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EDITORIAL

Dealing With Arguments Used To Disprove The Essentiality Of Baptism For Salvation

Salvation means freedom from sins. Christ is the only Way of salvation; that is, only through him one can be saved from sins and become worthy of heaven. Since He died on the cross for the propitiation of the sins of the world according to God's will. In God's Bible we read, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, demonstrated at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:23-26).

Thus, God has provided the way of salvation to all humanity in Jesus Christ. What should then man do to receive the salvation that Christ offers? According to God's plan of salvation, one must believe in Christ from all heart that he is the Son of God who had died on the cross for the sins of the world, was buried, and was raised from the dead by the power of God (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; John 3:16); must repent of sins or turn away from all ungodliness (Luke 13:3,5); and must be baptized in water for the remission of sins, to become one with Christ in His death

and burial and resurrection. (Romans 6:3-5). When Christ, in the beginning, had given the great commission to His followers, as He stood before them, ready to depart to be received in heaven, His last spoken words to them were: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15, 16). When the apostles, as His ambassadors, began preaching His gospel to every creature as He had commanded them, and as soon as they believed and asked, "What shall we do?" Their answer to them was: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2: 38).

How can one deny the essentiality of baptism in God's scheme of redemption and yet claim to believe in the Bible as the book of God's word? There are those who say, Christ didn't say at Mark 16:16 that he who does not believe and is not baptized will be condemned, and since He said, but he who does not believe will be condemned, therefore baptism is not necessary for salvation. But, who will be saved, according to Christ, at Mark 16:16? He said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." Now, if one is not going to believe, then certainly he is not going to be baptized also. Just as if one is not going to eat, he is not going to digest also. One must both eat and digest to live healthy, but to get sick or die one has to quit eating. One who does not eat, is not going to digest either. And, it would be most absurd to say, "he who does not eat and does not digest . . ."

Some quickly go to the thief, who had died almost two thousand years ago on a cross when Christ was crucified at Golgotha, to escape baptism. They say, to the believing and repentent thief on the cross, Christ had said, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43). So if the thief could go in the Paradise to be with Christ, without baptism, then how can baptism be an essential act for salvation from sin? They forget, however, that Christ was still living, had not died for the sins of the world, when he spoke those words to the thief. The command of Christ's baptism for the forgiveness of sins was yet not given, as Christ had yet to die on the cross for the sins of the world. Some forty-three days after the death of the thief under consideration, after the resurrection of Christ from the dead and after he had lived on earth in the resurrected body for forty days, did Christ command, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved," as we read in Mark 16:16. Baptism in water is the likeness of Christ's death, burial and resurrection; as one is lowered in the body of water, signifying the burial

of a dead person, and the resurrection of Christ by coming out of the grave of water. Only after the death and burial and the resurrection of Christ Himself was that going to be possible. That thief wasn't required to be baptized for the remission of sins, as he lived under a different law of God, as did Abraham, Moses and David and many many more. Baptism for salvation was commanded by Christ after His resurrection, and those who want to be saved today by the death of Christ, must believe in Him and repent of sins, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.

Others say that water means word, and therefore if one believes in the word of God then one will be saved. Such would make Acts 8:36-39, in the case of Philip and eunuch, to read: "Now as they went down the road, they came to some *word*: And the eunuch said, See here is *word*. What hinders me from being baptized? Then Philip said, if you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the *word*, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the *word*, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing." Does this sound sensible? Of course, not. Now, replace in each place water for *word*, and you will have a nice sensible reading, wherein you will learn that when eunuch saw a body of water he wanted to be baptized. After Philip had baptized him in water he came up out of the water and went on to his way rejoicing. He was rejoicing because he knew that now he was saved. How did he know that? Because Philip had preached to him what Jesus had said. (Acts 8:35).

I believe, since baptism involves water, that makes people to stumble, just as it did in the case of Naaman in chapter five of the book of second Kings in the Old Testament of the Bible. Naaman, says the Bible, had become furious when he was told by God's messenger that he ought to go to river Jordan and in its water must wash himself seven times to get rid of his leprosy. Naaman's reasoning was: "Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be cleaned? So he turned and went away in a rage." (2 Kings 5:12). But after some time Naaman changed his mind, he repented, and came back to Jordan, and we read, "So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like flesh of a little child, and he was clean." (2 Kings 5:14). Naaman at first was looking at water only, without seeing at the power of God. But

then when he did realize his mistake and did according to the command of God, he saw the blessing of God. And, I believe, there are many many people today like Naaman, who need to realize their mistake and humbly submit themselves to God by doing His will. God's salvation comes to man when man does what God says.

Praising The Lord Or Taking His Name In Vain

J.C. CHOATE

James says that we use the tongue to bless God, or to praise him, and likewise to curse him. He says, "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." (James 3:10).

