

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Published by Church of Christ, Box 3815,
New Delhi-110049

Pleading For The Restoration Of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 17

July 1986

No. 3

EDITORIAL



The Christian's Perspective

We as Christians are so blessed. Sometimes though we forget that. We begin to take everything and everybody for granted. It is at this point that we need to take inventory of our lives to see where we were, where we are, and where we will be in the end.

WHERE WE WERE

Both Paul and Peter reminded the Christians of their day of their past, of the state they were in, and of their deliverance. Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands : That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world : But now in

Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:11-13). Peter wrote, "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries : Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you : Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For thit cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Peter 4:3-6). Again, Peter said of the Christians of his day, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light : Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God : which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul : Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles : that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Peter 2:9-12).

Notice what they were and then what they became. They were Gentiles, in the flesh, in sin, lost, without Christ, doing the works of the flesh, and therefore without hope. Others were keepers of the law, selfrighteous, hypocrites, ungodly, and therefore unsaved. Once they became believers in Christ, repented and turned from their past ways, and obeyed God, then the Lord saved them, made them sons and daughters of God, and gave them hope of a better life and a better world to come.

But what about us? Remember when we were in our sins? We thought we were happy in our misery. But what did we have? We had nothing to live for and noting for which to die. We were without God and hope as most of the world is today. Finally one day we heard the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, of salvation, of hope. We accepted the Lord on his terms. We obeyed his gospel and he saved us and changed us and made us pure and gave us a new life with hope.

Sometimes when we get to feeling low or we begin to feel big and important; when we forget to forgive and to show love; when we begin to find fault with everyone and everything; then we need to remember what we once were. We should remember the grace and mercy that God extended to us to make us what we are. That should humble us and bring us back to reality.

WHERE WE ARE

As we think of our past and of our obedience to God, then it makes us appreciate where we are. We are now saved and children of God. Christ said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). Paul declared, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:26,27). We are in Christ and in his body, the church. Paul reminds us, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3). Again, he says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13). Furthermore, we are forgiven (Acts 2:38), washed by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7), and made new people in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17). We have the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), and the hope of eternal life. (1 Peter 3:15).

Can we ever fully understand in our minds all that this means and implies? What joy, consolation, and peace to know that we have been forgiven and that we may be forgiven of any sin or failure that enters into our lives as we repent and ask God to forgive us. Beyond that is the knowledge that as we "walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7).

Knowing all of this, then how could we ever give up, quit, and go back to that old way of living? What would we have to

gain? Think of all that we would lose. Being wise then, we will go on living the good life, the better life, worshipping and serving God, being faithful unto death.

WHERE WE WILL BE

Finally, there is a reward waiting for the faithful of God. What we have and enjoy now is nothing in comparison to what he has in store for us. The Bible says that eye hath not seen or ear heard what the Lord hath in store for those who love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9).

James says that the faithful will receive a crown of righteousness. (James 1:12). Christ reminds us that a crown of life will be given to those who are faithful unto death. (Revelation 2:10). Christ again tells us that in his Father's house are many mansions and that he will return one day to receive us that where he is we may be also. (John 14:1-3).

Think about it! Christ will come, we'll be resurrected from the grave, and we'll be changed, and caught up into the clouds to be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Not only that, but there in heaven, in all of its beauty and splendor, with the righteous, and with the Lord and with the Father himself, away from the world and all of its sorrows, there we shall dwell forever more. (Revelation 21:4; Revelation 22:5). How could we ever ask or want for any more?

As God's people, let us continue faithful to the end. Even in this life we are the most blessed of all people, but in the world to come we'll have life that shall never end. If you are not a Christian, not a child of God, you are missing everything that is good and worthwhile in this life and if you miss heaven then you will have missed everything. We as God's people then exhort, implore, and invite you to obey the Lord and let Christ change your life and your destiny. Christ himself invites you to come while there is still time and opportunity. Please do, because your very soul and life depends on it.



associate editorial

Whom Should One Believe?

Recently in a Bible study one man asked this question: "Whom should one believe when there are so many people, all claiming that they are teaching from the Bible, yet they teach conflicting things?" I believe this is an important question, and deserves a Bible answer. Many are asking this question because of the prevailing confusion in the religious world. They want to know the truth, but are unable to differentiate between truth and error. Religious books, Bible correspondence courses, magazines, tracts, etc., are being sent through various religious organizations to people. Then there are radio programmes of religious nature, religious meetings and campaigns, all for the purpose of telling people what the Bible teaches. But most of them believe and teach different things on the same subject, from the same Bible. For example, some would teach that faith alone saves. While others teach one must believe and obey to be saved. Some would say that the church is not important, but others teach one must be in the church to be saved. Some are teaching from the Bible that the Holy Spirit baptism is necessary for salvation. While others teach that the baptism of the Holy Spirit does not exist today. We can go on and on showing various conflicting doctrines being taught today in the name of the Bible. Seeing this, then, people are rightly asking, "whom should one believe?"

