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What Really Saves?

Since all have sinned (Romans 3:23), all are therefore in need of salvation. How is man saved from sin? Or what really saves man? There are several things, according to the Bible, which makes man's salvation possible. For instance, God saves man, but He sent the Word, His only begotten Son from heaven to save man from sin. (John 1:1,2,14; 3:16). Then Jesus, God's Son, died on the cross, and through His atoning death of the cross. He became a propitiation for the sins of the world. According to God's law, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22). Christ's blood was shed for the remission of our sins. (Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Peter 1:18,19). Colossians 1:14 says, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." So God saves, Christ saves, His death saves, and His blood saves us.

But more, in Ephesians 2: 8, 9 we are told that man is saved by grace. Yet Paul wrote at Romans 1: 16 that the gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. Before going to heaven Christ told His disciples to go and preach His gospel to all the world, and He said, he who believes and is baptized shall be saved. (Mark 16:15,16). Then on the day of

Pentecost when people asked the Apostles: "What shall we do?" The Apostle Peter told them to Repent and be baptized in the name of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 2:37, 38).

From all of this we learn then that there are several different things which together makes man's salvation from sin possible. We can't be saved without Christ or without His death or without His blood. Likewise, we can't be saved without the grace of God, or without faith in Christ, or without doing what He has commanded us to do to be saved

There are some who believe that man is saved by grace alone, that is man has nothing to do for his salvation from sin. Others believe man is, saved by faith alone, that is, a mental acceptance of Christ as Saviour. Some also believe that there is a special merit in the very act of baptism and as long as one goes through the act of baptism then God will save him. All such teaching is false. While it is true that man is saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8), and by faith (Hebrews 6:11) and by baptism (1 Peter 3:21), but the Bible no where teaches that man will be saved by grace alone, or by faith alone, or by baptism alone.

To be saved one must believe in God and Christ (John 8:24). One must accept God's grace by faith and obedience, that is, obeying the gospel from the heart to be saved. (Romans 6:17, 18). From the example of the people on the day of Pentecost we learn that one must repent and be baptised for the forgiveness of sins to be saved. Ethiopian eunuch, when he desired to be baptised, was asked by Philip, if he truly believed in Christ; and the eunuch told. Philip that he believed with all his heart that Christ is the Son of God. After this good confession of Christ as the Son of God Philip baptized eunuch. So one must also confess Christ to be saved. (Matthew 10:32, 33; Romans 10:9,10). In fact, one must do all whatsoever Christ has commanded Himself or through His Apostles in the New Testament to be saved. True, Christ is the Saviour (Luke 2:11), but he will save only those who will obey Him (Hebrews 5:8,9), and will be faithful to Him until death. (Revelation 2:10).

The Problem of Bribing

J.C. Choate

I was recently in an African country that was developed far beyond most countries in the whole area. Yet a common practice among the police was to go out on the streets and roads and stop cars and other vehicles to check on their papers. All of the drivers knew what they wanted and always paid up.

Another common practice was to round up young men and take them to some point where they would be questioned. Again, those who paid were released. Those who did not, or could not, were kept a day or so without food to sweep and clean the place or to do some other type of work.

Guess what the people thought of the police? They thought they were crooks, trouble makers, and they looked upon them as their enemies. And yet, had those same police enforced the law, respected the law abiding citizens, and had been of help, then they would have highly praised and honored them.

In so many of the poor countries the people in authority harass the poor, and make their life that much more difficult. So many have to pay for their jobs, buy a seat in the college or university, and pay everyone that moves a finger for them.

How does the Christian deal with this kind of thing? Should he pay bribes or what? Obviously to bribe some one to break the law is wrong. The Bible teaches that we should definitely obey the law. (Romans 13). That would forbid, then, that we pay someone to break the law for us or to help us to get around the law. But bribery is still there to take advantage of people and to demand more and more of them. How do we deal with that? As stated, if it is to encourage someone to break the law for us then of course we cannot be a party to that. If, however, it is not a matter of breaking the law, but it is in the form of a tip, offering a reasonable amount for some service rendered, then that would be different.

I feel that those in authority are the ones guilty for the bribery system. They either are a part of it, do not forbid it, or pay such poor salaries that it encourages bribery to continue.

While bribing affects all, the rich can afford it and often pay so that they can move on and do what they want to do. It also helps the rich to become richer and the poor to become poorer. But the ones who suffer the most through all of this are the poor people. The ones that the law should be protecting and helping are the ones who are plagued by the law and anyone who is in position to demand something of them.

How can a people rid themselves of such? It could come from the top where the authorities outlaw bribing and punish those who are found guilty. This seldom happens though since there are so many who benefit from it. Or it could come from the bottom if enough of the people would refuse to pay and demand of their authorities the services that they are supposed to receive. This will probably not happen either since most are too weak to resist.

