

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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All About The Bible

(2)

In the editorial of the last issue in *The Bible Teacher* we had discussed about some very important things that the Bible teaches. We saw that the Bible teaches that sin is real and that all accountable being are sinners. Next, we observed that through Christ God has provided redemption from sin for all men and women. Then we saw that Christ will come back one day, and that no one knows when He will come back again. Concerning His coming back I forgot to mention one more important thing in the last editorial, and I must take this opportunity to emphasize that the Bible teaches that Christ will never come back again on earth. Some believe and teach this. But this is not true. I know, it is not true because I read in the Bible, at 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 10 that at Christ's coming both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Check in your Bible if it is not true. Now, since according to the Bible the earth and all its works are going to be burned up at the coming of Christ then we know that He will not set his foot on earth again. How will He come then? The answer is found at 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 where the Apostle Paul wrote thus: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, And the dead in

Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." We also remember the fact that at the time of Christ's return to heaven the Bible says, a cloud had received Him out of the sight of the disciples, and the two angels who had appeared to them at that time when they were looking up had said to them that this same Jesus will so come back in like manner (Acts 1:11). So the Bible teaches that Christ will come back in the clouds up in the air, and not on earth. Fourthly, we had observed that judgment will take place at Christ's coming and that all people of all nations, dead and living, will be judged, and the standard of judgment will be the Book of God, the Bible which He has given us in this life, and will be opened again on the judgment day. Further, from the Bible we learn:

5. About Resurrection. When the Bible says, Christ will judge both living and the dead, it means when Christ comes back there would be those who would be alive or living on earth at that time, but those who are dead or will be dead by that time will be made alive or resurrected. Christ had told His listeners that they should not marvel about it but the time is coming when all will be made alive and "those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." (John 5:29). According to the Bible, there will be only one resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous. The resurrection will be of the bodies. Souls do not need a resurrection. I Corinthians chapter 15 in the Bible is known as the "Resurrection chapter", because there the Apostle Paul talks in length about how the resurrection of the body is possible. Peter on the day of Pentecost told his listeners about David and said that David yet did not go to heaven. (Acts 2:34). Well, where is David then? His soul is in hades (Luke 16:23; Acts 2:31), and his body was buried in the grave. And the same is true of all others who have died from the beginning. In Luke 16 we find the rich man and Lazarus in Hades, but both were in different palces in Hades, which is the unseen place of the departed souls. While Lazarus was in paradise (Luke (16:43), rich man was in Tartarus (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). When Christ will come back all the dead will

be resurrected and will be judged. (Acts 17:30,31). Hades will give up all souls and bodies will be resurrected (Revelation 20:13), and bodies will be changed and will become incorruptible and immortal. (1 Corinthians 15:35,53). And then the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked or unrighteous will be condemned.

6. About Heaven. Heaven, the Bible says, is the abode of God. (Matthew 5:34). Unrighteous and wicked will not inherit heaven. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). All who say Lord, Lord, will not enter heaven, but only those who do the will of God the Father will enter into the kingdom of God. (Matthew 7:21). The church of Lord Jesus Christ is also called the kingdom of heaven, (Matthew 16:18,19; Colossians 1:13; Acts 2:47), because it represents those who will finally inherit God's kingdom in heaven. But not all who seek or desire to go to heaven will be able to go there, said Christ, but only those who would strive to go through the narrow gate. (Luke 13:24). The difference between God's kingdom in heaven and on earth will be that while on earth there might be all kinds of people in it (1 Corinthians 5). but in heaven only the righteous and holy will reside in it. (Revelation 21:27). According to Christ. at His coming He will send His angels who will gather *out of His kingdom* all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. (Matthew 13:41,42). Notice, they will be gathered out of His kingdom, the church. It is not uncommon to hear people say, that so and so has died and has gone to heaven. If all go to heaven after death, then imagine what kind of place heaven would be! But the truth is that all will not go to heaven, but only those who do the will of God will go there. (Matthew 7:13-14).

7. About Hell. Christ has warned, "And if your hand make you sin: cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where their worm does not die and fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:43,44). Hell is also called the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 25:30). Then Jesus said, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Notice, both soul and body will go into hell, the place of fire and outer darkness and of weeping and gnashing of teeth. While in hades only the soul goes, as we have seen above, but in hell both soul and body will be cast after the resurrection, and that is the main difference between hades and hell. And the same will be true between Hades and heaven. John describes hell as the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, and says it is the second death. (Revelation 21:8). The first death which is not mentioned but implied is the physical death which all must face alike (Hebrews 9:27). But the second death will be for those who have not accepted God's gift of redemption from sin through the blood of Christ. Why is hell called the second death? Because it is the place of separation. Separation from the righteous and separation from God, those who are going to live there will exist there forever separated.

