

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL

### **"Giving Thanks Always For All Things To God"**

One of the most dangerous, yes, serious mistakes that most of us commit in our lives is to leave out God in our plans and in prosperities. Most of us act in life like the man Christ described in Luke the 12th chapter who said: "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops? So he said, I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry. But God said to him, You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided? So is he," said the Lord, "who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Have you ever paused to think: how much God has done for us and has given us? The man of the story of Christ, talking, yes, braggingly spoke atleast eleven times "I" or "My"!! There was no God, the giver and provider of all things, in his life's planning! "This is mine", "I have obtained these"; "I am going to do this or that for myself."-This is how he took everything and planned for his future!!! Yet, he never wanted to think that He could go any moment, and what he said was his, was actually not his! How sad!

Aren't there people, yes most people, everywhere, who are celebrating the New Year with drinking and dancing and merry making

and by engaging in various worldly and evil things? For them the New Year is the time of merry making; spending their time and money on worldly things. They have no time to realise that time and everything they have is a gift of God, our heavenly Father!

The apostle Paul, in Ephesians 5:20 reminded by saying, "Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." God, has created us; he has given us life and everything to sustain our life. We are not here forever. We are like pilgrims here. We are here today, and may be gone tomorrow, forever into eternity to live there according to as we have lived here! "Do not be deceived", said the inspired man of God, in Galatians 6:7,8, for "God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." What we shall reap in eternity depends on what we are sowing now in our lives. Again, said the inspired apostle: "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15,16). And, most certainly, we are living today more so when the days are evil! With so much filth and dirty things shown on Television everywhere; with so much dirty and filthy literature available in most languages everywhere; it is becoming more and more easier, yes tempting, for people to forget that there is a God who will judge us all one day through the things He has shown to us in His Book, and indulge in watching T.V. and in reading mind corrupting magazines and books. No wonder people have not time to pray to God to express thanks to Him, and to worship him or for reading from His Book, which is: "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16,17). And, no wonder, people have no time for meditation on "whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report . . ." (Philippians 4:8). But rather the perilous times for which the apostle prophesied prevail. "But know this," he had said, "that in the last days perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, *UNTHANKFUL*, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power." (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

The best way to celebrate the New Year therefore would be to get

together as families or friends, and through prayer offer our thanks to God for the gift of time, for the New Year. Ask the forgiveness of God for the things we may have committed knowingly or unknowingly against the will of God in the times past. Ask Him to help us live the New Year for His praise and glory; that through our lives, speech and conduct His name might be exalted among men everywhere. Thank God for everything He has done for us, and above all for Jesus Christ, the Word, Who became the propitiation for our sins by giving Himself to die in our stead on the cross. Our prayer should be to God that He might help us all to do those things which He has commanded in His Scriptures, things that we know that we ought to do but have not done yet to prepare ourselves to meet our God in eternity and to live with Him forever.

## ***Does One Ever Have The Right To Refuse A Person Who Requests Baptism?***

**J.C. CHOATE**

There are those who believe that the Lord has commanded us to preach the gospel (Mark 16:15, 16), and when we do that, and one or more requests baptism, that we are to comply with their wishes without questioning them about their motives or anything else. I personally cannot accept that. I believe that the Lord holds me responsible for being sure, as far as possible, that they are properly taught, that they understand what they are doing, and that they comply with what the Lord expects of them to be saved and to be added to his church.

It is true that I cannot look into their mind and heart and know their motives, but if I am led to believe by their response that they do not fully understand what they have been taught, or they are unwilling to repent of all of their sins, or to confess Christ as the Son of God, then I must take that to mean that some more teaching needs to be done. If after I have gone over such matters again and again, to be sure that they know what the Bible teaches, and they are still unwilling to accept that, and to comply with the Lord's wishes, then I have no other alternative but to refuse to baptize them. Anyway, how can they be saved if they are unwilling to obey the Lord, and how can I baptize them scripturally in such a case? Not only that, but I would be doing them a disservice if I

baptized them under such circumstances and I would surely be displeasing to the Lord in such a case as this.

Furthermore, I believe that I have a perfect right, a scriptural responsibility, to ask some questions of one that I have taught before baptizing that person. I first of all would probably ask such a person if they understand what I have been saying or what I have taught them. I would go on to ask them if they understand that baptism is a burial in water and for the remission of sins. Then I would ask if they accept the fact that if one believes and is baptized that he is saved, that the Lord adds him to his church, and that as a result one wears his name. As a matter of fact, I would question that person a good bit about the church because if one doesn't sufficiently understand these matters, how can he obey God? Furthermore, if one doesn't get all of this straight in his mind now, then he is going to have problems later on. I believe that all of this is just being sure that one is properly taught and that he is willing to meet the Lord's conditions of salvation before he is baptized.