So that brings it back to you and me. What are we going to do? Are we going to become a participant and encourage the continuation of such a system or are we going to resist and encourage our family and friends to do likewise? We may not stop it by our actions but we can surely have the satisfaction of knowing that we are doing right and that we are not encouraging wrong doing.

Grace—How Much Does It Cost?

Steve Williams

“Grace” is mentioned 169 times in the KJV of the Bible, 129 of these occurring in the New Testament. The Bible truth that we are “saved by grace” needs constant emphasis. Occasionally, though, a problem arises if the grace of God is taken for granted. Since salvation is a free gift, the concept of grace can be perverted

to a point where commitment or discipleship is thought to be unnecessary (Jude 4; Romans 6:1-2).

One man who has warned others of this danger is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer is a hero to many people and considered one of the more influential theologians of this century. He was executed by the Gestapo at the concentration camp in Flossenbug on 9 April, 1945 because he had publicly and privately opposed the regime of Hitler. In a book originally written in 1937 he explains how the grace of God can become perverted (*The Cost of Discipleship*, The Macmillian Company, 1959).

He calls the problem "cheap grace". He writes, "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance . . . Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate" (p. 47). He traces the problem back to Luther: "Luther had said that grace alone can save; his followers took up his doctrine and repeated it word for word. But they left out its invariable corollary, the obligation of discipleship . . . Costly grace was turned into cheap grace without discipleship" (p. 53). Calling cheap grace the "*carte blanche* for sin", Bonhoeffer rebuked his brethren: "We poured unending streams of grace. But the call to follow Jesus in the narrow way was hardly ever heard . . . The word of cheap grace has been the ruin of more Christians than any commandment of works" (pp. 56-59).

The solution, as Bonhoeffer sees it, is implied in the title of the book—*The Cost of Discipleship*. Grace was not cheap for God. It cost Him his only Son, His beloved one. Likewise grace should not be cheap with us. To be follower of Jesus ought to cost something, namely our faith, our service, our obedience, and our lives.

Running The Race Of Life

Philip C. Wilkerson

"I shall run the way of Thy commandments, for thou wilt enlarge my heart."

Psalm 119:32

Running is a topic that the Bible has quite a lot to say about, and there are numerous applications that can be drawn from this topic. For example, there are many admonitions about running from evil such as: 1 Corinthians 6:18 which says, "Flee fornication." Or I Corinthians 10:14 which says, "Flee idolatry." There are also numerous proverbs and psalms that talk about running and evil: Proverbs 6:18 states that one of the seven things which the Lord hates "are feet that run rapidly to do evil." Passages that have been a source of comfort and encouragement also speak of running. In Isaiah 40:31 the prophet says "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings as the eagle, they shall run and not grow weary, they shall walk and not faint."

The most familiar picture of running that we have in the New Testament is that picture of a runner competing in a race. In 1 Corinthians 9, verse 24 the apostle Paul says: "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win." The New International Version (NIV) translates verse 24 like this: "run in such a way as to get the prize". That means there is a way of running that will not win the prize. Athletes who compete in marathons and other types of distance races know that DEDICATION is the prime ingredient necessary for winning. Dedication is also required in running the race of life. Living a life dedicated to God means sacrificing our selves, putting to death the old man, and our sinful wants and desires for a more lasting and permanent, albeit deferred, reward. Jesus spoke of the kind of life and dedication that pleases God in Matthew 22:37 where he said: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." God desires that all men would dedicate their lives wholly to Christ and his service, to living righteous and godly lives.

The Apostle John told us Just how we can test our total dedication and love for God in I John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome." The Spirit did not say to keep only one or two commandments, or that we only have to keep our favorite

commandments, or the ones that are convenient for the situation we find ourselves in. Whole-hearted dedication and love for God displays itself in total obedience to the whole will of God. However, you can be 100% dedicated to God, and still not gain the prize. The Bible teaches that there have been, and always will be, many people who have dedicated their lives to God. These people are running under the impression that they are pleasing God, and yet actually, they are not. The best example of this type of runner is Saul (who later became the apostle Paul). He thought that he was pleasing God by persecuting the church and slaughtering Christians (Acts 22:3-5). Jesus had something to say about this type of runner in Matthew 7:21: "Not everyone who says unto me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare unto them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who work iniquity.'" So you see it is possible to be running the race of life thinking you are pleasing God, and yet be running in vain. Isn't it a terrible thought to think of coming to the Judgment only to realize that you had wasted your entire life?

We must run as God has commanded us to run because it is God who will Judge all men who have run the race of life (Acts 17:30-31; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 22:12). Those who don't or won't remain true to the revealed word of God, or those who presume that they may add to it or subtract from it as they like, are trifling with the grace of God (Revelation 22:7, 18-19). Once we are running as dedicated servants of God, once we are abiding in His word, we must keep running; we must remain faithful until we depart from this life.

