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EDITORIAL



Happy New Year

Thank God for keeping us and allowing us to have another year. In the last few days many have greeted us with a Happy New Year greetings and likewise we have said the same to so many people. Certainly we all look forward to have a happy and blessed New Year, but to make a Happy New Year, there must be the proper use of time. Someone has rightly pointed out, "Dost thou love life? then waste not time, for that is the stuff that life is made of." Another has said, "Nothing is more precious than time and those who misspend it are the greatest of prodigals." Character may break to pieces and be built up again. Health may be lost and regained. Silver and gold might be lost but time can regain them. But time cannot be recalled. The brevity and uncertainty of time emphasizes our responsibility in the way we should use it. Yes, nothing is more precious than time. At Ephesians 5:15 and 16 the Apostle Paul was right when he said, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." To redeem the time means to buy back again the neglected opportunities. Of course, the time itself we cannot bring back. But think of all those opportunities that might have come our way during the time we have already spent through which we could have served our God and our Creator, but we failed to do so. Remember what Christ said in

Matthew chapter 25. He said, when he would come back to judge the world then people of all nations will be before Him and that he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And to those on His right side he will say, "for I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me I was in prison and you came to me. And then the righteous will answer Him, "Loro, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or naked and clothe you? Or when did we see you sick, or in prison, and came to you?" The Lord said, then he will tell them that, "inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:35-40). Such opportunities are not lacking. Let us buy back the time.

When the children of Israel were heading to the Promised Land, and when they came near it, just before entering into the Promised Land, Joshua, their leader, cautioned them by saying, "That you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before." (Joshua 3:4). They were going to enter into a new land, and God was directing their travel and would lead them right if they would follow His directions. We haven't yet lived over the year 1989. We have just touched the hem of it. Are we going to allow God that He through His Living Word might direct our steps as we live each day of this New Year? Many among us are guilty of filling our days with useless and worthless things, leaving no time for reading and studying from God's Book, the map of our lives, and for doing those things that God expects of us. Surely, as Paul said, "the days are evil." Most of us have no time for Godly living, for doing those things which God commands us to do. Its not uncommon to hear people say, "We have no time, we are too busy." Yet the very people have time for watching T.V. and video and cinemas, and for various other worldly activities.

We should know that we are living on "borrowed time."

We are not here forever. And who knows, this may well be the year of our summon to meet our God! None of us knows how long we are going to be here on this earth. The psalmist very correctly pointed out when he said, "The days of our lives are seventy years? And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labour and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away." (Psalm 90:10.). The writer of the book of Ecclesiastes exhorts, "Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed . . . Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:6,7.) And the Apostle Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote, "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14.12.) Are you prepared to meet God, even if? this may well be the year of your summon to meet Him?

Seeing the brevity and the uncertainty of time, let us resolve to draw near to God in this year by "Seeking first God's Kingdom and His righteousness" in our lives. And, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." (Philippians 4:8). God bless you and keep you, and that may you truly have a Happy New Year as you strive to give God and His Will first place in your life.

"Spirit-Filled Men" Contradict The Words Of The Spirit

J.C. Choate

There are many today who claim to have the "baptism of the Holy Spirit". They also say that the Lord works through them to perform miracles, to speak in tongues, and that God speaks to them. Many of these are said to be "Spirit-filled."

Surely all of these people would admit that the Bible contains the words of the Spirit. And yet, isn't it amazing that all of these individuals who claim to be Spirit-filled, are the very ones who contradict the words of the Spirit as set forth in the scriptures?

For example, all of these "Spirit-filled" men and women are in churches that the Spirit has never mentioned in his writing. They wear man-made names, yet the Spirit has said that salvation is in the name of Christ. (Acts 4:12). The Spirit speaks of the followers of Christ as being Christians in Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; and 1 Peter 4:16, but we never read of the Lord's people as being Pentecostals, Charismatics, Full-Gospel, as well as many other names. If these people really are "Spirit-filled" and "Spirit-led" then why would the Spirit lead them to be in churches and to wear names that he has not authorized in his word?

These "Spirit-filled" people are in different churches and organizations that oppose each other. Each claim that they have been baptized with the Holy Spirit but that the other has not. Each say that the other cannot do the things that he claims that he can do. Each contradicts the other in his preaching. Again, would the Spirit lead these men to oppose each other and to preach things that not only contradict what each other say, but contradict the things that are written in the scriptures?

