

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL

### *A Peculiar People*

There are a people who call themselves Christians, but their beliefs and practices are much different from others who are also recognised in the world as "Christians". Those peculiar people do not believe in certain things and do not follow many such things which are known to be normally associated with Christianity. For instance if one ask them, whether they are Catholic or Protestant? Their answer will be that they are neither Catholic nor Protestant, but that they are just Christians, as all the followers of Christ in the beginning were. And to substantiate their point they quote from Acts 11 : 26 and 26 : 28 and 1 Peter 4 : 16, where followers of Christ were called Christians, and that there were no Catholics and Protestants then. Likewise, if one ask them, to what church do they belong? They will answer this by saying that according to the Bible, there is only one church, which was built by Christ, according to Matthew 16 : 18, and therefore they are members of that one church—the church of Christ. All their

congregations, they say, are known as churches of Christ, as was the case when Paul mentioned in Romans 16: 16, nineteen hundred years ago.

These people of churches of Christ are undenominational. They believe that Christ desires unity of all His followers in His one church, and that the Bible condemns denominationalism. (John 17 : 20-23; 1 Corinthians 1 : 10-13). They have no headquarters anywhere in the world; all congregations of churches of Christ are independent or autonomous, yet they are all united as one body under one head, which is Christ. (Ephesians 1 : 22, 23). They all follow the New Testament of Christ as their only creed. Preachers in churches of Christ are not called Pastor or Reverend, or Father or Padri. Members call them by their names, just as they call Peter, Paul, and John, and Christ by their names. Ever read, Reverend Paul or Pastor Peter, or Father Christ, in the New Testament? they ask. God has not authorised such titles to be used for preachers. (Psalm 111 : 9; Matthew 23 : 9). Also, preachers in churches of Christ do not wear any special clothings or specially made robes, which would give them status of a special class or make them important persons amongst others. Such a display of self righteousness was condemned by Christ in Matthew 23: 1-12. Another notable fact is that there are no women preachers or evangelists in any congregation of churches of Christ. When questioned about this, members of the church quote from 1 Corinthians 14 : 34, 35 where the Apostle Paul said, "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church." Likewise, 1 Timothy 2 : 11, 12 is shown, where the Apostle by inspiration of the Spirit commands ; "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence." Christian women can teach children and ladies, but they are not permitted by the Lord to speak or preach publicly, is the inference.

And, do you know that churches of Christ have no special services for certain days, such as Christmas and Easter? In fact,

members of church of Christ do not celebrate in any way, at home or as a church, these most celebrated festivals of modern Christian religion. Strange ! Right ? Members of Christ's church ask, where does the Bible command that Christians should observe Christmas and Easter, or any other such days ? In fact, they are not even mentioned in the entire Bible. Then, there is no example where Christians of the first century had ever observed them. Those Christians want to speak where the Bible speaks and want to remain silent where the Bible is silent. They want to speak as oracles of God. (1 Peter 4 : 11). They believe the Bible is God's word, and whole will of God for man is revealed in it; that man should not add anything in its teaching and nothing should be taken away from its contents. (Revelation 22 : 18, 19).

The worship of the church of Christ is also unique. The church meets for worship every first day of the week or Sunday. All members are encouraged to attend each services. There is no shouting or commotion of any kind. There is no clergy or laity in the church. There is no special choir or a special band of singers. The whole church sings together to praise God. Remarkably, one never hear the sound of any mechanical instrument of music accompanying the singing of the church! The church of Christ believes, since God commands Christians to sing, therefore we must sing to please God. If we play instruments of music in worship of God then that will be a violation of God's specific command to sing. It is observed, when God commanded Noah to use gopherwood in building the ark, Noah had no choice. He had to use only gopherwood, not any other, in any proportion, if he was going to please God. (Genesis 6 : 14 & 22). According to Hebrews 13 : 15, "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." And Ephesians 5 : 19 exhorts : "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Again, in the worship of God, you will see no prayer books or creed books used in the church. Bible study is conducted, things are taught, directly from the Bible for the edification of the whole church. Different men in the church are called upon to lead in prayers the

whole congregation. Likewise, all members who earn a living are encouraged to give according to their incomes, as taught at 1 Corinthians 16 : 2. Also, the Lord's Supper or communion is observed with all seriousness on each first day of the week or Sunday, as one reads at Acts 20 : 7 and in 1 Corinthians 11 : 23-29. In other words, worship of the church of Christ is strictly conducted after the New Testament pattern.

Notably, members of Christ's church believe that Christ adds to His church those who are saved, when they do what Christ require that one must do in order to be saved from sin. Hence, no one can join the church of Christ by his or her own choice or by doing anything less than what the Lord requires. Just as in the beginning of the church, it is pointed out, when people became believers in Christ after hearing about Him, they were required to repent and be baptized, immersed in water, for the forgiveness of sins, (Acts 2 : 38; 8 : 35-39), and when they did that, Christ added them to His church. So must everyone, who wants to become a member of the church of Christ, do that today. There has been no other way and there is no other way today to become a member of the church of Christ.

