

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

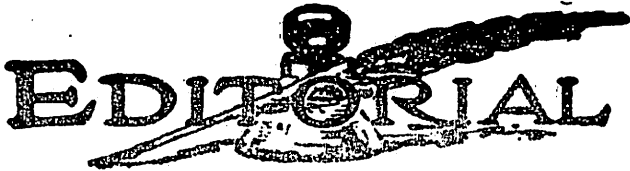
*Pleading for the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL



### Should We Stop Writing?

It is always nice to hear from our readers who express their appreciation for receiving *The Bible Teacher* and who admire articles published in this magazine, written so boldly and based on what the Bible teaches. But occasionally we also receive letters from some readers who write and tell us that we should not write in *The Bible Teacher* on certain subjects. For instance, those who are in denominational churches are not happy with articles which condemn sectarianism because they feel denominationalism is a part of Christianity and there are many sincere and honest people in various denominational churches and that all denominations are doing atleast some good. All of this may be true. But does that make denominationalism right Scripturally? How does God look at it? Reading from I Corinthians 1:10-13 we find the Apostle Paul saying, "Now I plead with you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you .....that there are contentions among you. Now I say this that each of you says, "I am of Paul", or "I am of Apollos", or "I am of Cephas", or "I am of Christ". Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?

Or were you baptized in the name of Paul" Now who condemns division or denominationalism? The Bible, of course. Then what's wrong in writing something the Bible teaches about? Only those who are prejudiced don't want their errors to be pointed out to them. Christ spoke about such people and said, "Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; for the heart of this people has grown dull: Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed. Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their heart and turn, so that I should heal them". (Matthew 13:14, 15). Christ had prayed for the unity of His believers on earth. (John 17:20, 21). This is not His desire that His followers should worship and follow Him through various sectarian churches, having different names and beliefs. We all know that He built and has only one church. (Matthew 16:18; Ephesian 4:4; 1:22, 23). When, in the first century, the Apostles were preaching and thousands were being added to the church by the Lord daily (Acts 2:47), how many denominations existed then? None. They were all members of the same church. Then why can't be the same today? We have the same doctrine of the Apostles in the Bible they had in the beginning. (Acts 2:42). Human creeds and doctrines has divided Christianity of today in several hundred denominations which exist in direct opposition to the prayer of our Lord. We are pleading with men everywhere for a restoration, not reformation; of the Christianity that existed in the first century. This can be possible only when people are liberated from the error of denominational teachings. Christ said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32). Unless the truth is spoken, how it will be known??

Those who are trying to keep Old Testament Sabbath and are encouraging people to give tithe, as was commanded under the Old Testament law of Moses, protest against such articles of The Bible Teacher which inform readers that we are not living today under the Old Testament law of Moses and therefore we should not keep Sabbath or give tithe or follow any other commandments of the Law of Moses. (Galatians 3:19-24; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:7, 13),

Others write and tell us that we should not write in The Bible Teacher that people are no longer baptised with the Holy Spirit baptism and are no longer healed miraculously, because they believe people are still being baptized with the Holy Spirit and are still being healed miraculously as in the first century. But what does the Bible say? How many baptisms are there today? Just one, according to Ephesians 5:5. Which one is that? Baptism of water, according to Matthew 28:19 and Acts 8:38, 39. What about the baptism of the Holy Spirit? It was not commanded for all people as the water baptism was, Mark 16:15-16, but it was a promise for some people. (John 14:25, 26; 16:12, 13; Acts 1:1-8). Likewise, miraculous healing was not for all time. It was to continue, till the spoken word of God was confirmed. (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 13:8-11). I believe God can still create a man from the dust of the ground, as He did in the beginning. But He is not going to do that because there is no purpose for that now. Jesus and the Apostles healed those who were born blind and lame. They raised the dead, even from their graves. They did many other miraculous deeds so that people could believe their words. Miracles confirmed that they were the men of God and that what they were teaching was God's truth. The same confirmed truth has been written for us in the Bible so that we could read it and believe it and do what it says and be saved. We do not need to see a miracle today to believe that the Bible is the word of God. On the other hand, who can go to a grave yard today and command a dead to come out of his grave so that all people could see, as Christ had done? (John 11:38-44). Or who is able to give new eyes to a man who was born blind?? (John 9). Or who can give new legs to a person lame from his mother's womb? (Acts 3:1-8).

Some have also suggested that we should not publish such articles in The Bible Teacher which inform readers that observance of certain religious days such as Christmas and Easter are not authorised by God but are a part of man-made teaching. They write and tell us that these days have been accepted by majority of people and writing against their observance would mean we are saying that they are all wrong. If those days were not observed in connection with Christ, and if

His name and the name of the Bible was not associated with them we would not have said a word about them. Since this is not the case, we must speak and let the world know that such things are not even mentioned in the Bible, that their origin is with man and not with God. God has not authorised, exemplified or commanded their observance. If we are going to please God, then we should not go "beyond what is written". (1 Corinthians 4:6). When we do something religiously that God has not commanded us to do then in doing so we ADD to what God has said, and that is sin. At the close of the Bible we find this grave warning: "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone ADDS to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book". (Revelation 22:18). We must therefore plead with people to speak only where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.

