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Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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EDITORIAL

For God Is Not The Author Of Confusion But Of Peace

When we go shopping we buy things by weight or measure. We do not just buy things without checking the exact and actual weight or measurement. Likewise, when we receive or issue a cheque we make it certain that the proper signature is put on the cheque. Also, when we sell or purchase a property or a vehicle, we carefully check all documents to be proper for such transaction. Then, when we get sick or ill, we just don't reach for any medicine and take it, rather very carefully we take the prescribed medicine only! Inferentially, we do not remain unconcerned about any such things, because our money and health are involved in matters like these. Yes, all of us follow the standard or the authority when it comes to the things of physical nature. However, sad to say, when it comes to the things of spiritual nature, most people accept just anything in the name of religion, without verifying the proper standard or the authority!

Why there is so much confusion and diversity when it comes to religious matters? The only obvious answer is: men have rejected the proper religious authority. Christ, after His resurrection, and before His ascension into heaven, had declared: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." (Matthew 28:18). Several years later, after Christ had made this statement, the writer of the book of Hebrews wrote: "God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us

by His Son..." (Hebrews 1:1,2). John, one of the apostles of Christ, said: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9).

Where do we learn about the authority of Christ? How does God speak through His Son today? Where is the doctrine of Christ revealed? The answer to all of these questions is: the New Testament of the Bible. Christ, who has all the authority in heaven and on earth, had promised the apostles that after He would go He would send to them the Holy Spirit, Who would lead them into all truth, would guide them and teach them and remind them all that He had taught them while He was with them. (John 14:25,26 & 16: 5-15). The apostles of Christ, after they had received the Promise, wrote everything for us, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in the New Testament of Christ. Thus, for everything that we need to know and want to know spiritually we must go to the Bible, and specifically to the New Testament of Jesus Christ, under which law of God we live today.

Here are some of the answers to most important questions of man, from the New Testament of the Bible:

1. What must one do to be saved from sin? Believe in Christ with all heart, repent of sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38 & 8:35-39).

2. To what church must one belong? Christ is the builder and the owner of the church. There is only one true church, which is Christ's spiritual body and He is the head of His church, to which He Himself adds all the saved ones. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18).

3. What name should one wear as a follower of Christ? The followers of Christ were always called Christians. (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16; James 2:7).

4. What kind of worship God desires of us today? We must worship God in spirit and in truth. On the first day of the week (Sunday), by partaking from the Lord's Supper (unleavened bread and fruit of the vine), Singing hymns and spiritual songs, praying to God through Christ, Giving of our means or contribution, and studying from God's book, the Bible. (John 4:24; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19).

5. As Christians should we celebrate special religious days or festivals? There are no such special religious days or festivals mentioned in the New Testament of Christ; neither commanded nor

shown by an example. The apostle Paul wrote Christians and said: "But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have laboured for you in vain." (Galatians 4:9-11).

6. If, as a Christian, one sins again, does one need to be baptised again for the forgiveness of sins? No. There is only one baptism. As a Christian one must realise that he cannot sin habitually or deliberately, since he has allowed himself to be buried with Christ through baptism in water, as a dead person, having died to sin by repentance, and is a new creation in Christ. But being in Christ, if one sins, then, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (Ephesians 4:5; 1 John 5:18; 1:5-10; 2:1,2; Acts 8:22).

Most people stay ignorant about religious matters because they want to follow men and doctrines of their churches or sects, instead of going to the Bible, opening it and reading from it to know what God has spoken. Yet, "Not everyone", said Christ, at Matthew 7:21, "who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven." Through the pages of this journal we are continually pleading with people everywhere to quit following man made teaching and do what God says through His Book.

The Lord Wants Us To Be Faithful

J.C. CHOATE

Man is a sinner. (Romans 3:23). He needs to be saved, and Jesus died on a cruel cross to make that possible. (1 Peter 2:21-24). But man can be saved from his sins only when he realizes he is a sinner and is willing to come to Jesus in obedience to him. This involves learning of Jesus (Matthew 11:29), believing in him (John 14:1), being willing to repent or turn away from all of his sins (Acts 17:30), willing to confess Christ with his mouth that he believes that he is the Son of God (Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32), and then to be buried in water, which is called baptism, for the remission of sins. (Colossians 2:12; Acts 2:38). This is all so very simple and easy to do for anyone who wants to be saved from his past sins. (Mark 16:15, 16). How could one possibly misunderstand it unless he is unwilling to submit to the Lord or else some-

one has taught him error? If you will read all of the cases of conversion in the book of Acts, you will find that they all obeyed these same truths and were thereby saved and added to the Lord's church. (Acts 2:38,47). If one will do what they did, he can also be saved. Christ did not have one way to save them and another way to save people today.