Members of the church of Christ believe that the whole Bible contains the word of God, that it was written by the inspiration of God. But today we are not living under the Old Testament Law of Moses, which Christ, according to Colossians 2 : 14; Ephesians 2 : 14-16; 2 Corinthians 3 : 7-11 and Hebrews 8 : 7-13, has fulfilled and taken away through His death of the cross. However, in its place Christ has given us to follow His New Testament. We must accept and respect the whole Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament as God's book that contains His words. But we must also realise that we cannot live under two different laws at the same time. We can teach and learn from the Old Testament part of the Bible. But we cannot worship as shown in the Old Testament. As Christians we are not required to give tithe, keep Sabbath, or offer animal sacrifices, as the people living under the Old Testament were required to do. And that is the difference.

Let us go back to the Bible; let us do Bible things in Bible way and let us call Bible things by Bible names, is the sincere plea of the members of churches of Christ. They are, everywhere pleading for the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity of the first century. Already, through the years, millions of people all over the world, after learning about the true New Testament Christianity, have left their sectarian and denominational organizations, including the author of this editorial, to become members of the church of Christ. I hope that you too will consider this grand plea with all seriousness and sincerity. If you want to know more about the church of Christ and about undenominational Christianity, please write at our address for a free Bible correspondence course.

## *Tips For Preachers*

J.C. Choate

It is a great honour to be a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must not only want to be preachers though, but if we do become preachers, or if we are already preachers, we must realize the great responsibility that goes with it. We must also conduct ourselves in such a way that we will be worthy of being called gospel preachers.

I would especially like to offer some tips or suggestions to those of you who are members of the church of Christ who have become preachers or who will become preachers. It is my prayer that you will seriously consider them and apply them to your life, if you haven't already. To be able to teach and influence people for Christ, you must not only please God, but you must also have the respect of the people.

1. Be sure that you have obeyed the gospel yourself and that you are a member of the Lord's church, the church of Christ, the only one you can read about in the Bible.

2. Practice what you preach always. Jesus did, and we are to follow his example. To do otherwise is to be a hypocrite. Furthermore, those who fail to do this will eventually be caught in their deceit.
3. A preacher is worthy of support, but don't preach just to earn a living. It would be better to go hungry than to do that.
4. Don't be a hireling, preaching whatever you are asked to preach. If you don't believe it, then don't preach it regardless of how much you are offered. Jesus condemned the hireling.
5. Don't ever take support for preaching the gospel and then preach something else.
6. Believe what you preach one hundred per cent. Let there be no question in your mind. If there is a question, then don't preach it.
7. Be sincere in your preaching. If you are not sincere, your hearers will detect that and you will lose their respect. Don't put on a show.
8. Study the Bible and prepare your sermons adequately. Don't just talk and say nothing. Support your points with a "thus saith the Lord."
9. Have a love for people. Be concerned about their souls and demonstrate that love and concern.
10. Be a worker for the Lord. Don't be lazy. Take initiative in preaching and teaching. Look for opportunities to study with people. Remember, you are concerned about souls and you want to see them obey the Lord.
11. Teach people the gospel. Be sure they know and understand the truth. Encourage them to obey the Lord once they reach that point. Don't suggest that they put it off. Then once they obey the Lord, continue to study with them and to encourage them to live the faithful Christian life.

12. Be honest in dealing with members of the church and people in general. Don't ever mislead them or deceive them. Always tell the truth.
13. Be careful with the way you handle money. Don't be extravagant and wasteful. Don't go into debt to the point that you can't manage it. Try never to borrow money from brethren and if at all possible don't loan money to them. If you feel that you must let them have some money, and you are able to do that, then make it a gift. To get entangled with brethren with money matters, you will only drive them away.
14. Don't brag about your ability to preach, about what you have, what you earn, or other matters. If you have to tell people all of these things, and exaggerate and make it to be something that it is not, then you will either create jealousy in the hearts of those that you are dealing with, or they will shun you. Let others do the bragging, but don't brag yourself.
15. Don't be ashamed of the Lord and the gospel. Speak up for the truth.
16. Don't talk too much. Some are constantly getting themselves in trouble because of their mouth, and not thinking of what they are saying.
17. Be a good listener. Too many times preachers want to do all of the talking and never give anyone an opportunity to say what they want to say or to ask questions. Be patient in dealing with people. Remember that they have rights too.
18. Be kind and considerate. Respect those that you are talking to or studying with.
19. Don't be mean and ugly in the pulpit or in talking to or studying with.
20. Don't try to do everything in the worship services. Give others the opportunity to participate and to grow in their ability.