The Lord willing, we will continue to write in The Bible Teacher about what the Bible teaches, not with the intention of hurting feelings of some people but with the intention of showing God's truth as revealed for us in the Bible. Truth, however, hurts. And we can't help. Christ did not cease preaching the truth just because some were not willing to hear Him. (John 6:60-68). When the Apostles of Christ were warned that they should not speak by the authority of Christ any more, their reply was, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God? you judge." Yes, readers, you judge. When so many people are living religiously in error, believing "as doctrines the commandments of men", (Matthew 15:9), how can we cease declaring the whole counsel of God? (Acts 20:27). "Preach the word!" said the Apostle Paul, "Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long sufferings and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers: and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry". (2 Timothy 4:2-5). This we will continue to do through the pages of The Bible Teacher.

# Are We Evangelistic?

J.C.. Choate

As Christians and members of the Lord's church, from time to time we need to take a close look at our lives to see where we stand before the Lord and one another. We need to evaluate our motives, our work, the fruit we are bearing and our future goals. If we were in secular business, we would call that "taking inventory."

If we are not careful, it is easy to succumb to being just an ordinary Christian. In that context we are satisfied with ourselves. We are not bad characters. We are basically honest. We generally tell the truth. We try to get along with those around us. We go to worship. So we are Christians. But are we growing? Are we teaching any one? Are we having a good influence on our associates? Are you bearing any fruit? Do you have any plans for the future? What about a one year plan or a five year plan?

When it comes to the congregation that you are a part of, what is that congregation doing? Is it content to only keep house for the Lord? That is, is its main purpose of existence to meet each first day of the week? What kind of leadership does it have? As a man, are you one of the leaders? Have you met as leaders for a planning session for the church? Do you have any plans, any goals whatsoever for the expansion of the work? Do you have Bible classes? Are they planned or you just come up with something when you get to the meeting place? Is an effort put forth to use all of the members in some capacity? Do you have a visitation programme for the sick, for the unfaithful members, for the people of the area? Do you have any plans for gospel meetings? What is the purpose for having them? To entertain the members, to teach them and help them grow, or to reach the lost? Does the church have any plans to begin some work in another part of the city or in a nearby village or city? As a woman, do you meet with the other ladies to make plans for visitation, to help those in need, to participate in helping with

the teaching in the children's classes? Now when you consider all of these questions, and honestly answer them, then you will begin to see the direction you are going in as a congregation. Don't blame all of the failures on the other members and excuse yourself. Remember that you are a part of the local congregation. The church must work as a body of people and not leave every thing up to one or two and then criticize them for doing everything.

As an individual Christian, do you attend the Bible classes or are you always late or even fail to attend them? What kind of an example are you setting for your family and your children? Don't be surprised if they do as you are doing when they grow up. Worse still, because of your example, it might be that they would not even go. Further, do you take anyone to worship with you? Do you ever have members of the church and friends in for a meal? Christian hospitality, if it is designed to teach and influence people for Christ, can be a powerful means of reaching souls for Christ. Do you volunteer for public participating in the worship services of the church? Do you volunteer to offer your services in various things that need to be done in the church? As you grow in the Lord, you also will grow in your home, in your business, and in other areas of your personal life.

We are like a business, a motor, a power plant, or a government, in the sense that all of the parts and members must work together to run, to operate, and to accomplish its intended purpose. Just one little member or part that doesn't work can bring all of the rest to a standstill. The Apostle Paul compared the Lord's spiritual body, the church, to a physical body in 1 Corinthians 12. He showed how all of the physical body work together instead of opposing each other, working against one another, or refusing to work. He concludes that the members of the body of Christ are to do likewise.

As individual Christians, and especially when we unite as a congregation of the Lord's church, we are like a power station. We are lights to the world, salt of the earth, and a mighty conquering and victorious army. We can have a powerful influence for good on those around us. As the church, we can do whatever

we set our minds to do. If we could somehow understand this and apply ourselves to the task before us, my, what a job we could do.

If you will look at the church in the book of Acts, you will observe that it was ever growing and spreading. The gospel was constantly being preached to the lost. This brought persecution, but even this was a means of helping the Lord's cause to spread. This was the commission that the Lord had given to the apostles and then to their converts. The result of all of this, the gospel rapidly spread to all parts of the world and the gospel was preached to every creature under heaven.