But after one obeys the Lord, is saved, and added to his church, then what? Does the Bible teach that once one has been saved that he will always be saved? Not at all, as we will see. The fact is, once one has been saved then the Lord wants him to remain saved. To be saved only to go back into sin makes things worse than ever. Peter said, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter 2:20-22). Peter is simply saying that if one is saved but goes back into sin that he is lost just as he was before he obeyed the Lord. Actually, he is worse off inasmuch as he has tried but failed, and may have too much pride to return to the Lord so that he can again be forgiven, or he may feel that since he tried once and failed that he might fail the next time too, so why ever try. Not only that, but for one to be saved and then to go back into sin sets such a bad example for all who observe the thing he has done. Again, it can cause weak to give up and it may discourage those who have not obeyed God from even trying.

What then does the Lord really want? He wants us to be saved, of course, and he wants us to remain saved. Jesus says that we should be faithful unto death to receive the crown of eternal life. (Revelation 2:10). There are many illustrations of this in the scriptures. In other words, it is not enough to enter a race. To receive the prize one must successfully run the race. (Hebrews 12:1,2; 1 Corinthians 9:24). The Lord wants us to become a part of his army; but to be victorious we must fight the good fight of faith. (Ephesians 6:10-17; 1 Timothy 6:12). The scriptures tell us that we must put God first (Matthew 6:33), that we must endure to the end to be saved (Matthew 24:13), that we must follow Christ daily (Luke 9:23), and that as servants of the Lord we must be ready and prepared to meet him when he return. (Matthew 24:44). Hear these words by the apostle John: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into

the city." (Revelation 22:14).

Finally, what is faithfulness? It means that as Christians we are to be dependable, reliable, and those that the Lord can always count on in doing his will. Someone has put it like this: The Christian is always faithful; he is predictable, that is, you can always predict what he will do. He will worship God each first day of the week, live a good moral life, love his neighbor as himself, set a good example in all things, and strive to reach the lost for the Lord. He is still human, still is a sinner before God, still subject to make mistakes, but as John said, "But if we walk in the Light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7).

In the end the Lord will save those who are his, those who have been loyal and faithful to him even unto death. Those who have begun and have quit or who have been unfaithful will be cast out to be lost in torment for all eternity. (Matthew 13:41). There will even be those who will debate their case with the Lord, but he will say, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:21-23).

Are you a Christian? Are you a faithful Christian? Jesus needs you, but he needs you for a life time. That is what faithfulness is all about, and it is that faithfulness that will be rewarded with eternal life with the Lord.

Especially For Women

A Child's Behaviour In The Home

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise. (Ephesians 6:1,2).

Mary and Elizabeth were neighbors. They were having a morning cup of tea together while their children played ball in the little park nearby. Anthony and James, with Thomas and his small brother, Matthew, ran and chased each other. They were having a lot of fun

Sometimes, though, Matthew would begin to cry and then he would run and whine to his mother that the other boys would not let him have the ball.

Elizabeth soothed Matthew's whining and called out to the other boys, "Now, don't be like that. Let Matthew play, too."

Thomas made an ugly face at his little brother and pinched him for running to tell his mother. His anger and crying brought another loud yell from his mother, "You'd better behave before I spank you!"

Thomas called Matthew "cry-baby" under his breath, but to his mother he said very hypocritically, "Sorry!"

"That's a good boy," Elizabeth said, ignoring Thomas' hypocrisy, and turning back to her tea. "I don't know why these boys fight all the time."

"Children will have disagreements sometimes," Mary agreed, "but don't you think you should try to find out what is the real problem between them when they are crying or quarreling, Elizabeth?"

"Matthew would just blame Thomas and Thomas would blame Matthew—how can I know who is telling the truth? No—it's easier to ignore it. They're just children. They'll grow out of it."

"But if I let mine pester me by whining and crying, I am afraid they will grow up to be whining and complaining adults," Mary said. "And if I think one of our children may not be telling the truth, or may be trying to deceive me, I have to challenge him and be sure that he understands that I won't accept anything but the truth. Not for anything would I have our children grow up to be adults that are not completely honest. That is such an important part of their character as Christians."

"You worry too much about little things, Mary!" Elizabeth laughed. "They're still only children!"

Children have all types of personalities. Some are serious; some are always joking. Some are stubborn and difficult to deal with; some are submissive. Some love spiritual things; others are more interested in business and money. Some are king-hearted; others may delight in causing problems.

Much of a child's personality is formed through genetic inheritance, just as he inherits the colour of his eyes and hair through his genes. The atmosphere in the home, the training of the parents, and the influence of friends and events in his life also help to shape a child.

Children are not "born to be bad" or "born to be good". It is the responsibility of parents to study the inborn personality of their individual children and then to polish and mold and shape him in the very best way possible. If a child is introverted, he may never become bold and

outspoken as an extrovert, but he can be trained to be sincere, warm, friendly, and responsive to people. A child who is naturally very strong-willed is likely to continue to be a determined person, but he can be trained not to be rebellious and defiant. This is the molding the parents must strive to do.

One weakness among parents is the tendency to think of children as unimportant in the real world of today; their importance will be as they take their rightful place in the world of the future. So they are minor, unimportant participants in the parents' adult lives. Their behaviour, their thoughts are those of a child. Such behaviour is unimportant because parents are sure that they will grow out of it as they mature. But this thinking is wrong. Parents need to realize that even though they are dealing with *children*, they are actually rearing adults, because their children are now being shaped into the *adults* they will be.

