

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

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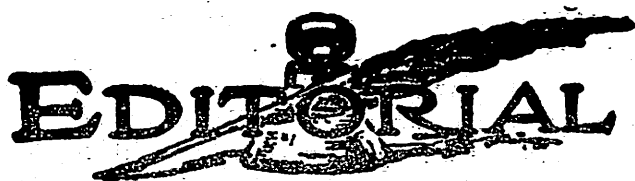
*Pleading for the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL



### Religious Confusion

We have a divided religious world. Even in "Christianity", all kinds of things are taught. There are different beliefs, baptisms, churches, names, ways to worship, and on and on it goes with dozens of other things. This can be very confusing, especially to those who do not have a Bible knowledge.

For example, there are many who sincerely come into contact with some church and after studying for some time they are baptized and become a part of that group of believers. They are very happy that they are now followers of Christ and they try to be as faithful as possible in attending the meetings of that church and in doing all that is required of them. But then after some time they may come into contact with a member or preacher of some other group. They become friends and begin to study the Bible together. They are told that they are in the wrong church, that their baptism is not correct, and therefore they should

be baptized again. This teaching is so convincing that they follow the instructions given to them and are baptized and become members of yet another church.

In time they may come across the church of Christ. Again they are told that they are in the wrong church and that their baptism was not for the right purpose. What do you suppose they would do in a case like that? Some would study, and if they were convinced, they would make the necessary changes. Others might be so confused and discouraged that they would pull back and remain what they are religiously or perhaps even give up religion altogether

Knowing that there are many people in this type of situation, what advice could be given to them? May be you are in this kind of state. You are confused. You are frustrated. You really don't know what to do. Before you give up, let me suggest that you forget what you have been told by different ones. Regardless of who you listen to, they can probably offer convincing arguments for their church, teaching, or whatever. The thing you need to do is to go to the Bible itself for your information. The Bible is the word of God. It is authoritative. It gives the last word on what to do to be saved, of which church you should be a member, the name you should wear, the way you should worship, etc. When you study the Bible in regard to these matters, you should begin to understand what God wants you to do. Regardless of what man says, do what the Lord has asked you to do and you will be right.

Now think about this! God's word is the truth, and the truth never contradicts itself. (John 17:17). God knew that man was lost and He gave His Son that we might be saved. (John 3:16,17). He tells us in his word the things he wants us to know so that we might be saved. (John 8:32). When we do as he instructs, Christ saves us and adds us to His church. (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:47).

The Lord tells us very plainly what one must do to have his sins forgiven. (Acts 2). He introduces us to the church that He promised to build (Matthew 16:18,19), He tells us the name it is

to wear (Romans 16:16), who the head is (Colossians 1:18), the importance of it (Ephesians 5:23), and how to become a member of it. (Acts 2:47). We are told also that Christ has but one church and that He would have all of us to be one in his body, the church. (Ephesians 4:1-6; John 17:20-23). That sounds like the Lord would have us to be members of His church, doesn't it? But what if we are in some other church? Then we are not in Christ's church and therefore we are in the wrong church. What should we do in that case? We should continue to study the Lord's word, and once we are convinced of what the Bible says about Christ's church or anything else, then we should do that.

Again, what about baptism? The Bible says that there is but one baptism, that it is a burial in water, and that it is for the remission of sins. (Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12; Acts 8:37-39; Acts 2:38). Now if your baptism was not in water, for the remission of sins, and to put you into Christ and his church, then it was not the baptism of the scriptures. Perhaps you were immersed, perhaps you went through a ceremony called baptism a dozen times or more, but if it was not according to the teachings of the scriptures then it was not right. You are therefore urged to study the Lord's word and do what it teaches. Men may tell you many things, and you may also be eternally lost if you follow their advice. You will be right only when you do what the scriptures teach.

Not only should you go to the scriptures concerning the church and baptism but also in regard to the name you should wear, the kind of worship God wants, the pure life God would have you to live, as well as many other things. Yes, God has spoken on these things and he has revealed his will in these matters that you can understand it and do what he wants you to do. Christ wants you to understand it and do what he wants you to do. Christ wants you to understand so that you can obey him. He would not want you to be confused so that you would be lost.

Keep in mind that the scriptures warn again and again that you should not allow man to deceive you. John tells us that we should try the spirits, or preachers, comparing the things we hear

with God's word to be sure that we understand what the truth is on the matters under consideration. He goes on to warn that many false prophets or teachers have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1).

Yes, there are many things taught in the name of Christianity, and if you are not careful you will be led into error even while you think you are following Christ. Again, you are asked to take the time to read and study God's word. Be sure you know the truth, and that you understand it, before you act on it. Once you know God's will, and you do what it says, then you will be right and there will be no need for more changes. If you study God's will to the point that you see that you have been wrong, that you are in some man-made church, that the name you are wearing is not found in the Bible, then be big enough to admit that you are in error, and make the necessary corrections so that you can be right.