But how do we run the race of life with endurance? Hebrews 12:1 provides the answer. "Therefore since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." How do we run with endurance? Verse two supplies the answer: by "fixing our eyes

on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." The Christian race is much like a long distance marathon. We run this race from the day we are baptized until the day we die if we remain faithful in all things that God has commanded. It is a long race, and there will be times when we will get tired, times when we will want to quit, times when Satan will try to distract us (I Peter 5:8), and draw our eyes away from Jesus and away from the goal. But we must keep our eyes on Jesus. He ran the race of life as a man (Hebrews 4:15; Acts 2:22-24; Philippians 2:7-8), he was faithful to His Father even to the point of dying. He finished the race, and now he sits at the right hand of God, encouraging us and interceding for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:24).

So then to win the race of life requires that we dedicate our lives wholly to Christ by being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16); that we please God by keeping all of his word (Luke 11:28); and that we remain faithful to God until the end of our lives (Revelation 2.10).

Satan's greatest warrior, Worldly Gain,
Often besieges our minds;
Battling Contentment's fortress
Aiming through chinks it finds.

But the greatest enemy of Worldly Gain
Is Godliness, which combined,
With Contentment attains the victory
Decisively every time.

The Mission Of Christ

W. Edwin Kearley

"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).

In Jacob's parting words to his sons, he said to Judah, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come" (Genesis 49:10). The "scepter" is the staff of authority. "Shiloh" is a descriptive term of the Messiah, the Prince of Peace. The leadership of Judah over the other tribes would not be relinquished until Christ came.

Isaiah prophesied concerning the government of the Christ, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder . . . of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from hence forth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7). The angel said the things mentioned in Isaiah's prophecy would happen to Jesus (Luke 1:31-33).

Daniel prophesied God would set up a kingdom in the days of the Roman kings. "And in the days of these kings" (the fourth world power, from Babylon) shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms; and it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44). In verse 45, Christ is "the stone" which "was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and gold." These foregoing elements represented the kingdoms of the world before the coming of Christ

Jesus said to Peter, . . . "Upon this rock I will build my church . . . and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven . . ." (Matthew 16:18-19). Therefore the kingdom Jesus said he would build is the church.

In (Mark 9:1 Jesus said, " . . . Verily I say unto you, that

there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." That power would come when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit came on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the tomb (Acts 2:1-4). On that occasion Jesus Christ was elevated to the throne at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:32-36).

Of the elevation of Christ, Paul said, "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, for above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:20-22).

The believer in Christ can have the assurance when Christ comes again, the kingdom will be delivered to the Father. Paul said, "Then cometh the end, when he (Christ) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father: when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy is death" (I Corinthians 15:24-26).

Paul, in reference to Christ, said, "...who is the blessed and only potantate the King of kings and Lord of lords" (I Timothy 6:15). Jesus declared, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18).

He gave the apostles authority to bind and loose what he had bound and loosed in heaven. To the apostles he said, "Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). John records, "... he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained" (John 20:22-23). God is the only one who can forgive. The apostles were to act as the Holy Spirit directed.

The apostles and all Christians until the end of the world were (and are) to preach the saving gospel to the world. Jesus commanded, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world, Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Without the power in the shed blood of Jesus, the preaching and baptism would be of none-effect. Through the blood of Christ people are saved. Paul speaks of the central facts of the gospel, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures (I Corinthians 15:1-4). Jesus himself said as he instituted his supper, "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are the cardinal facts of the gospel which must be believed.

Jesus said, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Our faith must include faith in the power of the blood of Jesus to cleanse our sins. Paul said, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

Our faith must be strong enough to change the direction of our lives. The Lord gives us ample time to repent. Peter stated, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

Faith must be expressed in confession of our faith in Christ.

Paul taught, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Baptism is the final act which puts one into Christ. Paul asks: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:3-5).

The Mission of Christ is not complete until we are faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10).

Old-Isms Die Hard

John Waddey

Some wise sage once observed that erroneous religious views are very hard to destroy. They keep recurring like weeds in spring time. We see this phenomenal demonstrated in the cyclical appearance of premillennialism, the claim of charismatic gifts and direct illumination and guidance by the Holy Spirit. Like the sevenheaded Hydra, these false systems keep replenishing themselves.

One such faulty view currently being resurrected is that called the *social gospel*. With the birth of the 20th century the liberal Protestant churches turned away from the proclamation of the gospel of Christ to what was characterized as the social gospel. Having lost their faith in the Bible as the inspired revelation of God, they began preaching another "gospel" that was devoted to the social and economic injustices of the day. Not being convinced that men were lost and doomed because of sin, they ceased to preach a message of redemption from transgressions. They concentrated their energies on the material needs of the race.

Feeling that people were safe before God, they sent missionaries to dig wells, provide job training and work for social reform.