The best answer that could be given to this important question will be that one should not believe in any thing that man says without investigating or without reading about it directly from the Bible. No matter who the preacher or the speaker is, he is still a man, and therefore he is able to make mistake. The same would be true about the writings of men available in books, magazines and tracts, etc. Just don't believe in any thing that man says without

having seen it written directly from the Bible. Those who are unable to read for themselves they need to get some one to read to them from the Bible itself. This is the only way that we can make sure whether a thing is the will of God or the teaching of man. This is exactly what the people of Berea did with the preaching of the Apostle Paul. (Acts 17:11). They didn't only hear or receive the word with all readiness but they also searched the scriptures daily to find out if those things, what they had heard from the preacher, were also written in the Scriptures.

As long as people will depend on men to tell them what God's will is the confusion will prevail, because all men are not preaching the truth. They may be teaching or preaching from the Bible, but they are not teaching and preaching the truth. John, the Apostle, says, "Beloved do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (I John 4:1). We do not have the Apostles with us today to correct us and to tell us what not to believe and what to believe. But we have the doctrine written in the books of the New Testament of the Bible, and we need to continue in the Apostles' doctrine as the first century Christians did. (Acts 2:42). The Apostles were the spokesmen of Christ. They were given the special measure of the Holy Spirit for leading and guiding them into all truth. (John 14:25,26; John 16:13; Acts 2:1-4). They taught and wrote God's truth, and today we have the same available for us in the New Testament of Christ. God's word must be read and re-read and meditated upon to know what God's will is. The sad thing, however, is that most people do not read and study the Bible for themselves. It is not that they cannot read, or the Bible is not available in their own language. They are telling me that they do not have time for reading the Bible. Yet they would have time to read newspaper or magazines, watch T.V., and visit with friends, etc. In the long ago prophet Hosea had said, "My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6). It was not that the knowledge was not available to them. But he said, they had "rejected knowledge." It was there but they didn't want to have it. The same is true today with the people. The knowledge is there, people can know what the Lord's will is, they can distinctly see the truth from error, but they don't take time to read and study the Bible. Most would depend on

what they hear on Sunday morning from the preacher or the "Pastor." I visit in the homes of people and on most occasions I find them watching their T.V. or doing something else. What they mean is that they do not have time for reading the Bible. Through the inspiration of the Spirit the apostle John wrote and said, "Do not love the world or the things of the world, if any one loves the world, the Love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:15-17). Notice, he who does the will of God abides forever. You can't do God's will if you do not know His will. You may be thinking that you are doing God's will when in fact you are doing man's will, this is also possible. (Matthe 15:8,9; 7:21-23). The only way to make it sure that you are doing the will of God is to first know God's will by reading and studying the Bible, God's word, and then do it. Do not depend on men for information, because your soul is very important. Everything that you read in this magazine regularly, I encourage you to investigate it in light of the Bible teaching and accept it only if it is written in the Bible, and do the same with every other religious literature or with the things that you hear from a preacher.

What Preachers Can Do To Stop Abortion

John Waddey

The battle to stop abortion would soon be won if the moral and spiritual leaders of the land could be awakened and inspired to join the fray. It is obvious that many preachers feel little or no obligation to actively involve themselves in the conflict. The following thoughts are addressed to such men.

It is the duty of ministers to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6 : 12). This warfare involves more than just abstract doctrinal question. We must also fight those moral evils that destroy the souls of men. Ours is a spiritual war of ideologies.

"We do not war according to the flesh . . ." We are "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10 : 3-5).

At the heart of the abortion controversy is the conflict of the humanistic versus the Biblical view of man. Those who view man only as a highly-evolved animal have no scruples in destroying weak or unwanted lives. Christians who see man as the offspring of God (Acts 17 : 28), reverence and respect all human life as made in God's image. The humanist knows no higher code of conduct than "might makes right." We know the law of God which says "thou shalt not kill" (Romans 13 : 8).

Men are needed to stand in the gaps and help to repair the moral walls of the nation, and even of the church. In every generation God seeks such men (Ezekiel 22 : 30). It is unbelievable that men who should be crying out against evil are sometimes found defending the unholy practice. Among the liberal denominations, there exists a *Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights*.

Faithful preachers are needed to provide a good example of positive involvement in the fight to save human life from abortion violence. "Be thou an example to them that believe . . ." (I Timothy 4 : 12). One dedicated soldier can be the cause of a hundred new recruits or to stir up the uncommitted to fervent involvement.

Preachers can lead the members of their congregation to a proper understanding about the evil of abortion. "Let our people also learn to maintain good works . . ." (Titus 3 : 14). Surely to save an innocent life is a good work. Truth makes men free (John 8 : 32). Ignorance and error enslave. Christians need to be taught the sacredness of human life and the evil of killing, no matter what euphemisms are used to camouflage the deed. People must learn the humanity of the unborn child and its developmental progress. The barbarity of abortion, its malevolent impact on babies, mothers and society must be exposed. Don't wait until more lives are lost and others ruined before you speak. Preventive medicine is always best. Show your people why it is right for

them to fight against Satan and his evil ways (James 4 : 7).