21. Don't become a professional fund raiser, constantly writing to those in foreign countries for financial help. When local people see you prospering beyond your means, they know what is happening, and they will also know that you are not the Christian that you claim to be.
22. Always stay clean and dress neatly. You might not be wealthy, but you can stay clean and you can wear clean clothes. If you are otherwise, who will want to hear what you have to say, and how will you be able to influence them for good? People go to those individuals for advice and help that they can look up to, those that they can respect and have confidence in, and those that they feel will give them some good advice.
23. If you have a family, take care of them and work together.
24. Don't hinder your work with bad habits. Smoking, drinking, chewing betel nut, and such like, will not enhance your work. If you are guilty of these things, then you need to quit preaching, and more importantly, you need to repent.
25. Be sure that you live a good moral life. Your soul and many other souls depends on that.
26. Use clean speech. Do not curse or tell dirty jokes. Don't be a gossip and constantly running everyone down.
27. Be faithful to the Lord always and give him the honour and glory for all that you do.

Remember that as young preachers that you will have to prove yourself. When people have seen all kinds of preachers, hirelings, those who misuse their jobs, and take advantage of the members, then it is going to take some time for them to be convinced that you are a good man, that you are sincere and genuine in your work. Work with brethren, encourage unity at home, in your city, and in your country. Strive to build a strong local



congregation and do all you can to help spread the gospel of Christ where you are, in your country, and around the world.

Older preachers should be examples for younger preachers. Don't look on each other as competitors, but encourage one another, help one another, and work together to strengthen the Lord's cause.

If you want to preach, there are millions of people that need the gospel. Prepare yourself and take advantage of the opportunities all around you to speak for the Lord. Preach the truth and the Lord will surely bless your efforts.

## *A Life of Prayer*

Steve Williams

Why should a person pray? Because God commands it. Because it is a privilege to speak to God. Because God grants promises and blessings to those who pray. Because Christ is our mediator in prayer. Because God has placed great power in prayer. Because Prayer has shown itself to be very effective in the past. And because "our unwillingness to pray is nothing else but a not desiring what we ought passionately to long for."

### PRACTICAL ADVICE

We ought to pray only for things that are right, in particular for assistance in glorifying God. We may pray for temporal blessings, but we should not pray merely for trifles. Our petitions ought to be guided by our needs. Our prayers ought to be accompanied by a life of piety. All sin is an impediment to prayer. We ought to pray with faith and hope, believing that we will receive that for which we have asked. Our prayers ought to be fervent, intense, and earnest. Our prayers should be continual and frequent.

Taylor recommends that the words of our prayers be pertinent and grave. Length is not as important as intent. "A long prayer and a short differ not in their capacities of being accepted, for both of them take their value according to the fervency of spirit, and the charity of the prayer." A prayer which is short because of impatience or apathy is imperfect, as is a prayer that is long due to ostentation.

In all prayer there should be an element of thanks giving. (Phil. 4:6). And whatever we beg of God, we ought also to work toward that same end. Our posture in prayer should tend toward that which is reverent, grave, and humble. When should one pray? Taylor wisely says that any moment that is not occupied by some other duty is a suitable time for prayer. In particular it is wise to begin and end the day with prayer.

A common problem in prayer is when our minds begin to wander. As an aid in mastering this problem, Taylor recommends that one pray to God for help in praying, that one's disposition may be more sober and fixed on prayer. Using written prayers or an outline for prayer can be of assistance. If you notice that your mind has wandered, repeat what you were saying in prayer to develop your habits and drive away the temptation of wandering thoughts. If you have severe difficulties with wandering thoughts, may be you have too many cares for this world. You might be benefitted by simplifying your life. Also one ought to remind self frequently that "it is a great indecency to desire of God to hear those prayers a great part whereof we do not hear ourselves. If they be not worthy of our attention, they are far more unworthy of God's."

What should a person do to prevent prayer life from becoming wearisome? Taylor recommends that one should not plan times of prayer that are too lengthy at the beginning. Pray more often but for shorter periods of time. Pray in a variety of forms or with a variety of aids. The more often you pray, the easier the habit of prayer will become. In time you will become so accustomed to regular prayer that you will be troubled if you miss your usual appointed times of prayer. Live a sober and godly life; this

will assist your prayer life. Going to God in prayer at night is much easier if the day has been spent in holy living.

Although Taylor wrote these words over 300 years ago, they are still good advice.

## JESUS ON PRAYER

Even greater advice can be found in the teachings of Jesus, our Lord. He recommended that our piety not be practiced before other people just to be seen by them. We should not call attention to our acts of religious devotion. Our prayers should not be pretentious in any way. We can measure how sincere our prayers are by the kind of prayers we pray in secret, not those prayed in public.

Jesus taught that empty repetition in lengthy prayer was needless. We can not build up merit by merely praying long prayers, Jesus then gave a great example of prayer that was short, reverent, and practical. At this point one should study carefully Matthew 6 : 1-15 and Luke 11 : 1-4.