Eighty years of history has demonstrated the utter failure of the social gospel approach to religion. Jesus said it plainly in his rebuff to Satan: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). As much as men need and want their physical needs met, there is in the heart of every man a hunger and thirst for communion with God. God "hath set eternity in their hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). With every creature comfort, men are still sinners. Their conscience has no peace; they live in fear of death and judgment (Hebrews 2:14-15).

The social gospel failed because it was a different gospel than that preached by the apostles (Galatians 1:6-8). Those churches which gave up the evangelical gospel of Jesus for that new system have suffered devastating results. Like a slow poison it has killed their mission outreach on foreign soil and dried up the spiritual life of their churches here at home. At home, members begin to ask if God is so indifferent towards man's spiritual faith and moral conduct, why bother with going to church and active involvement? Their numbers have drastically diminished. Fewer and fewer young men present themselves for ministerial service. The system is wrong and it does not work. It has finally been recognized as a culprit of evil by those sectarians who have tried it.

Now the Social Gospel weed has sprung up in *our* midst. Admittedly it is yet small and scattered, but the evidence is there of its presence. One congregation announced recently that they had decided to become a "servant church." So they knocked on every door and asked their neighbors, "How can we help you?" We've washed windows, moved grass, and repaired roofs. We've provided transportation, food and clothing; we are really reaching the people, they report.

Not one of these things is wrong in itself; all are commendable acts of service. But you could wash every window and mow every yard in town, feed and clothe every soul—and yet every one of them be lost in eternity unless the gospel is preached and they obey it. The Social Gospel tends to become a substitute for the message of salvation through faith in Jesus (Mark 16:15-16). Much of our contemporary preaching has lost its Biblical content—only a verse or two may be cited. Seldom are references given. Other sources of authority (?) are heavily relied upon. I recently read of a missionary who was raising funds to set up a factory in a poor nation to teach folk how to be self-sufficient. While the deed is noble, is that the mission of the church?

Far too many preachers have ceased to set forth in their sermons the terms of salvation. Lessons end with a vague call to respond “if you have needs.” Invitation songs are still sung as a matter of tradition, but it seems that no one is expected to respond.

Gospel meetings designed to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) are being discontinued by numerous congregations. In their place are films or lessons on family, child rearing, and other personal needs. Surely we need to have instruction in these vital areas. But good marital relationships, successful parenting, and feeling good about oneself are *not* the gospel of salvation.

The result of these trends is that fewer and fewer souls are being saved. Churches grow (?) by absorbing members from sister congregations. Many members have no strong doctrinal convictions. Some are found drifting into denominational churches with no sense of guilt in so doing. Others staying with us have a “tolerant” spirit toward error that leaves them vulnerable to false teachers.

Could it be that many brethren have lost confidence in the power of the gospel. Are they saying that teaching the word of God to lost sinners just won't get the job done these days? Do their actions indicate that they are searching for a better way to spread the kingdom than through God's appointed way? “Go . . .

preach the gospel to the whole creation . . ." (Mark 16:15-16) has worked for 1950 years!

I appeal to fellow preachers to get back to the basics of studying and proclaiming the Master's message. Let your preaching be filled with the wisdom of God rather than of man. Make Scripture your authority—show the audience where they can read it in their Bibles. Present lessons on home and family and practical lessons for living; but do not fail to proclaim Christ as Lord, and the gospel plan of salvation. Teach your brethren to "do good towards all men" (Galatians 6:10), but be sure to indocrinate them in the sound doctrine regarding faith, worship and service (Titus 2:1).

Remember what it is that makes up the church of Christ. It is not just that we are nice, that we help the poor, that we have good families, that we believe in God and in Jesus. Other religious bodies do all of these as well as we. That which distinguishes the true church from the counterfeit is all the above, plus a *Scriptural faith, message and worship!*

May we never fail in our duty as spiritual leaders, to lead God's people in the path of righteousness. The "Social Gospel" has been tried and found wanting. Please don't revive this faulty system and harm the Lord's body in so doing.

Christ's Church Is Autonomous

Flavil H. Nichols

The church Christ built is *one* in kind, while it is comprised of *many* congregations. Under Christ, its only head (Ephesians 1:22-23), each congregation is "independent in government; self-governing; also, without outside control." This is Webster's definition of "Autonomous." In the New Testament, the only organization through which Christians worked was the local congregation. No organization tied any one congregation to any other congregation. There was no conference, synod, or association of congregations in any organic structure.

Except the "church universal", saints in the first century had membership in nothing larger than a local "church." Anything smaller than the whole family of God, yet larger than a local congregation, is not the "church" in anybody's Bible! In its universal sense, the church has no earthly organization, for it has no earthly "head". Christ is its only "head;" therefore its only "headquarters" is in heaven. On the congregational level, the "church" in the Bible is, under Christ, ruled by "elders" [who are called also "bishops" (or overseers), and "pastors" (or shepherds)]; and it is served by "deacons". Each elder himself is subject to the eldership, just as each deacon, preacher, teacher, and each other member, is subject to the eldership.