My friends, Satan is out to deceive you, even in religion. Don't allow him to do that. You might have thought all along that you were right, but if you discover that you are in error, even though it is a great disappointment, be thankful to God that you discovered your error in time to make the necessary corrections. This is what you must do if you want to be saved.



**associate  
editorial**

## The Unique Month of the Year

December is a very unique month. Every year during this time of the year some unusual things begin to take place. Suddenly people become very religious. There may be people who had never thought of praying or singing unto the Lord during rest of

the year, but in December they are seen joining in prayers and singing Christian hymns, they even go door to door singing. Also, more giving take place in the month of December than in all the other months of the year put together. People are seen in helping and giving mood. Some feed the poor, others give their money for some religious work. And especially in the last week of December each year, people are seen in a very happy mood. Greetings are exchanged, even among people who have not greeted each other in months. Cleaning, painting and decorations are done in houses. Some put coloured paper stars outside their houses to show that they believe in Christ. People become more forgiving in the month of December. They are seen hugging their friends and relatives about whom they had taken a vow not to speak to them again. Also, Religious services are attended in a large number, and even those who had never attended a service in past several months are seen in religious gatherings.

This does not mean, however, that nothing bad takes place in the month of December during the festive season. There are people who drink liquor in this festive month, which leads to quarrel and fights. Many road accidents take place around the world during this month of merry making because of drunken driving. Dancing is another wrong thing which is usually associated with this month of festivities. Then there is lavishly overspending, the pretentious display, and revelries which is common during this period of the year. Idolatry is another common feature of this festive month. In most religious places (church buildings) and in some houses idols of baby Jesus are placed and in many places people are seen worshipping and bowing before the idol.

Now, going back to the good things which take place during the month of December, about which we have already noticed, all of these things, in fact, ought to be practised by Christians the year around, each day of the year. The Bible says, "Rejoice always." (1 Thessalonians 5:16). The apostle Paul exhorted Christians to "Rejoice in the Lord always." (Philippians 4:4). Christians ought to be happy and rejoicing always, not just once a year or in a certain month of the year. Again, we read, pray without ceasing. (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We need to pray always and every day.

(Luké 18:1). Then we should be singing always. The scripture says, "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:19,20). Likewise, we need to be giving the year around, and not only in the month of December. In fact, the Bible teaches, "On the first day of the week (Sunday) let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper." (1 Corinthians 16:2). Paul quoting Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35). We need to be helping those who are in need, not only in the month of December, but always. In the Bible we read, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:9,10). Forgiveness is another characteristic of a Christian. We must always, as Christians, forgive. Christ said, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14,15). When Peter asked the Lord, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Upto seven times?" Christ told him, "I do not say to you, upto seven times, but upto seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:21,22). The scriptures also teach, "Be angry, and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath." (Ephesians 4:26). Forgiveness is another thing that the Bible teaches we must practice always and daily. We should not keep forgiveness for the Month of December only, but we should be forgiving always, each day of the year. Also, about attending the services of the church, the Bible says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25). As Christians we must attend all services of the church, as much as possible. There is no such example in the New Testament of the Bible, where we see Christians assembling together once a year for some special service. They didn't observe festivals or days, as people do today. As we have already noticed from 1 Corinthians

16, they were encouraged to give their offerings for the Lord on the first day of the week, which is Sunday, because this is the day on which they regularly met for worship, this is also evident from Acts 20:7, which says, "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread . . . ." They met for breaking the bread or for partaking in the Lord's Supper and for worship each first day of the week, not just once a year.

At the end, let us remember the exhortation of the apostle Paul, He said, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:8,9).

## The Demands of Mercy

Steve Singleton

The difference between human religion and divine religion is the difference between a prosecutor and a defender, or between a machete and a scapel, or between a front-loader and a fork-lift.

Jesus describes human religion in these words: "They tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger" (Matthew 23:4).

Divine religion, however, is described differently: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). At the centre of divine religion is Jesus Christ, and in the heart of Jesus Christ there is mercy.

The writer of Hebrews depicts for us Christ as the merciful

high priest (Hebrews 4:14-5:11). The mercy in His heart flowed forth into the loving action at the cross.

The discussion in Hebrews 4 and 5 of Christ as the merciful high priest flows out of commentary in Chapter 2 on Psalm 8:4-6 (KJV): "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet."

The phrase "made him a little lower than the angels" refers to Christ's incarnation. Involved here is becoming like us in every way except sin. He had to become one with us in order to handle our greatest problem. Once He was fully identified with us, He could "taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9).