Jesus spent much time teaching on certain presuppositions necessary for a life of prayer, namely, our understanding of the character of God. In parables he taught that God is a benevolent God who wants to do man good, not evil. For more so than sinful people, God is ready and desiring to answer man's pleas for help. At this point one should study carefully Luke 11 : 5-13 and Luke 18 : 1-8. These are not all of the teachings of Jesus on prayer, but they are some great ones.

Remember the example of Jesus who frequently slipped off late at night or early in the morning and spent hours in prayer to God. If the Son of God felt a need to pray so earnestly to God, how much more so should we.

# *A Friend*

Lindell Mitchell

There are several things one expects from the relationship we call friendship. There is a new relation when friendship occurs. Formerly people may very well have been enemies, but now they are friends. Whatever may have occurred before, there is now a new positive relationship. They have become allies, companions, comrades and associates.

When friendship occurs there is a new level of understanding. In fact, the understanding heart of a friend is one of the major benefits of friendship. In a world where relationships tend to be shallow and contrived, it is important to have friends who understand us. Understanding is so vital to friendships because each of us is so imperfect. If any of us remain friends for an extended period, it will be because we understand one another's weakness. Whether in agreement or disagreement; joy or disappointment; friends understand one another and love each other despite the difficulties.

There is comfort in friendship. When the chips are down and all the fair-weather friends have fled to relationships they think will be more profitable, your true friend will be there with words of encouragement. Even if he has to disagree with you, he will still acknowledge your worth as a person and the value of your friendship.

There is help in friendship. In fact, concrete help is one of the basic ideas inherent in friendship. It may take many forms but it will be decisive and definite (James 2 : 14-17).

In true friendship there is correction. A friend will not allow you to walk in front of a speeding car, even if it means grabbing you by the nap of the neck and jerking you out of the way. Paul had to say some hard things to the Galatian church, but posed this important question; "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4 : 16). He was not a

mean, spiteful man. Quite to the contrary, he loved that church enough to confront and correct it. Certainly this is not always easy, but something worthwhile never is.

Friendship presents great challenges if it endures. The challenges may be in the form of a call to improve situations in life, to accomplish certain worthy goals, do certain works, or to refrain from some things. Clearly it is a great challenge to have an enduring friendship with another person, but the benefits are well worth the effort.

Perhaps no better statement of the blessings of having good friends is given than what Jesus said of his friendship with his disciples. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15 : 13-15).

## *Heaven's Grocery Store*

Foy Smith

I was walking down Life's Highway a long time ago. One day I saw a sign that read "Heaven's Grocery Store." As I got a little closer, the door came open wide, and when I came to myself, I was standing inside.

I saw a host of angels; they were standing everywhere. One handed me a basket and said, "My child, shop with care."

Everything I needed was in that Grocery Store. And all you couldn't carry, you could come back the next day for more. First, I got *Patience*, and *Love* was in the same row. Further down was *Understanding*, you need it everywhere you go. I got a box of

*Wisdom*, a bag or two of *Faith*. I just couldn't miss the *Holy Spirit* for he was all over the place. I stopped to get *Strength* and *Courage* to help me run the race. By then my basket was getting full, but I remembered I needed some *Grace*.

I didn't forget *Salvation*, for *Salvation* it was free. So I tried to get enough of that to save both you and me. Then I had everything to do my Master's will.

As I went up the aisle, I saw *Prayer* and I just had to put it in, for I knew when I stepped outside I would run right into sin.

*Peace* and *Joy* were plentiful, they were on the last shelf. *Songs* and *Praises* hanging near, so I just helped myself.

Then I said to the angel, "Now how much do I owe?" He just smiled and said, "Just take them everywhere you go." Again I smiled at him and said, "How much do I really owe?" He smiled again and said, "My child, He paid your bill a long, long time ago."

## *I Change Not*

Tom L. Bright

"For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. 3 : 6). This statement expresses a beautiful, and fearful thought.

Malachi, who lived about 400 years before Christ, was the last writer of the Old Testament. The Jews finished rebuilding the temple under the imploring sermons of Haggai and Zechriah. Israel seemed on the way to spiritual prosperity, and favour with God. But, in a few years, God raised up this great prophet to speak of "The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi" (Mal. 1 : 1).

God condemned them because his love was scorned. The priests were faithless. They married foreign women. They neglected tithes and offerings. Why did God tolerate them after all their wickedness down through the centuries? Malachi gives the answer.

God had a purpose, a plan, a scheme for the redemption of mankind. He promised victory over satan in Genesis 3 : 15. A more specific promise, confirmed with an oath, was given to Abram (Gen. 12 : 1-3), repeated to Isaac (Gen. 26 : 4), and to Jacob (Gen. 28 : 14). God's promise would not fail despite what man might do.

We should be thankful the Lord does not change. If God were like man in temperament and attitude, this promise might have failed. If it were not for His unchangeableness, we might never enjoy the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

God's purpose does not change. Through Isaiah he said, "Remember the former things of old : for I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46 : 9-10).