The church described in the New Testament has a plurality of "elders in every church" (Acss 14:23) or congregation. Three Greek words should be noted in this connection: PRESBUTEROS, EPISCOPOS, and POIMAIN. All three of these words are applied to the same men in the Lord's church. The "elders" [PRESBUTEROS] from Ephesus (Acts 20:17) were called "overseers" [EPISCOPOS] in verse 28 in the King James Version (the American Standard says "bishops"); and the task assigned these men is to "tend" (A.S.V.) or "feed" (POIMAIN] the flock"—or, be a "pastor" or a "shepherd" of the flock of God. From this it is certain that in the New Testament all three of these terms (elders, pastors, and bishops) are simply different names applied to the same men. The apostle Peter also applied all three of these terms to the same men. He wrote: "The ELDERS [PRESBUTEROS] which are among you I exhort . . . FEED . . ." [POIMAIN: be a "pastor" or a "shepherd" to]; "FEED the flock of God which is among you, taking the OVERSIGHT [EPISCOPOS] thereof . . ." (I Peter 5:1-2). Again it is clear that in the first century the same men were called "elders," "bishops," and "pastors."

"Bishops and deacons" (Philippians 1:1) are the only 'officers' in New Testament congregations. Every congregation is to have a plurality of each, whose qualifications are set forth in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. No bishop (or elder) has any 'authority' in any congregation except the one in which he has been selected and appointed. Preachers and all other Christians, too, should note

that the *selection* is one process, and the *appointment* is another procedure. The Jerusalem CHURCH was told to select the man : "look ye out among you seven men . . .;" but the appointment was by an apostle or a preacher (Acts 6 : 1-6; note also Titus 1 : 5).

My father (the late Gus Nichols) grew up at the turn of the century, when there was no 'stock law' which required cattle to be kept in fenced pastures. Instead, farm animals had "free range", and farmers had to fence their crops. For identification purposes each farmer had his own "ear-mark" for his animals—so named because they split or cut their EARS. My grandfather used the following ear-marks : "A split in the right ear, and an under-hack in the left." In 1949 Dad wrote : "If one of our hogs, or yearlings, was found among those of some neighbor which very much resembled ours in colour, size, or in general appearance, we did not claim the animal unless it had our 'EARMARKS'. If it had a 'SPLIT IN THE LEFT' instead of in the right ear, we knew . . . it was not ours." On exactly the same principles any church which does not have in every [organized] congregation "elders" who are also called "pastors" and "bishops," is not the Bible church. And if it does not have "deacons" to serve under the eldership, it is lacking also in that "earmark" of the Lord's church.

I quote again from my father's 1949 sermon, which he entitled :

"EAR MARKS" OF THE CHURCH

"The church of the New Testament has its earmarks, if you please, by which it can be identified among all other institutions in the world, A football team is not the church of the Lord—it does not have the right earmarks. And none of the fraternal orders, or lodges, is the church mentioned in the Bible. They may read the Bible and pray, and otherwise be religious. but they do not have the earmarks of the church of the Bible. Neither separately, nor collectively are they the church of our Lord They are so different from the church of the New Testament that one may

belong to them and not be a member of the church at all; and one may be a member of the church and never hear of them.

DENOMINATIONS

“The same is true of the modern denominational churches around us. Neither of them has the earmarks of the church portrayed in the New Testament. Some of them very much resemble it in some few points; but they do not have the EARMARKS. They are sadly lacking in many points of identity. The fact that denominational churches differ from each other in faith, name, doctrine, and practice, proves that they are not all identical with the New Testament church : for it was fundamentally and essentially “one body;” whereas the denominations are and are many bodies.”

Churches of Christ today are IDENTICAL with the church in the New Testament—in organization, as well as in name, doctrine, and worship. Congregations are now (as in the first century) independent, and autonomous, having “bishops and deacons” in each congregation that is organized.

Sin In The Face Of God

Victor M. Eskew

The author of Hebrews recognizes that there is “pleasure” in sin for a season (Hebrews 11:25). Humanity, having lost sight of sin’s “seasonal” nature has jumped into the middle of the slime-pits of iniquity. Our world today is fast becoming as the days of Noah: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). Man is bold in his sin. He commits unrighteousness without any sense of shame. Individuals continue in their wicked ways with no fear in their hearts at all. Many of this character have, in time past, been washed in the

Lamb's blood. Some such sinners even be those who worship God regularly and who take a lead in works of the church.

All should study seriously Genesis three. For it is here that we find sin in the face of God. Genesis 3:6 is one of the saddest verses of the entire Bible: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit there of, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Man and woman, the supreme of God's creation, transgressed the law Jehovah had laid upon them in Genesis 2:16, 17. Not long after the dreadful act, they and their sin stood face to face with God Almighty.