There are some highly acclaimed "Spirit-filled" preachers who preach to large audiences and then invite all of those who want to accept Jesus to come forward to stand before them. Then he instructs them to repeat the "sinner's prayer" after him. That prayer has nothing to do with conversion as revealed by the Spirit in the New Testament. Can you imagine Peter and the Apostles inviting those three thousand in Jerusalem to come forward and then to quote the Lord's prayer with them? Haven't these "Spirit-filled" preachers read the words of the Spirit, the New Testament? Or has the Spirit given them a new message? If so, does that mean that we can reject the New Testament? which will it be? We must reject one or the other. For sure, we cannot have both of them. But do you suppose that these "Spirit-filled" preachers have ever read Paul's statement in Galatians 1:6-9? Let's read what he said.

Paul declared, in speaking to Galatian Christians, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel. Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Now what was Paul saying here? He said that he had preached the one pure gospel to them, that is, what one must do to be saved. Then he says that should he come and preach another gospel, or another way to be saved, or even if an angel from heaven should come and do that, then he said that they would be accursed. In other words, if the one pure gospel was preached, then anything else would be false, and could not save, regardless of who preached it. But aren't these "Spirit-filled" men of our day preaching another gospel? They are certainly not preaching the gospel that Paul, Peter, and others preached. They didn't have anyone quoting the "sinner's prayer." Neither did they have people doing a lot of other things that these modern-day preachers ask the people to do. Do these preachers think they are greater than Paul or an angel from heaven? Paul said that if he, or if an angel from heaven, preached another gospel that they would be accursed. Would preachers of today not suffer the same condemnation when they preach another gospel? Would that not prove that they are false teachers? They may have a "spirit" but it is certainly not the "Holy Spirit."

Have these preachers not read Revelation 22:18,19 where it says that we are not to add to the word or to subtract from it? We are told that should we tamper with God's word and change it in any way that we will be punished of God for such a deed.

But these preachers talk about God speaking to them personally and revealing his will to them. The question is: Do we have the complete word of God or not? If God is still speaking today, is he not a respecter of persons when he speaks to them

and he does not speak to us? If God is still speaking, then how do we know what God really wants us to do? But if God is speaking, would he tell one to do one thing and another to do the opposite, and above all, would he contradict what he has already said? As a matter of fact, he is speaking today, but only as it is revealed in the pages of the New Testament. Because of what he says there, we know that he is not speaking through these so-called "Spirit-filled" men.

While we are raising these questions, what about those "Spirit-filled" women who have become public preachers. Is the Spirit really leading them to preach to mixed audiences? If so, the Spirit is leading them to do something that the Spirit has forbidden in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul, being guided by the Holy Spirit, wrote the Corinthian Christians, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." (1 Corinthians 14: 34). Again he said, "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." (1 Timothy 2:11,12). Now you women preachers, how do you explain this? And you that listen to them, do you suppose the Lord is pleased with them, and you for supporting them? Keep in mind that the scriptures forbid them to publicly preach. Surely they are not led of the Lord's Spirit to do the very thing that the Spirit has forbade them to do.

My friends. I doubt very seriously if we could ever change the thinking of these self-proclaimed "Spirit-filled" men and women. They have long since been deceived, and seldom do such people take time to evaluate their situation, where they are, what they are preaching, and how contradictory it is to the words of the Spirit. Seldom are they honest enough to humble themselves to the point of admitting their error so they can turn to God. But what about you? Is it a matter of the blind leading the blind and for both to end up lost? I plead with you to think seriously about these matters and to decide to return to a "thus saith the Lord" in all that you do in religion. My friends, only the truth can save you and take you to heaven. Remember that Jesus said,

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6).

No, you don't have to give up any power, the Spirit, the truth, or anything else that is of God to follow the Lord. The mis-led and deceived never did have what they claimed that they had any way. With the Lord you are not only freed from sin and deceit, but you now have the Lord, the truth, and hope. There is nothing in the world more powerful than that?

The Authority Of Christ And The Bible

Mark Hooper

In the midst of so many religions and sects among these religions, there exists confusion concerning the actual authority to which we are accountable. Some say we should follow this path to God or that path. Others teach that this writing or that book is what we should obey. Still others say that the tradition of this group or that has authority for our lives. What is the true spiritual authority for our lives today? Can we know what God really expects from us?

As we examine the sources of so-called religious authority today, one stands above all the rest. Jesus Christ claimed ALL authority from God. He said to his apostles after his resurrection that "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). Is this claim by Jesus valid? It must be valid considering the proof Jesus offered to back up his claim. He had worked genuine miracles (not just tricks) for three years prior to his death, and then after being crucified, came out of the grave bodily and ate and spoke with his followers for forty days. These are facts of history that no one can deny. Therefore, he must have been an incarnation of God, God's Son, as he claimed. This makes his statement of having all authority valid as well.