Also, with the way things are now, the way people are living with one another without marriage, and with as many divorces and remarriages as there are, then I feel that before I baptize a person I need to ask that person about his marriage situation. Then if he is living in sin and refuses to repent, then others might go on and baptize such a person, but I cannot conscientiously do so. How will it help to baptize someone like that? How can a person even think about being baptized in that case? Even if he is immersed in water, it is not only mockery of God's command, but it leads that person to think he is alright, and it sets a bad example for others.

Not only that, but any time there is some indication that one is unwilling to repent or to correctly obey God on any point, then he should not be baptized until he is willing to obey the Lord as he has clearly set forth in his word.

Finally, if a person is willing to comply with God's teaching on repentance then I would ask him if he believes that Christ is the Son of God. If he then confesses Christ to be the Son of God (Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32), then I will be delighted to baptize him in water (Acts 8:38,39; Colossians 2:12) for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38) that he may be saved by the Lord and added to his church. (Acts 2:47). If he should refuse to confess Christ, or refuse to do anything else the Lord has commanded, such as repenting of his adultery or any other sin, then I will certainly refuse to baptize him on the basis that I cannot scripturally baptize one that will not obey the Lord. As you may remember, after Philip had taught the eunuch about Christ and his need to obey the

Lord, and the eunuch asked if he could be baptized, Philip explained that he could if he believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. (Acts 8:26-39). Then the record says that the eunuch said that he indeed believed that Christ was the Son of God and on hearing that confession Philip proceeded to baptize him. But suppose the eunuch had been unwilling to confess Christ as being the Son of God. Do you think Philip would have baptized him anyway? Or what if the eunuch had been unwilling to give up his former religion or to repent of some open sin in his life? Do you suppose in such an instance that Philip would have ignored such and would have proceeded to baptize him? Surely you know that he would not have done so. Neither can we baptize any person that is unwilling to company with God's terms of pardon. No, it would not be me that would be preventing him from obtaining salvation, but he would be the guilty person. Don't blame me or any other person for one's refusal to obey God. Remember too that the Lord will gladly save all who will come to him on his terms. It is therefore up to the individual who needs to be saved to comply fully with those terms if he expects to be saved.

*Especially For women*

## ***Discipline Or Child Abuse?***

**BETTY BURTON CHOATE**

Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction. (Proverbs 19:18)

Do not withhold correction from a child. For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell. (23:13,14)

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. (29:15)

Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law.

When I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me, and said to me;

"Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live. Get

wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth." (4:1-5)

Discipline involves many aspects of the parent-child relationship. It is vital that both the father and the mother agree on the general course of rearing their children. How confusing and harmful it is if the father says one thing and the mother says the opposite! But because the mother is usually at home with the child more than the father, she becomes the primary one who must practice discipline.

Recently a young man said that his 18-month-old daughter is advanced for her age because, in behavior, she is already in "the terrible two's"! She has learned to say an emphatic, "NO!" She also has temper tantrums when she doesn't get what she wants. I asked if they have begun spanking her yet, and he said, "No. We want to be sure, first, that she understands what we do."

*As early as a child deliberately begins to do hurtful or defiant things, it is old enough to begin to understand discipline.*

Boundaries must be laid down in order that the child may know what is allowed and what is forbidden, and of course the boundaries will change greatly through the years. But the *principle* never changes, and once it has been firmly established, parenting is easier.

"No" is a boundary of discipline. Reasoning, shame, and the voicing of disappointment in the child's behavior are forms of discipline. Verbal discipline, though, often requires additional measures for enforcement. Some parents send a disobedient child to a room alone until it is penitent. Others take away privileges. Sometimes extra chores are required as punishment. Whatever works best for your child, to help it to learn to bend its will to the accepted behavior, is the method you should use.

In addition to these forms of discipline is physical punishment—not "child abuse", beating a child mercilessly, actually causing physical harm, breaking bones and causing bruises. Such behavior is unthinkable.

But a little hand that reaches out to slap a parent or another child should receive a stinging slap itself, along with a firm, "NO!" A thin green limb (tried first on one's own skin so as to be aware of its sting) will stop a temper tantrum, with no harm done to the child's body.

Hard shaking of a child is dangerous, as it could cause brain damage. Slapping a child about the ears and head is also dangerous. One mother slapped her son's cheek. In response he said, "The Lord made a better place than that to spank!" So she bent him over and

paddled him soundly! But the boy was right. Regardless of the many reasons why God put extra padding on our seats, it serves as good protection from real harm when a child needs a good spanking to set him straight!

We would do well to listen to the wisdom of the Proverbs. As the writer said, those who do not discipline their children while they are still young enough to mold have already decided that child's destruction. Lack of discipline at home, in the first training ground, results in lack of respect for authority in the community, in school, in business, and in life. That spells disaster!