Genesis 3:8 begins the horrifying scene: "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." When sin is first confronted with God, it *tries to hide* itself. Is this not a switch from when sin thought it was alone? Before God's presence was made known fully, sin was outright and bold. Eve gave to her husband, and he did eat. There was no attempt to hide at that point. But when the voice of God drew nigh, sin ran for cover. Thus it will be in the last day: Those who are proud of their sins, those who boast of their evil-doings, those who forthrightly transgress the law of God, will (when face to face with God) run for cover. "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:15-17).

The account continues in Genesis 6:9, 10: "And the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and hid myself." From these verses we see that sin is *afraid* in God's presence. There are those today who openly

practice adultery. Cursing and swearing have almost become acceptable language for most of society. Lewd and lascivious material is commonplace for television, theater, books, magazines, newspapers and any other place imaginable. Even some of the church live as devils throughout the week with no sense of shame. But when all those individuals come face to face with the Lord, shame will fill their souls. At that time their sin will be exposed by him who hates all sin, and fear will engulf the heart of the sinner. He will wish he had never been born.

And it would have been better for that poor soul not to have entered the world. For, thirdly, we learn from Genesis 3 that sin, as it faces God, *will be punished*. Genesis 3:14-24 discusses in detail the consequences which man had to face for having transgressed the will of God. Inevitable punishment will also be the lot of all who are sinners in this age. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." But the new Jerusalem is described as a place of Holiness: ". . . And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:8, 27).

If only sinful men would see how they will react when they come into contact with the Almighty, they would change while they still have opportunity. They will be engulfed in an eternity of torment. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

Some Tragedies in Religion

W.A. Holley

Do you think that religion can involve tragedy? Or, would

you object, saying that all religion, regardless of flavour or brand, is good, and is therefore to be praised? The truth is: The wrong kind of religion is a tragedy indeed! There is a true religion, and there are many false religions. All false religions lead unsuspecting souls to eternal calamity and disaster and terrible misfortune.

Why are the foregoing statements true? Because God Almighty accepts religion—the one true religion as revealed in the Holy Bible. In the Bible one can read of the *Jews religion*, the *Pharisees religion pure and undefiled*, and *vain religion*; but of these, only one religion is acceptable to our Lord God (Galatians 1:13-14; Acts 26:5; James 1:26-27).

We shall consider several points, based upon the Scriptures, which demonstrate the truthfulness of our contention:

(1) *Ignorance is a great tragedy in all worthy endeavours, but especially so in matters of eternal truth (Hosea 4:6)*. Ignorance of sin does not excuse any one (Leviticus 5:17). Poison is still poison although one may think it is cake-coloring! One must know the truth to be saved (John 8:30-32). To overcome ignorance, read and study the holy scriptures every day (II Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11).

(2) *False teaching is another great tragedy of our age*. Conflicting voices are continually crying for attention. There is but one true gospel; and if all preachers preached the truth of God there would be no human creeds, no denominational churches, no incompatible plans of salvation. If one will not believe the truth of God, he will believe a lie (II Thessalonians 2:10-12)! and be damned. All preachers should be tried by the Scriptures (I John 4:1-2; Acts 17:11). The doctrines and commandments of men are sinful in the sight of God (Matthew 15:9).

(3) *Oftentimes good intentions end in tragedy*. Why? Because good intentions never carried to fruition never accomplish any thing. One who is always "going to" build a bridge never does any thing! Thousands have been lost even though they "intended"

to obey the Lord God—the Almighty—some day—but never did! Good intentions are essential, but such cannot take the place of obedience (Matthew 7:21-23; Hebrews 5:8-9). If you intend to obey Jesus Christ, do it today; death may come unexpectedly, and find you unprepared.

(4) *Joining some denominational church can be a tragedy of the first magnitude.* Why is this statement true? Well, such an act tends to lull one to sleep, thus giving one a false sense of security. How often have we heard honest souls say that they are satisfied with their church and their religion? All of which may be true; but it is God, not ourselves, nor other men, who must be satisfied! Is God satisfied with what you have done, religiously? Ah, that's the real question!! *Death-bed repentance* is not taught in the word of God (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:36-38; 22:16 Romans 6:3-4). And furthermore, no person ever joined the church in New Testament times (Acts 2:41, 47).

(5) *In some cases high academic achievements ends in terrible tragedy.* Certainly, I am not opposed to high academic achievement; but when preachers or elders or other church leaders become so enthralled with human learning that they think they have surpassed the wisdom of the apostles, they *and all their followers are headed for a mighty fall!* The word of God will stand when the world is on fire (Matthew 24:35; John 12:48). God warns against worldly wisdom (I Corinthians 1:21-31; 3:18-23). It is well for the dog to wag its tail, but when the tail begins to wag the dog, something is radically wrong. How many young people have gone to the great universities with their hearts full of faith and confidence in God, but who, after years of brainwashing there, have returned home with their faith shattered, nonexistent??