We are commanded to sing praises to the Lord. Paul wrote the Ephesians, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:19). He says almost the same thing to his brethren at Colosse. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Colossians 3:16). Finally, the Hebrew writer says, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." (Hebrews 13:15).

It seems rather clear that the tongue can either praise or curse God. It is also clear that when it comes to worship that the Lord wants us to sing and make melody in our heart to the Lord, that is, to praise the Lord with the fruit of our lips.

Can a Christian then praise the Lord in worship by singing praises to God, not using mechanical instruments of music, but at home, at a funeral, or in some other setting besides worship, sing religious songs with mechanical instruments of music? Some would say yes and some would say no. The question would arise, if we are not praising the Lord, would we not be using his name in vain? We know that we can worship the Lord and honor his name through singing only, but if there is a question that arises concerning the use of instruments of music in the

home, at a funeral, or wherever it might be, would it not be better to leave such off. Also, if it is going to cause division among brethren, then most certainly it should be left off. Those who would insist that they can use instruments of music with religious songs outside of worship, in spite of what the Lord has said, and the fact that it would cause division among brethren, are certainly wrong. They are the ones who want to have it because they want to have it. Whether it be out of tradition, being influenced by the religious world, or otherwise, it is still wrong.

I cannot personally attend a denominational funeral and sing when mechanical music is being used. I cannot do such for conscience sake, and neither can I do it because of the example I would be setting. I would be asked why I can sing with mechanical music there but not use it in worship on the Lord's day. They would see this as hypocrisy or not practicing what I preach.

Neither would I want mechanical music to be used at my funeral by brethren or non-brethren. In the first place, I would want brethren only to conduct the service. Then I would ask that they use spiritual songs only and that no mechanical music be used. If I did not use it during my life time in praising the Lord, I certainly would not want it to be used during my funeral.

Where such problems exist, however, each should be patient with the other, to give time for further study, and not be so quick to divide. Sometime brethren use things like this to divide over when really the base cause for such division has more to do with personalities, a struggle for leadership, or a disagreement over some other matter, than the issue at hand.

Let us be mindful of the fact that the religious world is looking on and finding great delight when we divide over something like this. Let us not divide, but let us continue to study the matters, and finally come together to believe and do what the Bible teaches that we might all be one in Christ Jesus.

Our main goal should be in singing religious songs, whether in worship or outside of the worship setting, to praise and honor our Lord, but never to degrade or to use his name in vain.

Especially For Women

What Is Death? What Is Resurrection?

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

"... the body without the spirit is dead..." (James 2:26)

"And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27)

"But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?' Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body"...

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."...

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' (I Corinthians 15:35-38; 42-44; 50-54)

Anthony stood at the gate and watched the funeral procession make its way down the street.

Mary came and stood beside Anthony, her arm around his shoulder. "Death seems such a final thing, doesn't it, Anthony? Even to Christians, knowing what God says, usually it seems like the worst thing that could happen to us."

"Isn't it the worst thing, Mother?"

"No, some sicknesses would be worse. Even divorce would be

worse. Just think how your friend, Sunder, feels, knowing that his father didn't love him and his mother and sisters enough to stay with them. At least, death leaves a good memory of the person who is gone, but anger, fighting and divorce destroy the life together as well as the memories."

"What happens when a person dies, Mother?"

"The Bible says that the spirit—the life force, the part of each of us that doesn't die—leaves the body. Without that spirit, the body is a dead thing. Do you remember what God told Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? He warned them that if they disobeyed Him, they would die."

"And then Satan lied to them and said that they wouldn't die. But they didn't *really* die. Mother."

"Yes, Anthony, they did. Spiritually, they died. For the first time they were separated from God, and sin has continued to separate people from God ever since that day. That is the worst kind of death, because it is eternal and it leaves us with no hope. We can't do a thing ourselves to save us from that kind of death. But God had mercy, waiting to help people out of the terrible mess we were in. He sent Jesus into the world to save us from our sins and to take away the wall of separation sin had raised between Himself and humans.

"But Adam and Eve died physically, too, because from that moment the cells and organs of their bodies began to age and die. They learned, and all of their children learned, that there is no escape from death. It *will* come."

"What happens when we die, Mother?"

"Ecclesiastes 12:7 says, 'Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.'"

"Some people believe in ghosts and spirits of people who have died, that they haunt houses and places and people. Do they really?" asked Anthony.

"The verse we just talked about says that when a person dies, his spirit returns to God—not that it wanders around the earth, haunting people. Jesus told in Luke 16 of the death of two men. One was righteous and the other was not. Jesus explained, 'So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.' So both of these people—the good man and the bad man—went to the place of the dead. Lazarus went to Paradise, but the selfish rich man

went to the place of torment. They were not free to wander around the earth. They were not even allowed to cross over from one part of Hades to the other. Abraham said. "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us."