## *Jesus And The Cross*

**WILLARD COLLINS**

Salvation of the lost, on a worldwide basis, centers on Jesus and the cross. His sacrifice has drawn men closer to God for 1990 years. Before Christ was crucified He was treated shamefully. The Savior was scourged by His enemies, stripped and mocked by the soldiers. The opponents spit upon Him, and then they led Him away to crucify Him. Matthew wrote, concerning the crucifixion, "*And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments among them, casting lots, and they sat and watched him there*" (Matthew 27:35-36). After hours of suffering, Jesus died at Golgotha.

### **The Cross—A Symbol**

The cross symbolizes the great truths of Christianity. First of all, this symbol suggests the depths of sin. The marks of sin may be seen in broken homes, class hatred, and in men's disregard for the rights of each other, but the crucifixion is the supreme effort of God to picture sin to man in its true light.

Sin was responsible for the death of the Son of God. I once heard the late H. Leo Boles preach on the subject "Sin That Crucified Jesus." He began with the sin of ignorance, and then listed the sins of hatred, envy, prejudice, lying, love of money, and moral weakness. In commenting on the sin of moral weakness, Boles said, "Pilate was too weak to do what he knew he should do. He could have acted firmly, but he sacrificed his principles of honor and acted as a moral coward."

## **The Breadth of Mercy**

The cross of Christ is a sign of God's bountiful mercy. The power of the blood Jesus shed on the cross is available to all. Justice demands that evil be punished, but through Christ's death, God extends mercy to men in sin. Instead of the sinner receiving punishment, he can receive forgiveness.

The following story was handed down from the Medes and Persians. The laws of the Medes and Persians were unalterable and their penalties inescapable. An eye was demanded for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. A young man had put out the eyes of one of his fellows, and the law demanded that, as punishment for his crime, the young man must have his own eyes plucked out.

The criminal was brought before the judge for trial. In this case, the judge happened to be the culprit's own father. The contradicting cries of justice and mercy rang in the father's ears. He loved his son, but he also respected the law. The guilty must be punished, but love must find mercy's way.

After much reflection, the judge said to his son, "As your judge, I must assess the penalty of the law, which demands that two eyes be given for the two you have destroyed. I cannot do less than meet the law's demand. But, as your father, I offer one of my eyes to help meet the requirements of justice." Paul said of this lesson of mercy, "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). The cross declares God's mercy and love for man.

## **Power of Salvation**

The cross symbolizes the power of man's salvation. Paul said, "*The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God*" (1 Corinthians 1:18). Man becomes reconciled to God through Christ on the cross.

There is the story of a divorced husband and wife who stood on either side of the bed of their dying child. With one hand, the child grasped the hand of the father; with the other hand, it held firmly to its mother. While the child was in this position, life passed from the little body, and the spirit returned to God who gave it. Drawn together by this object of mutual love, pulled closer and connected by two tiny hands, this husband and wife were reunited and a once-broken home was restored.



At Golgotha the Son of God reached into heaven with one hand and took hold of God. With the other hand, He reached to earth to touch the heart of man. The Christ of the cross seeks to reconcile man to God.

The beams upon which our Savior died were more than pieces of wood. The next time you sing "The Old Rugged Cross," consider anew God's mercy and love.—John summed it up when he wrote, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life*" (John 3:16).

## *Faith*

HANS J. DEDERSCHECK

Faith has to be related to loyalty, belief, and reliance. Paul affirms that in Jesus Christ faith works by love (Galatians 5:6). It is impossible to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:1,6), but faith without love is unacceptable (1 Corinthians 13). Faith without works is dead (James 2:26). Therefore, faith is the lifestream in a man's existence. Faith saves, edifies, corrects, reproves, and makes believers perfect in Christ Jesus.

A man's heart is purified by faith in God (Acts 15:9). By faith people repented of their sins and were baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). Humans are sanctified by faith (Acts 26:18). The Gospel of Christ is preached among all nations for obedience to the faith (Romans 1:5). Once we are justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

There is only one faith (Ephesians 4:5). That faith is to be defended, and Christians defend themselves with the shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16). Christians are to progress in the faith (Philippians 1:25). Paul says: "*If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven*" (Colossians 1:23). Christians show a faith of steadfastness (Colossians 2:5). Paul remembered without ceasing the work of faith, the labour of love of his brethren, the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:3). A Christian's faith must be defended. Therefore, the Lord tells us to take on the whole armour of God, so that we may be able to withstand in the evil day. Truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation,

God's Word, and prayer—these are our weapons against the power of evil, and we must use them continually (Ephesians 6:10-18).