Since the proof exists that Jesus was an incarnation of God, a closer examination of his claims will reveal the truth about religious authority. Not only did he claim all authority, but he claimed to be the truth in spiritual matters. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6). Because he was God in the flesh, he was able to make this claim. And because he proved his divinity through miracles and especially his resurrection from the dead, his claim about being the truth and the only way to God must be accepted by all. If one really seeks the truth in religious matters, these claims by Jesus Christ must either be accepted or rejected, and because of the proof mentioned above, the only real conclusion is to accept Jesus' claims and follow Him.

If Jesus has all authority, then our ONLY choice is to follow his teachings. Jesus stated this precisely when he said, "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day" (John 12:48). Therefore, the words of Christ and the message of his apostles whom he sent out are the only authority for us today. These words are contained in the New Testament of the Bible. We must read, study, and obey these words completely, without adding to or taking away from in order to be pleasing to the only true God.

If you would like to discuss this further, write to this magazine, or to the church of Christ-Bombay, P.O. Box 26773, Sion, Bombay 400 022. The church meets in Bombay at Bombay Central in the Methodist Centre building in their first floor chapel, YMCA Road, behind Maratha Mandir Cinema. You will always be welcome anywhere the church of Christ meets. Join us in following only the truth in *all* things.

The Cancer Of Hatred

Via Gospel Advocate

If love is the supreme Christian virtue, then hatred should be avoided by Christians like the plague. Hatred is one of the

works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). Hatred of one's fellow man means one is not a lover of God (1 Jn. 4:20). Most people would easily agree with this assessment, but how many of us would admit that hatred ever abides in our hearts? Asking ourselves a few questions can help us determine if this work of the flesh lives in our soul:

1. Do I want to retaliate, "get even!" with someone for a real or an imagined wrong?

2. Do I criticize? Build myself up by tearing others down?

3. Do I feel any satisfaction from ill-news about another, even a public figure whom I do not know?

4. Am I overly aggressive? To check this you need go no further than your daily drive in your car. What kind of a driver are you?

5. Am I ever guilty of administering "psychological torture"? Do I humiliate? Tease? Indulge in a cutting tongue? Do I enjoy this even slightly?

6. Do I enjoy "taking people down a peg," "putting them in their place," or seeing it done to them? (from William R. Parker and Elaine St. Johns, *Prayer Can Change Your Life* [Carmel, New York: Guideposts, 1957], p. 158).

Hostility and hatred are very damaging. They will hinder your prayer life, if not destroy it entirely. One of the keys to a meaningful prayer life is honesty with ourselves. We may have to be honest enough to admit our hostility toward and hatred of others in order to pray as we ought to pray. Jesus told us we must forgive others if we expect God to forgive us (Mt. 6:12-15; 18:35). He even taught us to pray for our enemies (Mt. 5:44), a certain means of being honest about our hatred and dealing with it directly. As we cleanse ourselves of hostility, we will attain more of the peace which passes all understanding.

God's Awesome Power : Man Without Excuse

G. N. Chauhan

So awesome is the power of God the Almighty that the natural phenomena of lightning, thunder, typhoons, tempests, tornados, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and the limitless forces in the cosmos, pale into insignificance when compared to God's infinitic power.

Through the Bible God has revealed Himself in more ways than one. If He had not done so, then there would be nothing authentic and we would know absolutely nothing for certain about God, the universe himself and the provision for his salvation. When all this is taken into account then we see the purpose behind it all. God wants our adoration, worship and service to Him alone and He will hold all accountable if we neglect to do so.

In Psalm 19:1 we read, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork." And in Ps. 8:3 it says, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast, ordained; What is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Innumerable are the Scriptures that speak similarly about the incomparable greatness of God so that man is indeed without excuse not to know God and and seek Him while he can be found, spiritually-speaking. The prophet Jeremiah says this in Jer. 29:12,13, which reads, "Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

The apostle Paul helps us to perceive God as Divine, as the Almighty Creator of all good things, the immensity of the heavens, the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and of course,

man himself made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26;2:7). Hear Paul as he speaks what the Holy Spirit made him speak. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." (Rom. 1:20.) See also verses 21-25. Such is the majesty of God and His awesome power and what is inferred by this is that it calls for man's total submission, honour and thanksgiving in worship to Him.

A second aspect of God is revealed that we perceive of Him as a Holy God, a Lawgiver and a Righteous Judge. (Gen. 28:25; Ps. 89:14; Jn. 7:24; Rom. 2:14,15). God's law is a portrayal of His holy character given to us as a pattern of conduct for man since He made man in His image. In effect, He has written this in man's heart or conscience. This awareness is not only an individual awareness but a corporate one for society as a whole to live in fear of Him, but because of man's obduracy, stubbornness and even audacity, he tends to defy God and His laws and centers his veneration on the creature rather than on the Creator who is blessed forever. This revelation of God in his creation and in man's conscience man should perceive of God as something real and should pay his exactions to Him, though these material things do not reveal man's redemption. There is need of a Saviour. Since the fallen state of man is so bad that even this material reality of God's truth exhibited in His creation is suppressed in the reprobate mind of man.