To be a moral beacon in a world of moral/spiritual darkness is part of a preacher's duty (Philippians 2 : 15). You have numerous opportunities to speak on this subject in your pulpit and classroom and on other platforms as well. Preachers often are asked to speak at civic clubs, school functions, preachers, meetings. There are opportunities to speak on radio, TV or to write news columns. Preach God's word on this serious matter to that broader audience (II Timothy 4 : 2).

To be effective, one must arm himself adequately to do battle with the evil practices of the day and the arguments defending such. Like a well-equipped Roman soldier, we need the whole armor of God, plus the courage to stand and fight (Ephesians 6 : 13-18). Ignorance is not bliss in this conflict. Our pro-abortion enemy is usually vocal, brazened, and loaded with a hundred deceitful arguments that sound "reasonable" to the uninformed. Take the time to educate yourself so that you can refute every false argument and establish your case for the sacredness of life.

Ministers should use their influence to bring their fellow preachers to a proper view of this crucial issue. Without your help they may well become involved in the sin by their tolerance or by actually counselling a troubled mother to abort her child. The golden rule should prompt us to offer our knowledge to our fellow servants (Matthew 7 : 12).

One can help by leading his congregation to reach out with a helping hand to women with problem pregnancies. The church can minister to them in Jesus' name. Without condoning their sin, we can assist unwed mothers with proper food, shelter, and prenatal medical care. Some young girls in this condition are literally on the streets, on their own. Poor mothers may need our help. Especially should rape victims be our concern. Our charge is to "do good to all men, especially them of the household of faith" (Galatians 6 : 10). The unfortunate mother and her baby are worthy subjects of our benevolence. To smugly withhold assistance could well drive a desperate mother to an abortion clinic.

We can all pray diligently for God's help in defeating the death peddlers, the necro-philiacs. We need to offer "supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanks-givings" for our rulers, that they will use their offices to stop the slaughter (I Timothy 2 : 1-2). We must pray for those girls and women contemplating abortion, that the eyes of their hearts be enlightened before they stain their hands with the blood of their own young (Ephesians 1 : 18). Pray that God will smite the hard hearts of the abortionists who kill for the greed of money, that they will turn from their vicious trade.

Finally we preachers must be willing to endure the wrath and railing of those who would destroy a baby that stands in the way of their pleasure, freedom, or money. When we testify of their evil works, they will hate us, even as they did Jesus (John 7 : 7). Likely you never have encountered the scorn and abuse the pro-abortionists will heap upon you. But "blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely. . ." (Matthew 5 : 11). To see the smile of one baby you saved will make it all worthwhile. To hear the thanks of one mother you helped to avoid so horrible a mistake will repay you a thousand fold.

Abortion can and will be stopped. May you be a part of the victorious celebration when that day comes.

Some Lessons From Football

Flavil H. Nichols

Jesus and his apostles used familiar things to illustrate divine truth. Our Lord referred to the lilies, fowls, a fisherman, a sower, and numerous other things to illustrate his points. Paul referred to a race, boxing, a soldier's armour, and such like. Since the sports world's attention is focused on the "Super Bowl," let us draw some lessons from the game of football.

Just as all members of the team must cooperate in order to

win, so in the church all members should learn the value of working together. "Let nothing be done through strife..." (Philippians 2 : 3).

The game of football is governed by a rule-book. The game must be played by the rules—and they read the same to me, as they do to you. The rule-book not only tells how to score, it also spells out penalties for those who violate the rules. Similarly, the 'game' of life has a rule-book—the Bible! Unlike the sports rule-book, the Bible never needs revision, for it is inspired of God (II Timothy 3 : 16). The Holy Spirit by the mouth of David and other inspired men (Acts 1 : 16) spake the scriptures, and forbids any changes or alterations of the word (Galatians 1 : 6-9). Those who do not speak according to this word have no light in them (Isaiah 8 : 20), nor do they have God with them (II John 9-11). This rule-book is the same all over the world (Matthew 28 : 18-20; Luke 24 : 46-49). Ignorance of the rules does not excuse nor justify violations (Hosea 4 : 6). In fact, men are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them" (Ephesians 4 : 18). No player is allowed to twist the rules, nor to 'interpret' them, to suit his own notions (II Peter 3 : 16). The Bible, like a rule-book, tells us what the penalties will be for each infraction (Psalm 9:17; II Thessalonians 1 : 7-9).

All players must obey the coach, who may represent God, our Father. We are fortunate to have such a God as he is! Daniel exclaimed: "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever : for wisdom and might are his : and he changeth the times and the seasons : he removeth kings, and setteth up kings : he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding : he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him" (Daniel 2:20-22). Therefore as 'players' on his team, "we ought to obey God, rather than man" (Acts 5:29). Only the members of his team are subject to the coach, and all who submit to God are members of his church (Acts 2:47). Those who do not obey God are unsaved (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). As the coach has a gameplan, so God has a plan for us and for our lives (Matthew 7:21; Ephesians 1:9, 11, 12). A respectable coach disciplines unruly players, and God chastens us (Hebrews 12:9), requiring also his church to discipline unruly

members (II Thessalonians 3:6).