8. About Eternity. Those who will enter heaven will live there eternally, and those who will be cast in hell will also exist there forever. Christ, picturing the day of judgment, said about those who would be on His left and right hands: "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:46), Notice, both the unrighteous and righteous are going to enter either into everlasting punishment or into eternal life. There is no difference between everlasting and eternal—both are unending. The day is coming when this old world, earth and its works and all that we see up in the sky are going to be burned up and dissolved, and the Bible puts this great question before all of us, "Therefore since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heaven will be dissolved being on fire and the elements will melt with fervent heat?" (2 Peter 3:11,12). "Nevertheless" concludes the writer, "we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." (2 Peter 3:13). Are you then prepared to possess the land that is fairer than day? (Revelation 21:1-4; 22:3-5).

The Problem Of Pain And Suffering

J.C. Choate

The problem of pain and suffering is a universal problem, one that is with all of us at one time or the other. How do we deal with it? Unless we can understand it, and learn by it, and grow with it, we can be hurt even more by it.

The majority want to blame God for their pain and suffering. They ask why God would allow war, famine, and all of those things that would cause human suffering. To the contrary, however, most of our problems are brought on by man himself. For instance, you eat too much you will get sick. If you drink alcoholic beverages you could get drunk and kill yourself. If you drive a car too fast you could have a wreck and hurt yourself and hurt others too. If you gamble you risk losing all of your money. If you are immoral you may contract some disease. And on and on we could go. In other words, sin and wrong-doing bring with them certain consequences. Paul declares that the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23).

What about war? Who started it? Don't blame God for that. What about little children who suffer when the home is broken or the parents mistreat them? It is true that they suffer often times unjustly, but again God is not responsible. But you might wonder why God would allow such things to happen. If God forced us to live according to his will and serve him against our own will then that would eliminate all of these problems. But God has never forced himself upon man, and I doubt that most people would want him to do that, even to eliminate problems.

Then there are storms that kill people or hurt them in other ways. Isn't God responsible for this? Not directly, for sure. God did create the world and all things therein. He created nature and set it into motion. From the beginning nature was not designed to be adverse in any way, but when man sinned part of the punishment was also through problems in nature. The earth began to

produce thorns and thistles. (Genesis 3:17-19). Sin brought about the flood and extreme changes in the nature of weather. (Genesis 6, 7). When weather conditions reach a certain point, there is rain, wind, and even storms that can destroy. Even then if man will take precautions, in most cases he will not be harmed.

Finally, man faces the problem of death, and all of the sorrow that it brings to the family members. This, too, is according to the law of nature, the ultimate result of sin brought into the world by Adam and Eve. (Genesis 3:1-5; Genesis 3:22-24).

Regardless of suffering and pain, don't blame God for it. Try to understand it, live with it, and benefit by it. We don't want to suffer, and we don't like to see others experience pain, and for sure God doesn't want man to be hurt. But suffering is with us, it is a part of life, and therefore we must learn to live with it and to try to overcome it. This is all the more the reason why we should look to God for help and obey him so we can be saved in this world, and by being faithful to him we will be able to go to heaven where there will be no more sin or tears, suffering, separations, or death. My friend, the best life is the Christian life, and finally the Lord has prepared an eternal home for the soul where there will be joy and happiness forevermore.

While we deplore pain and suffering, still it has its good points. For example, pain in our bodies is a signal that something is wrong. With that knowledge we can take steps to make the necessary corrections. But even more important is the fact that when we are hurting and have needs, we are more prone to turn to God for help. This perhaps is the greatest blessing that grows out of pain and suffering.

We would conclude, then, that in almost everything there are both good points and bad points. If we can take pain and suffering and bring something good from them, then we are helping to fulfill the scripture that says "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28).

Friday Of Gloom, Sunday Of Glory

Winfred Clark

Many of us have heard the recent report of a sermon by a black man, called Sunday Is Coming. Its setting is the day of our Lord's crucifixion when things looked dark. Yet, you look beyond this day to the day of his resurrection when things have undergone a great change. Yes; it may be the Friday of gloom, but there is the Sunday of glory!

Go back to that setting as found in Matthew 27 and see what we can learn.

1. WE HAVE THE FRIDAY WHEN TRUST SEEMS FUTILE.

From the human standpoint the trust that Jesus had in God seems to be a futile thing. They indeed said, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now" (Matthew 27:43). It does seem that all is lost as he hangs on a cross with his hands fastened by the nails. It surely dealt a blow to those disciples who followed him along the way. But the fact that God did not meet their timetable, does not mean his trust was not well placed. They said, "Let him deliver him NOW." But there was the Sunday that was to come! That day would reveal the value of that trust. That day would show God is not limited by our way of thinking.

2. WE HAVE THE FRIDAY WHEN EVIL SEEMS TO BE IN CONTROL.

If one measured things by the way it looked that day, he would think evil was on the throne, and good was forever crushed. He would think righteousness would never rise again. And it does seem sometimes that righteousness has no chance. It seems that evil will forever be the popular cause. But, that is the wrong estimate. There is a Sunday coming when righteousness will reign again. When the lifetime of right living will pay dividends far beyond man's expectation!