Though they knew Him as God, they did not honour Him as God . . . They exchanged the truth of God for a lie . . . They did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer. Such an attitude is tantamount to denying God altogether. They became futile in their speculations, darkened in their understanding; they embrace a lie; God gives them up or over to a depraved mind and as a result they indulge in idolatry (Rom. 1:25). No wonder then that immorality is so common and rampant in the world today as it was then, but seems the worst in this present century.

Even God's own people have not escaped His wrath when

they apostasised times without number in their long history of disobedience. Take the case of Judah's apostasy, idolatry and unrighteousness. When these had reached the limits of God's patience Judah was forcibly removed to exile and slavery, in Babylon for 70 years in fulfilment of God's righteous judgment (Is. 40-55 chapters). Their servitude was a hard and cruel one; they were utterly despairing of any hope of delivery. However, God was preparing the people for a fuller disclosure of Himself as a Saviour and pitied them. In Is. chap. 40 we have this pardon extended by God to redeem His people.

Jehovah God is a covenant-keeping God. He declares His covenant and the nature of the salvation that He would bring to His people that would come by Him, not by any body else. In Ps. 146:3 it says, "Put not your trust in princes nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help" (salvation), God challenges the worshippers of idols and invites the people to look to Him for salvation. Peter in the New Testament said this of Christ when he declares, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there none other name under heaven given among men, where by we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). And when we look into the book of Isaiah chapter 45 and read from verse 18 we have this; "For thus said the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it: He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited: I Am the LORD; and there is none else. . . . Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nation: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea let them take counsel together: who had declared this from the ancient time? who had told it from that time? have I not the LORD? and there is no God else beside Me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me. Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I Am God; and there is none else." (Is. 45:18-22).

God intervenes in the affairs of men whether in blessing or in judgment. He redeems His people on the one hand and judges His enemies. God is committed to His people because of

His covenant and the blessings that will be to the obedient in Christ (Eph. 1:3-13). Remember salvation is offered free only to the obedient ones (Heb. 5:8,9), doers of His word (Jas. 1:22), and keepers of His commandments (Jn. 14:15).

To all he has given the opportunity to get salvation under His grace (Tit 2:11) but this involves obedience to the will of Christ in obedience to the commands of the Gospel which is salvation with the promise of life eternal in the age to come (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 1:16,17; Eph. 1:13; Tit 1:2; Acts 13:46-51; 14:7, 15; 15:7). This is the proclamation of the good news to one and all before this awesome God who is ready to pardon anyone who believes and obeys Him. "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as head above all". (1 Chron. 29:11).

Rearing Children

Betty Choate

She was a sweet little three-year-old girl, but she was also stubborn, crying, and having tantrums whenever her parents said no to something she wanted. A curious by-stander asked her, "Why do you act like that?" With innocent frankness of a child, she answered, "So they will do what I want."

Children are not stupid. Often they are ahead of their parents in figuring out how to manage situations to their liking. And so that peace and quiet can reign, finally the parents will give in to pleading or crying and tantrums. The children, in such cases, have won and are in control. What a dangerous thing it is when the inexperienced are in charge—and how dangerous, especially, when it is the development of human souls and personalities that is entrusted in hands of the unknown ones who are actually being developed.

But parents will insist, "I *must* give them what they want—otherwise they will not stop crying! "Is that really true? No There are other ways to handle the situation so that the parent, and not the child, is in control. Let me share some wisdom gained from my parents and also from my own experiences from rearing four children.

First, the parent must decide once and for all he/she is the boss and that the child will obey. Once that decision is firmly made the victory is assured—the only factor remaining is to find the strategy that works best with each child, for children are different and must be handled according to their individual personalities.

Second, use some psychology to find the method that curbs the child. Scolding and reasoning are enough for some sensitive children. Others may respond more quickly to the temporary loss of a favorite toy or some privilege. Taking away television privileges for an evening or a week can quickly change a rebellious attitude.

Why does a child cry in a tantrum? Because it realizes that it is forcing the parents to turn all of their attention to him, trying vainly to quiet the noise. With my own children I learned that if I sent them to another room to cry alone, the tears disappeared quickly! I usually said, "Just go to the bathroom or to your bedroom, or stand in the corner with your face to the wall and don't come back to me until you have a smile on your face and can say, 'Sorry'." Amazingly, the tears dried up quickly when there was no audience! Even a child realizes that a tantrum performed for no one is a useless effort!

When authority has been established, when the child realizes that his parents *will* be obeyed, most of the confrontations will disappear. But occasionally strict discipline will be necessary and the parents must be ready to use it, for the child's own welfare. Sadly, sometimes when such clashes of wills occur, the parents lose their tempers and act like indisciplined children themselves, hitting the child about his head and ears or beating him

mercilessly. How wrong it is for anyone to act the part of a bully, even angry parents!