Sometimes, without intending to do so, parents train their children in behaviour and attitudes that are wrong and harmful for all concerned.

- By showing partiality among their children, they teach the favored child to be a selfish and self-centered adult.
- By giving in to childish temper fits, parents are molding adults who will be demanding, belligerent, and prone to settle disagreements with anger.
- By ignoring lies and deceit on a childish level, parents are forming an irresponsible, deceitful adult.
- By indulging a child's every whim and desire, parents are teaching the adult to be spoiled and extravagant.
- By allowing a child to whine and cry, parents are training the adult to use these methods to get his way.

Parents teach good things, also.

- By giving responsibilities in the family, and training the children to be dependable in doing whatever work was given them, they become responsible adults.
- Children who are taught to be thoughtful and considerate of the feelings and needs of others will be caring adults.
- A child who is taught to respect those in authority over him will continue to be law-abiding and obedient to authority when he is mature. (Romans 13:1-7).
- Although heavy work should not be given to a child, it is good to train him in working and taking pride in doing a job well, so that this attitude will continue with him as an adult.

- Spiritual training given on a daily basis to children will go with them all of their lives and will help them to develop into strong spiritual adults. (Proverbs 22:6; Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Sometimes people feel, "Don't give a child responsibility or expect too much of him. He is a child; let him be a child; he will have to carry the load of an adult soon enough." While this sympathetic reasoning may have some merit, it is wiser to err on the side of expecting more of a child than too little, to require greater responsibility than not enough. Childishness and irresponsibility which continue into young adulthood are difficult to overcome. The older a child is before he begins learning the thinking and duties of an adult, the more he will be forced to learn in a very short period of time when he is considered to be an adult. We can spare our children this stress by teaching them to carry some responsibility from an early age.

It is so important that we as parents remember that we are not "rearing children", but we are "rearing adults", and that *they will likely become whatever we mold them to be*. Let us not take this work lightly, but realize that no greater work could be ours than the molding of a human soul for life as an adult in this world, and for eternal life in the world to come. (Ephesians 6:1-4).

Glorifying God

THOMAS R. DOHLING

"... I honour my Father and you dishonor me. I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge" (John 8:49, 50).

Jesus came to show God to the world. He was (and is) the "radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being" (Heb. 1:3a). While on earth, He sought in every way, to honour His Father and glorify Him alone. He did not seek glory for himself. If He had, He would not have "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Phil. 2:7), and also, there would not have been any reason for Him to humble Himself and become obedient unto death—even death on that despicable object—the cross. Crucifixion did not glorify anyone; rather it placed the person crucified under a curse (Deut. 21:23); it revealed a person's base character. But Jesus, the sinless One, Divinity incarnate, took this form of death upon Himself, sacrificing His own glory, in order to glorify God, the "one who

seeks it." Jesus was submitting Himself totally to His Father's will.

God seeks glory because He alone deserves it. Jesus Christ, did not consider it wrong to glorify God. The Holy Spirit teaches the Christian to glorify God. All of creation glorified God. Why shouldn't we?? Let us never be ashamed of glorifying God because He "seeks it." We please Him when we glorify Him. If we glorify Him now, He will glorify us in Christ Jesus in His Time (Rom. 8:18b). Let us resolve NOW to glorify Him ALWAYS in EVERY WAY we can!

The Fruits Of Sin

ROELF L. RUFFNER

Recently a committee within a well known American denomination released a report which recommended that their denomination accept practicing homosexuals into their church as well as unmarried heterosexual couples "living together." Needless to say there was an uproar among the conservative wing of that denomination. Ads were placed in newspapers around the nation denouncing the report as seeking to condone sin, which it did. The decent, God-fearing members of the denomination were outraged; and they should be. God's displeasure with sin, homosexual or heterosexual, is well stated in His word (Leviticus 18:22-23; Romans 1:21-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 18; Hebrews 13:4).

Even though this report will probably not be adopted at any convention of this denomination in the near future it does point out the sin inherent in any man-made religious organization. The same God who said, "For I hate divorce" (Malachi 2:16) also said through Paul, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye speak the same things, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). God does not want many "churches" but one body, the church of Christ (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4). He certainly does not want a polyglot of religious confusion with each party "doing its own thing" yet still claiming to have "unity in diversity" in Christ. That is contrary to the spirit of unity for which Christ prayed (John 17:20-21)!

I am thankful for the congregational autonomy of the New Testament church. Congregation A has no scriptural authority to oversee congregation B. (Yet they should lovingly point out doctrinal

error and even disassociate themselves from an apostate congregation if necessary (Romans 16:17). This is one way the Lord isolates apostasy and keeps it from spreading to other parts of the body (I Corinthians 11:18-19).