3. WE HAVE THE FRIDAY WHEN GOOD PEOPLE FEEL LONELY.

There were precious few in and around Jerusalem who dared stand very tall alongside the Son of God on that dark Friday. Most of the people near the cross were enemies, not friends. Even some of the disciples fled in fear, and good people stood alone. Can you imagine the feelings of Mary as she stood by, when she recalled all who had been helped by that one now being killed? But that day would pass—and Sunday would come when the hopes of many would be revived, and the good news of his resurrection would be told by these. They would later be challenged to tell the whole world about it (Mark 16:15-16).

Yes, they faced the Friday of gloom, but they could surely wait for the Sunday of glory.

Does Jesus Trust Us?

Ancil Jenkins

“.....many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men” (John 2:23-24).

There is an interesting play on words in this passage. The people “believed” in Jesus because of his miracles. However, Jesus refused to “entrust” himself to them. This was because of the superficial nature of their faith. It was based entirely on the spectacular. This was the same faith that caused the multitude to follow him because of the loaves and fishes. This was an incomplete, inadequate faith. To have entrusted himself to them would have been like building a house on the sand.

How real is the power of Jesus in your life? Do you ever say, “I wish I were able to do more for the Lord?” Have you often thought, “My spiritual life is just not what I want it to be.” Are you confused by your lack of opportunities to use your

abilities. Do you wonder why the Lord has not used you in a mighty way?

The promise of Jesus is that he will be with us, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20). He promises to come in and make his permanent abode in us (Revelation 3:20). Jesus said that both he and the Father would dwell in those who love them. (John 14:23). Paul prayed that Christ might have a permanent dwelling in the heart of the Ephesians (Ephesians 3:17).

Do you have such a relationship? What actions come from your knowledge of this indwelling? Our lives are to be enriched and empowered by Christ in us. If they are not, it is because we either do not have this knowledge, or he does not dwell in us.

If we are Christians, how could we have missed his being in us? It may be that he does not trust us, just as he didn't trust some in his day. He has not committed himself to you because you have not committed yourself to him. If we give all we have to him, he will give all of himself to us.

This trust will never come until we are willing to give him every part of our lives. I seem to remember a fable of a king who wanted to reward some of his subjects. He asked them to give him all the money they had. They gave him copper, brass, and a few silver coins. When he later called them in to his presence, he returned the money to them, but the coins were now all made of gold. This brought a mixed blessing to the people. They were happy, they now had gold coins, but disappointed they had hoarded back a few they had not given the king. God is able to take all we give him and reward us richly.

All he gives, I will take,

All he takes, I will give.

I may have full right to him

When he has full right of me.

(Adapted from an anonymous verse).

Does He Really Expect So Much?

Dean Fugett

After all, what did he do? He just died for us , that's all. So just go ahead and do as you please. Go ahead and hold malice in your heart! Go ahead and keep that chip on your shoulder! Go ahead and divide his church. Go ahead and be deceitful! Go ahead and forsake the assembling! Go ahead... GO AHEAD!

But remember, That was Jehovah's ONLY BEGOTTEN SON who died there on that cross. He cannot be expected to look so lightly on our infractions as we look upon them. He will not deal so lightly with our failure to follow that SON who died there for us.

How hard it is to get people to see that the Bible is not just so many suggestions that we may or may not follow, as suits our fancy. That is actually God's Word for us to follow, every precept, every principle!

"Let The Redeemed. . . Say So"

W.A. Holley

"Oh, give thanks unto Jehovah; for he is good; for his loving-kindness endureth forever. Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the adversary, and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south" (Psalm 107:1-3, ASV).

Under the law of Moses the "redeemed" were those faithful Jews who followed the Lord's commandments of that day. Under the New Testament the redeemed are those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. When is one so washed? When one believes (John 3:16), repents of his sins (Luke 13:5), confesses the name of Jesus Christ (Matthew 10:32-33; Acts

8:37), and is baptized into Christ for remission of sins (Acts 2:36-38, 41-42,47).

In apostolic times those who heard and obeyed Christ were so filled with joy they could not help but rejoice and be glad. They were compelled to share their new faith; their Saviour, with others. The eunuch "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:26-39). The Lord's people are commanded to "rejoice" (Philippians 3:1;4:4).

But there are some things which should never characterize the churches of Christ. We shall note.

(1) Among members of churches of Christ there should be no **RECIDIVISM**. What does this word mean? "A tendency to relapse into a previous condition or mode of behaviour" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 8th edition). How does this definition apply to members of the church? Well, many who come from the world into the church remain for a time, and then return to the world from whence they came. Perhaps these were not properly taught. Could it be that we are willing to receive members at any cost? At any rate, we are losing far too many members (II Peter 2:20-22).

(2) Do some of our members have too much fraternization with those who are not sympathetic with New Testament Christianity? The Bible warns against evil companionships (I Corinthians 15:33). Have we sent out unqualified teachers who are unable to uphold the truth of God? (Titus 1:9-16; 2:15). All should understand that "right doctrine" and "right practice" stand or fall together. We realize that sinners must be taught; but is it not dangerous "to associate on close terms with members of a hostile group," if we possess not the strength or courage to stand for the truth? McGarvey, commenting on I Corinthians 15:33-34, among other rationalist, to show the full enormity of the teaching of the remarks, says: "Paul declares that it is a shame to the Corinthians to have such Christless Christians in the church—men who have so little knowledge of even the power of God as to deny his ability to bring to pass so simple a matter as the resurrection."