"What is 'resurrection'?" Anthony asked.

"When Jesus' friend, Lazarus, died, Jesus told Martha, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' (John 11:25) In Romans 6:5, Christians are promised that if we have been baptized with Jesus in the likeness of His own death, we shall be raised in the likeness of His resurrection. When Jesus was crucified, after He had been in the grave three days. His Spirit came back from Paradise and entered His body again, making it alive. Only there was a difference: He would never die again, and His body was changed so that He entered rooms that were shut and He disappeared from the sight of those who were watching Him. (John 20:19-31; Luke 24:31) But it was His same body, brought out of the grave and changed somehow so that it would never die again, because He said to Thomas who was doubting that it was really the Lord he was seeing, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving but believing." (John 20:27).

"In Philippians 3:21 God promised that He will change our lowly bodies so that they will be like the glorious body of Jesus. He told the apostle John the same thing in 1 John 3:2: "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

"Get your Bible, Anthony, and read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 to me," Mary said.

"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

"Revelation 20:12-15 adds to the picture: 'And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.' Verse 12 of chapter 22 tells us the words of Jesus: "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with me, to give to every one according to his work."

"So, Anthony, we know that death is coming, and so is the resurrection. That's why it's so important that each one of us lives to please God, so that we can be ready to live with Him eternally. That's why Daddy and I are always trying to teach you children what God says in His word. We can't escape death. And the resurrection will be just as sure. We want to teach you so that your names will be written in the Book of Life that God is keeping."

"I want that, too, Mother. I want to be a Christian," Anthony answered, with tears in his eyes.

The Bible Speaks What Does Christ Expect Of His Church?

BILL BROWN

The Holy Spirit revealed to the apostle John what to write to the seven congregations of the Lord's church in Asia. He first commends them for what they had done and been in the past. Then he reprimands them for their apostasy and calls for a repentance. (Rev. 2, 3). Christ is inspecting His church and he knows what work his body, the church, should be doing. The Lord does expect many things. "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from

the truth, and shall be turned to fables". (II Tim. 4:1-4). "To the intent that *now* unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by *the church* the manifold wisdom of God". (Eph. 3:10).

Christians are in danger of "shrinking back" and it is every members responsibility to draw near with a full assurance of faith because his sacrifice has made this possible and we are to "hold firm the profession of our faith without wavering . . ." (Heb. 10:22-23). There is an urgent message in the exhortation of Heb. 10:23-25. The lack of enthusiasm and active participation in the life of the church causes a congregation to become sluggish. But these demands summon the congregation to respond to God's gift. The renewal of the church cannot happen without people who are motivated by God's gift to "stir up" others unto "love and good works". (Heb. 10:24).

Christ expects the church to have a great vision. This is the duty of every member, because without vision, people will perish. Prov. 29:18. Without a true knowledge of the word of God the people will be destroyed for lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it". (Amos 8:11-12). Blame then must be placed on the preachers that are refusing to follow the "charge" given in II Tim. 4:1-4, and to the elders that are not requiring it to be done. Therefore Matt. 28:20 applies so well since Christ requires his church to be a teaching of the word people as Paul stated in Acts 20:27, 31 that he "had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, and that by the space of three years he had not ceased to warn every one night and day with tears". Not until the teaching is done and the church becomes a sacrificing giving church, will the gospel go to the far-flung regions of the earth. "Honor God with thy substance, and with the *firstfruits* of *all* thine increase". (Prov. 3:9). Then a very careful study should be made of II Cor. Chapters 8 and 9.

However, all the above needs to be coupled with much prayer and pray according to God's will, striving together in prayer. I Thes. 5:17; I John 5:14; Phil. 1:27; Phil 4:6. Because Christians so many times take these words of God's grace for granted, there is a place for a word of warning. The Hebrew letter tells the good news of the sacrifice of Christ, and it also warns us that no man dares to trifle with God and His word. Heb. 2:1-3.

Another Advance In Medicine???

JIM FAUGHN

Have you heard about one of the newer developments in medicine? It is being reported as a possible aid to women who are infertile. According to a report I saw on the news the other day, these women may have a new source for eggs. Since it is normal for baby girls to already have the eggs which they will later use for reproduction, some researchers are experimenting with a procedure which would remove eggs from aborted female fetuses and implant them in women needing the eggs. **Wait!!!** Please read that last sentence again. The phrase, **"aborted female fetuses"** is a direct quote from the news report.

According to the Bible's account of creation, ". . . God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him: male and female created He them" (Gen. 1:27, emphasis mine, JF). Sexual identity is, thus, linked with being part of the unique creation of God which is known as mankind.