(6) *Popularity, as desired as it is by all, can lead to terrible tragedy.* It is normal for one to want to be popular, but surely not at just any cost or price! Should a girl sacrifice her virginity for the sake of popularity? In the field of religion, the most popular preacher, or the most popular church, or the most popular doctrine, etc., are the poorest guides to be found. Why not go to the Holy Bible and learn the true and right way of the Lord? Truth

found there may not be popular with the masses, but it will be true and right! Many Jews of Jesus' day would not confess Him because they were afraid they would lose their position with others (John 12:42-43). Demas gave up truth and righteousness that he might go cack into the world, which was far more popular (II Timothy 4:10).

(7) *Partial preparation is another great tragedy for thousands upon thousands of people.* Many are willing to obey part of God's commands, but not all of them. For example, the five foolish virgins made *some* preparation—but not enough (Matthew 25:1-13). King Saul, of Old Testament fame, kept that portion of the Lord's commandments that pleased him, but he was not ready to go all the way with the Lord (I Samuel 15:1,3, 6-9, 13, 15-23). The truth is: Partial "obedience" equals "disobedience" (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46)! Are you, dear Reader, among those who are ready to believe, but refuse to be baptized (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-38; 22:16)? In the New Testament those who reject obedience to the commandments of the Lord are doomed!

(8) *The sin of procrastination is another great tragedy indeed* Many people *plan to* obey the Lord *some day!* To procrastinate is to put off intentionally and habitually something that should be done. To illustrate, Felix (Acts 24:24-25) waited for a "convenient season," rather obeying the Lord promptly. King Agrippa (Acts 26:28) was "almost" but not "altogether" persuaded to become a Christian. According to the Scripture "now" is the time; tomorrow may be too late (II Corinthians 6:2). Jesus said, "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

Did Adam And Eve Have Children In The Garden?

George Reed

Some argue that Adam and Eve had children in the garden of

Eden. They reason from Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth . . ." that they either did "multiply," or they were disobedient to the commandment. From Genesis 3:16: "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy conception; in pain thou shalt bring forth children," some claim that "God doesn't explain the birth process to Eve; he just indicates it will be changed. Unless Eve had been involved in childbirth before, the statement has little meaning." A third reason for this view relates to Cain's building a city (Genesis 4:17). One writes: "You don't build a city with you, your wife, and your son. The obvious implication is that there was a multiplicity of people around, many of whom had been born in the Garden."

Let us notice several reasons why these arguments cannot be right:

1. Only Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden. "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24). If there were more people in the garden at the time Adam and Eve were driven out, why does not the Bible tell us, or at least allude to them?

2. In the Bible only Adam and Eve knew they were naked. Notice what the Bible says happened after Adam partook of the fruit: "And the eyes of them *both* were opened, and they knew that they were naked . . ." (Genesis 3:7). If there were a whole multitude of people in the garden, why did not God say, "And the eyes of all the people were opened?"

3. Why did not God make coats of skin for more than Adam and Eve if they were not the only ones in the garden? Genesis 3:21 states: "And Jehovah God made for *Adam* and for *his wife* coats of skins, and clothed *them*." Did he let the rest of the people go naked?

4. Genesis 4:1 says the man knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain. If Adam knew his wife before this time, why doesn't the Bible say so? Cain had to be their first child. Eve said, "I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah." The tone of

this passage suggests that Eve was surprised, and full of joy. If this were not her first child, Eve didn't know anything about it. Eve before her fall did not know pain at all. Remember, the garden was a type of heaven on earth. The Lord was simply telling Eve she is now going to have pain in childbirth.

5. To say Cain was born inside the garden is to completely misread the Bible. Cain was born outside the garden (Genesis 4:1). He dwelt in the land of Nod (verse 16). Cain was a wanderer, and was dwelling on the east of Eden (verse 16). Who believes that Cain built a city in the garden? Isn't this astounding?

From the genealogies, one can truly see that Adam and Eve's first child was Cain, and he was begotten outside the garden. Let us just take the Bible for what it says, and not for what we would like for it to say!

Was the Law Nailed to the Cross?

Dillard Thurman

I received a scorching letter condemning me for stating the law of Moses had been made obsolete by the gospel of Christ, and that the "Ten Commandments" were no longer binding on us. The writer stated this position makes it permissible to commit murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, or break any other of the "Ten Commandments." He closed with a scathing indictment that consigned my soul to hell in a most emphatic way! However, he will not apply that reasoning to the laws of the state in which I live. Prior to 1836, Texas was under the rule of Mexico, which had strict laws against horse stealing, cattle rustling, murder, etc. But after the rag-tag army under Gen. Sam Houston defeated the Mexican forces at the battle of San Jacinto, Texas was no longer under Mexican rule! It had become a self-ruling nation! One does not violate the laws of Mexico today when he steals cattle or horses in Texas! Mexican rule was thrown off, and the laws of Texas applied. But it is still a crime to steal cattle and horses, and commit murder, in Texas! Would this man argue it is legal to commit those crimes because we live under a different set of laws? No there was a change in sovereign rule in the state!