## **“Faith . . . Love”**

**DAN WINKLER**

*“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6).*

To breathe, we both inhale and exhale. The abundant life of Jesus involves a similar process. We take in the teachings of Jesus by faith (accepting, trusting, and obeying what He says), and then we express the joys of faith in love.

Faith comes in all shapes and sizes.

(1) There is “shallow” faith. Jesus said, *“O ye of little faith,”* in reference to worry (Matthew 6:30-31), fear (Matthew 14:31), and human reasoning (Matthew 16:7-8).

(2) There is “ship-wrecked” faith. Hymenæus and Alexander are tragic examples of such (1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:16-18; 4:14-15).

(3) There is a faith that “shrinks”. We are not to be of them who *“shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have a faith unto the saving of the soul”* (Hebrews 10:39).

(4) There is a faith that is “strong.” How encouraged we are by the centurion and woman of Canaan who were praised for their “great” faith (Matthew 8:10; 15:28).

Whereas faith comes in different sizes, love expresses itself in different ways.

(1) We love and obey God. In fact, He told us that a true love is obedient (1 John 5:2).

(2) We love that which is good. We should never fall victim to the perilous times and the evil ways of those who are *“no lovers of good”* (2 Timothy 3:3).

(3) We love those who are good and belong to God. In fact, this is the way the world identifies us as followers of Jesus (John 13:34-35).

(4) We love and reach out to the godless. Those of the world are *“without Christ . . . and without God”* (Ephesians 2:12). With them we

lovingly share the glories of Jesus and the blessings of faith (Mark 16:15).

What avails? "*Faith which worketh by love!*"

## *Who Is Of The Truth?*

JERRY JENKINS

A major issue facing religious people is, "Am I following the truth?" It is important to follow the truth, for a failure to walk in truth is to sever fellowship with the Lord. "*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*" (1 John 1:6). In addition, it is evident that truth is associated with action. We are to "*walk in truth,*" and we are to "*do*" the truth.

How can we know that we are of the truth? Some say it is impossible to know. Others say we can know by our feelings, or that knowledge comes by a direct intervention from God. The question is, "How can I be certain that I am of the truth?"

Again, we turn to our Master for the correct answer: "*Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice*" (John 18:37).

If you are of the truth you will hear the voice of Jesus about the following subjects:

(1) Have you heard His voice concerning baptism? "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mark 16:16).

(2) Have you heard His voice about soul-winning? "... *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*" (Matthew 4:19).

(3) Have you heard His voice concerning giving? "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35).

(4) Have you heard His voice about prayer? "*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint*" (Luke 18:1).

(5) Have you heard His voice regarding obedience? "*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*" (Luke 6:46)? "*Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of*

heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"  
(Matthew 7:21).

## **God Requires Obedience!**

**D.R. BOGGS**

*"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22).*

This statement is made by Samuel to Saul when Saul returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites. You will remember that Saul brought back the king, Agag, and the best of the flocks and herds. Saul's excuse was that he brought the animals back to sacrifice to God. He had failed to obey God in destroying everyone and everything of the Amalekites.

God's attitude is the same today as it was in those days. Obedience is more important than anything we might think to sacrifice to God. We don't burn animals on altars anymore, but we still attempt to offer God that which we wish instead of full obedience to Him. We often become like the physical offspring of Abraham in trying to bargain with God for that which pleases us, instead of that which pleases Him.

We find passages of Scripture that are too strict to please us, and easily declare them as not meaning what they say. We have friends and loved ones who are living in contradiction to God's Word, and declare that God has made a special exception for them. Or more comforting yet, we refuse to learn God's will for acceptable living, and then declare ignorance as justification for disobedience.

That which pleases the God of heaven is not measured in how many buckets of gold and silver we can fill at the Lord's temple. It is not measured by the number or beauty of great symphonies dedicated to the glory of God. It is not measured by the accomplishment of things that we decide is beautiful worship.

That which makes God the happiest is the humility of heart to obey His commandments, the willingness to say, "*They will be done,*" and then do it. People who are acceptable to God do not presume to tell God what they will offer. They offer the sacrifice of a pure heart, humbled in obedience, learning and doing the bidding of God's eternal Word.

# The Ancient Road

TIM NICHOLS

The ancient Romans built an impressive network of roads throughout their empire. Many of them have been in continuous use for centuries. Beneath the pavement of some of the modern highways of Europe are the carefully laid stones of the Romans. It is not always easy to tell exactly where they are, because in many places they have been covered with asphalt, and the roads have been widened to accommodate modern traffic, but tour guides are almost sure to remind tourists that they are there. It is a special pleasure to walk on the original stones that are still exposed, and to try to imagine the prominent historical figures who may have walked on them.