I am well aware of the fact that we are not the only part of God's creation which has both the male and female genders. I am also aware of the following:

1. Mankind is different from all of the rest of God's creation. (We are the only part made "in His image").
2. Along with being made in His image, we are also made as males and females.
3. The use of the label "female fetus" is recognition of the fact (whether intended or not) that you are talking about a human being and not a "tissue mass." (Before this idea can be discarded, something needs to be considered. If the eggs these "fetuses" can be used to produce human beings, doesn't that say something about the identity of the being that produced the egg?)
4. Abortion is the taking of the life of somebody created in the image of God.
5. The taking of an innocent life is murder.

Will the procedure being reported on prove to be an amazing scientific discovery or another "justification" for one of the greatest evils in our land? I hope that I am wrong, but I think I know the answer to that.

The Church, God's Commonwealth

CLEM THURMAN

The apostle Paul wrote of the Gentiles, "*Ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel*" (Eph. 2:12). But that was their condition before the Son of God came. His death on the cross was to reconcile both Jew and Gentile "*In one body unto God through the cross*" (v. 16). That "*one body*" is called in this same letter, "*The church, which is his body*" (Eph. 1:22-23). For several centuries Israel had been "*the commonwealth of God,*" but now the law that separated them from the Gentiles and made them God's special people had been "*nailed to the cross*" (Col. 2:14). Because Jesus had "*abolished in his flesh*" that "*middle wall of partition*" (Eph. 2:14-15), the nation of Israel was no longer God's commonwealth. That distinction now belongs to the church for which He died and in which He reconciles both Jew and Gentile to God.

The word, "*commonwealth,*" means: "A nation, state or political unit . . . A governing unit which exists for the public welfare, the common good." The word, "*common,*" means: "Belonging to or shared by two or more." That aptly describes the church, in which the members share equally in the things of Christ. Just as Israel was a commonwealth, in which the citizens shared in the common good. So is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ a commonwealth, in which the members share equally with one another.

WE HAVE A COMMON TEACHING

The Lord never gave one teaching for part of His church and another teaching for others. He told the apostles, "*Preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mk. 16:15), and they were never authorized to teach anything else. When division occurred in the church in Corinth, the plea was made, "*That ye all speak the same thing*" (1 Cor. 1:10). Although some will say that is impossible. Peter shows how it can be done: "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*" (1 Pet. 4:11). If all speak as the oracles of God, they will all speak the same thing. Whether Jew or Gentile, old or young, black or white, European or Asian: there is one teaching for all. Paul wrote, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation unto all them that believe*" (Rom. 1:16). And he warned, "*Though we or an angel from heaven preach*

unto you any other gospel than that we preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). All of the members of the body of Christ have a common teaching: His gospel.

WE HAVE A COMMON FAITH

A common teaching will always produce a common faith, for, "*Faith cometh by hearing the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). When people hear and accept the same teaching, they will believe the same thing. That is why Paul wrote, "*There is one faith*" (Eph. 4:5) and said that Titus was his "*true child after a common faith*" (Titus 1:4). It is popular today to speak of "many faiths," or "the faith of your choice." But such language is unknown in the Scriptures. Jesus never gave a multiple choice in faiths! He offers one faith. The Lord exhorts us, "*Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 3). All Christians "*have obtained a like precious faith*" (2 Pet. 1:1), or they are not of the faith at all. When all "*speak the same thing*" (1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Pet. 4:11), they will all believe the same thing (Jude 3).

WE HAVE COMMON BLESSINGS

When we follow Him, the Lord promises us "*riches in heaven*" (Matt. 6:19-20). The apostle Paul preached to the people of his day, "*The unsearchable riches of Christ*" (Eph. 3:8). And those riches are offered to all that are in Christ: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ*" (Eph. 1:3). God has given to those who are in the body of Christ, "*All things that pertain to life and to godliness*" (2 Pet. 1:3). The fact that one is rich or poor as regards this world means nothing in sharing the riches of Christ (Jas. 2:1-4; 1 Tim. 6:17). There are no special blessings for some that are not available to others: no privileged class, no elite. "*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one in Christ*" (Gal. 3:27). The blessings God offers to one, He offers to every one. That is the church, God's commonwealth.

WE HAVE COMMON RELATIONSHIPS

When the apostles were striving for honors and special recognition, Jesus told them, "*The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them . . . Not so shall it be among you*" (Matt. 20:25-26). And after showing the desire for preeminence among the Pharisees, Jesus told his disciples, "*He that is greatest among you shall be your servant*" (Matt.

23:11). We are brothers and sisters in Christ, all in the same family, having the same Father: *"In Christ ye are all the children of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ . . . Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are"* (1 Jno. 3:1). Because we are all children of God, we sustain a family relationship with every other member of the Lord's church. The apostle Paul speaks of the church as the body of Christ, and our being parts of that body, *"We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another"* (Rom. 12:5). For this reason, *"Members ought to have the same care one for another"* (1 Cor. 12:25).