Recently a letter came from the brethren in Singapore. In that letter plans were outlined for this one congregation to renovate its building to enable the church there to have more room especially for classes and to enable it to be more active in its evangelistic programme. It spoke also of raising a sum of money to help a sister congregation to pay off a debt that was incurred when it built a new meeting house, Next, several men were mentioned that were being supported by that congregation in other parts of the city and in neighboring countries. Finally, a goal was set to begin conducting Bible classes in a suburb of the city with the intent of beginning a congregation there. This congregation has done this again and again in the past, so they are simply continuing to do what they have been doing, but ever expanding. One could not say that this congregation has been satisfied over the years to just carry on its local members. As the saying goes, we either go forward or backward, we either grow or die, we either evangelize or we lose. It is almost impossible to stay where you are, to keep your present members, and to do only what you are doing now.

But where can we begin? We can begin with ourselves, with the local congregation, where we are. But that doesn't mean that we should stay there. We should move forward, grow, expand, reach souls for Christ, establish new congregations, and bear good fruit for the Lord. Be faithful, be a teacher, be a cheerful giver of your means, of your time, and of yourself. There is no end

to what we can do and what we can accomplish as individuals and as congregations when we make up our minds that we are going to do something for the Lord, that we are going to be evangelistic.

Are we evangelistic? If we are not, the Lord is not happy with us, regardless of what we are doing, even if we classify ourselves as faithful Christians and faithful congregations. We may have our own way of measuring our service and faithfulness to the Lord, but his measurements are different. If you want to really live, enjoy being a Christian, derive satisfaction from your efforts, then give yourself to the Lord, work for him, serve him, be a teacher of God's word, and use your influence to further his cause. Again, in simple language, be evangelistic.

## The Sword of the Spirit: God's Word!

Dillard Thurman

Many rabble-rousing preachers, seeking sensationalism and showmanship, exploit their false claims of miraculous power by the Holy Spirit. Exalting the Holy Spirit's working within themselves, they discount the plainly revealed Word of God in His plan of salvation! Ignoring the Bible, and what it says, they claim reliance in inner feelings and emotions as evidence of pardon. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." (Rom. 1:16). God's Word is absolutely essential if we are to have faith in Christ: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17). Without that Word, we would have no faith in Christ, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." (Eph. 1:13). And the acceptance of the Word of God does not negate the work of the Spirit.

An unbiased and unprejudiced study of this matter will disclose that the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to



do that which is necessary to assure our salvation. After Paul had listed the various parts of the Christian's spiritual armor, he then said: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Eph. 6:16-17). This reading shows the affinity the Spirit has with the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." These two are not competitors, and are not rivals. The Holy Spirit works through the Word to disclose the terms of salvation and produce faith in Christ, so that man may be saved from sin! A thorough study of their relationship as shown in the chart will lead to this conclusion. Study what each does, and their relationship in doing it.

### **The Spirit and the Word Both Witness!**

We read from Rom. 8:16—"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Well, and good, but HOW does the Holy Spirit bear witness? Jesus clarified this even earlier. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (Jno. 5:39). Now, in the first passage we found the Spirit bears witness, and in the second, that the scriptures (Word) testifies (bears witness). Thus the two, Spirit and Word, bear witness. But the Holy Spirit bears witness only through the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." The two are joined in this effort!

### **The Spirit and Word Both Instruct!**

Long ago God's revelation was announced: "Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedest against them by thy Spirit in the prophets." (Neh. 9:30). It is concisely stated that God instructed Israel by His Spirit in the prophets. But again we are told: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness". (1 Tim. 3:16). Paul surely included the work of both the Spirit and Word in writing: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodiness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world." (Tit. 2:11-12). The Spirit and Word are joined in this instruction through the "Sword

of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

### **The Spirit and Word Both Convict!**

Before departing from His disciples, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit unto them, “And when he is come, he shall reprove (convict) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” (Jno. 16:8). The fulfillment of this is seen in the first gospel sermon, where the Jews were convicted of sin, righteousness and judgment by Peter’s words (Acts 2:32-37). The Spirit worked through the Word, for the apostles “spake as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:4). Paul showed the word convicts in writing to Titus: “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convict the gainsayers.” (Tit. 1:9). Thus the Spirit and the Word both convict: but they are joined in this effort; employing the “Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

### **The Spirit and Word Both Beget!**

None can deny the Spirit’s work in begetting sons of God. In 1 Cor. 3:6, Paul declares, “The spirit giveth life.” And this is more pointedly shown in the work of God’s Word: “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” (Jas. 1:18). Life is in the seed, and the seed of the kingdom produces the children of God. Jesus said, “The seed is the word of God.” (Lk. 8:11). But that seed must first be quickened: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” (Eph. 2:1). The Spirit and Word are combined in this effort also; the Spirit working through the Word. Paul wrote to saints, saying, “For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” (1 Cor. 4:15). Then James stated: “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.” (Jas. 1:18). Notice again that this is done by “the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

### **Born of Both the Spirit and the Word**

In speaking with Nicodemus, Jesus said: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Then in explanation, He said, “So is every one that is

born of the Spirit." (Jno. 3:5,8). Therefore it is a foregone conclusion that all in the kingdom have been born of the Spirit! But if we read further, we are informed: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet: 1:23). So, those in God's family are born of the Spirit, but they are also born of the Word of God! Could we not then conclude that God's family is composed of children who have been born of the Spirit as He worked and moved through the Word? Surely we can see that we have been begotten and born of the Spirit when we are begotten and born of the Spirit-filled Word of God!