(3) The church of Christ needs no such columnists to infiltrate its membership, working undetected, in their efforts to undermine the power and influence of Christ's gospel. This is exactly what happens, in many instances, if members of denominations are brought into our fellowship. Denominational baptisms, and instrumental music, and women preachers can do much to create the spirit of compromise (Romans 16:16-18; II John 9-11). If denominational church members can be converted to the truth—well and good! But compromise the truth? No! Never!!

(4) The church of the Lord needs no traitors such as was Judas (Luke 6:16). The word TRAITOR occurs in II Timothy 3:4, in a list of evil characters, foretold as abounding in the last days. Benedict Arnold lives in infamy because he dared betray his country. Truth should be bought but never sold (Proverbs 23:23). Let members of the Lord's church stand tall, having backbones as big as saw logs, never yielding an inch to false doctrines (Galatians 1:6-10). The Lord needs some one to "make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me..." (Ezekiel 22:30).

"LET THE REDEEMED...SAY SO"

(1) If you know the difference between truth and error, "SAY SO!" (Ezekiel 22:26; 44:23; I Timothy 6:3-5). Here we have the bitter fruits of error outlined.

(2) If you have obeyed the truth of God, "SAY SO!" Truth must be obeyed (I Peter 1:22-25). Why should a Christian be ashamed of it? (Romans 1:16). Why not stand up and be counted? (Revelation 22:16).

(3) If you know how to distinguish the church of the Lord from human denominationalism, then, "SAY SO!" Matthew 16:18-19 and Acts 2:36-38, 47 teach that the church of Christ was in existence hundreds of years before the curse of denominationalism ever arose. Any standard encyclopedia will disclose the origins and peculiarities of all major denominations of the world. Why not "say so?"

(4) If you know that singing, as taught in the New Testament,

is God's authorized music for worship in the church, stand up with courage and conviction, and "SAY SO!" We urge our readers to read again I Corinthians 14:15; Romans 15:9; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; and James 5:13. Christian church organs can corrupt the Lord's worship, just as ordinary food corrupted the worship when added to the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:20-29). Dear readers, do you have courage to stand for the Old Jerusalem gospel? Why not "SAY SO"?

(5) Do you know that denominational baptisms are invalid? Why? Because they teach that one should be baptized because he is already saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27). Any defective baptism must be corrected as taught in Acts 19:1-5. We need no one who feels compelled to apologize for the truth of God. The word of God will stand when the world is on fire (Matthew 24:35).

If you truly believe, stand up and "SAY SO!"

Paying The Price

Tom Kelton

Everyone who writes knows that constant discipline is necessary to continue to produce works worth reading. This discipline is not easy. There is a temptation to let up and not pay the price.

When you are tempted to do this consider these examples of discipline.

Gibbons toiled twenty years in writing "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."

George Bernard Shaw wrote five pages a day for nine years, even though he made a total of only thirty dollars in those nine years—about a penny a day.

Martin Luther led the Protestant Reformation and made

an important contribution to German literature with his translation of the Bible. He wrote more than four hundred works, from pamphlets to large books. In addition, he wrote 125 hymns, the best known, "A Mighty Fortress," is still very popular.

William Tyndale first translated the Bible into English. He was harassed; he was excommunicated; he was driven from pillar to post; he was betrayed; yet he sneaked copies of his translation into England in crates and cases, in boxes and barrels, and bales, in rolls of cloth and sacks of flour and bundles of merchandise. On October 6, 1536, Tyndale paid the final price for his translating the Bible. He was first strangled and then burned at the stake.

In 1660, John Bunyan was imprisoned for preaching without permission. He remained in prison for over twelve years. During his imprisonment Bunyan wrote "Pilgrim's Progress." This well known allegory has been translated into more than a hundred languages and dialects, and has been read by more people than any other book except the Bible.

William Carey could read the Bible in six languages when he was in his teens. When he went to India as a missionary he established the Serampore Printing Press and published the Bible or portions of it in thirty-six languages or dialects. His press made the Bible available to more than three hundred million people.

Charles Spurgeon, during his lifetime, wrote one hundred thirty-five volumes and edited another twenty-eight. He died at the age of fifty-seven.

These men were dedicated to writing. They gave their lives to communicating with others.

The Final Judgment

Wheeler Pounds

Please read Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus sat upon the Mount of

Olives when his disciples came inquiring regarding the end of the world and Christ's second coming. Christ explained many things to them regarding their question (Matthew 24, 25). He ended the discussion by describing the judgment scene (Matthew 25:31-46). Those who will be rewarded are placed on the right hand, and the lost shall be on the left. On that day some will be surprised!

When that judgment day arrives, will we be one of the surprised? Will we listen for the praise, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34)—but instead hear the shocking condemnation: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 24:41)?

The duties listed in this context all relate to benevolence and good works. It is our Christian responsibility to fulfill these obligations. We give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, assistance to the stranger, clothing to the needy, and we visit the sick and the imprisoned. Some, however, choose to ignore their responsibilities.