The phrase "crowned with glory and honor" refers to His exaltation—that glorious resurrection and ascension to the throne of God. When crowned, He became the "author of their salvation" (Hebrews 2:10) and a "merciful and faithful high priest" (Hebrews 2:17).

In the following sections of Hebrews, the writer causes the buds of Chapter 2 to blossom.

He first examines Christ as a faithful high priest (Hebrews 3:1-4:13). Because He is faithful as a Son over God's house (3:1-6), we must also be faithful and not harden our hearts (3:6-4:11). Then he says God knows our heart condition and will judge us accordingly (4:12,13). This establishes our need, not only for a faithful high priest, but also for a merciful one, which is the next topic. (4:14-5:10).

There are five reasons why Christ is qualified to be merciful to us.

1. Because He has passed through the heavens. Hebrews 4:14 recalls Chapter 2's commentary on Psalm 8. After the Christ was made lower than the angels, He passed through the heavens



on His way to His coronation. In other words, He passed the angels going both ways: He went lower than they for His incarnation and He went higher than they for His coronation. It almost goes without saying that if He surpassed even the angels, then He ascended far beyond all the prophets, or Moses, or Joshua—and certainly far beyond Aaron.

Just like the high priest passed through the veil to enter into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, so Jesus passed through the heavens. This is more fully explained in Chapter 9.

2. Because He is God's Son (Hebrews 4:14). Now the writer of Hebrews is building on his treatment of Psalm 2 and the covenant with David (2 Samuel 7) back in the first chapter, Just as the Mosaic high priest had to be of the right family, a son of Aaron, so the Messiah had to be the Son of God to be the eternal high priest.

He can be our merciful high priest because, as Son, He has the access to the Father no one else has, and He can persuade the Father as no one else can.

3. Because He can sympathize (Hebrews 4:15-5:3). In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Faithful explained to Christian his escape from Adam the First, who had lured him with great promises. Faithful said, as he pulled, away from him, Adam reviled him and promised to send someone after him who would make his way bitter.

Faithful continued: "Now when I had got about half-way, I looked behind me, and saw one coming after me, swift as the wind; . . . So soon as the man overtook me, it was but a word and a blow; for down he knocked me, and laid me for dead. But when I was a little come to myself again I asked him wherefore he served me so. He said because of my secret inclining to Adam the First. And with that he struck me another deadly blow on the breast, and beat me down backward; so I lay at his feet as dead as before. So when I came to myself again I cried him mercy: but he said, I know not how to show mercy: and with that he

**knocked me down again. He had doubtless made an end of me, but that one came by and bid him forbear."**

When Christian asked who the man was that told him to stop, Faithful replied: "I did not know him at first: but as he went by, I perceived the holes in his hands and in his side, then I concluded that he was our Lord."

Christian answered: "That man that overtook you was Moses."

We don't need an accuser. The Law does that very well, as the seventh chapter of Romans demonstrates. What we need is an Advocate (1 John 2:1,2). The Levitical priest learned sympathy and compassion by being reminded of his own needs. He offered sacrifices for himself. But Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for others.

4. Because God appointed Him high priest (Hebrews 5:4-6). Jesus, the Christ, was not appointed by some mere man, nor did He appoint Himself. God appointed Him, as is clear from Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4. With the Messiahship goes a special and unique priesthood, not according to the order of Aaron, but according to the ancient order of Melchizedek.

5. Because His sufferings qualified Him (Hebrews 5:7-10). By suffering, Jesus proved His full identification with us and became qualified to sympathize with us. His intense prayers in Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-44) were offerings acceptable to God. His prayer of "Not My will, but Thine, be done" was answered. His "piety" and his "obedience" were sacrifices acceptable to God for our sins. Calvary was a victory because of the submission of Gethsemane.

"Although He was a Son," He was willing to "learn" obedience, not by being taught, but by the experience of obeying. It is a great paradox. Why would someone in such a high position stoop so low?

This study about Christ as a faithful and merciful High Priest comes down to where we live in three ways. First, because he is

faithful, we must hold firmly to our faith (Hebrews 4:14). This salvation and this Savior are too great to neglect or turn away from.

Second, because he is merciful, we may approach God with confidence (Hebrews 4:16). At the foot of Sinai, the people trembled at the dreadful presence of the Lord. But we can approach the throne with confidence because it is a throne of grace before which our merciful High Priest serves.

Third, because Christ is the source of eternal salvation, we must obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). The New Testament makes this clear again and again. The Son demands obedience. To refuse Him is to lose Him.