Even so, the law of Moses passed away that the perfect law of liberty might be brought in! *"Then said he, Lo; I am come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all."* (Heb. 10:9-10). But Jesus did not offer His body for us as an offering under the Aaronic priesthood! (Read and study Heb. 7:1-11). The writer of the Hebrew letter declares: *"For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."* (Heb. 7:12). Are you willing to deny the change, repudiate the sacrifice of Christ, and go back under the law? Do you accept the old Levitical priesthood of the law, or the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ?

Love and Respect for the law

There's no lack of love or respect for the law of Moses in contending that God brought it to a close! Paul was quick to affirm his love of the law and respect for what it had done: yet he readily admitted that it had served its purpose, and had been taken out of the way! *"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."* (Gal. 2:21). Paul recognized Moses as the great law-giver; but he was not the Messiah! Thus it was written, *"And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end"* (Heb. 3:5-6). It was not the intention of God that the law of Moses, with ten commandments, should last forever! *"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."* (Gal. 3:19). The law spanned that time from Sinai to the giving of the Seed of Promise! *"He saith not, And to seeds, as to many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."* (Gal. 3:16). Because Christ came fulfilling all that was required under the law, it was written of Him: *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."* (Rom. 10:4). To reject Christ's removal of the law is to reject Jesus Christ as God's deliverer for us. He took away the first to give the second!

Christ Removed the Law of Moses!

Paul assures us that Jesus Christ purchased our redemption by His death on the cross (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). But he further shows that by His death He forgave our trespasses, *"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."* (Col. 2:12-14). Not the "ceremonial part" of the law, but the whole law was nailed there! "Nailing IT!" But you ask, Why was that necessary? And even this is clearly explained: *"For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof For the law could make nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God."* (Heb. 7:18-19). So it is most emphatically stated in Scripture that the first covenant, the law of Moses, was done away, was abrogated or repealed. The reason assigned was that this enabled the perfect law of liberty in Christ to become effective! The foundation of many laws governing us today is laid in the law of Moses. But they were carried over into the new dispensation by its Head, which is Jesus Christ. Yes, it is against God's law to commit murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, and other things found in the law of Moses. But we obey those laws today, not to honor Moses. but in obedience to Christ our Lord!

A Change Made In the Law

Jesus Christ recognized the law of Moses was valid in His day; and He lived up to its requirements. But remember His word: *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill, For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."* (Mt. 5:17-18). Jesus fulfilled that law. and when it had served its purpose, He nailed it to His cross (Col. 2:14). But with that law being removed, Paul asked the rhetorical question: *"Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid"* (Rom. 6:15). The fact that the law had been removed did not give license to sin, and only a shallow mind such as our queriest would so argue! We do not seek to change the law of Moses: Jesus did that! But we must recognize the scope of that law, and abide by God's purpose in it!

As noted before, the law was given because of transgressions till the seed (which is Christ) should come (Gal. 3:19). *"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith"* (Gal. 3:14). Now, how much plainer can you make it than that? After coming to Christ, we no longer need the schoolmaster (or tutor), but are led and justified by faith. *"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."* (Gal. 4:4-5). This was not possible under the law of Moses! But in Christ, we have no further need of those types, figures and shadows which the law contained!

Count Your Blessings In Christ!

Every Christian should offer unceasing praise to God for that which Jesus did for us! *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."* (Gal. 3:13). Yet Jesus Christ suffered that ignominy and shame to redeem us from the curse of the law, and present us free in Christ! He had to die to bring forth the New Testament by which Will we are saved! *"For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator for a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."* (Heb. 9:16-17). Paul asked, *"Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."* (Gal. 3:21). Earlier he had answered the question: *"For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."* (Gal. 2:21).

Thus the death of Christ on the cross obtained our sanctification and our justification! *"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."* (Eph. 2:14-15). Jesus broke down the middle wall of partition [the law of Moses] that separated the Jews and Gentiles, to bring them in as one new man in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), a Christian! When the law [our schoolmaster] had brought us to Christ, it had served its purpose, had been fulfilled, and was taken out of the way! But a terrible calamity befalls one who turns from Christ to go back under the law which Christ removed! *"Christ is become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."* (Gal. 5:4). Notice that Paul does not say it is possible or impossible: he said they ARE FALLEN FROM GRACE! Oh yes, there is another verse I cite for your consideration: *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* (Heb. 10:31).