### **The Spirit and the Word Both Save!**

We read in Tit. 3:5—"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit." God saves us because of His mercy, but He does so by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Spirit! However, we must also listen to James: "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (Jas. 1:21). And of course, this fits in with Paul's statement: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." (Rom. 1:16). Yes, we are saved by the Spirit, but we are also saved by the Word of God; with both working through the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

### **Both the Spirit and the Word Sanctify!**

After listing the heinous sins of the Gentiles, Paul then wrote, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:11). In the name of the Lord, and by the Spirit of God, they were washed, sanctified and justified! Don't underestimate the work of the Spirit! But also remember the prayer of Jesus: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." (Jno. 17:17). Christ gave Himself for the church: "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." (Eph. 5:26). Thus Paul wrote: "Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thes. 2:13).

In this passage again you find Spirit and the truth combined to effect sanctification; but accomplished by the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

### **The Spirit and the Word Both Cleanse!**

From 1 Cor. 6:11, we found that we are washed by the Spirit, and are thereby cleansed of our defilement. But this cleansing power of the Spirit is exerted through the Word. Jesus said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (Jno. 15:3). But notice again: "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," shows this cleansing by the Spirit is done through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit sets forth the washing of water by the word as the gospel is proclaimed, accepted and obeyed! The cleansing and sanctifying is accomplished by the joint effort of both: working through the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

### **The Spirit and Word Indwell the Saints!**

Paul is emphatic in declaring: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. 8:9). Then he makes it very clear that he refers to the Holy Spirit's dwelling in the Christian by adding: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. 8:11). There is no reason to doubt the indwelling of the Spirit in God's children! Those who believe that the Father and Son dwell in Christians should not argue against the Spirit dwelling there also, and in the same way! The sermon by Peter on Pentecost promised the Spirit; "and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" is tied with salvation (Acts 2:38). Later Peter declared, "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him." (Acts 5:32). Some have the idea that the Spirit dwelling in one must be with miraculous power, but they find no difficulty in accepting Paul's words: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." (Eph. 3:17). In just that same way, the Spirit and Word of God dwell within, as we partake of the "Sword, of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

## **The Spirit and the Word Both Strengthen!**

In the verse preceding that last quoted, you read: "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." (Eph. 3:16) So, we now find that we are strengthened by the Spirit of God! But how is that strength imparted? Paul showed us: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20:32). So, the Spirit strengthens, and the Word of God's grace builds up! Can't you see that one is built up in the most holy faith by partaking of the Spirit-filled Word? The Spirit uses the "Sword which is the Word of God" to impart spiritual food, by which we are nourished, exercised and strengthened. But never are these two working against one another! They always corroborate in the effort.

## **The Power of the Spirit and Word**

To the saints in Rome, Paul wrote, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15:3). This point is universally accepted, that the Holy Spirit has power! The Holy Spirit's power was shown in the Lord (Jno. 3:34), and it was reported, "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit in to Galilee." (Lk. 4:14). The Spirit is associated with demonstrations of power in the hands of inspired men. To His disciples, Jesus said, "But ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you." (Acts 1:8). Paul spoke of his efforts in the gospel as "through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God." (Rom. 15:19). He stated, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power." (1 Cor. 2:4). Surely all accept the truth of the Spirit's power. But the Word of God is also endowed with power. "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12). This book declares that God is "upholding all things by the word of his power." (Heb. 1:3). So powerful

is this Word that Jesus stated: "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away." (Matt. 24:35). Yet again He said, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (Jno. 12:48). But as in other passages studied, there is no conflict of power in all of this! The power is in "the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

### **The Spirit and Word in the Resurrection**

Paul assured the saints, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. 8:11). The Holy Spirit's work is not fully accomplished until He has brought forth the dead at the resurrection! But even this is not done independent of the Word of God. Jesus said, "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." (Jno. 5:28-29). To get the whole picture, study this: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thes. 4:16). The voice of the Lord will announce the resurrection! Yes, the Spirit will quicken the dead, but will be joined with the Word; both will operate through the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

### **Don't Reject the Word of Salvation!**

Let none become guilty of rejecting or discounting the Word of God by refusal to obey His terms of pardon! The Holy Spirit brought God's plan of redemption by revealing it through inspired men. To reject that message is to reject the Spirit! It is well to study carefully the conditions of salvation delivered by the Spirit. The Spirit speaks, saying, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The acceptance of that word in fulness of faith can obtain salvation! "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41). "Howbeit many of them which heard the word

believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand." (Acts 4:4). "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." (Acts 8:12). "And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." (Acts 18:8). Paul states this is how Christ sanctified and cleansed the church—"by the washing of water by the word." (Eph. 5:26).