How little we know the meaning of obedience! Sometimes we obey Christ simply because it is more convenient than disobeying. Often we can see the immediate benefits and obey gladly and readily. But the true test of obedience is when we know we will have to suffer to obey. How readily do we submit then? How gladly then do we bend the knee to do what God wants for us?

How many Gethsemanes have we had? How many times have we sweated great drops as of blood? How many hours have we agonized with a decision, knowing what God wanted us to do, but also knowing the awful cost—lost friendship, used up time and energy, missed pleasure?

Obedience does not perfect until obedience costs. Jesus said, "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple . . . . He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it . . . . If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be My disciple . . . . No one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his possessions."

Why such demands? Why such costly obedience? Because of two reasons. First, He is telling us what is important in this life. Nothing can take priority over the Son-Priest, the Messiah-Savior.

If my wife told me to choose between her and Christ, I must choose Christ. If my son told me either to deny Christ or never see him again, I must tell him goodbye.

Second, these demands are consistent with what He went through. Costly obedience is the only proper response to the dizzying price He paid. He tells us to take up our cross—He took up His. He tells us we must lose our life to find it—He lost His. He tells us to give up our family for His sake—He gave up His for our sake. He demands that we give up everything for Him—He had nowhere to lay His head and His only possession, the robe on His back, was taken from Him.

True, He makes costly demands, and yet He sympathizes with us. He dispenses mercy. He deals gently with us who are ignorant and straying. And He gives the precious gift of eternal salvation, which He purchased with His blood, to all who obey Him.

His call goes out to all: Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart, or you will never enter His rest.

## Excuses

Ed. Jones

In Christianity all our excuses are but attempts to reject Jesus while giving the impression that we are still interested in serving God. As long as a person is more interested in serving self than in following Christ, excuses will be a continuing problem.

To illustrate the point from the Gospel of John, consider the rejection of Jesus in chapters 5, 9, and 11. These events in the life of Jesus get to the heart of the true motivation for religious excuses.

In John 5 Jesus heals a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. He then told the man to take up his bed and walk. Jesus openly did these things on the Sabbath.

A great objection was made because of the man carrying his bedroll on the Sabbath. The Jews claimed that their objection was based on religious conviction and their great zeal for the Law of Moses. They were wrong in that Jesus had not truly broken the intent of the Sabbath, but this particular case offers grounds for an excuse that would appear to have merit.

More of the true motivation behind the Jew's rejection of Christ is found in John 9. Again the Sabbath is a feature, but in this instance there were no burdens lifted. The objection here was simply that Jesus had healed a blind man on the Sabbath. Doing good on the Sabbath was certainly not condemned and the Jews were even more clearly wrong in this objection. And, oddly enough, they were more angry over this healing than the previous one that had given them a greater appearance of being right.

The final objection in this related sequence of rejecting Jesus points out the foolishness of all attempts to excuse ourselves from accepting Christ. In John 11 Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. There is no mention made of a Sabbath being involved, and yet the wrath of the Jews is greater here than with any of Jesus' previous miracles.

John 11:47-53 and 12:9-11 exposes the selfishness that was behind the excuses. It was not the Sabbath. There was no valid religious principles violated by Jesus. The problem was that following Jesus would have meant losing their selfish lifestyles and the acceptance of men that they loved above all else.

There are no reasons for rejecting Jesus, only excuses. Whenever we fail to accept Jesus even our most plausible excuses must be seen simply as utterly foolish attempts to excuse the inexcusable.

The solution is simple. We must deny self and follow Christ (Lk. 9:23). There is neither peace nor gain in selfish excuses. There is peace of mind, true gain and everything good and worthwhile in accepting Jesus as our Lord (Eph. 1:3; 3:14-21).

# Believing in Jesus

Shyam Salam

How good and religious man one may be, none can escape Jesus when one starts thinking of his Salvation. Here some from various religious backgrounds may ask what does the term Salvation mean. Where does it begin and how far it covers? In short, it may be answered as Redeeming of an alien sinner to become a child of God in the family of God to start living acceptably to live with God eternally. Redeeming of an alien sinner to become a child of God in His family and start living acceptably and die acceptably to live with God eternally. In order to get this chance of redemption from the bondage of sin, one must come to Jesus and believe who he is. "For God so loved the world that he gave . . . . . whosoever believe in Him shal have eternal Life" (John 3 : 16) "—he that believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16 : 16) Jesus is the very son of God in whom we have to believe (John 8:24).

When one believes in Jesus he cannot reserve anything of his own. He has to surrender every thing in the will of God and must believe in the following things pertaining to Jesus.