Micah adds "thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Mic. 7 : 20). Because of his promise to their fathers, he did not destroy them for their wickedness. Still, when his purpose was realized in Christ Jesus, the Jews had fulfilled God's intention. He kept the promise.

Did God cast away those he foreknew? Of course not! As a nation, they no longer held a special place in his eyes (the promise had been fulfilled). As individuals with an eternal soul, God's concern for them was not slackened at all. He made provision for them to be saved through the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1 : 16-17). "And so (through the gospel) shall all Israel be saved" (Rom. 11 : 26). All Jew who are saved will be saved in just the same way everyone else is saved. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

God does not change in any property, quality or characteristic ascribed to him by inspiration. We can be assured that every attribute the Bible credits to him, he does not possess partially, but in absolute perfection. They have always been. They did not evolve. They always will be.

Notice some unchangeable attributes possessed by the heavenly Father. He is love (1 John 4 : 8), gracious (Ps. 84 : 11), righteous (Ps. 119 : 137), light (1 John 1 : 5), faithful (Deut. 7 : 9), merciful (Ps. 103 : 17-18), holy (Ex. 15 : 11), and good (Ps. 34 : 8). God has always possessed these qualities !

He has also always been a God of justice (Isa. 45 : 21). He is our Rock and our Fortress (Ps. 31 : 3), and he is also our Heart-searcher (Jer. 17 : 10). He does not change in his hatred of sin. Because He is the unchanging God, He will punish every transgression and disobedience. He always has, and He always will.

God hates certain things and has clearly revealed his enmity of them. He hates putting away (Mal. 2 : 16), abominable things (Jer. 44 : 4), false oaths (Zech. 8 : 17), and the deeds and doctrines of false teachers (Rev. 2 : 6, 15). "These six things doth the Lord hate : yea, seven are an abomination unto him : A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. 6 : 16-19).

God hates sin, but not the sinner, "He cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2 : 13). He cannot act in any way that would be unlike Himself. "God is love" (1 John 4 : 8). His love demands a plan to save sinful man, God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3 : 9).

Let us never forget that we will one day stand in judgment before him who changes not. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves..." (2 Cor. 13 : 5). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath



done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5 : 10). If we love him and keep his commandments, his unchangeableness assures our salvation, but it also assures our damnation if we are rebellious and wicked.

## *Is the Bible Our Talisman ?*

Terry M. Hightower

In Samuel 4 : 10-22 the nation of Israel's army is slaughtered, the ark of the covenant taken, and Eli's sons killed, leading to the deaths of Eli and his daughter-in-law. The people put great stock in the ark of the covenant and apparently thought that the mere presence of the ark was enough to guarantee the presence of God (1 Sam. 4 : 5, 22-23).

Although Eli's daughter-in-law said, "The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken," the truth is that Israel lost her glory when Eli's sons corrupted the moral and spiritual living of the nation. As priests of Israel, they had been running rampant in sin, so much so that they were even committing adultery "with the women that did service at the door of the tent of the meeting" (1 Sam. 2 : 22).

The Bible describes these sons as "base men" who knew not Jehovah" (1 Sam. 2 : 12) because they also violated the rules of priests concerning sacrifices and that "despised the offering of Jehovah" (1 Sam. 2 : 13-17). The people, including their daddy, Eli, allowed all this to happen before their very eyes, but they did not put the sin out of "the camp."

Because of this the people lost sight of their real strength—GOD (Ps. 46 : 1; 89 : 15-18), and trusted in the ark as an image or "good-luck" charm. This is the same way that the pagan, superstitious Philistines viewed the ark (1 Sam. 4 : 7; 5 : 1-2) ! Instead of repenting of wickedness and praying to God, the people

of Israel all just shouted with a great shout (1 Sam. 4 : 5) as the ark came into their camp. This was much as the pagans of Ephesus wildly shouted for the idol Diana in the Apostle Paul's day in Acts 19 : 28-34.

Many members of the church today, including those in your congregation (you and me, brother and sister), think that the mere presence of a Bible in their home, or that mere membership in the church is a guarantee of God's presence ?

Has the ignored Bible, or the church building become our good-luck charm ? Christians are to study, grow, and teach others (2 Tim. 3 : 16-17 ; 1 Peter 3 : 15), but I fear that many brethren are not giving diligence to present themselves approved unto God (2 Tim. 2 : 15).

We had best wake up to the truth of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 6 : 9 : "Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." When Israel repented by putting away their idols, and rendered true service to Jehovah, they prevailed over the Philistines (1 Sam. 7). There is simply no substitute for obedience in righteousness. God help us to put Christ first in our lives like we know we should.

## *The Gift and the Promise of Acts* *2 : 38-39*

Harold Littrell

"Repent and be immersed, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins may be forgiven, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; for the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are far off, even as many as the Lord our God may call" (Acts 2 : 38-39).

