal offered in sacrifice to God was to be without blemish: *"If there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the Lord thy God"* (Deut. 15:21). However, the prophet Malachi shows that this decree was regularly violated with sacrifices of animals they would not dare present to the governor of Persia. *"If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto the governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person, saith the Lord of Hosts"* (Mal. 1:8). They were giving scraps to God.

When heaven gives, it provides the best of the divine realm. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). Without flaw, without spot or blemish, the Lamb of God laid down the only perfect life ever known for the sins of mortal man. No wonder the angels sing: *"Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation"* (Rev. 5:9). We are, without doubt, recipients of the deepest love the world could ever know.

KEY WORDS DESCRIBING OUR SALVATION

RECONCILIATION—Our state without Christ is described in Eph.

2:12, "Ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world." But through the events at Golgotha, we can as sinners, be brought back to our Creator. That process of bringing back together those who are estranged is reconciliation. "And might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:16). Estranged from God by our sins, Jesus died for us: "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of the cross" (Col. 1:19-20).

REMISSION—To have the guilt of the past washed away and to stand on level ground at the foot of the cross is a sublime value. "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood" (Rom. 3:23-25). The apostle Peter told those sincere salvation seekers on the day of Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). The beauty of Acts 3:19 thrills our souls: "Repent and turn again that your sins may be blotted out."

REDEMPTION—"In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7). We can be redeemed through the precious blood of the Son of God and walk in a new life (Eph. 4:22-24) that has a bright future. From darkness to light, our journey takes us toward the land of fadeless day (Acts 26:18).

RANSOM—"Christ Jesus, who gave himself a RANSOM for all" (1 Tim. 2:6). We had been kidnapped by Satan and held in bondage by sin (Rom. 2:13-14), but Jesus paid the ransom price to set us free. "Up from the grave He arose" by the power of God: "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). As Eph. 4:8 declares, Christ set the captives free and destroyed Satan's power over death (Heb. 2:14).

ATONEMENT—"My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin, And if any man sin, we have an Advocate, with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1-2). Entering the strong man's house and spoiling his goods (Matt. 12:29), our Saviour triumphed over Satan. Because the power of God in us is greater than the world (1 John 4:4), we can now be at peace with our Maker and the past has been demolished. We now walk

hand in hand with our Lord (Col. 1:10). Paul has been at enmity with Jesus, but when he obeyed the good news, his sins were washed away (Acts 22:16). The burden of guilt and the vast chasm of rebellion vanished away. The glorious and awesome power of the blood of Jesus was now a bridge Saul of Tarsus spanned to come back home to God (1 Tim. 1:12-15).

YE WERE BOUGHT WITH PRICE

In 1 Cor. 6:19-20 we find a jewel that challenges our attention. *"Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price."* The Lord bought us with a very high price. We must, therefore, glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are His! It is as though we were on the auction block to be sold to the highest bidder. The devil wants us and is willing to raise his offer, whatever the cost. But just as all seems lost, a sweet but distinct voice of compassion and concern breaks the silence. It is the voice of the Creator who saves us at the precise moment that all seems lost.

God is our Creator. He made us and does not want us to be lost to the enemy of our souls (1 Pet. 5:8). Strangely, we rejoice to realize, we were redeemed to be set free, not to be the slave of a tyrant, but the child of the King! Only the efficacy of the blood of Jesus could cause us to enjoy the liberty of the sons of God (Gal. 5:17). We are free to want to do what God wants us to do. Should we not gladly obey and serve the Saviour that released us from the bondage of iniquity?

THE POWER OF THE BLOOD

The events at Calvary form the most important moment in the history of the world. There is, indeed, power in the blood of the Lamb. There are several rich points developed in the Scriptures in regard to the blood of Christ. Notice these truths that make salvation obtainable.

The blood of Christ is **Essential**. Acts 8:32-33 contains a marvelous reference to Isa. 53 and the One who was willing to do that which was necessary to release us from the clutches of Satan. God allowed Christ to bear our errors and blunders and have them cleansed by His stripes that have the ability to heal us: *"Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and*

Bishop of your souls" (1 Pet. 2:24-25).

The blood of Christ is **Efficacious**. *"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isa. 1:18). What a beautiful and expressive verse! Our scarlet sins can become as white as snow; though red like crimson, they can be as wool. The high cost of low living demands a price so high that only the death of the Lord Jesus could atone for mankind's enormous blunders.

The blood of Christ is **Enduring**. In Rev. 15:3 we rejoice to read that the redeemed host was standing on the sea singing *"the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."* In Ex. 14, the anthem Israel sang in Moses' day at the crossing of the Red Sea declared that Jehovah would fight for them. Add to that the victory in the Savior's blood (Col. 1:20) and we are truly more than conquerors (Rom. 8:35-37).