1. He must believe that Jesus was born of a virgin mother. She got concieved by the over-shadowing of the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 1:18-25).
2. He must believe that Jesus is the Son of the living God and the Christ, the spiritual king. (Matt. 3:17). He must be able to confess as Peter did, "You are the Christ the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16). Peter confirmed this on the day of the Pentecost when he got the power of the Holy Spirit before the crowded gathering on that day in Jerusalem. "—God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:36).
3. He must believe that Jesus had been raised from the death. Because our salvation and hope depends on the resurrec-

tion of Jesus. If Jesus was not raised from the death, what we believe and hope in him is in vain (Rom. 4:24, 1 Cor. 15:12-19).

4. He must believe in the power which is in His blood that was shed on the Cross. (Rom 3:23-25) Because without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (Heb. 9:22). The blood of animals cannot take away our sins. (Heb. 10:4). Only the blood of Jesus, the lamb of God can wash sins of mankind once for all. (Heb. 9:12).
5. He must believe in the Church which Jesus built (Matt. 16:18), purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20:28), which is his body (Col. 1:18). Because Jesus limits his saving power within this very church. He cannot extend any thing outside. (Eph. 5:23). This is the only church about which we can read in the Bible.
6. He must believe in the words of Jesus without any exception and obey like a wise builder who builds his house on the rock. When wind or flood comes it can resist and stand. Because he hears and does God wills. (Matt. 7:24). If not you will be called a foolish builder. Jesus said from among the believers some will be cast in the outer darkness because they do not heed and do the will of the Heavenly Father.
7. He must believe in the words taught by the apostles of Jesus Christ. Because they were guided by the Holy Spirit whom God had sent as Jesus promised. (John 16:12-15). They preached about Jesus and our salvation as they were commissioned by Jesus Christ. (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:47).

Believing all these things pertained to Jesus he must be ready to show his faith by his works of obedience. (Jam. 2:18). He that hears, believes but does not do, will receive the wrath of God. (1 John 3:16).

# God's Amazing Grace

R.W. Gray

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound!  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved.  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!

Thro' many dangers, toils, and snares  
I have already come.  
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright, shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we first begun.

It has been erroneously assumed that grace is exclusively a New Testament subject. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Did not even the first human beings receive "grace" when God covered their nakedness? did not grace postpone their violent physical death by the substitutionary sacrifice of an innocent animal? (Genesis 3:21). Righteous Noah found "grace" in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8). The sons of Korah exclaimed, "... the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalms 84:11). The Lord proclaimed to Israel's law giver: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and



transgression and sin . . . " (Exodus 34:6). God promised to hear the cry of the poor for covering, exclaiming, "for I am gracious!" (Exodus 22:27). "Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly" (Proverbs 3:34). "And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, . . . that he may have mercy upon you . . ." (Isaiah 30:18). "Hate the evil, and love the good, . . . it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5:15). ". . . For I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and great of kindness . . ." (Jonah 4:2). "And now, I pray you, beseech God that he may be gracious unto us" (Malachi 1:9).

From Genesis through Malachi, God's mercy and grace are highlighted. God's amazing grace has ever been such that he has promised, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

God's grace does not cover the wicked in his wickedness, nor the ignorant in his ignorance. Grace teaches that we live soberly, righteously and Godly in this present world (Titus 2:8-9). "And the time of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

God's amazing grace provides constant cleansing from sin through the blood of Jesus for those who "walk in the light." He forgives his people who "confess their sins" (I John 1:7,9).

Christ has been made the propitiation for our sins through grace. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (I John 2:2-3). While we walk in darkness, refusing his commandments, we have no promise of grace (I John 1:6;2:4).

If saving grace is extended to the heathen in his ignorance, we do him an injustice to tell him of Jesus and his love. For if he "believes not" he will be damned (Romans 10:13-16; Mark 16:15,16).

If brethren are "forgiven through grace" in their "ignorance of sin and error in their lives," we do them a grave injustice in correcting their error. James would have been in error to say, "we save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:20). Better it would be to allow him to go on in his error covered by grace than to enlighten him that "sin is sin," and thus expose him to the need for obedience (Hebrews 5:8-9).

Paul warned the Galatians that the "works of the flesh" would cause them to be lost. He nowhere hints that grace covers "such sins" when we commit them "in ignorance" (Galatians 5:19-20). It remains true that "those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

The new "grace-negates-law," and "grace-covers-our-ignorance" doctrine is a 'first cousin' to the license to sin advocated by the Gnostics and their forerunners. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, . . . ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. . . ." (Jude 4). His admonition is still timely: "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of your Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21).

As sweet as is the sound of God's amazing grace that has brought us safe thus far, that relieved our fears, and that will lead the faithful home, it is trampled under foot, and counted an unholy thing by those who turn from the word of his grace that has the power to save and sustain (Hebrews 10:24-32; Acts 20:32). "Do not err, my beloved brethren" (James 1:16). "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16). We are "under grace," but not "under license to sin"—whether deliberately or ignorantly.