Friend, we need not extend this study further. We believe you have the gist of the matter, and can see that the Word of God must be accepted in fulness of faith, and faithfully obeyed, to avoid rejecting the Spirit of God that gave it. Remember, we must have respect for "the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

## Christians, Then and Now

Johnny Ramsey

We can be today what servants of Jesus Christ were over 1900 years ago. The intervening years have not hidden the power of the gospel. It is still the same message of salvation. (Rom. 1:16).

Let us illustrate the plausible nature of what we are saying. Suppose that the game of baseball would cease to be played for several centuries. If in the year 2589, a man were to follow precisely the baseball rule book of 1989, he could present to the people of the day the exact game we see played now! The elapse of time could not change the matter. And friends, the same principle applies to Christianity. If we obey and teach and practice that religion portrayed on the pages of the new Testament we shall be members of the church of the Lord!

The church which Jesus Purchased with His own blood does not consist of all the denominations. New Testament Christianity

is undenominational. The body of Christ is not composed of the 300 differing religious bodies on earth today.

But someone says, "Preacher, have you never read the passage in John 15 concerning the vine and the branches? Don't you know that Jesus was referring to the various denominations when he said "I am the vine, and ye are the branches?" No, I do not believe that Christ was referring to the various denominations when He said, "Ye are the branches." There are four conclusive reasons why we say this.

1. Jesus made it plain that He was referring to an individual and not a denomination when He spoke of the branches of the vine.

2. The very context disproves the theory put forth by the denominations. Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches. . . If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as branch" (Jno. 15:5-6).

3. Jesus was not sanctioning present division (which He prayed against in Jno. 17) when he stated "I am the vine and ye are the branches." None of the present denominations even existed then, so he could not have been referring to them.

4. I am also sure that Jesus was not upholding sectarianism by His use of "the vine and branches" because: A vine bears only one type of fruit. If Christ had wanted to uphold denomination-ism, He would have needed another comparison, for one vine only bears one type of fruit. You don't see grapes, peaches, bananas, apples, watermelons and pumpkins all growing from the same vine.

I beg of you to consider seriously the importance of being a member of the body of Christ. In Gal. 3:27 and 1 Cor. 12:13 we read that we become part of Christ's church when we are "baptized into Christ" (Rom. 6:3-4). When we do this, the Lord will add us to His church (Acts 2:47) where we can serve the Lord faithfully until death and then go home to Heaven.



# "It's Everyone's Job"

W.A. Holley

In Matthew 25:14-30 Jesus taught a wonderful lesson regarding the proper use of talents. In this parable, talents are given to three servants: five to one, two to another, and one to the third. These servants were expected to invest their talents in order that more talents might be gained. The story shows that the first two servants gained five and two talents, respectively; but the third servant buried his talent in the ground and thus gained nothing.

We are here emphasizing the importance of "every one" meeting his duty or responsibility. We may wish to avoid our duties; but God nevertheless requires us to give account to him (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). For example, God keeps up with one who steals and brings punishment upon him—whether the objects stolen are God's holy word, or material possessions (Zechariah 5:1-4; Jeremiah 23:30).

Now we shall present several categories designed to impress upon the minds of honest readers the importance of human response to God's demands. God and men are required to work together in matters of salvation. The book of Deuteronomy (chapters 27 and 28) illustrate this principle wonderfully. The reader should take note of the "if thou shall hearken"—and "if thou will not hearken", passages.

(1) Where Lord's day attendance is concerned, "it is everyone's job". No other one can attend the services of the Lord for you (Acts 20:7; Hebrews 10:24-25): Excuses are of no avail (Luke 14:15-24). The excuses offered in the text cited are ridiculous and foolish—but no more so than any excuse you may offer. For example, one brother, when ask to lead in prayer, asked to be excused because he had left his glasses at home! There is a difference between a Bible reason and a foolish excuse, Worship attendance is "everyone's job".

(2) Where obedience to the gospel is concerned "It's every-

one's job". Every responsible person on earth should obey the gospel of Christ. The gospel is composed of facts to believe (I Corinthians 15:1-4), commands to be obeyed (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4), promises to be enjoyed (Romans 6:22), and threats to be feared (Mark 16:16). God has no means by which he forces men and women to obey his will, but those who refuse the overtures of the gospel are certain to be lost (I Peter 4:17; II Thessalonians 1:7-9). It is possible for one to sin away one's day of grace. That is exactly what the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum did because they rejected Jesus and his message (Luke 10:12-16).

Thus, your parents or others cannot obey the gospel of God for you. No one else can believe for you, repent for you, confess Jesus Christ for you, or be baptized for you (the Mormon's practice, notwithstanding). These are commands that you must obey for yourself. "It's everyone's job".

(3) The formation of good habits is each individual's business. Bad habits are always detrimental: good habits are always expedient. It is never expedient for one to become addicted to alcohol, or tobacco, or marijuana, or cocaine, et, al. As a rule, habits formed early in the life persist throughout one's life-time, whether good or bad.

Sow an act and you reap a habit.