All the football officials may represent Christ, for he has "all power . . . in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). He is the Referee, Umpire, Line Judge, Field Judge—all the officials in one—judging both the progress made, and the conduct of the players. And all decisions will be made in harmony with the rule-book, for "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Romans 2:16; note also Acts 17:30-31; II Timothy 4:1-8; I Peter 4:5; Acts 10:42).

In the New Testament church there are "elders in every church" (Acts 14:23) "in every city" (Titus 1:5), who may be represented by the Quarterback. The Quarterback himself is a member of the team, who must comply with the directions of the Coach. Upon the instructions of the Coach, the Quarterback calls the plays. No player is allowed to argue with the Quarterback, nor to call a different set of signals, thus dividing the teams (Hebrews 13:7, 17). A team spirit is very necessary: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (I Thessalonians 5:12-13). It is a sin to cause division among the team (church) members! Not all players have the same abilities, nor the same responsibilities. For example, the half-back may not be a good punter, the center may not be a good pass-receiver, the quarterback may not be a good defense lineman, etc. Even so in the church we have "differing" gifts or abilities; but each should use his to the fullest extent possible (Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 12:14-31).

Some other lesson which may be learned from this are: (1) If one does not play according to the rules, he will be penalized. Similarly, we will suffer if we violate God's rules (I Corinthians 9:24-27). (2) The violator is not the only one who suffers:—the whole team is set back. Backsliders retard and hinder the whole congregation (I Corinthians 5:6-7). (3) One mistake can affect the outcome of the game. This also is true in the church. (4) While faithfulness (Revelation 2:10) is required, no one is expected to be sinlessly perfect; yet each is expected to do his best. There is a

vast difference between accidentally DROPPING the ball, and in selling out to known gamblers (I John 1:7-10). (5) Training rules are for our—and the team's—own good. God never demands that we give up one thing that is BEST for us! (Matthew 4:4; I Peter 2:2). All divine regulations are “for our good always” (Deuteronomy 6:24).

There is worldly honor for a winning football team, with each player entitled to a monetary reward. But for the faithful Christian, there is God's approval in this life, and “in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:30), with “an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven” (I Peter 1:4).

Worry And The Kingdom Of God

John P. Weekley

Our Lord said, “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:34). The word rendered “thought” means “worry.” Worry will cause one to be distracted from spiritual goals. In the parable of the sower we read, “And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with CARES and RICHES and pleasures of this life, and bring NO fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:14, caps mine jpw). The word which is translated “choke” conveys the idea of “crowding.” “Anxieties” that go with materialism can “crowd” one away from the most important things in life.

Not only is this anxiety (Matthew 6:34) distracting, but it also deals with time. The time element in this verse is future. Jesus is warning us against *living in the future*. There is a vast difference in *planning* for the future versus *living* in the future. The Bible itself is a book which deals with plans for the future. Passages like Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3; Isaiah 7:14; Galatians 4:4; Acts 17:30-31, and many others so demonstrate. But never do we find God getting ahead of himself. Jesus on more than one occasion referred to his hour that was to come (John 2:4; 7:6; 12:23). When Christians *live*

in the future, instead of *planning* for the future, their lives become burdened not only with today's problems but also with tomorrow's. That is too much of a load for any person to bear, and it is forbidden.

The Lord said, "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body" (Matthew 6:25). This passage forbids distracting cares for the basic necessities of life. One can become so concerned about physical needs for self that he forgets God. In Luke 12:16-21 all of the references to "I" show that this man was rich toward himself because he was overly concerned about himself. His main interests in life were for his self-needs rather than his godly needs. He became so involved with his needs that he forgot God. We are to be concerned about the basic needs of life (I Timothy 5:8; II Thessalonians 3:10), but not to the degree that it distracts us from Spiritual needs. (Matthew 16:26).

Just prior to making the above statement, Jesus said, ". . . ye cannot serve God and mammon" (verse 24). The Greek word for "mammon" not only means riches, but carries the idea of TRUSTING in riches. Our Lord said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt . . ." (Matthew 6:19). So we as Christians are not to : (1) treasure up earthly things, Matthew 6:19; (2) trust in earthly riches, Matthew 6:24; (3) be OVERCONCERNED about earthly needs, Matthew 6:25; or (4) be OVER-BURDENED with earthly problems, Matthew 6:34.

The Lord said, "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek . . ." (Matthew 6:32). After reading Psalm 1:18-32 it is evident that three of the basic causes for the Gentiles to give up a knowledge of God were : (1) materialistic goals rather than spiritual, (2) trust in material things rather than God, and (3) over-concern (worry) about material possessions. These objectives always pull men away from God.

"God is a spirit" (John 4:24). God's word is a spiritual message (John 6:63). God's Kingdom is a spiritual one (Matthew 6:33; Luke 17:20-21). And God's hope for man is spiritual (I Corinthians 15:50). Thus, for one to order his life in harmony with

a knowledge of God and his will, one's objectives **MUST BE** spiritual, not physical.

Two things which go together in a given society are materialism and worry. It is difficult to know which comes first. It is like the chicken-or-egg dilemma for the evolutionist : which came first? But it seems that affluence breeds anxiety; then anxiety creates a greater desire for material things, and also a vain trust in the physical.