"The gift of the Holy Spirit" (*ten dorean tou hagiou pneuma-*

tos) has the same construction as "the doctrine of the apostles" (*te didache ton apostolon*) of verse 42. The first could be translated, "the Holy Spirit's gift"; and the second, "the apostles' doctrine." The doctrine of the apostles is not a doctrine about the apostles. It should be equally obvious that the Holy Spirit's gift is not the Holy Spirit.

The gift of God is eternal life (Rom. 6 : 23). The gift of Christ is eternal life (John 17 : 20). The gift of the Godhead, (for they are one), is eternal life. This gift is conditioned on being faithful (2 John 9; 1 John 1 : 7; 2 : 3-4; Rev. 2 : 10; 1 Cor. 10 : 12; James 1 : 12).

The child of God receives the promise of eternal inheritance (Heb. 9 : 15). John states, "This is the promise which he himself Promised us, even eternal life" (1 John 2 : 25).

We conclude that the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 : 38 is the promise of eternal life. This promise is to everyone who believes and obeys the gospel, which is God's saving power (Rom. 1 : 16). The gift of eternal life is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6 : 23; 1 John 5 : 11), and he is our hope (1 Tim. 1 : 1). We now have that hope as an anchor to our soul (Heb. 6 : 19).

## *What Must I Do To Be Saved ?*

Guy N. Woods

"What must I do to be saved?" is the most momentous question ever raised by an accountable human being. Where we shall spend eternity; whether we shall be immeasurably blessed, for all of eternity, in heaven with the good and the pure and the holy of all ages; or whether we shall suffer the tortures of the damned, in company with the impure, the wicked and the unholy, in hell, in ceaseless misery, and through endless ages, depends on

knowing the correct answer to this question and in bringing our wills into submission thereto. All of us, when in our degenerate states, are lost (John 3 : 18), without God and without hope in the world (Ephesians 2 : 12) being dead in trespasses and in sins (Ephesians 2 : 1). But God, "being rich in mercy" and "because of his great love wherewith he loved us," sent His Son into the world to make possible our redemption and eventual salvation in heaven.

Following His triumphant resurrection from the grave and shortly before His glorious ascension into heaven, our Lord delivered to His disciples the "Great Commission." It is called the Great Commission, to distinguish it from an earlier "limited" commission applicable only to the Jews (Matthew 10 : 5-10); and, to denote its scope, being worldwide and age-lasting in purpose. The last Great Commission of our Lord has often been styled "the marching orders" of the Lord to His disciples since under it they were commissioned to carry the Gospel to all the nations in a grand effort to disciple those capable of and willing to receive it and to induce those thus disciplined to submit their wills in belief, in repentance, in confession and in baptism in order to their salvation.

There are three specific reports of this commission—one by Matthew (28 : 18-20), another by Mark (16 : 15, 16) and still another by Luke (24 : 46, 47). Mark's report, especially significant because of its simplicity and clarity, reads : "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16 : 15, 16).

The passage has in it an obligation : "Go ye into all the world." What that obligation involves is clearly evidenced in the words "preach the gospel." The object constituting the end and aim of the obligation is "the whole creation." Thus, here is made crystal clear the universality of the gospel message and the inclusion of all accountable beings in God's plan to save. Those who make themselves amenable to the message thus to be delivered are to believe and to be baptized: the promise to those who so do is

salvation; the alternative is damnation; "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."

(1) "He that believeth" indicates both the extent and the limitations of the promised blessing. These words eliminate infants, imbeciles and all other irresponsible persons not capable of believing. Those in this category are eliminated on the basis of need, such not being lost, because not accountable are therefore not in need of the salvation which the passage promises.

(2) "And is baptized shall be saved" denotes the purpose of the response required and makes clear the design of the baptism mentioned. The passage presents two conditions essential to salvation: "He that believeth" (item number one) "and is baptized" (item number two) "shall be saved" (item number three). Belief and baptism are joined by the coordinating conjunction "and," thus showing each to be related equally to the dependent blessing, salvation. It is not "He that believeth shall be saved"; nor, "He that is baptized shall be saved", it is; "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The conjunction "and" has here the force of the plus sign; to say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," is the equivalent of saying that belief plus baptism equals salvation. The significance of this may be seen in the following parallel:  $2+2=4$ ; belief+baptism=salvation. But  $2-2=0$ ; therefore, belief-baptism=nothing! Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," is a complex, declarative sentence, the principal statement of which is "He...shall be saved." Were this the whole of the Lord's statement, the salvation of all would be here affirmed; "he," though masculine in form, is common in significance, embracing all men (and women) to whom the Gospel, earlier mentioned in the passage, is preached. The "he" of the passage, however, is modified by a limiting, restrictive clause indicating particularly what he is contemplated: "that believeth and is baptized." "He...shall be saved." What he? The "he" that believes and does no more? No. The "he" that does not believe but is baptized? No. Who, then, is the "he" of whom salvation is affirmed?