Through the eyes of most, any denomination begins harmlessly enough. A religious conglomeration of individual congregations forms which follows some leader espousing doctrines foreign to the New Testament. Again contrary to the New Testament they form a denomination with each local congregation giving up some of its autonomy in the process. Then they organize conventions or ruling bodies which make rules and regulations not found in the New Testament. A bloated bureaucracy follows, demanding part of the "tithes and offerings" of the local body. More and more the local body is governed by hierarchy in a distant city. Gradually the denominational leadership becomes imbued with secular ideas and modernism. Soon this man-made monstrosity is far removed from the idealism of its founder and even the beliefs of the laity. And one of the fruits of the sin of denominationalism is the acceptance of anti-biblical positions on morality.

Let us use this "report" to show our religious neighbors the sin of denominationalism. If we show them this sin they may become convinced of the other errors they embrace concerning infant baptism, the Lord's Supper, etc. Perhaps we can teach them the simplicity and God blessed obedience of New Testament Christianity. They can be freed from creeds and the doctrines of men and be simply Christians, saved by the blood of Christ, God grant us the opportunity and the love to do this!

Be Thankful For Your Bible

HOLGER NEUBAER

Long before the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg (around 1450 A.D.), the making and copying of books was a long and arduous procedure. Ancient books were written and copied letter by letter by scribes who gave their utmost devotion to ensure they had copied completely and accurately the book before them.

The ancients considered the work of the scribe extremely important and those that would copy scripture considered their task the most noble service they could render for God and mankind. A man

named Cassiodorus, who founded a monastery which was noted for its Latin paleography (study of ancient writing), wrote this commentary on the work of those who endeavored to preserve the word of God.

By reading the divine Scriptures, (the scribe) wholesomely instructs his own mind, and by copying the precepts of the Lord he spreads them far and wide. What happy application, what praiseworthy industry, to preach unto men by means of the hand, to untie the tongue by means of the fingers, to bring quiet salvation to mortals, and to fight the Devil's insidious wiles with pen and ink! For every word of the Lord written by the scribes is a wound inflicted on Satan, And so, though seated in one spot, the scribe traverses diverse lands through the dissemination of what he has written . . . Man multiplies the heavenly words, and in a certain metaphorical sense, if I may dare so to speak, three fingers are made to express the utterances of the Holy Trinity. O sight glorious to those who contemplate it carefully! The fast-traveling reed-pen writes down the holy words and thus avenges the malice of the Wicked One, who caused a reed to be used to smite the head of the Lord during his passion.

Indeed those men who worked tediously and laboriously to give the world the Bible, the saving message of the gospel, ought to be highly esteemed and respected for their great work.

In an Armenian manuscript, the scribe who copied wrote in the margin that a heavy snow storm was raging outside and his ink had frozen while his hand had become numb and his pen had fallen from his fingers. The scribes' work in copying the Bible was long and demanded much patience. The ancient Hebrews, in ensuring accuracy of the copy, would count every letter they had written and match it with the original and if one letter was added or deleted they would destroy the copy and start over again.

The thousands of manuscripts now extant, which have been discovered from different parts of the world, all attest with amazing agreement, that the word of God had been preserved and that all men can know the saving message of the Gospel.

Knowing something of the history of Scripture, can only strengthen our conviction that we do have the very "Word of God" contained within the sixty-six books of the Bible and we ought to be so thankful that we can assemble in comfortable surroundings, with those of like faith, to study the efficacious, effulgent and eternal word of almighty God.

Don't Believe Everything You Hear Or Read

DALTON KEY

Heaven reserves no special blessing for the credulous Christian. Inspiration rather warns us, lest we be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14). Again we are warned, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). The noble Bereans were so described, not because they blindly believed, but because they "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). The Bereans were not cynical, but neither were they gullible.

Don't naively believe everything you hear or read just because it flows from the lips or pen of a preacher. Preachers have been known to be wrong. Mistakes are often made unintentionally. A preaching friend of mine once exhorted his hearers by saying, "All those who feel the need may come forward and commit their sins publicly." Of course he meant to say confess, not commit. Another preacher, during the course of a local Gospel Meeting, proclaimed, "Let me assure you that we have gathered here for no other purpose than to think on worldly things." Some what flustered, he continued by saying. "It would be impossible for one to attend every service and get anything out of the sermons." Such "bloopers" are accidental, understandable, and expected from time to time of all who speak publicly.

Other errors are not so accidental and are far more serious. False doctrine is no laughing matter. The religious world appears to be permeated with the filth and stench of moral and doctrinal error. If you find this hard to believe, just listen to the religious broadcasting on radio and television. You may conjure up the wildest, most outlandish doctrine imaginable; then, if you listen long enough and closely enough to late night radio preachers, you will eventually hear that doctrine proclaimed as truth.

I frequently tune into a few of these late night radio evangelists as I travel home from evening speaking engagements. Within the space of one week's listening a while back, I heard lessons on "Your Beloved Pets in Heaven," "There's a Witch or Wizard After You," "Warding Off

Evil Spirits with Common Table Salt," and "Getting Filthy Rich by God's Grace." A radio station not far from where I once lived was at one time in danger of losing its license because of the anti-black, anti-semitic remarks made by one of the preachers speaking during its late night programming. And you would think from hearing some preachers that your salvation depended upon sending them money! The sad part of it all is that there are hundreds of thousands of people gullible enough to listen to, believe, and financially support these preaching parasites.