We sin by omitting to do good works (James 4:17; Matthew 25; I John 5:17; Hebrews 2:3; 10:25) as well as by doing what God has forbidden (I John 3:4; Galatians 5:19-21). Christians must realize and accept these good works; otherwise we sin.

The basis of our fulfilling these obligations is love. We do that required of us, not because of necessity, but because we are motivated by love for God and one another. We are to love our neighbour as ourselves. This is illustrated by the actions of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). The first and greatest commandment is: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;" and the second commandment is: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:34-40). Simply, we must love and care for the souls of others! We are not alone in this world; therefore we must practice the "Golden Rule:" "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them likewise" (Luke 6:31; Matthew 7:12).

At certain times with certain people it may be easy for us to be compassionate, while at other times it may not be so easy. If a relative or friend is involved, we find compliance easy. We feed our friends—and they feed us. We have our family reunions, and we eat sumptuously; but the unfortunate may get only the crumbs that fall from our table (see Luke 16:19-31). If a dear friend or relative is sick, we visit (maybe); otherwise visiting the sick is “too depressing.” or “we don’t have enough time,” or “I may catch something anyway.” The stranger we completely ignore—“who knows what they might do!” The needy can get assistance elsewhere; “After all, we have enough problems of our own!” And the prisoners???

God’s message, therefore, is: we are to be ready unto every good work (II Corinthians 9:8; Ephesians 2:10; II Thessalonians 2:17; I Timothy 6:18; Titus 3:8). We are known—and will be judged by—the fruit that we bear (Matthew 7:16; Luke 6:44). Christians are sincerely concerned for those who hunger and thirst. We share God’s blessings to us with the needy; and we are concerned for the stranger, the sick the imprisoned (see also Hebrews 13:1-3). We are to do good unto all men especially to those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10).

When Christ gave the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16) he included every creature in all nations. All are precious in His sight! Christians must be as a light to reflect this message to all the world, “Every creature,” every soul, all races, every nation!—Everyone is important! Every soul can benefit from the love God has for us. One must hear and obey his gospel from which all blessings flow (Romans 1:16).

How can we get this message to the hungry and needy if we fail to reach out to them? How can we reach the stranger, if we avoid him? How can we impress upon the prisoner (sinner) the need for God’s guidance, if we fail to visit and teach him? Can we carry out the Great Commission by selecting and choosing only the DESIRABLE to help and teach? Can we expect to be on the right hand on the day of Judgment if we ignore his commandments?

Think on these things.

A Strange Thing

T. Pierce Brown

Most of my life I have read John 5:39 in the King James Version and assumed that it was a command of Jesus to "search the scriptures." Since we know the admonition is good and scriptural, there is no harm done by this conclusion, even if it is wrong. After reading it in the Greek text, and after having examined the context with more care, it is now my considered judgment that the word "search" is not an imperative, but is in the indicative mood, giving a statement of fact. There are several reasons for this conclusion.

First, since it was known by Jesus that they already searched the scriptures, even with extreme care, and were meticulous in having them verbally accurate to the "jot and tittle," it would be a little peculiar for him to urge them to search the scriptures, doing what they already did. He said, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do ye not after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matthew 23:2-3). He admitted that they had searched the scripture and knew what was in them, but did not practice it.

Second, it seems evident that the context of verses 39-40 indicates that their concept of how to get eternal life was wrong. We should not in any way disparage the value, yea, the necessity, of searching the scripture to find God's will and discover how to gain eternal life. But the Jews, who were already so interested in searching the scriptures so intensely that they were able to tell how many times a particular letter of the alphabet was used in the Law of Moses, seemed to conclude that being an authority on what the law said would gain for them eternal life. This, apparently, is the point of Jesus' remarks.

Third, this conclusion is strengthened when we notice that he said, "In them ye think ye have eternal life." It is my judgment that if he had been wanting to emphasize that it is through the

knowledge of the scriptures that one DOES find the way to eternal life, his statement here, and especially the contrast in verse 40, would have been different.

His whole point is, "You search the scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life. They testify of me, so you should have been able to find eternal life if you had FOLLOWED those scriptures, instead of simply being satisfied with KNOWING them. But you did not. You did not allow the scriptures to lead you to ME, where eternal life is found."

My point in this article is that it is possible for us to do the same kind of thing. Denominational theologians have done it for centuries. They can write enough books to fill a library, and yet deny the Virgin Birth, the resurrection of Christ, the necessity of obeying the gospel, or any number of other strange things.

However since they probably will not be reading this article, but you are, I will try to impress you with the fact that YOU can do the same thing. You can have your schedule of daily Bible readings. You can attend every gospel meeting in your area. You can even be scholarly enough to check the original Hebrew or Greek word in any passage under consideration, and still never come to Christ.

When I find a person who would drive 100 miles on ice to attend a Soul Winning Workshop (or speak on one) and would not walk across the street to set up a Bible study with his neighbour, I am aware that this principle still is applicable.