Sow a habit and you reap a character.

Sow a character and you reap a destiny.

—Charles Reade.

Good habits are good to live by and they are good to die by. It is said that "Jeb" Stuart, of Civil War fame, while he lay dying, was offered a flask of whiskey to relieve his great suffering. Refusing it, he said that he had promised his mother that he would abstain from strong drink.

(4) "It's everyone's job" where moral standards are to be maintained. Any girl, in an effort to prove (?) her love can throw her life away if she so chooses. Only within the bonds of holy

matrimony is the place where physical intimacy between the sexes is to occur. We quote: "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). No amount of rationalization, however persuasive, can remove one's responsibility toward God's commands! Yes, girls, it is up to you to maintain your virginity—even in this promiscuous age.

Under normal circumstances, any girl who does not keep herself until after marriage is headed for severe pain and shame and suffering which she probably cannot even anticipate. To show what we mean, we will quote a few lines from a teen-age girl who knows about this problem from her own experience: She Wrote:

"I was seeing this guy for two years on and off. I was really in love with him, but I was really stupid. When I told the baby's father, he couldn't believe it; he told me to get an abortion. I was so mad. I couldn't believe he said that. I thought he would want the baby and would want us to get married; but I was wrong. Since I wouldn't get an abortion, he didn't want anything to do with me . . . He was real mean and cold, . . . I lost a lot of friends when I began to show . . ." What a sad story! All people should profit from the real experience of this young girl.

We do not excuse or condone the young man's responsibility in this unhappy affair. Of course, he is responsible; he must share responsibility for his actions. Sex is not a game to be played with by responsible people. All accountable people must reap as they sow (Galatians 6:7-8). David the king, in his affairs with Bathsheba, was made to reap as he had sown (II Samuel 11:1-5; 12:7-14).

Yes, others may contribute to our sinfulness. But, when in the final analysis, we come face to face with our sins, we must recognize them as our own transgressions—not the sins of our parents, nor boy/girl friends nor our neighbours. If you drink, it is you who did the drinking! If you commit adultery, it is you who committed adultery, no matter who else may have been involved. "It's everyone's job!"

# “Take Heed How You Hear”

Dan Winkler

## Introduction

Revelation heralds the charge: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches” (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9). However, men listen and react differently to the Bible. (Cf. Nehemiah 8:1, 5, 6; Ezekiel 33:30-31; Acts 2:37; 7:54; 17:32-34).

Jesus’ “Parable of the Sower” addresses the importance of listening properly to God’s word (Cf. Matthew 13:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23). This brief study will set forth an attempt to analyze Luke’s account of this parable; and, then, make a few applications of the same.

## I. The “Parable of the Sower” Analyzed

Luke’s account of this parable (Luke 8:12, 15, 18) projects four possible ways to hear and react to holy writ. Each possible reaction may be summed up in two words:

(1) The first possible reaction to holy writ is summed up in the words “no reception” (Luke 8:13). In Palestine, well-packed, hardened walkways separated narrow strips of soil that were prepared for planting. Seed that fell upon these hard paths was soon plucked up by birds and, thus, did not germinate, grow, and bear fruit. Even so, it is possible for one’s heart to be hardened to the point that God’s word will not be received.

Matthew’s account of this parable identifies prejudice as a factor causing such a condition of the heart (Matthew 13:1-23; especially vs. 10-18). “Prejudice” may be easily defined by a casual glance at the word. It means to “pre-judge”. Now, to follow in stride with the noble example of those who received the word (Cf. Acts 2:41; 8:14; 11:1; 17:11), one must study the Bible today without preconceptions, and with an open mind.

(2) A second possible reaction to holy writ is summed up in

the words "no root" (Luke 8:13). In Palestine, rocky soil consisted of a thin layer of soil resting upon a large limestone base. Such could not provide the moisture and plant nutrition needed for adequate root systems, and, thus, the sustenance of plant life. Even so, it is possible for one's heart to be so spiritually malnourished that he has not the depth to withstand temptations that are sure to come, nor to stand for the truth he once received.

Convictions must run deep. In fact, Matthew's account of this parable uses the word "persecution" for Luke's "temptation" (Matthew 13:21). Thus, Bible-produced-convictions must run so deep that they are capable of withstanding the pangs of ridicule and persecution. Christians are to be "rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:17). They are to be "rooted and builded up" in Christ, as well as "established" in their faith (Colossians 2:6-7). So a study of and a reaction to holy writ needs to flow from and stand upon a heart of conviction (Cf. I Corinthians 16:13).

(3) A third possible reaction to holy writ is summed up in the words, "no resistance" (Luke 8:14). It is possible for prepared ground to look clean while she still cradles wild seed within her bosom. Consequently, good seed that is sown germinates and grows along with the seed of weeds and wild grasses. Eventually the tender plants produced by good seed are choked out by the wild grasses and the thorns. Even so, it is possible for the selfish desires of the heart to choke out the word of God.