The blood of Christ is **Enabling**. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service"* (Rom. 12:1). Based on the unfathomed mercy and love of God, we are empowered to fight ardently and actively *"the good fight of faith"* (1 Tim. 6:12).

The blood of Christ is **Enriching**. In Jude's brilliant benediction, we find the fruition and culmination of our life in Christ and His cleansing blood. Due to our relationship with our Redeemer, the Father above is able to keep us right with Him. *"Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now and for evermore"* (Jude 24, 25).

WHAT IS THE WAY OF THE CROSS?

In Acts 2:36 and 13:38-39, we find the crux of the matter in God's plan of salvation and way of redemption. The crucified One has *"been made both Lord and Christ."* Those words mean "master" and "the anointed" of God! It is through Him that sins can be erased and mankind can be brought back to the Creator. What a wonderful and gracious opportunity! To walk with the Lord in purity, integrity and hope is the way of the cross. Notice further, the way of cross:

Humility (John 6:38)
Sacrifice (Phil. 2:8)
Surrender (Matt. 26:42)
Service (Mark 10:45)
Loneliness (Heb. 5:7)
Obedience (John 17:4)
Victory (Rom. 1:4)
Compassion (Luke 23:34)
Concern (Mark 16:15)

When Jesus, our Savior, and God's perfect Son, shed vicarious blood at Golgotha, our hope for redemption was made accessible. Praise the Lord for such a Redeemer! The only life that counts is life in and through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

*What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
O precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

The Word Of God

W.A. HOLLEY

God works in people. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Yes, God works in men and women! But how does he work? We shall see: ". . . When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the word of men, but it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

In the light of the foregoing quotations, we are forced to the conclusion that God works in people through his word (Hebrews 4:12). God does not work in men through dreams, imaginations, sorcery, witchcraft, enchantments, astrologists, psychics, and the like. We know that thousands today believe in such; but God speaks to men

through his word—only!! This is the reason why you should become a student of the Holy Bible.

Gospel preachers should make certain that the people to whom we preach, know that there is a **gospel preacher** among them. How sad, how tragic, it is when a "gospel preacher" finishes his sermon, some listener says, "That was a fine Baptist" or "Methodist sermon." **Gospel preachers** must show the difference between the true and the false (Ezekiel 22:26; 44:23). "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing . . ." (1 Timothy 6:3-4).

Ezekiel was one of God's great prophets. His hearers are seen talking with each other, but they do not take his message seriously. We quote, "And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice . . . for they hear thy words, but they do them not" (Ezekiel 33:30-33; Cf. 2:5). Paul taught preachers to "preach the word . . . in season" and "out of season"—that is, when people want it, and when they do not (II Timothy 4:1-5). The people desperately need to know that there is a gospel preacher among them (Cf. Ezekiel 2:5; 30-33).

IMPROPER WAYS TO HANDLE GOD'S WORD

(1) One can be unskilled in the use of God's word. The Hebrew writer says, "For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe" (Hebrews 5:12-14). To become skilled in the proper use of the word one must learn some facts about it. Careless or haphazard reading never produces the proper results. The skilled use of any weapon is a necessity (II Timothy 2:15).

(2) One can "wrest" or twist the scriptures. "As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Peter 3:16). For example, many preachers, when they come to Mark 16:16, or Acts 2:38, or Acts 22:16, or Romans 6:3-4, are unwilling to accept them at face-value; they torture or twist them, seeking to make them mean something else.

(3) Some make the word of God of none effect. What does this mean? Many make fun of the teaching of the Bible. Others mock, scorn, and ridicule its message, arguing that it is out of date. Some simply ignore it. To illustrate: take a glass of tea: then add a table-spoon of salt;

and you have the refreshing power of your glass of tea destroyed—made of none effect. When one adds the doctrines and commandments of men to the Bible, he makes God's word of none effect (Mark 7:6-13).

(4) One can blaspheme the word of God (Titus 2:5; 1 Timothy 6:1). To "blaspheme" is to speak evil of. One may blaspheme God, Christ, the doctrine of God, the church of Christ, or faithful members of the Lord's body. Men and women, boys and girls, who refuse to comply with the demands of Almighty God often also "blaspheme" the word of God (Titus 2:1-8). We strongly suggest that our readers turn now to the references cited and digest the thought presented.

(5) The word of God is often corrupted (II Corinthians 2:17). Many corrupt the word of God in order to make dishonest gain. The apostle refers to those false teachers who make merchandise of the souls of men through dishonesty and covetousness. Such preachers as Jimmy Swaggert, Oral Roberts, Jim Baker, et al., fall into this class (Titus 1:11; II Peter 2:3, 14, 15; Jude 11, 16; Ezekiel 13:19).