Jesus declared Himself to be "*the WAY, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6). Peter later wrote that it would be better "*not to have known the WAY of righteousness*" than to have known it and then turn from it (2 Peter 2:21). Aquila and Priscilla instructed the humble Apollos in "*the WAY of God more perfectly*" (Acts 18:26). Peter taught that false prophets would follow their own "*pernicious ways,*" and that, because of their actions, "*the WAY of truth*" would be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2:2). In these, and in many other cases, the word translated "way" is from a Greek word *hodos*, which means "road."

Jesus is the road that leads to heaven. The New Testament is our only road map. Although men have attempted to cover the original stones with centuries of "improvements," the original stones have not been lost. Since this road is constructed of truth and divine ideas that are revealed in God's Word, it does not deteriorate over time. It "*endureth for ever*" (1 Peter 1:25). It is "*strait and narrow,*" and it leads "*unto life*" (Matthew 7:13-17). It is the road of peace (Luke 1:79, Romans 13:17), of love (1 Corinthians 12:1), of truth (2 Peter 2:2), and of salvation (Acts 16:17). It is sometimes persecuted (Acts 9:2), and it is grievous to those who forsake it (Proverbs 15:10). But it is the right road (2 Peter 2:15).

If you fail to walk on this road you will be on the road followed by most people. It is broad and wide (Matthew 7:13-17). God wants you to refrain from walking on this road (Psalms 1:1; 119:101), because He hates it (Psalms 119:104,128).

A few years ago we heard an older preaching brother exhort us to "get in the middle of the road!" He warned us to avoid the extremes of

the liberal ditch on one side and the law-making ditch on the other. His point was valid, but it may need to be revised for our time. You see, they have widened the road. Trying to position yourself in the center of these extremes may result in your missing the ancient road. Instead of using the "ditches" as our reference points, why don't we just open the ancient road map and walk directly on the road laid by Christ and His apostles?

Let's not be distracted by those who seem to be to our far left or far right. But, let's continue to show them the map.

## ***Terms By Which The Church Of The Lord Is Designated***

**BILL NICKS**

The term most often used in the New Testament is simply "the church." It does not always refer to the church which Christ built. In Act 19:32 it refers to an angry mob. In Acts 7:38 it refers to the Israelites in the wilderness.

"The church" means a group of people, never a building. In reference to the church, itself, it means those "*called out of darkness into light*" (1 Peter 2:9). There must be a "*translation out of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son*" (Colossians 1:13f). There must also be an obedience to that "*form (pattern) of doctrine*" (Romans 6:17ff). Then, upon one's obedience to God, there must be an addition to the Church by the Lord (Acts 2:38-47). There also must be a conviction that, since sins have been remitted, we must dedicate ourselves to serve and worship God, both in daily life and in the public worship assemblies of the church.

We cannot separate ourselves from the church, since Christ is its head (Colossians 1:18). What we choose to do or not do to the church, we choose to do or not do to Christ Himself (Matthew 25:40,45; Acts 9:1-5).

The church is also called "*My church*" by Christ (Matthew 16:18), and "*churches of Christ*" by Paul (Romans 16:16). These words designate ownership.

The church is referred to as the "*house, or family of God*" (1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:19; 3:15). This means God is our Father and we are His children, and we are brothers and sisters with brotherly love

in the family (2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 3:26ff; Romans 12:9f; 2 Peter 1:5-7).

The church is also called "*the body of Christ*" (Colossians 1:18,24; Ephesians 1:10, 23), emphasizing the headship of Christ, the subjection of members to Christ, and the functioning of members perfectly while heeding the commands of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). If one member is severed from the body, it cannot function properly.

It is vital that those who wear the name of Christ as part of His body honor Him as Lord.

## *Before And After*

**BOB PLUNKET**

One of the most persuasive arguments for a product is the before and after effect. You see this a lot on television and in the newspaper. Sometimes they show a man without hair, then how he looks after he has his new hairpiece. Many times there is a noticeable difference. (Sometimes he looks worse than he did without hair.)

What kind of evidence are we to the power of the Word of God? Paul talked about his before and after with Jesus: ". . . *though I was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious; howbeit I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief*" (1 Timothy 1:12-13). Paul's change was so dramatic that many people could not believe it. This caused people to ask questions and to investigate. It gave Paul an opportunity to tell men what changed his life. David could say, "*Before I was afflicted I went astray but now have I kept thy word.*" David is appealing to his before and after. Mark tells of the demoniac who lived in the tombs. Men had to bind him with fetters and chains, but he would break them into pieces. He was riddled with self-inflicted cuts from the stones, but after he had been with Jesus he was clothed in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus (Mark 5:1ff).

God has a picture of each of us before and after. Is he pleased with your progress? Are you a good recommendation for Christ? Peter talked about men and women who have become worse than they were when they started, and what a terrible fate. He said, "*It is like the dog turning to his own vomit again and the sow that was washed wallowing in the mire*" (2 Peter 2:20-22).