Jesus, parable identifies three problem areas which potentially feed selfish desires: cares (Cf. I Peter 5:7), riches (Cf. Matthew 6:19), and pleasures (Cf. Philippians 3:19; I Timothy 5:6; II Timothy 3:4) of this world. The "desires of the flesh and of mind" cause one to be "dead in his trespasses and his sins" (Ephesians 2:1-3). Christians must not love such (I John 2:16) nor study the Bible from such selfishness.

(4) A fourth possible reaction to holy writ is summed up in the words, "reception and results" (Luke 8:15). A deep bed of soil, free of wild seed and well prepared, was the sower's delight and desire in Palestine. Even so the honest and good heart which

hears the word of God (Matthew 13:16), holds fast to the same (Philippians 1:27), and works patiently (Hebrews 12:1), is a delight to God.

Observe how this proper reaction to God's word counteracts all three foregoing improper reactions to God's word. (a) The "honest and good heart" counteracts prejudicial hardheartedness. (b) "Bringing forth fruit" counteracts those who are choked out and "bringing no fruit to perfection". (c) Bringing forth fruit "with patience" counteracts those who "fall away" by ceasing to believe. Indeed, one should approach a study of the Bible with an honest heart, ready to build convictions based on scripture, and work in keeping with the same.

## II. The Parable Applied

(1) Apply this parable to the requisites for becoming a Christian one must believe in Jesus (Mark 16:16; John 8:24; Acts 8:37; 16:31), repent of his sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30) and be immersed in water for the purpose of having his sins washed away (Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Peter 3:21). Prejudicial preconceptions, the temptation to make excuses, and selfish desires, must not prevent man from receiving and being a doer of the word (Cf. James 1:21, 22) in these requisites.

(2) Apply this parable to a dedicated life. Christians are to "abhor that which is evil (Romans 12:9). Temptation is not a set of "tinker-toys" to be played with; it is a raging fire that if yielded to, will set one on course to a devil's hell. Temptation is not a harmless pup to be cuddled and petted: it is a carnivorous beast that will consume one's soul and rob him of his eternal destiny in heaven: Thus, Christians should "abstain from every form of evil" (I Thessalonians 5:22) and not be tempted or lured through prejudice or selfish desires to do anything less.

(3) Apply this parable to the singularity of the church. Paul wrote the bold statement, "There is one body" (Ephesians 4:4) and identified that spiritual body as "the church" (Ephesians 1:22; 23). Even further, twelve times in ten verses Paul indirectly established the singularity of the church using words such as, "the

church", "the body", "it," "a glorious church", (Ephesians 5:23-32). One must not allow denominational prejudice nor the temptation and selfish desires to broaden the basis of Christian (?) fellowship, to prevent his accepting God's law of inclusion and God's law of exclusion.

### Conclusion

Said the father to his excited son, "Slow down, Son, you are talking too fast!" Said the son to the father: "No, Daddy, you are listening too slow!" Some are listening to God too slow, if they are listening at all. How pertinent is the charge of Jesus, "Take heed how you hear."

## A Matter Of Ignorance?

Victor M. Eskew

The Bible is clear in its admonitions about withdrawing from the disorderly. The apostle Paul demanded that those who teach things contrary to sound doctrine be marked and avoided (Romans 16:17-18). This same apostle commanded us "not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an Idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no, not to eat" (I Corinthians 5:11). To the church in Ephesus the following injunction was given: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11). And to the church at Thessalonica, note these words: "Now we command you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (II Thessalonians 3:6).

Although the action of withdrawal is a clear command of Jehovah God, many local congregations of the Lord's people have not practiced it, are not practicing it, and some probably will not practice it! One of the prominent excuses for not doing it is because members of the church are ignorant about the matter. When the subject is mentioned; one of the first things said is:

"We need to have a class on this subject, because we do not know what is involved in the action". Thus, a preacher has to spend weeks and months teaching individuals what the Bible has to say about the subject of withdrawing fellowship.

This writer sincerely feels that the cry of ignorance with regard to withdrawal of fellowship is in some cases merely an excuse which individuals have in order to get out of having to do that which the Bible very plainly tells us to do. Be it granted that there are some individuals, primarily new converts, who might be ignorant about the matter. But for the biggest portion of the church, this statement probably is false.

The fact is that people know exactly what is involved in this action. The very words by which the action is described indicates what must take place. Also, most of those who use this excuse of ignorance have had a Bible on their shelves for years, and much is contained therein on the subject. Too, faithful gospel preachers have never neglected this area of church responsibility in their preaching and teaching. If the truth were known, some congregations which use this excuse probably do so with each preacher who comes along! And therefore, they have been taught several times about the matter. In addition, many tracts and books have been written on "Church Discipline." These could have been purchased and studied by those who persist in ignorance about the action of church discipline.