How should physical punishment be carried out? With control, with concern, with love. Before using any instrument of punishment on my children, I used it first on myself. That easily answered my questions about how to use it so that no real physical harm would be done. One of the most effective tools of correction, as my mother taught me (both through practice when I was a child and through advice when I became a parent!) is a thin green switch from a bush or tree stripped of its leaves. Applied correctly, it creates a stinging sensation that will long be remembered—but, again, parent should try it first on themselves so that they will not hit hard enough to make marks.

All parents have the responsibility to their children to practice loving discipline so that they will grow up to be worthwhile, well-trained adults, but especially is this true of Christian parents. In His word, God has given us strict instructions about the importance of training our children properly. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." "Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction." (Proverbs 19:18) "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly." (Proverbs 13:24).

Mistakenly, some parents think that they love their children too much to correct and discipline them. They let them grow as they will, unruly, undisciplined little humans whom others avoid because their behaviour is so terrible. They develop complexes, feeling unwanted, having few friends—and even the parents are relieved when they are away at school and there can be a little rest. If you, as a parent, feel happier when your children are somewhere else, it is time for some careful evaluation of your methods of parenting, for it is the parents and not the children who are to blame when they are "bad".

Sometimes we are blind to the unruly behaviour of our children, laughing it off as only "naughty". Others can see the

corrections that need to be made, but parents are very sensitive about any suggestion made by someone else that their children are not perfect. Why is this? Because of our own foolish pride. We realize, subconsciously, that a complaint about our children is really a complaint about the kind of job we are doing as parents, so we become offended.

But let's be practical: How many years did you go to school to learn to read and write? How much training was required for you to do your work well? We know that in every phase of life training and experience are necessary in order to do the job well, and we are eager for the training, not offended when the suggestion is made that it is needed. Yet, with the most important responsibility of all—the rearing of our children, the shaping of their souls—we somehow feel that the moment they were born we became all-knowing authorities on the subject of parenting and we bristled inside against advice offered by anyone. How foolish that attitude is! And, sadly, because of our own pride, our children are the losers. They pay the price while we through trial and error, bring them up. Useless mistakes are made that we are able to see so clearly in later years, when they are shaped and formed and it is too late to help them with our tardy wisdom. But other more experienced parents could have helped us avoid those mistakes if we had only been big enough to bury our pride and welcome advice for the sake of the children who were dependent on us.

India is changing. The family unit is changing. Children are being influenced more than ever by television, the cinema, their friends, and a relaxing of standards. Many more temptations await them than their parents were confronted with as they grew up. To remain good and obedient through the teen years and early adulthood will be a severe challenge. It can be achieved only if the parents exercise loving control over their children while they are young.

The scriptures say: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son

whom He revives...Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous, nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:5, 11) Let us listen to the wisdom of God and be guided by it.

Power Of a Transformed Life?

Dillard Thurman

No power on earth equals the gospel of Jesus Christ in transforming the lives of men! With an entrance into Christ, one's life begins a new phase: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. 5:17). A Christian's life undergoes a complete change from the selfish, sinful life given to the service of the devil! His life is no longer self-centered, but is Christ-centered. No life was transformed more than the life of Saul of Tarsus, who became the peerless and fearless apostle Paul! From a bold persecutor! As he had killed others, he became willing to face death for Christ Jesus, his Lord and Master!

The Bold Persecutor of Saints

The first time we see him on the pages of Holy Writ, Saul was at the stoning of Stephen: "And the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." (Acts 7:58). Though Saul was not actively engaged in stoning Stephen, yet "Saul was consenting unto his death." (Acts 8:1). If he were not an eyewitness to the charges, he would not have done the stoning; but he did aid and abet those who did. But he didn't cease: "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison." (Acts 8:3). Saul had already embarked on a "search and destroy mission" against the church of the Lord, and lusted to kill! He was still "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" when he obtained letters from the high

priest to bind men and women at Damascus, and bring them to Jerusalem to be punished! (Acts 9:1-2).

Paul Later Admitted His Guilt In This!

When Paul stood before King Agrippa, he made a full confession! "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which things I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." (Acts 26:9-11). He believed he was "a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief:" but yet he was chief of sinners as a persecutor! (1 Tim. 1:13-15). In Jerusalem he had confessed, "I persecuted this way unto death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women." (Acts 22:4). To saints in Galatia, Paul said, "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it." (Gal. 1:13). What transformed this bold persecutor into such a valuable servant of the Lord?

Why This Transformation?