WE HAVE COMMON RESPONSIBILITIES

When Paul wrote to Philemon, he called him, *"Our beloved and fellow-worker"* (Phile. 1). In fact, all of those *"called out of darkness and into his marvelous light"* (1 Pet. 2:9) are called *"fellow-workers"* in Christ (Phil. 4:3; Col. 4:11). Members of the body of Christ share the work, each being responsible to the Lord for what he or she does: *"So then, each of us shall give account of himself unto God"* (Rom. 14:12). But each one feels also a responsibility to other members: *"I say not this that others may be eased and ye distressed, but by equality"* (2 Cor. 8:13-14). Even as Jesus came *"to seek and to save the lost"* (Lk. 19:1), His disciples engage in the same work: *"They that were scattered a broad went everywhere preaching the word . . . We believe, therefore we speak"* (Acts 8:4; 2 Cor. 4:13). Instead of leaving the work of "professionals," the early disciples each sought to win souls to Christ. They shared the worship (Acts 2:42), they shared the giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-8), they also shared the responsibility of caring for the needy (Acts 11:29-30; 2 Cor. 8:10-14). Because we care about each other, we help each other: *"Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works . . . Bear ye one another's burden, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Heb. 10:24; Gal. 6:2). Because members share the responsibility, they also share equally the work.

WE SHARE A COMMON SALVATION

Jude wrote, *"Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints"* (Jude 3). The term, *"common salvation,"* simply means that the way God saves one He saves every one. *"God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and*

worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34). We are not allowed to "pick and choose" how to be saved: there is "one way" (Jno. 14:6; Acts 4:12). Jesus told the apostles to preach the gospel, and when they did it, people were told to believe (Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 16:31), repent (Lk. 13:3; Acts 3:19), confess (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37) and be baptized (Acts 2:38; 8:12; 16:31-34; 22:16). That is what people did to be saved 1900 years ago. People do the same things to be saved today. That is what "common salvation" means. God offers no alternatives. We accept His way, or we are not saved at all.

People in a commonwealth "share and share alike." The church of Christ, His body, is just such a commonwealth. Every member shares equally with every other member all the works, responsibilities, blessings and privileges that derive from membership in the body of Christ. When people asked 1900 years ago, "What shall we do?" God told them, "*Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ . . . They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls . . . And the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved*" (Acts 2:38, 41, 47). That common salvation (Jude 3) puts people into the church that Jesus built (Acts 2:41) in which all members enjoy equal rights and responsibilities. That is the church of Jesus Christ, which is "*the commonwealth of God.*"

Purity And Integrity

JOHNNY RAMSEY

In the great and memorable Sermon on the Mount the Prince of Peace made it exceptionally clear that the pure in heart would see God (Matt. 5:8). Truly, without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). There is no way we can exalt the Savior while living for Satan. But, still some try to walk the middle of the line with one foot in the church and the other in the world. Jesus emphatically stated in Matt. 6:24, "*No man can serve two masters.*" Halting between sin and salvation makes for misery in both realms (1 Kgs. 18:21). Paul, ambassador of the King, boldly penned these inspired words, "*Come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord*" (2 Cor. 6:17).

Just as our Creator is holy, so should we be (1 Pet. 1:16), as we bring our very thoughts under subjection to the will of heaven (2 Cor.

10:5). Jeremiah was powerful on this subject, "Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in heaven" (Lam. 3:41). If there is one area in particular wherein we fail to exalt Christ and His message, it is certainly in the way we think, act, dress, talk and live day by day. When our neighbors cannot tell that we have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13) we definitely have forgotten that we were made for His glory (Isa. 43:7). An unknown poet challenges us.

*He who lives to himself and dies to himself,
To himself and none besides,
Lives as though Christ never lived,
And dies as though Christ never died.*

The scenes of the cross bring sadness to our hearts as we recall the pain and loneliness of our vicarious Friend. With deep, agonizing tears (Heb. 5:7) Christ suffered in Gethsemane alone. Three close friends lost a golden hour to stand by the Lord because "the flesh was weak" (Matt. 26:41). The piercing cry, later on the Cross, should ever echo in our ears, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Taking our sins upon Himself caused the separation iniquity brings (Isa. 59) from God, "Who is of purer eyes than to look upon sin" (Hab. 1:13; 2 cor. 5:21).

*O the love that drew salvation's plan,
O the grace that brought it down to man,
O the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary.*

Freedom issues forth from the events at Golgotha. Christ makes us free indeed (Jno. 8:36). Free from sin, from the world, from the past, from the grave and from hell. Satan's dominion over us need never return again, because the blood that was shed for us at Calvary offers eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15).