Remember, this is the ultimate and final evidence in a Christian's life—not how much Bible you know, nor how many church services you attend, nor how many prayers you pray, but rather, are you like Jesus? It was said of the early church, "*They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus*" (Acts 4:13).

## *The Blessing Of Affliction*

**EDWIN WHITE**

Augustine once commented that "God had one Son on earth without sin, but never one without suffering." Life is no smooth road for any of us. Job says, "*Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble*" (Job 14:1). Man is always in the forge or on the anvil. Every life is shaped by its trials and afflictions.

I have noticed that it is affliction that proves one weak and another strong. A house built upon the sand is just as good in fair weather as the one built upon a rock. It is when the rain comes and the wind blows that the difference is established. If you would know whether a staff is strong or rotten, you must observe it when it is leaned on and the weight is borne upon it. A cobweb is as strong as a cable as long as there is no strain upon it.

The truly virtuous person is like good metal—the more he is fired the more he is refined. God polishes the jewels He especially loves, and intends to make most resplendent with many sharp-cutting instruments and rough files. The diamond that has been cut most is the one that sparkles most. The brightest crowns worn in heaven will be the ones that were tried, smelted, and polished in the furnaces of tribulation.

Foremost among the Christian's blessings is that his heart has been caused to bleed. God allows tribulation to visit His children, but He tells its purpose—that "*tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope*" (Romans 5:4). For Jesus, the mount of transfiguration was on the way to the cross. For each of us, the cross is on the way to the mount of transfiguration. The cross-bearer on earth will be the crown-wearer in heaven.



# Using What We Have

C.W. BRADLEY

All of us know people who have an exalted concept of their own importance. They greatly overestimate their abilities. They become arrogant and puffed up. We actually feel sorry for them and wish that we could in some way help them become a little more humble. The Bible warns that a man ought *"not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think"* (Romans 12:3).

But, there is perhaps even a greater danger for some to think less of themselves than they should and to underestimate their abilities. It is rather difficult for most of us to truly believe that God has given us the ability to do what He wants us to do.

It is always easy for most of us to overlook the abundance of opportunities which come to us every day while we keep waiting for the opportunity to do the spectacular, the extraordinary. Why should we expect God to open up for us great opportunities until and unless we begin doing something about the many opportunities already around us? Jesus said, *"He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much"* (Luke 16:10).

My own observation has led me to believe that it is not always those with the greatest natural ability who make the greatest success in ordinary life or in service to God. Generally, success is determined, not so much by how much we have, but rather, by how well we use what we have.

There is no virtue in possessing great ability and intellect. There is no disgrace in possessing limited ability and intellect. We are going to be judged by the way we use what we do have.

May each of us learn to use what we have in helping build up the Lord's church. Let's not waste time feeling sorrow for ourselves because of what we don't have. May each of us learn to let our own light shine—"you in your small corner and I in mine."

# ***Christ Is The Head Of The Church, His Body***

**ELWOOD HOLT**

In Colossians 1:18, Christ is spoken of as supreme, and he is supreme. The members of the Church are represented as branches of a living vine. He is the good shepherd, who gives his life for the sheep. The church is spoken of as a kingdom. He is the king who reigns over that kingdom. The church is represented under the figure of a body. He is the head of that body in all things. Therefore, He *should* have the preeminence in our lives! There are other scriptures in which Christ is represented as the head of the church. To the Corinthians Paul writes, "I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ" (I Corinthians 11:3). To the church of Ephesus, he wrote "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). Again he wrote; God "hath given him to be head over all things to the church, which is his Body" (Ephesians 1:22). According to this order, we are to notice the character of Him who is the head of the church. The dignity of His divine character is clearly indicated by the works which are ascribed to Him. In the context it is said, "By Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions or principalities, or powers; all things are created by Him and for Him" (verse 16). Again, "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:13). Surely no power short of the power of God could perform such stupendous works. Indeed, finite minds cannot comprehend this mighty creation; how then could a finite mind contrive it, or a finite hand execute it? Contemplate, gentle reader, the vastness of creation. What a world is this which we inhabits with all its mighty mountains, its roaring and muttering volcanoes, ever and anon belching forth rolling torrents of lava! Behold its wide spread plains, its deep rolling rivers, and its mighty oceans, whose mountainous waves roll, ever lashing the shore at the feet of the awestricken beholder. Then contemplate the innumerable tribes of living beings, formed to inhabit every part of this mighty world of ours; the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea. But, above all, contemplate man, made in the image of God, and then remember that ALL were created by Him who is the head of the church. Then we may form some very faint idea of His glorious character.