What can account for this sudden and complete change in the life of a persecutor? Why did folk suddenly say: "He which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed" (Gal. 1:23)? Nothing can account for this change other than what the Scriptures reveal! As Saul neared Damascus to persecute Christians, he was blinded by a bright light and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "Who art thou, Lord," brought the reply: "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest." Further, Saul was told, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (Acts 9:3-6). After three days and nights without eating or drinking, Saul was a changed man! The Lord told Ananias to go to Saul, saying, "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." (Acts

9:15). Saul later told of the meeting when Jesus said, "For I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of these things in the which I shall appear unto you." (Acts 26:16). When Ananias came to Saul saying, "For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:25-16). Saul obeyed without hesitation, and began his new life in Christ as a transformed man!

Saul Begins a New Phase of Life!

The new phase of his life was instantly seen! Ananias had come to restore his sight, "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose and was baptized. And when he had received meat was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." It is no wonder folk were amazed, and said, "Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the high priests?" (Acts 9.18-21). He had been trying to erase the teaching of the gospel from the earth. now he turns to devote his body, soul and spirit to proclaiming that gospel to the whole world! What transformation! Later to King Agrippa, he said: "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them in Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." (Acts 26:19-20). From that day on the road to Damascus, Saul (later Paul) never looked back!

A Changed Attitude Toward Life!

Once he had come into Christ, Paul's whole being was transformed! His confidence in the flesh as a Jew had been pronounced (Phil. 3:3-6). He could say he had "profited in the Jews' religion above many of my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my father." (Gal. 1:14). But he turned his back on all that for a new life in Christ! "But what

things were gain for me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them as dung, that I may win Christ." (Phil. 3:7-8). Only one thing can explain it: Paul really saw and talked with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, and it transformed a persecutor!

Paul's changed attitude is reflected in his statement: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20). The old man of sin died completely; and when he was buried into Christ, a new man lived in Christ! Then Paul could say, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. 6:14). The bold persecutor of Christ was in the distant past: and he could now say, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto the things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:13-14). He looked on ahead!

Paul's Devotion to the Gospel

Having once tried to destroy it, Paul's life was now turned to preaching the gospel; and he was prepared! "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation." (Rom. 1:15-16). He sought no praise, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." (1 Cor. 9:16). This was a singular subject with Paul; "For I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:1). His whole purpose in life was simply stated: "I am set for the defence of the gospel." (Phil. 1:17).

Without boasting, this stalwart soldier of the cross could say: "But I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but

the grace of God which was with me." (1 Cor. 15:10). So fervently did he preach that in a short time he could write: "So that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." (Rom. 15:19). Friend, this encompassed the religion of Jerusalem, all of Asia Minor, and four provinces in Europe! And then he closed by saying, "Having no more place in these parts," that he desired to see Rome while going on to Spain! We just don't have a whole host of preachers like that running loose today!

Paul's Personal Life Had Changed:

Maybe Paul was so effective in telling the story of Jesus because He had changed his life! "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18). It was Paul who wrote: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," and "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (Phil. 2:5; 1 Cor. 11:1). He wants the same transformation in the lives of all God's saints! Our own transformation must be shown to the world, and will be seen as we live closer to Jesus Christ, our great example! "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:1-4). Living with this constantly in mind will assure our own transformation in Christ, to be seen by the world.

Great Teachers

Johnny Ramsey

Until, and unless, all of us who teach the Bible manifest the Savior and make Him real, our instruction will not be very compelling. Only when Christ constrains us (2 Cor. 6:14) will we be

able to seriously draw others to the Lord of life and glory. I have seen the influence of a teacher disintegrate due to a quick temper manifested or a childish retort to ill-mannered pupils. We must as teachers, rise above pettiness and display the spirit of Jesus—regardless of the surroundings. Do we always remember to convey the sentiment of Psa. 144:15? “Yea, happy is that people, whose God is Jehovah.”

A deeper spiritual walk with God is needed by every member of the body of Christ. As teachers of the Bible we must develop a more consecrated life in order to “be strong in the Lord and the power of his might” (Eph. 6:10). This is needed for our own devotional aptitude and also for conveying this love for Jesus to those who sit at our feet. Teachers need to be examples in assembly worship and in daily, vibrant holiness. Until our friends believe we echo the commanding sentiments of Psa. 119:97, we are lacking in the dimension of devotion: “O how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day.”

There is no short-cut method to successful Bible teaching. We cannot walk up one day with a supernatural knowledge of divine truth. It takes time, thought, sweat, tears and constant work to be able to properly impart God’s will to others. Each one of us has probably exclaimed with Samuel Johnson: “If it rained knowledge, I’d hold out my hand.” However, we all know it doesn’t work that way. The word of the Lord is still able to build us up (Acts 20:32) and furnish us unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:17). But it is our duty to “lift up the Bible as though it fell from heaven into our hands alone, and thus, with single eye, read for ourselves.” No one else can study the book for me, and I should not desire it if it were possible.