John warned, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirit whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). Paul wrote, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Timothy 4:1, 2). And again, Paul warned of those who "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Romans 16:18).

May we become neither cynical nor gullible. If what we hear preached is taught clearly within the Bible, let us accept it, believe it, and fully obey it. If the preaching we hear is not founded upon a clear, "thus saith the Lord," let us by all means refuse it!

"Accentuate The Positive, Eliminate The Negative"

W.A. HOLLEY

- Cultivate a pleasing disposition.
- Learn to be tolerant.
- Genuinely love people.
- Be as courteous as possible.
- Follow the Golden Rule.
- Obey God rather than men.
- Guard your temper.
- Watch your words.
- Purpose to do right, regardless.
- Be a peacemaker, not a peace breaker.
- Cast no stone unless you are perfect.

- Disarm your enemy by admitting your faults.
- Understand that others have problems too.
- Judge righteous judgment.
- Be faithful to the Lord and to His church.
- Set up a schedule of prayer and Bible reading.
- Wear a smile and the world will smile with you.
- Read the Lord's sermon on the mount.
- Find the verse that says "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me."

Outstanding Service

TOMMY BLEWETT

A desire to do better than average is shared by all. Though this desire may be covered over by fear, failure, and disillusionment, most of us want to reach deep down and pull out the best that is in us. This is only right. Paul said, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23), and, if we put our heart into every effort, sometimes we attain greatness.

Greatness is achieved when one performs above the ordinary. It can be recognized in all pursuits. In football it's measured in the number of yards gained, passes completed, and points earned. In business it's measured in the number of units sold, services rendered, and money earned. Even in the kingdom of God there is greatness to be attained and if we put our whole heart into this effort it will be ours. But, we must understand that greatness in the kingdom is measured and recognized in a different fashion.

Two men desired to achieve greatness as disciples of the Lord. They came to him with their mother and she asked Jesus if her sons could sit on his right and left hand in his kingdom (Matthew 20:20-21). Recognizing their desire to be great and their ignorance concerning his kingdom, Jesus replied, ". . . Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They said unto him, we are able" (Matthew 20:22).

In the context of Matthew 20, we learn that Jesus was neither expecting nor desiring greatness in the eyes of men. At the climax of his

ministry he was going to be betrayed by one of his disciples, abandoned by the others, condemned to death by the religious leaders of his nation, mocked, scourged, and crucified by the heathen. Those who stood close to him could expect the same treatment. His faithful followers would drink the cup of rejection and be baptized with the baptism of suffering. And in the eyes of men such things do not make one great.

The disciples thought that greatness in the kingdom would be like that of the power-hungry leaders of the Gentiles, recognized by their dominion and authority they exercise over others, Matthew 20:25. But, Jesus taught that greatness in his kingdom came from serving others: "... Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26, 27).

Jesus put his heart into being a servant of others and gave his life for the kingdom. Those who desire greatness in the eyes of God must do likewise. We may never be recognized in the Football Hall of Fame or receive the Salesman of The Year Award, but we can put our heart into serving the needs of others and spend our life giving the best that is in us for the kingdom.

I Have Sinned

RON STOUGH

Three of the hardest words for any man to say are the words, "I have sinned." Out of the hundreds of characters whose lives are recorded in Scripture, there are only eleven to whom these words are attributed.

For some reason, man has always been reluctant to confess his mistakes, but if an individual hopes to be acceptable to God, he must learn to admit that he has sinned. I John 1:8,9 says:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins"

In our permissive world, sin is practically an obsolete word. People are "sick," misguided," or "socially maladjusted," but they are not sinners. The Bible declares that sin is a reality, and that the sinner is

unacceptable in God's sight. We must realize this before we will confess our sins.

Not only must man acknowledge that sin is real, he must also realize that sin is a personal thing. The Scripture teaches that "*all have sinned*" (Romans 3:23), but many times we readily confess the sins of others, while failing to admit our own faults.

Only when man realizes what sin has done to him, will he "*come to himself*," as did the prodigal in Luke 15:17. This sinful young man finally realized that he was in the hog pen, and he was there because of his sin. When we realize that sin places us in the hog pen of life, we will be more eager to confess our sins and obey the Lord's commands for forgiveness.

The Narrow Way

BOBBY DOCKERY

Jesus preached that life is a series of choices.

One of life's most basic choices is between the **broad and narrow ways**. As Jesus said, "*The gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it*" (Matthew 7:13-14). Jesus did not pretend that the way of discipleship was an easy, painless way. He spoke of difficulty and hardship. There is an easy way, but it is the way of death, destruction and eternal separation from God!

Why did Jesus picture the path of Christianity as a narrow way?

(1) Because The Terms Of Discipleship Are Narrow (Matthew 7:21; 16:24). You can be born a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Moslem, a Jew—but you can't be born a Christian. You must be reborn! (John 3:3,5). It takes a conscious decision . . . a choice . . . effort is required. Jesus demands explicit obedience (Luke 6:46; Hebrews 5:8-9).