I find in congregation after congregation the desire expressed to have "sound doctrine" taught (and I thank God for that, for in many of them now it is not desired nor taught). Yet I find that some of those who so loudly proclaim it's value could not be beat out with a bull-whip to actually try to develop the mind of Christ or try to lead some soul to him. This makes me strongly suspicious that "Ye think ye have eternal life by searching the scriptures" needs to be examined anew by a large number of US.

Do you think it exceedingly strange that the Jews who knew

the Law so well rejected the Lawgiver? It is not even more strange that in an average congregation of the Lord's people today less than half of those who claim membership in the local congregation even come at all more than one time a week? and if anywhere close to half are in attendance on the Monday night of the gospel meeting, both preachers gush with praise for "this good Monday night crowd!" Then in addition to that, if more than 10 percent of those who do come do any more than just attend, we are so thrilled we can scarcely contain our emotions.

Is it any wonder that some Congregations of the Lord's Church (and other places where man-made systems have replaced the way of the Lord) are making such headway? They have swallowed the idea that almost anything is better than nothing!

When those of us who teach true doctrine "rest on our laurels" and assume that in that fact we have eternal life, we do greatly err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God. The real quintessence of Christianity is to "let the life of Christ be manifest in our mortal flesh" (II Corinthians 4:11). If your searching the scripture does not lead you to that, you merely "think that in them ye have eternal life."

You Can't Live Wrong and Die Right

Edsel Burleson

"Detour" "Beware The Dog," "Thin Ice," etc., are signs we often encounter telling us of dangers which could destroy us. Despite such warnings, many prefer to do "their own thing," convinced that (somehow) everything is going to turn out all right.

A little boy listened to his Bible class teacher tell the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The teacher then asked the class, "Which would you rather be, the rich man? or Lazarus?" The

little boy very honestly replied, "I would rather be the rich man while I live—and Lazarus when I die!"

Sadly, this describes what many grown-ups have decided! And they are ignoring all the danger signs which would prevent their own eternal destruction. Paul warned: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12).

Destructive forces often come upon us so gradually that sometimes there is no reason, seemingly, to be alarmed or even concerned. Yet, frequently when we feel completely secure, tragedy strikes.

A little girl playing in the sands along the seashore built a city in the sand. She laid out the streets, built the houses, stores, banks, and wall. Outside the wall she laid out a highway and roads leading to farms and farm houses. All afternoon she worked building her city. She did not notice that the sun was setting, the clouds were gathering, and that the wind was growing chilly. She was too busy with her city. She did not notice that the tide was coming in, with waves mounting higher and higher, until one wave—mightier than the rest—came sweeping in about her, washing away her houses, and her lands; her city and her farms. In terror the child ran back, alone and afraid!

We, too, become so involved building our houses, filling our banks, and stocking our stores, that we ignore the heavy clouds that often move in creating the storms which sweep us into eternity. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

An old man asked a young friend who sought his advice: "What do you want to do with your life?" He replied, "I intend to go to college, graduate, and set myself up in business."

"Fine," said the old man, "What then?"

"I want to marry, settle in this community, and be a successful businessman."

"That is wonderful," said the friend. "What then?"
"Then I want to retire;—and then I suppose I'll die."
Then said the wise old man, "What then?"
Yes, WHAT THEN?

The Broader Perspective

Steve Williams

W.R. Inge wrote a perceptive line about our need for a broader perspective when faced with misfortunes and hardships in life. He said, "And let us remember, when we are inclined to be disheartened, that the private soldier is a poor judge of the fortunes of a great battle." How true this is. In a great battle where one side is winning an overwhelming victory individual units will suffer casualties. Individual soldiers may be wounded or killed. If they escape major injuries, they may dislike the food or not have enough to eat. They may be cold or exposed to a miserable rain. At the very least, they will miss being home with family and friends. In such a situation, if you asked an individual soldier how the battle was going, he might complain. Although he may be discouraged, his side might be winning a tremendous victory at that very moment.

As we fight evil as soldiers of Christ in the kingdom of God, individual Christians may be disheartened by problems. We may tend to universalize our own discouragement and think God's kingdom is losing. We may be like Elijah who urged the children of Israel to take a stand for God: "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (I Kings 18:21). When the people refused to take a stand, Elijah wailed: "I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men." Even after winning a great victory over those prophets of Baal, Elijah became discouraged as he fled for his life into the wilderness. Elijah moaned to God: "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (I Kings 19:10,

14). Elijah, the private soldier of God, was not a good judge of the fortunes of the battle. God saw the broader perspective and told Elijah to anoint two men as kings who would bring justice to the land and anoint Elisha as a prophet to replace himself. God would "leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal" (1 Kings 19:18).