But the question arises, How can we put materialism and worry in the right perspectives? We don't want to trust in riches; and also we want to reduce our concerns to a day-at-a-time. The answer is found in the word of God. In Ecclesiastes 12:13 man's true purpose in life is stated. In Matthew 4:4 we find man's true sustenance in life. Man's true possessions in life are named in Luke 12:15. In Matthew 6:33 we find man's true priorities during life on earth. When these four Bible facts become a part of our lives (James 1:21), we see that we have less to worry about, more to be happy about, and find ourselves going about our Father's business.

Some examples where materialism and worries have distracted men from God's will are : (1) Elders sometime fail to launch needed programs for the local church because they are over-concerned about the future, such as building programs. (2) Some elders fail to lead in discipline programs for their flocks because of worry and (real or imaginary) fears about future consequences. (3) Some preachers quit preaching because they worry about retirement needs. (4) Some qualified Christian men fail to begin preaching because of anxieties about the future of the present evil age and the "ism-trends" in the church, rather than believing in the power and victory of Truth. These fears and worries are created and intensified simply because we are not seeking first God's kingdom.

The two basic things in this article that keep men from seeking first God's will are materialism and anxiety. The common denominator in overcoming these two obstacles is found in Matthew 6:21 : "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Where is your heart? Is your heart living in the year

2,000 burdened with problems that haven't even happened yet—if ever they will? Is your heart over-involved in material possessions to the extent that it no longer cares for the poor, the lost, the church, or its own spiritual growth? (Hebrews 6:1).

For our hearts to be right, there are some things we must do : We must guard our hearts from evil (Proverbs 4:23). We must remove some things from our hearts (I Peter 5:7). We must clean-up our hearts and keep them pure (James 4:8). It is not very difficult for a faithful Christian to be more concerned about material things and the cares of this life than God's child should be. But it is totally possible for the Christian to be free from such sin (I Corinthians 10:12-13).

Authority, Please

W.T. Hamilton

The religious world generally does not understand New Testament Christianity. And those misunderstandings continue to try to make inroads into the church.

On my desk is an ad trying to sell us : "A rosary of outstanding value. Oval beads strongly mounted on silverplated wire and chain."

Another ad is trying to sell us "the only piano in the world designed with the assistance of a computer." They even offered free coffee, donuts, and a luncheon to prospective buyers for churches.

Still another wants to send us a "free catalogue of 'tailor-made' choir robes and ministerial gowns."

All of these have come in the mail recently. And then there are the phone calls! The other day a woman called and requested permission to come some Sunday morning and preach for us about a benevolent program she was working on. And on and on it goes.

It is easy to say "no" to requests like the above because it is easy to see that the New Testament does not authorize such things.

But some requests are more subtle. Denominational preachers who cannot get into our pulpits in person sometimes manage to get there by filming their sermons. If something is entertaining, popular, or catchy, we are tempted to use it to lure in people who have lost their appetite for the sincere milk of the WORD. I think I remember reading something in the Book about those who "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:17-18).

Any time we trade the plain preaching of the gospel for the philosophies of the world, we have made a bad, bad trade.

Practical Theism

Dick Sztanyo

Many articles have been written on "practical atheism." "Practical atheism" manifests itself in the lives of those who *do* believe in God, but *who live, act, and think as if God does not exist!* Their thoughts are rarely focused upon God and his will; they do not attend worship assemblies regularly; their speech and actions are indistinguishable from others around them who do NOT believe in God. In short, they are *really* no different from *atheists*, in spite of the fact that they *do* believe in God. Actually, they are more cowardly and dishonest than the atheist who, at least, has the courage of his convictions; whereas the "practical atheist" does not.

But, while articles have been plentiful on "practical atheism," I have yet to see the first word on "practical *theism*." The "practical theist" is one who doubts, or is unsure of, God's existence—but *who lives, acts, and thinks as if God does exist*. There are currently some within the body of Christ who counsel men and women to adopt this posture toward God. I have heard with my own ears a statement like the following: "When persons express their doubts concerning God's existence, I advise them to act *as if* he does exist for one month, and watch what happens" (my paraphrase). Persons who accept this advice actually admit the possibility (?) of the non-existence of God, and are led to think

that their *beliefs and/or actions* will make a difference in *reality!* But, if God does not really exist (and, since they do not *know* for sure, such is a *strong* possibility —so far as *they* are concerned), one's subjective beliefs (however sincere) and actions (however strenuous) will not bring him into existence! That is, one's beliefs and/or actions cannot change the reality of the situation!! *God either exists, or he does not!* One's belief will not change the truth!

Biblical writers, by way of contrast, insisted that men put any "belief" to the test so as to determine whether or not it was (or is) true (see Isaiah 41:21; I Thessalonians 5:21; I Peter 3:15; John 8:32). Once this determination has been made, then one's beliefs and actions are to be brought into line with the truth (that is, the reality involved). This *obligation* (and, it is a mandate from the Lord) *cannot be fulfilled at all* by the "practical theist." He defines *faith* as, "living as if the position one accepts is true." This is agnosticism of the rankest sort, and an utter perversion of Biblical faith. The same God who is the *source* of faith, and the One who *defines* faith, said: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21), and "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reason, saith the King of Jacob" (Isaiah 41:21). Biblical faith is non-existent in the absence of adequate evidence.