Our little world is but a speck in creation, as but a grain of sand on the sea-shore, compared with the immensity of the created universe. The sun, moon, and the stars are the works of His fingers. He "in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of His hands" (Hebrews 1:10). Imagine every fixed star—even those that can only be seen by the aid of our largest and most powerful telescopes—to be a sun, placed in the center of a system of worlds, all performing their annual revolutions around their respective suns. Then imagine all these worlds, with their innumerable hosts of living inhabitants, to be a very small portion of the workmanship of His almighty power. Think then how glorious must He be who is the head of the Church and the Savior of the body.

Paul says, "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (verse 17). The apostle says, "God hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds, and is the express image of His Person, and UPHOLDING ALL THINGS by the word of His power," etc. (Hebrews 1:1, 2, 3). The apostle here seems to represent the power of Christ as a mighty arch, reaching from eternity past to eternity to come, or spanning that broken off fragment of eternity which we call time, upon which arch is suspended the universe, all born up or upheld by Him "whom God hath given to be head over all things to the Church." Surely He is not simply a super-human or a super-angelic being. He who created all things, and who upholds all things, must be divine. The very term which expresses divine nature, is applied to JESUS, the CHRIST.

John says, "In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God." And the WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of GRACE and TRUTH" (John 1:1-14). This JESUS THE CHRIST is the one who loved us so much HE DIED FOR US. This JESUS IS THE SAVIOR OF ALL WHO WILL ACCEPT HIM.

## *The Real Dangers*

**AUTHOR UNKNOWN**

Homosexuality is not what threatens the fabric of society. It has been with us for thousands of years. When homosexuality is considered normal, not wrong, an alternative lifestyle, society is threatened. Divorce

is not the great threat to our country and the church. It has been with us almost from the beginning also. But when there is no stigma, when divorce is acceptable, the first option rather than the last resort, we are in trouble. Fornication or promiscuity does not threaten us. This sin is as old as mankind. Yet when fornicators become our role models, our heroes, we need to ask ourselves in what direction we are going. Unscriptural teachings or bad attitudes will not destroy the church. The church has been surviving these problems since her inception. But when those who are loose with the Scriptures become our ideals, and those who have bad attitudes are our defenders of the faith, then we had better take inventory of the future of the church.

In short, sin is not going to destroy us. Sin has been with us since Adam and Eve. When we no longer think of sin as sin, God's patience may run out.

## ***Teaching Them To Observe All Things***

**JIM WALDRON**

Before the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, most of us had very little understanding of the people in the former Soviet Union. Under communist rule many of them risked their jobs and lives to be "baptized" into the Russian Orthodox Church. A general religious nature of the people has meant an open door, which has resulted in the large number of baptisms we hear about when our brethren go there. Going, teaching and baptizing are urgent needs to fulfill the great commission. For the Lord Jesus said, *"all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world"* (Matthew 28:18-20). Yet, sad to say, the fourth part of the great commission is being woefully neglected. That is, there is a general failure to train new Christians. The general method of converting people in Russia or the Ukraine is for 2 to 8 brethren to go there for two to three weeks, hold classes or gospel meetings, baptize a large group of people and then leave. It is happening over and over again in many parts of the world. Brethren go, come back and say we baptized 40, 50 or a 100, and when

asked who is there with the new Christians the answer is—"we are looking for a man to go." Such is the equivalent of bringing a newborn home from the hospital, leaving him on the doorstep and saying, "root hog or die, boy." These new converts have very little knowledge as to the need to attend regularly and virtually no experience at such. Recently a group of campaigners came from the states to work in a city south of Kiev. They had been told 70 people had been baptized there in the last two years. The brethren were able to find and restore seven of them. In 1992 we were informed of some 26 persons being baptized the previous year, left to carry on worship by themselves and eventually going over to the Mormons. Why? Because the Mormons were there. They now report having two hundred "elders" in Kiev alone.

If not one is going to stay with new converts until they can be taught "*to observe all things*" then the fourth part of the great commission has been overlooked or ignored. Elders surely need to ask some sobering questions of those preachers or singing groups who want money to make these little two or three week excursions, like: "which ones of you are going to stay with the new Christians until they are able to stand on their own?"

## ***Striving Against Sin***

**JOHNNY RAMSEY**

Perhaps the best four-step decline in spirituality is set forth in Jeremiah 7:24: "But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walking in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward."

When men quit fighting against sin they have surrendered to the Captain of Hell. Far too many have waved the white flag before they even buckled on the sword. Why do we give up so easily?

One major reason that sin gains momentum is the startling fact that there is pleasure in sin. For a carnally minded individual it is far more appealing to associate with evil companions than with the saints in light. The bitter dregs of shame compel a sinner more than the pure waters of life. The devil will always see to it that leaving error is most inconvenient. As Byron stated in Don Juan: "Pleasure's a sin, and sometimes sin's a pleasure."