Think on these things. And may the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with [us] all" (II Corinthians 13:14).

# Building Up, Not Breaking Down

Ronnie A. Missildine

There are some in the world who are demolition experts. They know just exactly what to do to bring down a huge building or a mountain of rock. They have been trained and are very proficient in placing explosive charges in just the right places to be most effective. Then, with the flip of a switch or the push of a plunger, things which may have taken years to build come tumbling down in seconds.

There are demolition experts in the church. You say, "Oh, no!" But there are. They are trained, either through years of self-teaching, or after being taught by some negative individual who is also a "demolition engineer." They don't tear down buildings and bridges, but they are terribly destructive none the less. They know just the times and places to place a discouraging comment, a sarcastic dig, or an unwanted, unneeded, and unsolicited criticism. And, in seconds, the work of many in the heart of an individual (or even in a congregation) comes tumbling down! The demolition expert then proudly walks away with chin up and chest stuck out saying, "I guess I told them!" The damage will probably never be repaired. The heart, the soul, the work, and the stamina are scarred for life.

But God teaches us to **build up**, not tear down: to edify, not to destroy. "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace and things where with one may edify another" (Romans 14:19). Paul told the young preacher Timothy that we ought to spend time and effort on things which bring "... godly edifying which is in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:4).

My father and mother taught me (and their parents taught them before), "If you can't say something good, don't say anything". Were they saying, "If you can't build up, certainly don't tear down"? Yes!

Jesus said, "... for it must needs be that offences come. But

woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" (Matthew 18:7). Don't be a demolition expert; be an edifier!

## God Called him a Fool

Demar Elam

We are living in the age of the passive. Ours is a time when little concern, if any, is shown for anyone but self. In Luke 12:16-20 Jesus tells of a man with such a selfish attitude. I think his life is typical of the lives of many living today. He had great riches bestowed on him from above. And yet, his chief concern in life was to establish a life of ease and prosperity all for himself. He did not consider how he could use his riches to help care for a poor orphan child. He did not consider how a portion of his goods could make life more bearable for a person stricken with a dreaded disease. He cared nothing for the plight of the poor widows around him. He cared only for himself. He was selfish! He was living under a "take it easy" policy. This "take it easy" policy is running rampant in our society today. This rich man thought he had a lease on life (Luke 12:19), but quickly learned that he had made a GRAVE mistake.

Many people, like the rich man, have simply left God out of their thinking. America, as a whole, seems to worship the God of MATERIALISM. We want "things!" We want them all for ourselves!

This foolish man who left God and his fellowman out of his plans talked about "my fruits," "my barns," and "my goods." Read Deuteronomy 8:18. God had given this man everything he needed to become a success, and he was not willing to give God anything in return.

Man often forgets God in the day of prosperity. It should seem that the opposite would be true—that man would realize where his blessings come from (James 1:17), and would praise and serve God all the more! However, the sad reality is that the richer a man becomes, the more difficult it is for him to go to heaven. (Matthew 19:23-24).

The human soul can not be satisfied with material things. Money cannot bring complete happiness and fulfill all our desires. The wise writer of Ecclesiastes wrote: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: This also is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

God called this man a fool! Here was a man who had entirely missed the real meaning of life. We have been placed on the earth for a reason. I urge you, my friend, to stop and evaluate your own life. Have you left God out of your life? Is it possible that, due to your present lifestyle, God might soon say of you, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee" (Luke 12:20)?

## Worst Enemy? or Best Friend?

Tim Nichols

I'm your worst enemy. You will not be able to say at the judgment that you have never heard the gospel. Now that you have heard, you have responsibility. Like the rain that brings forth both beautiful vegetables and ugly weeds, the gospel causes some to be condemned while it causes others to be saved.

These words were spoken the other day on a local religious radio program by a denominational speaker. He was simply articulating the conclusion that all would correctly reach if a single assumption were to be accepted as truth. If accountable adults who have not yet heard the gospel are in a safe condition, then the preacher of the gospel is the world's worst enemy. Following are a number of Bible reasons for not accepting this oft-repeated assumption as true.

It is man's sin that separates him from God—not the gospel. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered

perverseness" (Isaiah 59:2-3). Because God is just, he will punish those eternally who are found guilty of sin (John 5:28-29; Matthew 25:46; II Thessalonians 1:5-10). Because all responsible men and women become guilty of sin, all are under this condemnation (Romans 3:23).