The heart and core of the sermon on Pentecost is found in Acts 2:36 wherein Peter told the audience, "God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." Up from the grave by the power of Jehovah, Christ arose (Rom. 1:4). The bands of death had been burst asunder and Satan had been defeated (Jno. 12:31-33). The law of Moses had been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14-17), the Lord's church was purchased with the blood shed there (Acts 20:28) and through the veil of his flesh "a new and living way" was dedicated for us (Heb. 10:19-20). Prophecy was fulfilled (Lk. 24:14) and reconciliation for

fallen mankind was presented in all its abundant joy (Eph. 2:16; 3:20). Truly, "*Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain*" (Rev. 5:12). What a magnificent moment, what a monumental occasion, was the Cross of Christ!

Upon the rock of Christ's divinity we should ever adore, exalt and cherish the relationship we have with Jesus and His holy word. We are encouraged to look to Him as "*the author and finisher of our faith*" (Heb. 12:2) since the Master is the only way home to glory (Jno. 14:6). Christ "*has the words of eternal life*" (Jno. 6:68) and He speaks as no one else ever has (Jno. 7:46). He brings light and peace through the Cross and causes us to have depth and meaning in our journey through life (Gal. 6:14). Upon the rock of His gracious power we should center our utmost affection. We dare not allow any mundane joy to hide Him from our view. After God spoke from the Mount of Transfiguration concerning the perfection and leadership of Messiah, we read these interesting words, "*They saw no man, save Jesus only*" (Matt. 17:8). May we always keep our gaze permanently fixed on Him (Heb. 12:2).

Predestination

NEAL POLLARD

Many in the denominational world say the Bible teaches that God, before He created the world and mankind, chose a select number of individuals to be saved (generally 144,000 based on a misunderstanding of the book of Revelation). This, their brand of "predestination," is a perversion of the scriptures. To say that God chose "Mr. Jones" before time began, to be saved regardless of how "Mr. Jones" behaved in his body, or whether or not "Mr. Jones" complied with God's scheme of redemption in becoming a New Testament Christian, defies the slew of passages representing God as "no respecter of persons" (Deuteronomy 10:17; Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:6; et al). There is the possibility that "Mr. Jones" can be numbered with the predestined who spend eternity in heaven. The New Testament church for which Christ died believes in "predestination." The Bible clearly teaches it, howbeit so different from the above stance.

WHAT IS PREDESTINATION?

Observe what some learned men, who know the original language of the Bible, have written:

1. *Thayer* says that it means, "to predetermine, decide beforehand, to foreordain: in the N.T. of God decreeing from eternity" (THE NEW THAYER'S GREEK-LEXICON, 1981, Hendrick-son, pp. 541).

2. *Lipscomb*, in his commentary on Ephesians, writes, "those who enter Christ are foreordained in accordance with the provisions of God's will" (A COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES, VOLUME 4, 1939, Gospel Advocate, pp. 26).

3. *Wuest* defines predestination thusly: "to divide or separate from a border or boundary before; To determine or appoint beforehand" (WORD STUDIES IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT, PART FOUR, 1940, Eerdmans, p. 34).

4. *Coffman*, perhaps, has the best definition of predestination in his commentary on Romans. He says, "The syllable 'pre' is simple enough and refers only to the time (before the foundation of the world) when God 'destined' certain things to occur. God destined men to be conformed to the image of his Son, the meaning being obviously this that the destiny of every man ever born on earth was that he should obey God and be conformed to the image of God's Son. 'Destined' has special reference to the plan of God, his intention, the objective he had in view when man was created" (COMMENTARY ON ROMANS, 1973, Firm Foundation, pp. 316-319).

In summary of those four good definitions, we can understand "predestination" to mean that the destiny of all men was in God's mind eternally. He determined, before man was even created, that he would save those who met the conditions of his grace (conditions we refer to as the "plan of salvation.")

THE LIMITATIONS/CONDITIONS OF PREDESTINATION

Conditions are important to contracts, where one party defaults benefits if they fail to meet those conditions. An advanced college course may have as a non-negotiable condition that the student take an introductory course in preparation for it. Most clubs outline conditions for membership, whether they are based on income, interests, occupation, or similar provision. Most every will has conditions to which the potential recipient must comply. The concept of conditions in the eternal plan of God should, then, make perfect sense.

At the grocery store, a sale item will often have as a qualifier, "limit three per customer." The fourth item will not be covered by the sale. A college athlete is limited to four active years of participation in his sport. The speed "limit" is sixty-five on the interstate. If a person driving ninety-five meets a state trooper, he will be penalized for exceeding the legal limit. The concept of limitation, like conditions, is easy for us to understand. God, too, has limitations relating to the salvation He offers.