There are scores of folk who get their only pleasure in doing evil

and this fully satisfies their worldly view of life. The tragedy is that they will continue without aim or purpose unless Christians begin anew to strive against sin!

Another contributing factor to the sinful predicament by which millions are captivated is the cunning progressiveness of sin. David, Demas and Diotrephes did not begin in the clutches of Satanic influences; but before they realized it adultery, spiritual infidelity and arrogance had enraptured them! What a contrasting view springs from the lives of Joseph, Joshua and Jesus. These three fled from sin, purged it from the camp and gained the victory over it. Our Lord finally sounded the death knell over the prostrate form of sin in His triumphant death.

Too many well-intentioned people cultivate sinful attitudes and allow pettiness to overwhelm them. We *do* make provision for the flesh!

If Ephesians 5:11 and I Thessalonians 5:22 were obeyed there could be no major problem in our lives. These verses tell us to have no fellowship with evil, abstain from it and rebuke it. Indeed, "let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." The sin of compromise has led to complete departure from the Lord for convenience is the mother of apostasy. Unless we resist the Devil he will not flee from us.

Is it not a challenging, heart-warming promise that God provides a way of escape for us when temptation strikes? In I Corinthians 10, Paul, by inspiration, tells us of the decline and fall of some of Jehovah's people. But neither they nor we need to go astray. The rich provisions of grace and glory envelop our lives when the Prince of heaven enters our being. We can gain a victory over sin for "he that is in us is greater than he that is in them."

Into My Heart, Into My Heart,  
Come Into My Heart, Lord Jesus:  
Come In Today; Come In To Stay,  
Come Into My Heart, Lord Jesus."

The pleasures of sin are too high priced for wise men to pay. The joys of Christianity are too glorious to miss. The poorest man is the one bereft of Christ. Therefore, let us war valiantly for Truth that sin-cursed humanity can know the peace that Jesus brings.

M.B. Welch, in the famous poem about an old violin, said:

"And many a man with life out of tune and battered and scarred with sin

Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd much like the old violin.

A mess of pottage, a glass of wine,

A game and he travels on

He is going once, he is going twice

He is going—and almost gone!

But the Master comes and the foolish crowd

Can never quite understand

The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought,

In the touch of the Master's hand."

May we so live that countless souls may live to see the hand of the Lord in their lives. If we do, the glories of eternal sunlight shall be our portion in the land of fadeless day. This is, indeed, our task and privilege!

## ***What Wise Followers Find (Proverbs 21:21)***

**NEAL POLLARD**

A motorist encountered a road sign, which read, "Select your ruts carefully, for you will have to drive in them the next twenty miles (Bradfield's Sermon Outlines, 88). All of us decide to follow a certain track in life. We cut a certain path with the choices we make. Whether good or bad, those decisions affect what kind of life we will live. As the apostle Paul admonished.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Galatians 6:7-8).

Paul's words are so logical! Why do so many follow the wrong path and the wrong guides? Why is spiritual stability so difficult for some? How can individuals repeat the same mistakes over and over?

Those who follow cult leaders often live the most miserable lives and die the most horrible deaths at the behest of those corrupt leaders. Good, religious people, who follow the teaching and traditions of men,

violate God's word and keep themselves estranged from salvation. So many follow the Pied Piper of the world, the Evil Enticer, and the deluding Devil. Pleasure is their pilot. But, not all have bowed their knees to the Baals of atheism, denominationalism, materialism, and hedonism.

Many choose a path which is paved by righteousness and mercy. The world has many individuals who fully embrace the Bible when it is presented to them and comply with the plan of salvation. These are among the wise followers mentioned by the writer of Proverbs 21:21.

"He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour."

**Wise Followers Find Life.** Those who find Christ and His church find everlasting life (cf. Romans 6:4; 16:16). These are fed by the bread of life (John 6:35), who satiates their spiritual hunger. Those who faithfully follow the giver of life will, in eternity, eat from the tree of life (Revelation 2:7), wear a crown of eternal life (Revelation 2:10), and have access to the water of life (Revelation 22:1)

**Wise Followers Find Righteousness.** Jesus promises that those who hunger and thirst after it will be filled (Matthew 5:6). Such is a fruit of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:9). Christ is the great King of righteousness (Hebrews 6:20 - 7:1-2), and "if ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (1 John 2:29).

**Wise Followers Find Honour.** The promise of Christ is,

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour (John 12:26).

Honor comes in service, humility, and obedience. So comes wisdom.

The foolish follow a wide and comfortable road, a non-sacrificial and a self-indulgent, self-satisfying path. The wise follow a narrow road, a demanding and self-denying street. The blessings go to the wise!