Are we able to tell men “words whereby they might be saved” (Acts 11:14)? Can we “give answer” to those who would question us (1 Pet. 3:15)? It is still impossible to teach that which we do not know. As fellow-workers with God (2 Cor. 6:1), we dare not be spiritually tongue-tied. May the Lord help us to so prepare ourselves that. Our lips will break forth constantly and properly with the message of redemption. There is just no excuse for an unpre-

pared Bible teacher. Just as there is no possible way to sell anything without working, it is likewise out of the realm of possibility for us to lead souls to heaven without expending effort.

Our magnificent obsession must always be the faithful teaching of the unsearchable riches of Christ, Let us begin now to do a better job of Bible teaching. There is no greater joy nor higher calling. May God help us to be loyal servants in His vineyard. May we never be content with mediocrity, when, with His help, we can soar to the realm of excellency. Precious souls are in the balance, and eternal bliss is at stake. Jesus lived to teach. If the burning fire of His word dwells within us, we will not be able to keep from opening our mouths and telling millions of the Lord and His mercy (Jer. 20:9; Acts 8:35).

The Errors Of The Charismatic Movement

Steve Williams

The charismatic movement and various types of Pentecostal religious groups are on the increase throughout the world, in particular in third world countries. Predictions are that in a few years they will outnumber all other Protestant groups combined! It is sad, however, that errors related to miraculous gifts are promulgated by them. Thomas R. Edgar, professor of New Testament literature and exegesis at Capital Bible Seminary, has recently written a scholarly refutation of charismatic claims. This article is a review and digest of Edgar's work ("The Cessation of the Sign Gifts," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 (October-December 1988); 371-86).

The charismatic claim is a serious one. "These so-called 'spiritual' experiences are either from God or not from God. There can be no neutral or partially true position. Either they are biblically true or they are false experience. . . . By the very

nature of the issue, the 'gifts' such as tongues, healings, and signs and wonders, so prevalent in today's charismatic movement, are either from God or not from God. There can be no middle ground" (p. 372). Edgar's *first* argument against pentecostals is based upon history.

If miraculous gifts had not ceased with the close of the apostolic age of the church in the first century, one would expect an unbroken chain of such gifts throughout the past 1,900 years. The burden of proof is on the charismatics to demonstrate the continuation of spiritual gifts in order to validate their current claims. The evidence of history, however, is that "the miraculous gifts of the New Testament age *did* cease and did not occur for almost 1,900 years of church history and certainly have not continued in an unbroken line....Chrysostom, a fourth-century theologian, testified that they had ceased so long before his time that no one was certain of their characteristics" (pp. 372-73).

There are a few alleged instances after the apostolic age and then a gap of 1,000 years before more alleged instances occur. "The alleged instances are even more rare if restricted to genuine believers, and if hearsay evidence is omitted. If instances of the gift of healing rather than supposed answers to prayer are considered, the alleged instances all but vanish" (p. 373). The fact that miraculous gifts ceased and are absent for centuries is now admitted by many charismatics.

Many charismatics admit the cessation of miraculous gifts but claim they were predicted to return in these "latter days." "There is no biblical evidence that there will be a reoccurrence in the church of the sign gifts or that believers will work miracles near the end of the Church Age...The 'latter rain, arguments are incorrectly based on verses that actually are referring to seasonal rainfall in Israel (Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23)...The arguments based on the expression 'in the last days' in Acts 2:16-21 are also invalid" (p. 375). The "last days" included Pentecost (Acts 2:16), thus, can not refer to the end of the church age.

"The present charismatic movement is characterized by

phenomena that began in the church about 100 years ago, which apart from any historical connection or evidence are claimed to be the same as the miracles performed in the apostolic age. It is simply naive to accept this claim without some direct historical link or solid biblical evidence that these present phenomena are the same as those in the days of the apostles....History testifies to the contrary. The gifts ceased and there is no reason to expect their presence or reoccurrence today" (p. 375).

Secondly, Edgar says charismatic claims are shown to be false because of a lack of similarity between current "miracles" and "signs" and those of the New Testament. "The miracles and signs of the apostolic age were clearly and overtly miraculous. Even the opponents of the gospel could not refute the miracles of the apostolic age. But today's 'signs and wonders' cannot be verified even by those who are neutral or friendly to the movement" (p. 376). Edgar deals with pentecostal claims under four headings.

The gift of healing. "Today's healers admittedly often fail.... The alleged healings are seldom instantaneous or complete. They usually are not healings of objectively verifiable illnesses; they often pertain to internal disorders such as 'emotional healing.' Rather than being irrefutable, they are unverified or even denied by those neutral.... There is little correspondence between modern-day charismatic 'healings' and the healings recorded in the New Testament. . . No one heals today in such a way that it is clearly the New Testament gift of healing" (pp. 376-77).