There is Only One Creed

Gary C. Hampton

The word creed comes from the Latin word "credo," which means "I believe." Webster's Dictionary defines it as, "A statement of religious belief; a confession of faith." Obviously everyone who has a set of religious beliefs has a creed. That creed may come from the statements of belief of an individual or a council. It may be plainly called a creed; manual, catechism, prayer book, discipline or some other name. We would suggest that the only acceptable creed is the Bible itself since God is its author. (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Jesus is God's spokesman for today. (Hebrews 1:1-2). Moses and Elijah appeared on the mount of transfiguration with Christ. Moses stood for the law, while Elijah represented the prophets and Christ is the testator of the new will. Peter wanted to build three tabernacles, one to honor each man, but God caused a bright cloud to overshadow them and spoke from that cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matthew 17:1-5) Jesus acted in accord with the Father's will and spoke the words the Father gave him to speak. (John 12:44-50.) Jesus promised his disciples that, when he ascended, he would send the Holy Ghost to remind them of his words and say the things Jesus would have him to say. (John 16:7-14.) Thus, it can be said the apostles spoke in accord with God's will and God confirmed it by the miracles they worked. (Hebrews 2:3-4).

Included in the promise to the disciples in John 16 was Jesus'

statement that the Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth. (Verse 13.) This the Spirit did. Jude wrote to the early Christians encouraging them to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3, A.S.V.) Peter said God had given them "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." (2 Peter 3:1.) Paul urged Timothy to continue in the teachings his mother and grandmother had started him in. He assured him that the scriptures were the God breathed word and the man of God can be perfected by them in every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17.) Paul told the Philippians to "walk by the same rule." (Philippians 3:16.) He told the Galatian brethren that it was this rule that created a new creature. (Gal. 6:15, 16.) So, the rule we are to follow is the law of Christ, which produces that new creature. (Ephesians 2:13-15; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:1-2).

In 1 Peter 4:16, Peter said, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Peter's exhortation should be heeded by all. Paul made that clear when he said the man, or angel, who preached another gospel should be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-9). Human creeds thus become unnecessary and even dangerous. If they add to God's word, they contain more than God said. If they take away from God's word, they are less than God said. Either way they become another gospel and are dangerous to the soul who supports them. If one argues that his man-made creed contains only what God said and all of what God said, then it is the Bible and should not be considered man-made. **SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES** to learn what God wants us to believe from the only true creed man has.

My Plan Or God's Plan?

Rex Banks

About the year 57 A.D. the Apostle Paul penned an epistle to the brethren at Rome expressing his deep appreciation for them (1:8) and informing them of his earnest desire to be with them

(1:11, 15, 23) and to preach the gospel at Rome (1:15), The Apostle had "planned" to go to Rome, but hitherto had been "prevented" or "hindered" from doing so (1:13; 15:22). However, as he penned these words, he anticipated journeying to Spain by way of Rome (15:28) and looked forward to finding "refreshing rest" in the company of the Roman saints (15:32).

Well, we know what Robby Burns said about the "best laid schemes o' mice an' men." Yes, Paul eventually made it to Rome all right, but he arrived a prisoner and was confined to his own rented quarters. You see, God had plans for Paul at Rome as well, and not long after the Roman epistle was written, the Lord told Paul that he must witness at Rome as he had witnessed at Jerusalem (Acts 23:11). And witness he did. Large numbers came to his lodging place, and he "testified about the kingdom of God" (Acts 28:23) and taught about the Lord Jesus with all openness unhindered (Acts 28:31). In fact, from his place of confinement he could write that his circumstances "have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12).

Now, perhaps like me, you need to be reminded occasionally that despite the apparent wisdom and nobility of many human plans and schemes, God has His own timetable and objectives and that these may not coincide with our own. How many times have we prayed earnestly for the removal of that "thorn in the flesh" only to find that the burden is increased? Well, before we "curse God and die" (Job 2:9), let's remember since "power is perfected in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9), some particular trial may be just exactly what we need at that time in order that we might learn to lean on God. Perhaps we've prayed for wealth "in order to be more effective in the kingdom." whereas God knew that what we really needed was poverty so that we might learn humility. Perhaps, like Moses, we feel that the time is right for God to use us in some magnificent endeavour (Acts 7:25), only to learn that the Lord has a 40 year training programme in the land of Midian in order to equip us for the task ahead. Oh, for the wisdom of the poet who could write: "I asked for health that I might do greater things. I was given infirmity that I might do better things."

Brethren, let's learn to serve God UNCONDITIONALLY. If Jesus could pray, "Not my will but Yours be done" in the matter of the crucifixion, how dare we make obedience conditional upon God's response to our prayers? His body covered with boils and his life in ruins, Job could still say: "Though He slay me I will hope in Him" (Job 13:15). At the door of the fiery furnace Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego make it clear that their loyalty to God did not depend upon His delivering them from the ordeal which lay ahead. (Dan. 3:17,18). Let us in turn resolve to submit to Him when the answer to prayer is "No!", when the thorn in the flesh is not removed and when human plans are stillborn. He is Lord—who will contend with the Almighty? (Job 40:2).

The Greatest Assurance : No Condemnation

Romans 8:14

Martel Pace

Upon entering Romans 8 one quickly finds the most comforting chapter of Romans, perhaps of the entire Bible! It ranks with Psalm 23, John 14 and I Corinthians 15. Probably part of its glory resides in the stark contract it offers to the near despair of chapter seven. "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (7:24). Romans 7:14-25 seems to depict a hopeless warfare as the "flesh lusts against the spirit" (Gal. 5:17). But in Galatians 5:16 Paul had just said, "Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh," Romans 8:1-7 is a divinely inspired commentary on that verse.