"He (that believeth and is baptized) shall be saved."

Our Lord, in this statement, joins belief and baptism, making them equally necessary to the end promised, salvation. What the Lord has joined together, let not man put asunder! Those who would attempt to divorce them are engaged in truly evil activity. It is crystal clear that our Lord, in this affirmation, makes salvation dependent on two conditions—faith and baptism—not merely, or solely, faith or faith alone. It must be obvious to all thoughtful people that when our Lord has designated any condition as essential as salvation, this condition must always be implied, though not mentioned, in all subsequent statements regarding salvation. Inasmuch as baptism, in water, is made one of the conditions of salvation in Mark 16 : 16, it is idle to expect the forgiveness on the basis of any “plan” excluding baptism. In Luke’s report of the Great Commission, repentance is declared to be essential, a fact repeatedly taught in the sacred writings (Luke 24 : 46, 47; Acts 17 : 30; 2 Peter 3 : 9).

Equally essential is a confession of the Lord, made with the mouth and in the presence of others (Acts 8 : 35; Romans 10 : 9, 10). The order of the confession is obvious : Inasmuch as forgiveness follows baptism in water, the confession could not be made after baptism since one could not acknowledge Christ as Lord while in unbelief and would not want to before repentance but before baptism! This confession is “unto” salvation. The preposition “unto” signifies that which is “in respect of an un-reached end” (Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary). The confession is, therefore, a condition prior to salvation.

It is truly tragic that some cavil over these conditions; and, in the case of water baptism, regard it as non-essential and unnecessary. It was our Lord who declared, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” and it is the solemn duty of all men to accept it because He said it. When men make an effort to eliminate baptism as a condition of salvation, they are, in effect, impeaching the judgment and wisdom of the Lord Himself. Men ought to want to do what the Lord said and for the reason that He said it.

It is occasionally alleged that because the Savior did not say,

in Mark's report of the Commission, "He that believeth and is not baptized shall be condemned," baptism should not be regarded as equally essential with belief. Such reasoning is fallacious and false: Unbelief alone is sufficient to condemn; one does not have to be guilty of additional acts of disobedience in order to the rejection of Christ. However, belief alone is not sufficient to save; even the demons believe and tremble; faith apart from works is dead. The moment works is separated from faith, faith is as dead as the lifeless body from which the spirit has flown. James solemnly declared, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2 : 26).

## *Learned Contentment*

Adron Doran

We are living in perilous times of discontent, anxiety, confusion, disturbance and despair. We seem to have lost our mooring, and find little in which to anchor our lives. We need to look to a source of security that will bring our lives into proper balance.

The Apostle Paul spent much of his time and effort in teaching individuals and congregations the Christian grace of contentment. He knew that it could be learned, and wrote to the Philippians that he had "learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4 : 11). Paul pointed out to young Timothy that, "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6 : 6). He seems to stress that contentment is a state of being, and a state of mind.

In the latter years of Paul's life he represented the highest degree of contentment within himself, and in his relations with others. He sought to impress young Christians and congregations with the importance of being content. He wanted his attitude and condition to serve as an example to his associates in regulating

their pattern of study and behaviour. He accepted his state and wrote "we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Tim. 6 : 7). He had learned to be content. He reduced fear and abolished anxiety because of his faith. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4 : 13).

The aged and experienced Paul reached a high level of spiritual maturity, which he desired to see inculcated in the lives of the less mature of his day. The need for such maturity is no less important to us. We who are older and more experienced should set examples of studied and learned contentment. The younger and inexperienced should seek to find encouragement in the lives of those who have learned contentment.

The writer is in the eighth decade of his life, and in the sixth decade of preaching the gospel. So with many of his peers he has learned the cardinal principle of contentment. He has spent his years trying to render service through the church, education and government instead of manufacturing and marketing commodities. The emoluments from these services have been great, but most of them have faded except, "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2 : 20). Though the financial gains have been little more than food, clothing and shelter there is great contentment to be shared with a faithful bride of fifty-seven years. All the honors, awards, and accolades received at the hands of associates pale into insignificance when compared with the contentment that comes with knowing "he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13 : 5).

Some who have gone "from rags to riches" receive the Horatio-Alger award. When we went to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City in 1971 to receive the award, we found ourselves in company with nine multi-millionaire recipients. We said to the assembly, "I am the only one of you who is still in rags." We quickly added that our riches consist in our investment in the Kingdom of God, and the lives of young men and women.

Contentment not only represents a state of being, and frame



of mind toward the riches of this world, but also toward the whole counsel of God. We must learn that the only lasting contentment is in submission to the authority of Jesus Christ, and to the limitations of the apostles doctrine, to the God given purpose for preaching the gospel, to the New Testament pattern for the organization and administration of the church, and to the mandate of the Bible to "live godly in Christ Jesus." If we have so done, when the time of our departure comes, we can rejoice with the contented apostle to the Gentiles that : "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day and not to me only but unto all them that love his appearing" (1 Tim. 4 : 8). Peace of mind and contentment come through being reconciled to God through his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ the Lord. (Rom. 5 : 10; Phil. 4 : 6).