(2) *Exorcism of demons.* Demon possession in the New Testament was not a vague way to refer to emotional problems. While someone today may refer to the "demon of worry" or the "demon of alcohol," that is not the same as the New Testament problem of demonism. "The New Testament instances of exorcism never failed, were without preliminaries, were instantaneous, were usually performed in public often *en masse*, usually on unbelievers, and in the case of the manic girl (Acts 16:16-18) apart from any cooperation of the demonized. Today's 'exorcisms' often fail, often require repeated sessions, are usually unverified

as demonism, and are never *en masse*, seldom if ever occur in public, are only on the cooperative 'faithful' " (p. 377). So-called modern exorcism usually amounts to little more than "common psychiatric or religious counselling sessions" (p. 377).

(3) *Raising the dead*. "No modern-day 'raising of the dead' has been verified. Wimber refers to a man who fell, hit his head, was apparently unconscious for three minutes, and 'came to' with a bump on his head. After Wimber and others prayed the bump eventually went away. This is incredible, not as a miracle, but that anyone would consider this a possible raising of the dead. Would anyone have been convinced by such a (so-called) 'miracle' that Jesus was the Son of God or that the apostles represented God?" (p. 378).

(4) *The gift of tongues*. "The tongues of the apostolic age were genuine miracles, since they were able to speak previously unlearned foreign languages, rather than the 'charismatic tongues' of today, which can easily be duplicated (Acts 2:4-11)...New Testament tongues were verifiable foreign languages. The term *glossa* means 'language' and is never used for ecstatic speech. By contrast, today's 'tongues' have never been verified as actual languages. All objective studies by impartial linguists indicate that they do not have the characteristics common to languages....There is no similarity between today's tongues and the New Testament gift" (p. 378-79).

Edgar concludes, "The 'charismatic gifts' of today are not similar to the New Testament phenomena either in general perspective or in the details. There is no evidence to conclude that they are the same; there is every reason to conclude that they are not....All objective evidence is contrary to the charismatic claims. It is not sufficient to assert that by faith their claims must be taken contrary to the evidence. This is existential naiveté, not faith. Faith is trust in biblical evidence rather than in experience" (p. 379).

Thirdly, Edgar reviews biblical evidence for the cessation of

miraculous gifts. "There are several indications in the Scriptures that the gifts of tongues, healing, and miracles (signs and wonders) will not continue" (p. 380). Apostleship, in the narrow sense of the twelve plus Paul who had witnessed the resurrection (Acts 1:22-26; 1 Cor. 9:1-2), did not continue beyond the New Testament era. The gift of apostleship is at least one example of a gift that was not to continue beyond the first century. "It is contrary to Scripture to assume that all gifts and all happenings of the apostolic church are to continue and to be expected in today's church" (p. 382). The miracles were "intended by God as evidence to authenticate the apostles' preaching" and "ceased with the apostolic age" (pp. 382-83).

Fourthly, Edgar contends that certain characteristics of the modern charismatic movement refute their claims. The fact that so-called healings and miracles are performed by divergent groups teaching contradictory doctrines, including non-Christian religions and sects such as Mormonism, demonstrate that these gifts must not be from God or else the Holy Spirit would show some concern for correcting crucial differences (pp. 383-85). A common characteristic of the charismatic movement is the emphasis on experience which "often results in emphasizing 'experience' over Scripture" (p. 384). The so-called miraculous gifts of charismatic "have not produced any genuine spiritual advance over 'noncharismatics,' because theological and moral problems among their leader and laymen are common (p. 385). They have "produced no advance in biblical knowledge or spiritual living" (p. 385).

"This movement has solved no theological issue, produced no advance in biblical knowledge, and has not produced more spiritual Christians. Would such an effusion of the genuine Spirit of God produce so little?...On the negative side the movement has split churches, and through its televangelists the movement has had one of the most significant negative impacts on the testimony of the church in recent history. These characteristics are evidence that the charismatic phenomena are not the

New Testament phenomena, that the genuine gifts are not present" (pp. 385-86).

In summary there are four reasons for rejected modern charismatic claims :

- (1) History demonstrates that miraculous gifts ceased with the apostolic age.
- (2) Modern miraculous claims lack similarity to the genuine New Testament miraculous gifts.
- (3) The Bible affirms the cessation of miraculous gifts.
- (4) Contradictory and negative characteristics of the charismatic movement demonstrate it is not of God.

With these four arguments Edgar has well summarized the evidence that modern so-called miraculous gifts of charismatics are not of God, not authorized by the Bible, and should not be engaged in by those who desire to be pleasing to God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.