The freedoms emphasized in Romans (as set forth by Nygren) are: Freedom from the wrath of God by God's love (5:1-11); Freedom from sin through baptism (6:1-14); Freedom from the law through the death of Christ (7:1-6), and Freedom from death

through the Spirit (8:1-11). Truly, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II Cor. 3:17). We have been called to liberty (Galatians 5:13).

Strangely, although perhaps not so, the word "Spirit" is nowhere found in Romans 7, but He fills chapter 8! So long as we try to war against the flesh without the Spirit we fight a losing battle. If we avail ourselves of the Spirit's "law of life" we become "more than conquerors." The great blessings provided and given in Romans 8 are numerous; I counted 21 but there may be more. If we have the first, "no condemnation," the rest will come naturally. A few are life, peace, made alive, sonship, witness, heirship, hope of future glory, all things working for our good, and God is for us. What others can you find?

The Old Law condemned by pronouncing sin and judgment. In Christ that is gone! We are shown that not even now are we in "the body of this death" (7:24). Remember that the Law made people see their sinfulness and helplessness. "No condemnation" does not mean that we will entirely escape the Judgment Day but rather escape "the judgment which follows the sentencing (Arndt-Gingrich). In Christ we should live as though we are pardoned because we are! Some still live with the fears of a prison house. Remember, Romans 6:3 established that we are "baptized into Christ." Now we are in "faith-union" with Christ, having died with him, been buried with him, and been raised with him (6:4). We are now so much *with Christ* that Paul can switch back and forth easily from the Person of Christ to his spiritual body ("corporate personality"—Bruce). The latter is comprised of Christ who is at God's right hand and all his people who share his life of "no condemnation."

To be "in Christ" is to be a member of the church. It is not just a name on the books, but it is to be a limb and an organ of his body. As such we are dependent on him for life and he is dependent on you for his will to be done on earth.

"No condemnation" is often misapplied to mean, "I have no condemnation; therefore I can't lose my salvation." This is not

the thought under consideration. Paul is just showing what you have while in Christ. One might run into a cave for safety during a storm, but that does not guarantee all future safety (Whiteside). Being set free does not rob us of all responsibility for future conduct. By sin's very nature it must be condemned wherever it is found, whether in a Christian or a sinner. But in Christ condemnation can always be avoided.

The thought of Chapter 7 is reduced to one sentence in 8:2,3. Many want to find something mysterious in "Spirit," but it need not be so. The Spirit indeed gives life, but he does so through words (John 6:63). What gives life is what saves; this is simply the gospel (Romans 1:16).

It is only the "law of the spirit of life" that makes free from "the law of sin and death" (8:2). But what is the "law of sin and death"? It cannot be the law of Moses. If it did, Paul was saying. "The law of Moses could not set me free from the law of Moses" (Whiteside). It is rather the principle which was working through the flesh mentioned at 7:23-24 (the "different law"). The law of Moses could not set us free from the principle of warfare in the flesh which causes us all to be spiritually dead through sin.

The law couldn't do the job because it was weak through our flesh (8:3). It is the weakness and vulnerability of man that gives sin a beachhead in your life (Barclay). To "live according to the flesh" (8:5) is to live dominated by its dictates—the desires of human nature. But *in Christ* one can live a life dominated by the love of God. It is because the appetites of the flesh so often lead to sin that "flesh" is called "sinful." "Sins of the flesh" are, not just sexual sins, for among them are wrath, envy and murder (Gal. 5:19-21).

Some think Christ gave us power to keep the righteousness demanded under the law. This would mean we now have a super-human power to live above sin. "Such an interpretation flies directly in the face of Paul's whole view" (Nygren, p. 317). Our salvation is because of what Jesus did, and not what we can now do.

Christian holiness means that we have a new spirit (II Cor. 5:17). What the law was powerless to produce because of inadequate human material is produced by the forgiving power of Jesus' death. It is not what we can do but what Jesus did for us.

We are not holy because we can now perfectly keep 10,000 precepts. It has something to do with the new heart provided the "new creature" in Christ. Indeed, we are to have a new love in appreciation of God's love (I John 4:19), and this does indeed fulfill the law (Rom. 13:9-10).

To run and work the law commands,
Yet gives me neither feet nor hands;
But better news the gospel brings;
It bids me fly, and gives me wings.

A vine does not produce grapes because of an Act of Congress, but because it is naturally tied to the vine and the vine's own life is in it; in our case, this is Christ's life.

Jesus now covers and protects us. When Cuba was under Spain an Englishman was arrested for lingering over a man another had stabbed. He was arrested and scheduled to be shot at sunrise the next day. The British ambassador learned of it. He went to the man before the firing squad, threw the "Union Jack" over him and said. "Now, shoot if you dare!" The power of England protected him. The governor reviewed the case and released him. With Jesus around us, and us in him, the fiery darts of Satan cannot harm us.