One philosopher-theologian (not a member of the church) recently wrote:

I have just opened a learned and authoritative textbook of the Christian Faith, and it says: "We ought not to believe the truth of any statement without evidence. That is as much a matter of common sense for Christians as for anyone else. Plainly, then, the idea of 'faith' as a sort of admission ticket to the company of those who accept a whole lot of things without proper evidence will not do"

The whole notion of believing on inadequate evidence is alien to Christian thinking." (Harry Blamires, *On Christian Truth*, pp. 1-2).

But, this is precisely what the "practical theist" asks us to do,

namely, to believe in the existence of God *without* adequate evidence!! Biblical writers, however, *knew* that adequate evidence exists for one to properly argue the case for God (see Psalm 19:1f; Romans 1:19-21; Hebrews 3:4; Acts 14:14-17; 17:22-31). Indeed, God "left not himself without witness" (Acts 14:17), but rather, he has "showed it" unto men (Romans 1:19). In fact, "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are" (and have been—D.S.) "clearly seen, being understood by things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are *without excuse*" (Romans 1:20). In the face of available evidence, those who reject God are rendered "excuseless" (to coin a term). There *is* adequate evidence to *know* that God exists, and one can *know that he knows* the truth on this subject.

The Bible contains an excellent example of "practical theism" at work. The *context* is Isaiah 41-46, and the *subject* is : God vs. "gods." A crucial stage in the argument is reached in Isaiah 41:21-24, 28 : "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring fourth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen : let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods : yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it altogether . . . For I beheld, and there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word."

These people both believed and acted "as if" their "gods" were real; but they were not. The false prophets in Isaiah 41 used an "argument" (?) similar to that used by the "practical theist." Though each is SUBJECTIVELY convinced that his conclusion is correct, the false prophets sought to prove the existence of their "gods," whereas our modern practical theists mean to prove the existence of "God." But SUBJECTIVE CONVICTION is no substitute for OBJECTIVE TRUTH. And, it is definitely not PROOF!! Subjectively, one may adopt the "try-it,-you'll-like-it" approach; but let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that this is the approach urged upon us by Scripture. *Even God himself* (in the passage being considered), *does not neglect the need for*

authentic credentials in order to establish the position advanced.

Our modern advisers should read (and carefully study) this passage. In it, they should observe the sheer folly of "practical theism." Moreover, they should note God's utter contempt for the "practical theistic" approach. Most importantly, they (like the rest of us) should observe God's demand to settle this question on the basis of *adequate evidence*. (NOTE : in this particular context, the evidence is predictive prophecy).

"Practical theism" is heresy. The Christian system makes a demand upon man so exclusive and so radical, that it *cannot* be recommended on any other basis than the *fact that* it stands the test of *hard evidence*, and the *fact that*, as a result of standing the test, the *Christian system is true!!!* "We ought not believe the truth of any statement without evidence" is the hallmark of genuine *Christian* theism. Let us all refuse to play the "as-if" game.

The Healing of the Lame Man

Ben F. Vick

"Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee : In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up : and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people, saw him walking and praising God : And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple : and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering." (Acts 3:1-11).

In the preceding verses we have an account of one of the many wonders and signs which were done by the apostles.

The healing of this man is very different from the so-called miraculous healings which take place today. Let us consider a few of the nontrasts which might be made between those who were healed in Bible times and those who claim to be healed today.

According to Luke's account, this man was lame from his mother's womb. In Acts 4:22, we are told, "For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed." He did not have some unsubstantiated sickness or disease, but he was crippled from birth, and all the people knew of him. Many who claim to have been miraculously healed today have had diseases which could not be substantiated. In the past I received a letter from a lady who claimed to have seen her children healed of ulcers, toothaches, and TB; and herself claimed to have been healed of gallstones. Who could substantiate her claims?

Another difference between the healing in Acts 3 and the supposed healings today is that Peter and John were not selective as to whom they healed like the fake healers are today. On January 28, 1979, Ernest Angley had one of his "healing crusades" in Birmingham, Alabama. Several brethren attended in order to put him to the test. One brother who attended was Mike Barrett, who is a polio victim and is on crutches. Brother James Pilgrim, reporting the outcome, said :

"Mr. Angley told his captive audience to wait on the Holy Spirit to tell him whom he wanted to come. He said some people won't wait on the Spirit. He then selected people. Any who tried to get in line without being called were *returned back* by the ushers. Can you picture the apostles doing this. Brother Mike Barrett, the polio victim on crutches, was told he could not go on stage because it would be dangerous going up the stairs. He was sent to an invalid section where he

would be prayed for later.”

Peter and John made no preliminary check-up of the lame man.