The conditions of predestination are not foreign to us. We must hear the word of God (Romans 10:17). We must believe the word of God, having faith that Jesus is God's Son (Romans 10:10; John 3:36). We must repent or perish (Luke 13:3). We must confess Jesus as the Son of God (Romans 10:10). We must be baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:27; et al). We must live faithfully until death (Revelation 2:10). If a person meets all of these conditions, he shall be saved. From the beginning, God has intended to save those who do the above.

Thus, the limitations are easy to grasp. As revealed in Mark 16:16, only the baptized believer will be saved. God destined only those who were baptized into the body of His Son to be saved. The limit of saved ones is not 144,000, as some suppose; rather, the limit of those who will be in heaven are only those who were baptized believers, members of the church for which Christ died, and faithful until death (in addition to those who die before they are accountable to God and those who are mentally incapable of being accountable to God).

PASSAGES WHICH REFER TO PREDESTINATION

While many of the passages of the New Testament embody the principles of predestination in God's scheme of redemption, at least five refer to predestination specifically.

1. In Acts 4:28, the phrase "determined before" in regard to the plan of God as He used His enemies to accomplish His eternal plan reveals the idea of predestination.

2. In Romans 8:29, the text says that Christians (28) are the foreknown and predestined ones to be conformed to the image of God's Son.

3. In I Corinthians 2:7, the mystery and the hidden wisdom of God (His plan for saving sinful man) is said to be "foreordained" before the world unto our glory.

4. In Ephesians 1:5, the saints addressed in verse one are the "us" of the fifth verse who are predestinated (foreordained).

5. In Ephesians 1:11, Paul again says "we." The antecedent of this pronoun is Paul, the saints at Ephesus, and all the faithful in Jesus Christ are predestinated.

Clearly, these passages teach that God determined to save everyone who would become a child of God and who would remain faithful until death. Should we believe in predestination? Absolutely! However, because the scriptures teach that only those who wear with fidelity the name "Christian" are destined to be saved, we must stand on that understanding of predestination. To believe any other way on this matter would be to our own spiritual hurt (Revelation 22:18, 19).

Things Related To Remission

WINFRED CLARK

You will find that there are ten occasions in the New Testament where this word appears. It is found in relation to several very important things. If we take the time to look we can gain some additional insights about this very vital topic. One can often learn some very good lessons by looking at a thing and then seeing the kind of things that are closely related to it. After all, we can learn many things about someone by the company he keeps.

One of the first things we need to have in mind is a good clear picture of the meaning of remission. What does the Bible mean in the use of the word? W.E. Vine would say, "a dismissal, release, or, the forgiveness of sins." Thayer says, "release, as from bondage or imprisonment: Forgiveness, pardon, of sins, the letting them go as if they had not been committed, the remission of their penalty." So we know that the use of the word will have to do with the forgiveness of sins, the full and complete pardon. That is what we are talking about when we talk about "things that are related to remission."

1. THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS RELATED TO REMISSION

Take the time to notice the conversation our Lord had with his disciples on the night he instituted the Lord's supper. It was then that he said, "This is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). None of us would doubt the fact

that Jesus had in mind the cross. In fact this was the night before he faced the cross the next day. Jesus saw his blood being shed. We know that Paul said at a later time, "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross . . ." (Colossians 1:20). Notice that we are looking at "the blood of his cross." So we know there is a connection between the blood and the cross. He also saw that blood being shed for many. He saw that blood being shed for the remission of sins.

The Hebrew writer would tell us, ". . . and without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). So we should come to the conclusion that the cross of Christ is necessary and essential to the remission of sins. Jesus had to die on the cross and that is the only means by which we can obtain the remission of sins. This is what Paul had in mind when he said, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). So the remission of sins, or the forgiveness of sins, is available only through the blood that was shed on the old rugged cross. No wonder the apostle Peter would refer to "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:19). What could be more valuable and precious than that which makes possible the forgiveness of sins.

2. THE NEW COVENANT IS RELATED TO REMISSION

When you return to the Lord's own words, as recorded by Matthew, you will see that there is a very definite relationship between the new testament and the remission of sins. Listen to these words, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). The Hebrew writer refers to it as the "blood of the everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20). You will find that the apostle Paul would repeat the words of the Lord to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). so we have no doubt that we can expect to find the remission of sins related to the new testament and to the blood that sealed the new testament (Hebrews 9:25-28). One who ignores that covenant which bears a direct relationship to the remission of sins, cannot expect to obtain that remission.