(6) Paul said he had "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully . . ." (II Corinthians 4:2). What does it mean "to handle the word of God deceitfully?" Well, it means "to corrupt, especially by mingling the truth of the word of God with false doctrines or notions, and so handling it deceitfully" (Vine).

(7) Some stumble at God's word. We read: "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (1 Peter 2:8). Israel stumbled in regard to Jesus Christ because his teaching, his atoning death, his resurrection, his gospel regarding his kingdom, were—and are—contrary to all their ideas as to the will of God (Romans 9:32; 1 Peter 2:8; Luke 2:34). Even today, many "stumble" over God's word because of its teaching concerning Denominationalism!!

HOW TO HANDLE THE WORD

(1) Realise that "the seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). Seed brings forth after its own kind (Genesis 1:11; Galatians 6:7-8).

(2) Receive God's word "as the word of God, not as the words of men" (1 Thessalonians 2:13; Philippians 2:13).

(3) The word of God is God's "sword" which strikes deep into men's hearts (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12).

(4) The "engrafted" (Implanted) "word" brings about the new birth (James 1:18, 21-25; 1 Peter 1:22-25).

(5) You should "obey" God's word (Romans 5:1-2; 6:3-4, 17-18).
Do it today.

The Fog

BOB PLUNKET

Few things are more devastating than dense fog. One thing that makes it so devastating is that we do not fear the fog as we fear wind and lightning. It looks so innocent and harmless, yet it can be so deadly. I was on the river the other day when visibility was no more than fifty to seventy-five yards. It reminded me of the universe before God said, "Let there be light." I thought of the nuclear winter that scientists talk about should there be a war. It reminded me of the millions and millions in the world without Christ.

But I guess it reminded me most of the work of Satan. Like the fog, he covers the landmarks. These are so important as we travel through life. They let us know where we are, how much progress we have made, and how to find our way home. Satan, like the fog, brings distortions. Even that which we see, is distorted. Satan, like the fog, brings frustration and confusion. Satan, Like the fog, can put us in harm's way.

I was hopelessly lost on the river, and became very concerned that I was in the barge channel. I finally dropped my anchor, found that I was in about eight feet of water, and I stayed there until the sun came out. Fog can cause us to run over each other. Satan, like the fog, isolates us, and disorients us. It can render us helpless. One may have a motor and know the river; but in the fog it is no help. Satan, like the fog, brings cold and dampness and gloom to our world. Paul says in II Corinthians 4:4, "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not . . ."

It was so beautiful when the sun broke through. The fog was dissipated. The sky broke through. The fog was dissipated. The sky overhead was blue. The leaves were red and gold and I was no more than three hundred yards from home. In this world of fog and darkness, confusion, God let his Son shine and he brought love and light and life and beauty and grace and hope and peace and fellowship and vision! No wonder Paul would say, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift," John would say, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

Our world today is in a spiritual fog, confusion, frustration, isolation, suspicion, rain. Our great world is in a spiritual and moral fog.

How desperately we need his Son.

"I Have A Few Things Against Thee"

RON HARPER

When the Lord addressed the church at Thyatira he addressed a church that had grown in "charity, service, faith and patience" (Revelation 2:19). They had grown in these areas in the face of strong opposition from Satan. By our standards they were one of the great churches in existence. To a degree, this would be correct.

We see, however, that the Lord was not fully pleased with the situation in Thyatira. "I have a few things against thee." The problem was: "Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols." The New American Standard uses, correctly so, the word "tolerate" instead of the word "sufferest."

What was the problem? A person in the church was teaching error, and the church was tolerating it. As a result of their toleration of her false teaching, people were being led into a life of immorality. The same thing will happen today when we tolerate error, people will be led into a life of immorality. I find it easy to overlook error. I like to think about the good things taking place in a congregation. I like to preach lessons with a positive thrust. When things are going well in the area of "charity, service, faith and patience," and when we are growing, we do not want to deal with error—lest we be perceived as negative.

It is then that I must stop and look at the results of giving place to error. In Thyatira, Jezebel had seduced saints to eat meat sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality. She was successful because she was tolerated. When we overlook any error, whatever ground we gain in other areas is lost as people fall into immorality. There is a lesson for the church of today!

We are fishers of men. When I go fishing I do not travel around the lake looking for snakes. If, however, a snake gets into the boat. I kill it because it endangers those who are in the boat. We do not go around looking for error. At the same time, when it is taught, we oppose it because it endangers those who are in the boat.

May God give us the courage to oppose error when it rears its head in the church. May he give us the wisdom to know that fighting error is not all there is to Christian growth. There are also such matters as "charity, service, faith and patience."