Because God is merciful, he provides a means by which sinful man can escape from his lost condition. Jesus gave his life upon the cross in order to suffer the punishment due sinners. Those who obey the gospel of Christ and continue to walk according to the will of Christ as expressed in the New Testament will be saved. Those who do not obey the gospel will be lost. God has offered no other means for redeeming sinful man (Romans 1:16; II Thessalonians 1:8-9; John 3:16).

When one affirms that sincerity is all that is necessary for salvation, he contradicts and goes beyond the revealed word of God (II John 9). He makes the gospel preacher a bringer of condemnation. He makes the death of Christ an unnecessary event and God a tyrant for bringing it about. He takes away all purpose to preaching the gospel. But we must preach the gospel to men and women. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Romans 10:15).

## You'd Better be in the Right Lane

Ron Williams

While visiting one of our members in the hospital in a large city a few days ago, I spied a sign at a service station advertising cheap gas. Thinking myself to be a smart economist, I decided to pull in and fill up my gas tank.

Unfortunately, my anticipation was too great and my observation skills too small. I pulled in and got out of the car, only to

meet an attendant turning toward me to clean my windows and even check my oil (if I had been using my head, I should have figured out that something was wrong). Only after I had filled up my car with gas did I notice the price on the gas pump. \$1.78 per gallon! I yelled, "Hey, what's wrong here?" The attendant informed me that this was FULL SERVICE, that self-service was over yonder!

Admitting defeat, I told my car that it had better enjoy this expensive gift (self-service was 78 per gallon), and I reminded the attendant to check the air in my tires! After thinking about this for a while and even laughing, there are some important lessons in a spiritual sense to be derived from all of this: (1) I was genuinely sincere in my intentions on this occasion, but I was wrong. Regardless of how sincere people might be in religion, failure to DO WHAT GOD SAYS will have tragic consequences for them in the end.

(2) As there were several different pumps to go to at that gas station, only ONE had the price that I really wanted but I failed to use it! We would do well to listen to Solomon as he wrote in Proverbs 14:12, "There is A WAY WHICH SEEMTH RIGHT UNTO A MAN BUT THE END THEREOF ARE THE WAYS OF DEATH. "Contrasted to that idea of religion, Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

(3) Finally, the failure on my part to observe the right gas pump cost me only some money;—but the failure for people to do what God has commanded will cost them the most priceless of all possessions—their souls for eternity!

## The Living Christ

Garvin M. Toms

With his resurrection from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ now lives again. To his disciples he said: "But you will see me

because I am alive, and you also will live (because I live)" (John 14:19, 20). "The life that he liveth, he liveth unto God" (Romans 6:10). The world needs a living Savior. Jesus lives in God the Father, while we live in them in a three-fold unity. The continual exercise of Divine power raises obedient believers up to live the new life in communion with Christ.

Jesus affirmed: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Our greatest hope lies in the truth that Jesus is no longer dead, but ever lives to intercede for us. The angels asked: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? HE is not here, but is risen" (See Luke 24:5-6). Appearing to his disciples alive—after his suffering—for about forty days, he ate and talked with them as he had done before, by which they became witnesses to his living again. To John in the Revelation (1:17-18) he said: "I am the first and the last, and the Living one, and I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." He has complete power over the domain of death. Thus, like Melchizedek, it is witnessed that he lives.

### THE LORD'S LIVING SERVICE

The risen Christ performs a service for mankind, following the atonement through his blood, which only a **LIVING** Lord can do.

As we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, "much more shall we be saved by His life" (See Romans 5:10-11).

**The Living Intercessor.** The Savior's life qualifies him to be our Mediator (1 Timothy 1:5) before the throne of God. "And what we say is yet more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (Hebrews 7:16). "Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near to God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). He works all circumstances together for good for all who love Him. Note that he "is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34).



**The King's Life.** The living Messiah saves obedient believers by his resurrection and his life when they are immersed for salvation (See Romans 5:10-11; I Peter 3:21). We are saved by all the services that he performs. Only a living Redeemer and "Attorney" could serve at the Court of Heaven on our behalf.

## THE GROUND OF ETERNAL LIFE

Christians live because they share the life of Jesus Christ. His resurrection is a constant guarantee that Christians will live in Christ and that they will live again in eternity. "For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself . . ." (John 5:26). Jesus is the life because he has it inherently by Divine right, and he has the power to share it with you and me.

# The Vanishing Purpose

Eddie Whitten

If man does not have a purpose to motivate him, it is doubtful he will be very productive. Unless he is thoroughly convinced and thrilled with the validity of his purpose, it is doubtful he will be highly motivated. Thus, the conclusion may be accurately stated, if one is not thoroughly thrilled and convinced of the validity of the purpose of his work, it is doubtful he will be very productive.

If motivation depends upon conviction, and if production depends upon motivation, then it follows that whatever we do in life that will have any lasting quality will depend upon the degree of our conviction in our purpose.