3. THERE ARE CONDITIONS RELATED TO REMISSION

It would not be right for man to set conditions if there were no conditions. On the other hand, it would be folly to ignore such where they have been prescribed. One would need to take into account a statement that Jesus made to his apostles. He said, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:23). So we can see the apostles were

to have something to do with the remission of sins. But take another look at something else Jesus said to these same men. ". . . Thus it is written, and thus it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins would be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47). So we know that the apostles were to remit sins, but we also know that they were to preach remission of sins and such preaching was to begin at Jerusalem. So we should have no trouble understanding how those apostles would remit sins. Such would be by their preaching as they were guided by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). They were not given the right to say just anything they had decided about this matter. That is the reason they were not to depart from Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). This would insure that they would say only what they had the right to say. It would mean that they would say what the Holy Spirit inspired them to say. It would mean they would say what the Lord would have them say. In so doing they could be assured that those to whom they spoke would be doing the only kind of preaching the Lord would have done.

But when you move to the preaching that began in Jerusalem you will find them preaching the remission of sins and salvation (Acts 2:21, 38, 40). But there is something else that you will also find. You will find that this remission was not an unconditional matter. It was not an unconditional matter when Peter went to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:43); "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth, in him shall receive remission of sins." So the condition of faith or belief is clearly spelled out by the apostle Peter. But remember that Jesus had said, "whoever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted." But here is the condition of faith. So the remission of sins is not without conditions. But what of those to whom the apostles preached in Jerusalem? After they had heard them preach it is said, "Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Now listen to these men who were to remit sins. What will they say? Notice, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Would you conclude that one could obtain the remission of sins without doing what the apostles said they were to do? Were not these men doing what Jesus had told them to do when he said, "repentance and remission of sins was to be preached in his name?" Did they not require those to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ? Is that not

preaching in the name of Christ or the kind of preaching that Jesus would authorize? Now is such with or without condition? One has only to ask that question. The answer is very, very obvious. All would reply with a resounding yes. We have no problem at all understanding who would receive the remission of sins. It would be those folks who did what the apostles told them to do. In fact, some three thousand people did just that and they were added to the church (Acts 2:47).

These are related to remission.

How Much Is Your Child's Soul Worth

ELWOOD HOLT

A few years ago there was a tragic story related in the papers about a little 19-month-old baby boy who is believed to have drowned near his ocean front home. The child, according to the heart-broken mother, must have gotten out of the fenced yard where he was playing. A young woman reported to police she saw a baby floating in the water, but by the time they got to the place, the body was gone. Lifeguards kept a constant vigil to no avail. The father had to be restrained to keep him from going out into the water in search of his baby. Boats dragged for the body, but evidently the little one was forever gone. This is especially a heart-breaking story to those of us who have little ones of our own. Our hearts go out to this grief-stricken father and mother, (and it isn't too hard to put ourselves to a degree in their places and know how consumed with sorrow we would be should such a catastrophe happen in our families). If we could, we would have done anything to have helped this family. But there is nothing we can do. We were not there.

Friends, I use this as the introduction to a few remarks which I believe are needed. While we are willing to do anything, reasonable or unreasonable, for the physical welfare of our children and our neighbor's children, what are we doing to guide our responsible youths in the right direction? What are we doing for their souls? I am speaking now of young people who are old enough to stand accountable before God, not little irresponsible infants. When infants die they rest secure in the bosom of Jesus the Lord, notwithstanding the teachings of various dogmas. But, young people of accountable age are going in the paths of

delinquency and sin, and instead of trying to help them, instead of reaching into the current of sinful destruction to haul them out, many older ones seek to justify their misdemeanors. Foolish, overly ambitious fathers and mothers are encouraging their sons and daughters in evil pursuits. They say that they want them to be fashionable and to reach the top rung in the ladder of social acceptability. They will do anything to preserve their bodies but are working for the inevitable downfall of their precious souls.

If we stand by and watch our children as they are swept out into the dark ocean of sin, God will certainly hold us accountable. All boys and girls who go bad are not bad at heart. They fall in with the wrong crowd, and "evil companionships corrupt good morals" (I Corinthians 15:33). Too many parents think they have discharged their duties to their children when they send them to Sunday school and church. When services are over, they will pick them up. And many wonder what they can do that is more effective? I will tell you, in the language of a Juvenile Court judge. Said he, in speaking on a problem increasingly serious in America, "Don't send your children to Church—take them." Many parents are not interested enough to go with their children. Parents, hear me. The time will come when you can no longer send them! Many are leaving their children to themselves. The wise man said, "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."

It is a poor, unworthy parent who would rather his son or daughter be popular than to be a worker in the Church of the Lord. Juvenile delinquency is at an all-time high. Are children worse than they once were? Maybe not, but as one man said, "They just know that temptations are keener than they were when we were children. Sin has been streamlined. But it is still the vicious disease that it has always been, and, unprepared to stand before God in judgment. If parents have neglected them, then they will stand guilty of their blood some day. The tide of sin is coming in . . . it is reaching for our children . . . if it claims them it may carry them beyond our reach forever, then we will have the rest of our miserable lives in which to stand condemned in the judgment seat of our own hearts.

Let us throw out the life line to our children while we can.
TOMORROW MAY BE TOO LATE.