(2) Because Truth Is Narrow (John 8:32). Truth cannot be broadened to accommodate error and still be truth! The truth is not elastic which can be stretched to suit every-body. When a mathematician solves an equation the correct answer—the "mathematical truth"—is necessarily narrow! When a pharmacist prepares a medicine he must narrowly follow the proper formula! By its very nature truth is restrictive. "*Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God*" (2 John 9).

(3) Because The Discipline Of The Cross Is Narrow. When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane the options available were narrow. To do the will of the Father He had to submit to the cross. The Christian life demands disciplined living from us as well (Titus 2:12).

We must choose either the broad way or the narrow way. The broad way may seem easy and inviting; the narrow way may seem hard and demanding. But in the end, the broad way is ruin; the narrow way is life!

God Organized The Church

GARY C. HAMPTON

The Father made Christ to be the head of the church (Ephesians 1:20-23). Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). We must submit to that authority.

Our Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47). Membership is not voted on by men. Membership is open to all people throughout the world (Mark 16:15-16; Romans 1:16). The New Testament does not give us an organization for the church universal, but it does for the local church. It appears that the apostles, under Christ, were over the church at Jerusalem and in Judea (Acts 6:1-4). Shortly thereafter elders are mentioned (Acts 11:27-30). Toward the end of their first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas ordained elders "*in every church.*" Paul directed Titus to "*ordain elders in every city*" in Crete (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). He went on to give a list of qualifications a man should possess before being appointed to such an office (verses 6-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7).

It is the job of the elders to oversee the flock they work with (Acts 20:28). Peter reminds them that Jesus is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-4). Also, the members should note that elders are to watch out for the safety of their souls "*as they that must give account,*" which would encourage careful consideration of their leadership (Hebrews 13:17).

Little is said about deacons, but we can piece together some important facts. Paul lists some qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The first seven men who may have held this office were those appointed at the direction of the apostles (Acts 6:1-8). Notice that they were assigned a specific task, and when it was carried out the Word of God increased and the church grew.

The New Testament also speaks of evangelists. Their duty is to preach the Word, not pastor the flock (2 Timothy 4:1-5). They should

proclaim Christ and preach all of God's instruction (1 Corinthians 2:1-2; Acts 4:12; 20:25-27).

Repentance: The Hardest Command?

DAVID W. CHADWELL

One of the Bible's least understood teachings is our responsibility to repent. The Bible begins by declaring (1) sin is the basic reality of human existence, and (2) everyone needs to repent. That is the basic lesson Israel was to learn from Adam and Eve (Genesis 2,3). From beginning to end, in all periods of Bible history, Scripture (1) documents the *need* for repentance, (2) *commands* sinful people to repent, (3) and holds people *responsible* for repentance.

The Old and New Testaments powerfully affirm the effect of human repentance on God. Repentance is essential to make the forgiveness of sins reality in a person's life (Acts 2:38). If one is to have his sins wiped away and receive the Lord's times of refreshing, he must repent (Acts 3:19).

How can a person repent if he does not know what repentance is? If he does not understand what Jesus, the apostles, and the New Testament writers meant by that word, how can he repent? One must understand repentance! Faith and baptism without repentance will not produce forgiveness of sin and new life in Christ.

This is the common explanation of repentance: "Repentance is turning your life around, redirecting life away from sin and toward God." Years ago someone explained the turning, the redirecting in this manner: "Repentance is a change of mind leading to a change of heart, leading to a change of action, leading to a change of life." All of this is true. However, in terms of everyday reality, do you know what that means?

Jesus gave the clearest presentation of the meaning and process of repentance in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24). A man's young son came of age. In the arrogance and false wisdom of youth, he decided to escape the restrictions and control of his father and older brother. He demanded and received his portion of the inheritance. A few days later, the son left home.

He traveled to a distant country and spent his entire inheritance

living in pleasure and ease. After he spent all his money, a severe famine struck that country. As conditions grew worse he had no food and no friends. He accepted a disgraceful job for an Israelite: feeding pigs (Leviticus 11: 2,4,7,8). Still he was desperate. He was so hungry he wished he could eat the undigestible carob pods he fed the pigs.

In his dire need he recovered "right thinking." He realized that his father's servants were cared for better than he. He also realized he was fully responsible for his mistakes. At that moment he knew that he had sinned against his father and God. He resolved to take action and face his sin.

What a hard decision! He would go to his father, confess his sin, and ask to be accepted back not as a son, but as a servant. He knew he was unworthy to be a son. He had no right to make that request. Imagine his agony as he walked that long journey home, wondering each day how his father would react. Would he be angry? Would he be ashamed of his rebellious son? Would he let him be a servant? Without regard for consequence, he returned.

That is a powerful description of repentance. It clearly portrays what repentance is. (1) He recovered his ability to "think and see correctly." He stopped deceiving himself and looked at the realities of his life and situation. (2) He saw his own sin, failure, and mistakes. (3) He acknowledged the truth: his sin occurred because of his choices and decisions. (4) He accepted full responsibility for his conduct and choices. "I have sinned against my father and my God." (5) He would acknowledge his wrong-doing to the ones he hurt—his father and his God. (6) He honestly understood his unworthiness. (7) He acted on his proper perspective, his right thinking. (8) He got out of the pig pen, he returned home, and he confessed the truth about himself.