Neither did the apostles take up a collection before the lame man was healed. Most of these fake healing services have a time set aside for collection. In an article entitled “In Search of A Miracle,” which appeared in McCall’s Magazine, September, 1974, William A. Nolen, M.D., (who researched the so-called healings done by Kathryn Kuhlman) stated :

“After the piano playing, the singing and some praying, she said, ‘Now we’re going to take up the offering—the money we need so we can come to you people and help the sick and needy everywhere. I want twenty people out there to write out checks for one hundred dollars. I want fifty people to write checks for fifty dollars. I want one hundred people to write checks for twenty-five dollars. We need that money. But if you can’t give a hundred or fifty or twenty-five, give whatever you can.’ At that point, the ushers hustled baskets into the crowd and the choir broke into the offertory hymn.” (PP. 101-102).

There is no record that Jesus or the apostles ever took up a collection before healing or raising someone from the dead. These fake healers are in it for the money.

Notice also that Peter healed this man in the presence of many people. It was the “hour of prayer”; and, of course, many people were going in to participate. Luke says, “And all the people saw him walking and praising God.” (v. 9). Even the enemies of the apostles could not deny the miracle. “And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.” (Acts 4:14-16).

Many of the “healings” which take place today are done in

privacy. Or they take place on the other side of the world where no one can substantiate the claims.

It is also interesting to note that this man was healed instantaneously. It was not a gradual process. Peter lifted him up and immediately, the Bible says, his feet and ankle bone received strength. In Dr. Nolen's review of the Kuhlman services, he tells of a girl by the name of Marilyn Rogers, eighteen years of age, who had fallen ill of multiple sclerosis eight months before the Kuhlman meeting. During the services, Marilyn felt the urge to walk up on the stage. Dr. Nolen (who, by the way, to my knowledge, is not a member of the body of Christ) described it this way :

"Then she [Kuhlman] had Marilyn walk back and forth across the stage, demonstrating her 'new' ability to walk. Since it was obvious to everyone that Marilyn's gait was not completely normal, Miss Kuhlman had explained, 'Of course it will take time for these muscles to get back to normal. But isn't she doing well—isn't God wonderful?'" (P. 104).

Now, why didn't Kuhlman do as Peter did in Acts 3?

The lame man was healed completely, or wholly. Imagine here is a man lame from his mother's womb, forty years of age, never having walked; but when Peter lifted him up, the Bible says he "leaping up stood, and walked and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." (Acts 3:8). Even individuals who have been able to walk in the past but are bedfast for a period of time are not able to do as this man did. This man did not even crawl as a baby must learn to do before he walks. Again, I refer you to the preceding quotation from the physician. Anyone who will take the time to compare the modern-day miraculous healings with those found in the Bible will conclude that the former are fakes.

Another contrast between the miracle recorded here in Acts 3 and modern-day healings is that, that miracle supported and confirmed the truth, but the fake miracles today do not support the truth but support error. Claiming to be able to do miracles today is contrary to what the New Testament teaches. Paul said in I

Corinthians 13:10, "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." That which is "perfect" applies to the written word in its completed form. And the "in part" applies to the miracles. When the written revelation was complete, then the miracles ended. In the construction of a building, scaffolding is used; but once the building is completed, the scaffolding is removed. So it is with miracles. The miracles were to confirm the word (Mk. 16:17-20; Heb. 2:1-4); but once the word was confirmed, the miracles ended. Paul said, concerning teachers during the time of the miracles, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (I Cor. 14:37). So, if a man is a faithful teacher of God's word, he will acknowledge that the miracles are ended.

Preach the Word

G.K. Wallace

There are a lot of priggish, puritanical brethren who are led astray by the assumed piety of certain preachers. What brother Longface preaches is surely the truth because he is such a devout man. They size up what he preaches by his piety and not by the Book. I am not opposed to piety. The Bible teaches us to be sober. It also teaches us to be honest. But the man who keeps insisting that he is honest is generally a crook. And he who parades his piety is usually a hypocrite. Piety, like honesty, flourishes better when it is treated as something personal and too sacred to be put on parade.

If our piety is the test of our soundness, then the Pharisees would be orthodox. They were reverent. The Pharisee, instead of leaving the door of his room open while he was on his knees praying, would stand out on the corner of the street and make long prayers. Thus he could be seen of all men. I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, nor a dresser of sycamore trees, but I predict that these superpious brethren will be on the street corners next. Paul was reverent, saintly, godly, and heavenly minded, but

was not too pious to call one fellow a "son of the devil" (Acts 13:10). His brotherly love did not keep him from resisting Peter. "I resisted him to his face because he stood condemned" (Gal. 2:11). The real test of one's orthodoxy is not his sincerity nor affected devotion, but whether he is true to the charge to preach the word.

Realizing that the gospel and not piety is the power of God unto salvation, how shall we preach it? It must be preached boldly and without fear or favor. The second recorded prayer in the book of Acts is a prayer for boldness. Brethren today call the preacher aside and ask him to tone his preaching until it is so tame as to be insipid.

Some say that we should be like John, the apostle of love. Of course, they think John was not vigorous and trenchant in his preaching. Was John a soft, effeminate preacher of the Word? The Sanhedrin was amazed at the boldness of Peter and John (Acts 4:13). Please notice that the text says "Peter *and* John." John was just as bold as Peter.