## *The Promise and Fulfillment*

**J. Shannon Jackson**

Every student of the Bible knows Jesus promised to build his church. In response to Jesus' question, Who do you say I am ? "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16 : 16-18).

Jesus, being the Christ, the Son of the living God, is himself God. His word is the word of God. God's word cannot fail. Every prophecy of God is sure. We know this promise to build his church was certain to be kept. The prophecy would be fulfilled.

Jesus also said to Peter and the others, "I will give unto thee

the keys of the kingdom of heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16 : 19). What the Lord called "my church" in verse 18 he called "the kingdom of heaven" in verse 19. These terms are synonymous. The church is the kingdom, and the kingdom is the church.

The gospels often mention the kingdom of promise and prophecy. John the baptist, Jesus, and the disciples of the Lord all insisted that the kingdom was at hand in their day. Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9 : 1).

The kingdom of God, which is the church of God, would come with power. Immediately before his ascension, Jesus said to the apostles, "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1 : 8). The coming of the Holy Spirit would be the coming of the promised power. When the power came the kingdom came. The church Jesus promised to build came into existence when the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

In sending the Holy Spirit, Jesus redeemed his promise to build his church. "When the day of Pentecost was now come . . . they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2 : 1-4).

The church is the people. "They that gladly received his word were baptized : and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2 : 41). "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2 : 47). God added saved people to the church daily. The church is the saved people. All saved people are in the church because God adds to the church daily such as should be saved. Those who are not in the church are such as should not be saved.

The church, in New Testament times, radiated the truth of the gospel. They were not ashamed to be called the people of God, and God was not ashamed to be called their God. The church eagerly told others about Jesus and his cross. Their living

hope demanded to be blazed abroad. "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8 : 4).

Paul told Timothy, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly : But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3 : 14-15). The church is the mainstay of the truth. Like Paul, we must be "set for the defence of the gospel." The church is the defender of the faith, the foundation of truth, and the advertising agency for salvation.

The church of the first century enjoyed a growth explosion. The number of disciples may have reached about half the world's population. This amazing growth was the result of saints telling the good news of salvation in every place. It was characteristic of the church to be telling redemption's story.

The church entered a period of decline, and finally departed from the truth. The dark ages came upon the world. The Roman Catholic Church, and the Greek Orthodox Church ruled supreme in so-called Christendom. It was a bleak time when the people, deprived of the Bible, walked in darkness,

The genius of restoration sprang from the shadows of apostasy. Men discovered that the seed of the kingdom of heaven is the word of God (Luke 8 : 11). They rightly concluded that the seed of the kingdom will produce the kingdom. There was a great revival. People again thrilled to the message of salvation, and the church prospered. The fantastic growth of the restored church rivaled the growth of the first century.

The church was excited. She again fulfilled her purpose of preaching the gospel on every street corner. The faith was defended, and the truth was boldly proclaimed. The number of disciples multiplied exceedingly.

We stand in danger of another decline. People do not know how to appreciate their blessings until they lose them. Slaves appreciate freedom. Prisoners esteem the right to walk the streets. On the other hand, prosperous people do not know how to fear

poverty. Those who have the truth do not consider the risk of losing it.

Once we were people of the book, envied and admired by religious neighbours, but hated and despised as well. We spoke where the Bible speaks and were silent where it is silent. Today, instead of standing firm on Bible teachings we try to avoid confrontation. We seem to want the good opinion of men, more than the approval of God. We cannot have the plaudits of sinful man, while having the praise of God. "For am I now seeking the favour of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men, if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1 : 10). That is a hard, but necessary choice.

The New Testament was true when it was written, and it is equally true today. If New Testament truth must be recast, then is the problem in the inspired writing or in our application? If it was good for Paul and Silas, it ought to be good for us.

We must again become people of the Book. A church to whom the truth is paramount. Truth is more important than popularity, because it frees (John 8 : 32). Truth is more valuable than men, because it brings us to God (John 14 : 6). Truth is more precious than material wealth, because it sanctifies to the saving of the soul (John 17 : 17). Truth is more vital than power, because it purifies (1 Peter 1 : 22). "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Prov. 23 : 23). "Redeem the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5 : 16).

What of tomorrow? What will be the birthright of our children? Will they stand as a beacon of truth for all the world to see, or will they be of the world? Some among us are drifting because of a lack of Bible knowledge. My friends and brothers, we must strive to be salty . . . "ye are the salt of the earth." We grow when we are not afraid to tell people the truth about salvation.

If our ambition is to be so much like the world we sink into a great, grey glob of nothingness, then how can we be its light? Is the salt losing its saltiness? Is the church forsaking its intense hunger for truth?

"Search the scriptures daily, whether these things are so."