A touching picture of our forgiving God is revealed in the father. After all that time the father still watched the road, hoping for his son's return. When that dirty, ragged, thin figure appeared in the distance, the father recognized him. He ran to his son, and in compassion hugged and kissed him. He hardly heard his confession—he knew the repentance was real! He received him as his son, restored him to the position of his son, and hosted an enormous celebration, because his dead son was now alive.

That is repentance. That is the powerful effect repentance has on God. That will occur in your life—if you repent.

Disregard For Truth

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Paul warned the Thessalonians that men would depart from the faith and that such apostasy was "already at work" in his day (II Thessalonians 2:7). When error comes it is not in one gigantic leap but in short steps that eventuate on the sordid streets of hell. The impact of the influence of such action overwhelms a lot of folk who go with the tide rather than choosing the challenging nature of Christianity. When the floodgates of apostasy open wide great masses of spineless people are swept away. Such sorrow reminds me of the famous words of Cicero in the first century:

"He departed, withdrew, rushed off and broke away."

It is very difficult to ever gain back those who unwisely and swiftly departed from Truth. When men fail to "prove all things and hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21) it becomes axiomatic that someday soon they will no longer be among the saints. Those who never check the Scriptures to document the way of salvation are already in the trap of Satan (Acts 17:11). It is significant that the warning Paul gave the Ephesian elders concerning apostasy was quickly followed by a commendation of the sacred text as their only hope of saving the church (Acts 20:32). When brethren no longer care what the Bible says, but are rather enthralled by public opinion and poise, they remind me of the man Catullus spoke of fifty years before Christ:

"Now he is treading that dark road to the place from which they say no one has ever returned."

A failure to stand up for the Lord (Ephesians 6:10-12) is tantamount to admitting the world is too much with us. When members of the church defect and abandon Christ for earthly fame they are bereft of solid foundation, secure moorings and future hope. Though it took Israel only one night to leave Egypt it took forty years to get Egypt out of them! When it was too much trouble to worship God properly (1 Kings 12:28) and serving Him became tedious (Malachi 1:13) the tie that bound the creature to the Creator was flimsy indeed. One of Fanny Crosby's best hymns reads like this:

"Savior more than life to me
I am clinging, clinging close to Thee,
Every day, every hour
Let me feel Thy cleansing power
May Thy tender love to me

Bind me closer, closer Lord to Thee."

When we, like Ezra, seek the law of the Lord and do it we will naturally be stronger and more helpful to others who are on the verge of departure from the gospel system. As there were false prophets in days gone by (II Peter 2:1) so shall false teachers abound in our day (I John 4:1). Such must be opposed by the sword of the Spirit, the blessed and powerful word of God (Ephesians 6:17). Those who would pervert the glad tidings must be exposed and never condoned (Galatians 1:6-9; II John 9-11). Regardless of the consequences "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29) and that must be done boldly (Acts 14:3).

Such courageous action will not make us morbid or tentative but rather aggressive with the opportunities the Saviour supplies. We will never fall into Satan's trap of pessimism but realistically prepare for battle by more ardent study of Scripture, more fervent prayer and a dedication to duty that realizes the opposition is strong but that our God is far more able than all the henchmen the enemy can muster (I John 4:4; 5:4; 3:8). We dare not compromise, for Truth allows no truce (Matthew 12:30), and there can never be concord between light and darkness (II Corinthians 6:14). Smooth words of dialogue will never replace strong words of purity (Isaiah 30:10; Jeremiah 9:3). We have no proper choice but to say with Joshua:

"But as for me and my house we will serve Jehovah!" Truth will be more precious than life and if death comes because we stood firm in the face of apostasy it will be a glorious and happy departure from this old sinful world (Revelation 14:13).

In the first century, followers of the Lamb of God, were persecuted, imprisoned and slaughtered by enemies of the gospel. Judaism, Gnosticism and Roman oppression combined to challenge Christianity. But, as many historians reflected, so the success of the Redeemer's army confirmed:

"The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the kingdom."

Apostasy again in our era is a shattering reality that demands the best within us if such error is defeated. Whether it be in a compromise in regard to worship, doctrine, morals (such as the marriage—divorce controversy) or authority, we dare not bend the knee to Baal. Too much is at stake—now and in the future and even unto eternity—for us to acquiesce. In the pulpit, classroom, radio, television, periodicals, homes, streets and personal evangelism we must be true to the inspired and complete Holy Scriptures! In morals and modesty and every phase of personal purity we dare not hurt but rather uphold the cause of our Savior!

T. O. Chisholm tenderly wrote:
"Bring Christ your broken life
So marred by sin
He will create a new
Make whole again
Your empty, wasted life He will restore
And your iniquities
Remember no more."