## The Purpose of the Early Church

Jesus said, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The salvation of souls from sin was the mission of the Lord. That was his purpose for coming to the earth, to provide for mankind that which mankind could not

provide for himself. Redemption from sin, a way of getting back into the grace of God from whence man had fallen, to deal Satan a death blow, could be accomplished in no other way. Jesus paid the price for the souls of all men when he shed his blood on Calvary's brow. The apostles knew beyond question that this man, Jesus, was the Son of God (Luke 24:36-52).

With the knowledge that Jesus, who was crucified on the cross and buried in Joseph's new tomb, had now been resurrected and had ascended back into heaven, the apostles assumed a degree of boldness that was soon to arouse the attention of many people. The book of Acts is the "history book" of the New Testament. There are some outstanding changes seen in the character of the apostles. The qualities that now characterize them reflect the conviction in their purpose. They are fearless. They are determined. They are dedicated. They are persistent. They are bold. They are unwavering. They are compassionate. They are considerate. They are united. They are selfless. They are loving. They are loyal. They are productive.

There are sermons to be preached in connection with every one of the above mentioned attitudes. Each of the characteristics of the apostles (and others) in the early days of the church served a vital role in the growth of the church. In the face of physical persecution, their knowledge of the Savior strengthened their conviction. Their conviction fueled their motivation, and their motivation moved them to discharge the responsibility given them by Jesus in Acts 1:8, to carry the gospel outside the city of Jerusalem into the uttermost parts of the world.

### **The Purpose of the Church Today**

Who knows how many of the members of the church in the first century were "Sunday morning Christians"? Perhaps many were. There were some who were weak and hypocritical (Acts 5:1-6). It is not likely, even in spite of their claims, that all first-century Christians were faithful in attendance and service. Since we surely do not know who, nor how many, were faithful, we'll have to leave that judgment up to the Lord. What we do know is

that there were many who were faithful enough to be counted worthy of persecution and who were driven out of their homes and their homeland (Acts 5:41; 8:1). Their purpose was unshakeable, and they suffered terrible persecution. But the church grew!

The church in our time serves the same Lord as did the church in the first century. We are victims of the same sins that need forgiveness. We face the same pitfalls, we need the same guidance and we shall reap the same destiny as those Christians of long ago. The only difference between us is a matter of time—some 1950 years, or so—which is completely meaningless considering God's reckoning of time.

What is the purpose of the church today? Is it not the same as was the purpose of the first century church? The eternal nature of the church never changes to fit the "mode" of society. The same eternal promises of reward to the faithful and condemnation to the faithless still remain. The same challenges and charges that were issued to the first century church are issued to us in our time. The same responsibilities which rested upon the first century Christian rests upon us today. Nothing has changed on the part of inspiration, but much has unfortunately seemed to have changed in regard to the thinking of many in the church. It appears that the conviction that the blood Jesus shed was for the remission of the sins of those who obey him (Heb. 5:9) is sorely lacking in the minds of so many in the church. The lack of that conviction has resulted in a misdirected purpose. It seems that the purpose of our spiritual emphasis is no longer to serve the Christ by teaching others about him, but rather is centered in our social needs being met. The misdirection of our purpose has literally destroyed the heart of our motivation. Now, many are motivated by the physical, sensual, social gratification that can be experienced through fellowship with one another, and are losing the joy of true fellowship with our Father in heaven.

### **The Purpose of the Church Tomorrow**

Dare we predict the future? It is not our judgment to make as to what the future may hold. But, we can make some judgments

as to what will be needed if the church is to meet its responsibilities both to God and to mankind. There must be a return to the purpose which motivated the first century church. There must be that all-consuming conviction that Jesus died for individual me; that his blood was shed for those who believe that he is the Son of God (whoever it may be); that he is the author of eternal salvation, and that we can be saved only through him (John 14:6). There must be the motivation produced by the conviction that, even in the face of possible persecution, the singularity of the church must be upheld; that contamination by man-originated creeds shall not taint the blessed divinity of the church Jesus purchased with his blood. There must be the determination to seek the lost with the message that God wants us to preach (Jonah 3:2; Hag. 1:13; 2 Tim. 4:2), and there must be that undying, compelling need to preach and teach God's word in spirit and truth, in love.

### Conclusion

When the time for the departure from this life approaches, may it be accompanied by the assurance that all is well with my soul because I can say with the apostle Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have *kept the faith*" (2 Tim. 4:7).

The purpose of the church is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The purpose of the church is to seek the souls of lost men, urging them to the same conviction as ours, convincing them of the love of God and of their need to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us fervently pray that we never lose sight of the challenge that is ours. Otherwise we will be contributing to a vanishing purpose!