No, ignorance is not the true reason churches have not practiced the withdrawal of fellowship. This excuse is merely used in order to bide for a little time. The real reason the action will not be taken is because many members know that they have mates, mothers and fathers, children, brothers and sisters, and close friends who would need to be withdrawn from if the action were implemented. They enjoy their weekends together, the daily association, and trips together out of town, too much to have to obey the command to "withdraw from" their disorderly kinsmen and friends.

Those who feel this way are not disciples of Christ which



they think they are. Their actions indicate that they love their relatives more than their Savior. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). They have deceived themselves in this matter. To them the apostle Paul's words can be addressed. "Be not deceived! God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:7-8).

Brethren, this is not a laughing matter. It is not a subject upon which we should think lightly. It is a command of God (II Thessalonians 3:6; Revelation 22:14). It involves the soul of the sinner (I Corinthians 5:3-5). It involves the soul of the sinner (I Corinthians 5:3-5). It involves the purity of the church of our Lord (I Corinthians 5:6-8). Let us quit hiding behind pretended ignorance, and practice that which God demands on this vital subject. If we continue to refuse many stripes will be the wages which we will have earned in the last day. (Luke 12:47; Romans 6:23).

## The Will Of The Father

Clifford Dixon

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Here we see that one must do the will of the Father in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. What is the will of the Father in heaven? There are two main Greek words rendered "will" "thelema" and "boulomai". "Thelema" (in this text) means will, commands, and desire. "Boulomai" expresses more strongly the desire in the deliberate exercise of the will. So the will of the Father refers to the desires, commands, and wishes of the Father. As a people we should be eager to obey God so that we will be pleasing to God.

1. We need to notice the willingness of God in our behalf: "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). Also our prayers are to be made for all men. God wants all men everywhere to be saved. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:3-4). So it is God's will that all men be saved, and he has made ample provisions through Jesus Christ his Son.

2. We need to realize that God's will or commands are the commands of the gospel. "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (Ephesians 1:9-10). The "mystery of his will" is identified in Ephesians 3:6 as the gospel. It is God's will that this gospel be the message of redemption to mankind. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). Paul told the Corinthians that "in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (I Corinthians 4:15). According to Acts 18:8 the Corinthians heard, believed, and were baptized. This is God's will for everyone.

God wants Christians to allow the word to transform their lives. He said, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that, good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

God also wills to work in us as we continue to obey the commands he has given. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13). To accomplish this God desires that Christians: (1) Learn his will (Romans 12:2); (2) Flee from immoral conduct (I Thessalonians 4:3); (3) By well doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men (I Peter 2:15); (4) and Always abound in the work of the Lord (I Corinthians

3. Christ did the will of God while on earth (John 5:30). He taught the disciples to pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). Christians are told, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" (I John 5:14). Jesus in Gethsemane prayed, "Thy will be done". (Matthew 26:42), and we are told that he "was heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7). His cup was not removed, but he was given the strength to bear it (Luke 22:43). So our prayers are to be as those of Jesus, making our petitions, then prefacing or modifying them with; "Thy will be done, and not ours."

4. We are to place ourselves under the will of God in every action of life. James states, "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into the city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (James 4:13-15). Man proposes, but God disposes! Every thing we plan is dependent upon God's will. The rich farmer of Luke 12 learned too late not to leave God out of his plans. He left his earthly riches behind when he died and had no provisions laid up in heaven. How terrible to leave God out of one's thinking! To do as James enjoins here is to recognize God's hand in the affairs of men. It is also to recognize the need of God's assistance. It causes us to realize that without God's help we cannot possibly succeed; and that if he is not willing for a thing to be done, it is best that it fail. Solomon put it, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

In conclusion let us realize that God wills that we be saved; therefore let us seek God's will (commands), and pray that God's will be done, and place ourselves under his will in every action of life.

# “Where’s Your Bible?”

Dan Jenkins

Almost everyone has heard the story of the important paper that has been discovered in the family Bible. The fact that it had not been used for many months made it possible for such a paper to be lost. In many homes the Bible is hardly more than a filing cabinet—a place to keep the records of the family tree.

How much change would there be in your life if you lost your Bible? How long do you think it would be before you noticed it? Would you discover that now you have more time to read other books, to visit, to watch TV, or to talk on the telephone? Would the absence of the Bible make any drastic change in your lifestyle? Suppose the government decreed that it would be a criminal offense for anyone to have a Bible in his home, and removed your Bible from your home: would it affect you at all?

When God gave the ten commandments and the other laws through Moses, they were kept in and near the golden ark in the Most Holy Place. Their “Bible” was never in their homes; yet note that he said: “These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart” (Deuteronomy 6:6). Again he said: “Therefore shall ye lay up these words in your heart and in your soul . . .” (Deuteronomy 10:6). No Bible was found in their homes; yet it was found in their hearts! Notice carefully the words of David, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:111).

In reference to Christianity, God foretold: “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33). Biblical faith and the righteousness that comes from it are based on these words, “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart . . .” (Romans 10:8). Finally near the words of Paul, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom . . .” (Colossians 3:16).

Beloved, where is your Bible?