May we never desert Bible principles or abandon the faith of the gospel but, with definite stamina, press on to higher ground (Philippians 3:14). We should beware of false prophets and remember "we are complete in Christ" (Colossians 2:8-10). Being always prepared to defend truth, (Philippians 1:17), let us rejoice in our relationship with the pristine beauty of Christianity (Romans 5:5). The courage and conviction of godly people, working in unison, under the banner of the Lord, can overwhelm evil and error. May we, therefore, work together in upholding the message of the Cross and in exposing sin wherever it is found.

"Give me some men who are stout-hearted men
Who will fight for the right they adore
Shoulder to shoulder and bolder and bolder
They grow as they go to the fore"

Truly, nothing can stop us or halt any plan when courageous Christians stick together man to man!

Learn To Discern

ALLEN WEBSTER

If sin were an animal, it would be a snake. If it were a sickness, it would be cancer. If it were a chemical, it would be poison. In medical terms, it is a disease. In geographic terms, it is quicksand. In weather words, it is a hurricane. To the hunted, it is a trap; to the treasure-seeker, it is "fool's gold;" to the wagon train, it is an ambush; to life, it is death.

As bad as sin is, most people are not afraid of it. They have learned to look at it through lens that deform its true character. Let us examine some of these.

DARK SUNSHADES—"I can hardly see it at all." Ahab committed sin "as if it had been a light thing for him" (1 Kings 16:31). Those who condemned Jesus said, "Let his blood be on us and our children"

(Matthew 27:25). Some of the leading "thinkers" of our day are denying the reality of sin. What used to be black is gray, and gray is white. As in Jeremiah's day, the "blushing mechanism" of some has malfunctioned (Jeremiah 8:12)—nothing is sinful to them.

The spiritual senses of these have been dulled to the point that they cannot see, hear or feel with the inner faculties. Jesus looked into the hearts of those wearing sunshades and earplugs and said, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart . . ." (Matthew 15:13).

ROSE-COLORED GLASSES. How many times have we approached one about some sin only to hear, "I don't see anything wrong with it." The Scriptures are read, but only to hear, "Well, I don't see it that way." And, they don't. Prejudice glasses are keeping them from seeing the truth. But God's word has not changed, and will not, so they must take off the shades.

The Bible says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20). "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 17:15).

Sin is today spoken of as negative goodness, immature development, misdirection, a defect of temper, a mere mistake. Lust is called love, hard-core pornography is art, lying is coloring the truth, dishonesty is "good business," car theft is joy-riding, homosexuality is an alternate lifestyles, gambling is revenue enhancement, drunkenness is alcoholism, baby-killing is abortion and adultery is "spicing up a marriage."

Modesty is old fashioned quaintness, chastity is neurotic inhibition, standing faith is termed "standing in the way of progress," living in sin is a trial marriage and prayer is psychological feedback (Winkler).

TELESCOPE. A telescope is good for seeing objects a great way off, but is useless for anything close by. This is the person who knows all about every sin committed by another's family, but cannot seem to see anything wrong in his own. Paul wrote, "I charge thee . . . that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Timothy 5:21).

God held Eli responsible for his family's behavior: "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and *he restrained them not*" (I

Samuel 3:13; cf. 2:12). Although he confronted them with the error (2:22-25), it was too little, too late.

Some today quickly condemn an action in someone they know, but when one of their own is guilty of it, the telescope does not allow them to focus on it. For instance, before a son or daughter became involved in an adulterous relationship, they were strongly opposed to divorce and remarriage for just any cause (as they should have been, Matthew 19:9), but changed when it entered the family. Sometimes one family will condemn another who misses services (Hebrews 10:25), while they dress immodestly (I Timothy 2:9). One might castigate another for dancing (Galatians 5:19-21), when he/she gossips (Leviticus 19:16). One will condemn a drunk (Ephesians 6:18), who lies or curses (Ephesians 5:25, 29). Let's wear the jewel of consistency.

BIFOCALS—"Your sin looks big, mine is small." Some people cannot seem to focus on the beam closeup, but they can clearly see the mote far off (Matthew 7:3-5). Self-criticism is much more difficult for most than "other fellow" criticism. This is hypocrisy, the Pharisee's trade, "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:4).

Paul spoke of the danger of young widows being supported by the church. "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but *tattlers also and busybodies*, speaking things which they ought not" (I Timothy 5:13; cf. II Thessalonians 3:11). Christians will suffer, but they should never suffer for being "a busybody in other men's matters" (I Peter 4:15).

The Bible teaches us to not ignore sin. We are to help our brother "out of the ditch" (Galatians 6:1,2; James 5:20), for we really are "our brother's keeper" (cf. Genesis 4:9). At the same time, we must be careful to first clean out our own closets for blind men do not make good guides (Matthew 15:14).

MAGNIFYING GLASS—"I cannot forget my sins." Some Christians keep their forgiven sins under a magnifying glass, never out of the conscience's eye. If one has done what God said to do to have sins removed (cf. Acts 22:16; 1 John 1:7-9), then God has forgotten them (Hebrews 8:12). Christians need good "forgetters" (Philippians 3:13).

Let us all learn to discern about sin.