What reckless saints were those early preachers! They did not so much as regard their own lives in preaching Christ (Acts 20:24). Watch these great men in action and compare some brethren who are apparently afraid to quote the Great Commission with emphasis lest they should offend some sectarian. No doubt the uncompromising fearlessness of these apostles was derived from Christ. "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). No one would suspect a compromising, cringing preacher of having been associated with the world's greatest Preacher.

Faithful preaching of the word of God will accomplish divine results. First : The word preached, believed and obeyed will put one into Christ where he is saved from his sins (Acts 2:38; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Gal. 3:26-27). Second : The word preached will expose false teachers. Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus that false brethren would arise among them: "I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them"

(Acts 20:29-30). False teachers should be exposed. *Those in the church shall not be spared.* Third : The word preached fulfills the sacred charge of Paul to Timothy.

We would thus save ourselves. "Take heed unto thyself, and to thy *teaching*. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (I Tim. 4:16).

The gospel preached "with thoughts that breathe the words that burn" will please God and disturb man. The early preachers did not please everybody. Occasionally a preacher of our day boasts that all were pleased with his work. Even the sects dismissed to attend his services. How different from Paul. He did not please the world nor all the brethren. When he went into a place to preach he had a revival or a riot. The enemies of the truth spoke of Paul and his companions after this fashion, "These that have turned the world upside down are come here also."

Sound Doctrine

Harold G. Taylor

Many in our day have relinquished their stand. Preaching today has fallen on hard times. Preaching is now in the doldrums—if not in the doghouse. Our day has become the day of dialogue rather than declaration.

Young men today are often discouraged from preaching as they witness disciples' disdain for the pulpit. Many members with an eye on the clock and a foot in the aisle are saying to the messenger, "Son, don't preach past noontime. We must beat our denominational friends to the cafeteria. Just hold us a service and don't be so serious in heralding a Saviour." So, old-time oratory is passe. Many feel the church can do without a coarse-voiced, Bible-thumping preacher in the pulpit making a lot of dog-matic statements to a captive audience.

Brethren, a church cannot grow on chaff! Only "back-to-the-Bible preaching" will grow an evangelistic church. We must return

to distinctive preaching that rings with Biblical clarity; once again we must give the "sense of the scripture." A church conservative in doctrine, Biblical preaching, militant in action, evangelistic in spirit, strict in morals and undenominational in posture will grow. Stake the word out in the hearts of men and watch the church catch fire!

We must preach the fundamentals of faith (II Tim. 4:2). Philosophic or socially-oriented preaching will kill a church. Liberalism is the gospel of the empty church building. Bible preaching appeals to intellectuals—youth, aged and middle. However, we are to preach the word whether it appeals or not! But, it has been proven that such grand themes as the Virgin Birth, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Lordship of Jesus, the Second Coming and Undenominational Christianity attract and convert men.

If we dilute the message, what do we have when we go to the lost? The first century Christians recognized the need for proper teaching. Early disciples persevered in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42) and resolved doctrinal problems at the home base (Acts 15). God's ambassadors fitted their message to men's need rather than their fickle curiosities (Acts 17:18), sectarianism (I Cor. 3: 3,4) modernism (I Cor. 15:12), fake doctrine (II Jno. 9-11), and apathy (Rev. 3:14-24). The divine strategy: win with the word or die with a lie! The early church gave the world a live option, and multitudes stormed to the cross.

As then—so now! A religion that is definitive, lovingly tough, separate, evangelistic and fundamental will win. Liberalism has nothing to offer. Social discourse and a rosewater gospel are the burial garments for liberal churches. Only the gospel of Blood can live. (I Cor. 2:2; Gal. 6:14).

Do you Have an Odor of a Sweet Smell ?

Gary C. Hampton

No, this article is not about perfume or flowers or aerosol sprays. Instead, we are talking about the various deeds one has

done for the Lord. When Paul wrote the Philippian brethren, he said, "But I have all, and abound : I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God." (4 : 18).

The Philippian's gift went to the apostle in an hour of need, when he was in prison. However; Paul said it was a sacrifice offered up before God that had sweet smell to the Almighty and pleased him. From this we conclude deeds done by Christians are counted by God as sacrificial service.

Jesus told a parable of the judgment which further illustrates our point. (Matthew 25 : 31-46.) Those on the right hand were bid by Jesus to come and inherit the kingdom because they had seen Jesus hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick and in prison and ministered to his needs. They asked when they had seen the Lord in such conditions and cared for him. The Lord said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Good done for men in need is good done for the Lord.

So, we ask, do you have an odor of sweet smell ? If you regularly give as you are prospered into the local treasury, the answer is yes. When you have visited a sick person and attended to their needs, you have sent up a sweet odor in sacrifice to God. Cards sent to the sick or bereaved or food taken to their homes would also send up a sweet smell.

It is time we realize little things done in the Lord's name are sacrifices that please God. Too many of us do nothing because we think we have to do something big. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10).

