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EDITORIAL

Blessed Are Those Who Hear The Word Of God And Keep It

Watch it! For it didn't say, at Luke 11:28, "blessed are those who hear the word of God," but it says; and Christ said this: "blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it." As much as it is important to hear God's word, it is even more important to hear God's word and then to keep it or do what God had said.

Its a blessing to know that God has always spoken to man. He has always made known His will to man. Back in the garden of Eden God communicated to Adam and Eve His will. He spoke to Noah, what He wanted Him to do. Then He spoke to Abraham and Moses and to others; and through them to all the people. One of the inspired writers of the Bible in the New Testament wrote at Hebrews 1:1 & 2, "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heirs of all things, through whom also He made the worlds." God's Son is Jesus Christ, who, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. By the power of God His Word became flesh, a man, to live among men; to communicate God's will to man. (John 1:1, 2, 14). Today if we want to know what God wants us to do; what we must do to be saved and to go to heaven; how we must live and worship God acceptably; then we must listen to what Christ Jesus says, through whom God speaks to all humanity today. But how does Christ speak to us? We have His New Testament in the Bible, in which are written the things he has taught.

Also, He had His disciples whom He had chosen in the beginning, we know them as His apostles; to them he had promised that after His death, burial and resurrection when he would return back to the Father in heaven, He would send to them the Helper, the Holy Spirit, Who would tell them His words, so that they would be able to teach all nations God's will. Just prior to His death on the cross, Christ had this to say to His apostles: "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (John 14:25, 26). And, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (John 16:12-13).

The Bible, all of the sixty-six books of the Bible, is packed with the word of God. Presently, however, God speaks to us all through His Son Christ Jesus, Who speaks to us through His Holy Spirit inspired apostles. Thus, when we hear Peter, Paul or John or any other apostles speaking to us, as we read the New Testament, then we are hearing what Christ and God are speaking to us. But not those who only hear God's word are blessed, but those, who hear and keep or do what God says, are blessed. Christ taught, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven." And, to nail it down He told this unforgettable story: "Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Now everyone who hears these sayings of mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." (Matthew 7:21, 24-27).

Now, the application is this: as you hear or read God's word, even through the pages of this magazine, with what attitude do you hear or read? Listen to James, in James 1:22-24, he said, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was." On the last page of the book of God, at Revelation 22:14 is written this beatitude: "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city."

An excellent example of this can be cited from Acts chapter two,

where Peter told his listeners, in his first gospel meeting, to "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Immediately after that, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." (Acts 2:38, 41). They heard and did what they were told to do. May this blessed attitude be in all of us.

"Understanding What The Will Of The Lord Is"

J.C. CHOATE

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:17). That means then that the Lord has a will and it is possible to understand that will. When Philip found the man from Ethiopia, reading from the book of Isaiah, he asked him if he understood what he was reading. (Acts 8:30). He then went on to explain it to him, and once he heard the truth and understood what he should do, then he was ready to obey the Lord, but not until that point. Had he not understood who Christ was, and what he needed to do to be saved, he could not have obeyed the Lord to be saved.

The scriptures teach that one must believe in God (Hebrews 11: 6) and must believe in Christ as being the Son of God. (John 14:3). Furthermore, one must understand what repentance is, and what is required in repentance, to obey the Lord's command to repent of his sins. (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38). One's faith in Christ as being the Son of God must be strong enough that he is willing to confess Christ before men. (Matthew 10:32, 33). Paul says that if we deny the Lord, he will also deny us. (2 Timothy 2:12). Likewise, one must understand what baptism is, that it is a burial in water, for the remission of sins, and that it puts one into Christ and his church, if he is to be baptized scripturally. (Romans 6:3, 4; Acts 2:38).

After Christ was resurrected, and before he returned to the Father in heaven, he spent a lot of time with the Apostles teaching them things pertaining to the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3). When Philip went to Samaria, we are told that he preached Christ to them (Acts 8:5), but it also says that "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). But what was the Kingdom? It was the church, the Lord's spiritual family. (Matthew 16:18, 19). Also, in speaking of the church at Colosse, Paul describes it as being the kingdom of God's dear Son and he includes himself as being a part of that kingdom. (Colossians 1:13, 14). Then we are told that when one is saved, that the Lord personally adds that person to his church. (Acts 2:47). But how could this be done if one was ignorant of the Lord's church and understood the church to be made up of many denominational churches?

The point in all of this is that one cannot look upon Christ as being a mere man, or see him as one of the many "lords" in the world, and expect that to be acceptable to Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. Neither can one baptism as a mere formality that one goes through, or the church as being just another religious body of men through which one seeks to please the Lord. And neither can he ignorantly worship God and expect his worship to be acceptable. (Acts 17:23).

We are told that the Lord's word is truth (John 17:17) and it is that truth that saves and makes one free. (John 8:32). Christ said that he was the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one could go to the Father except through him. (John 14:6).

Ignorance cannot save anyone. It cannot put one into Christ and his church. It cannot make worship acceptable. It cannot produce the kind of preaching that is needed in the world today.

Christ said that one cannot be saved unless he does the will of the Father in heaven. (Matthew 7:21). Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). Christ also said that the gospel should be taken into all of the world. (Mark 16:15). He likewise said that we must go and teach all nations. (Matthew 28:19). Why should we preach and teach God's word? Why should the Bible be read and studied? So that God's word might be understood and intelligently acted on. Then they must likewise go and preach the gospel to a lost and dying world.

We cannot be saved through ignorance or by believing and obeying half truths. We cannot just believe something and blindly stumble into the church, only later to discover that we have been scripturally baptized and added to the church. If so, anything goes. But one does not ignorantly fly a plane, or use a computer, or just begin to speak another language. Things like that are learned through long hours of study and practice. It is done on purpose with the full intention of reaching that goal. Likewise God has a will and we must become familiar with it, believe it, and obey it if we expect to be saved, to be added to the church, to worship acceptably, and to please the Lord in all that we do.

Thank God we have the Lord's word so that we can know his will and have our eyes opened to truth and salvation. Who then can be saved? All who will believe and comply with that will. It is that simple.

Especially For Women

Teaching Our Children To Be Accountable To God

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

"My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands, for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.

"Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:1-6).

Anthony was feeling troubled. he was sitting alone in the corner of the courtyard, thinking about the quarrel he had at school with his friend Arun. He was remembering the angry words he had said and the bad language he had used. Over and over again the words of Jesus ran through his mind, "... whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment (Matthew 5:22)," and he thought of the command not to swear by God's name (Exodus 20:7).

Anthony was so ashamed of what he had done. He knew that his father and mother would be disappointed in him when they learned about it but, more than that, he was ashamed for God to know. "Arun's parents aren't teaching him the Bible, but I acted worse than he did. What can I do to make things right? I know. I'll ask God to forgive me, and tomorrow I'll tell Arun I'm sorry for the way I treated him."

That night at the beginning of the family devotional time, Anthony apologized to his parents for his bad behaviour. "I'm sorry," he said. "I've asked God's forgiveness, and I will tell Arun tomorrow that I was wrong. What else do I need to do?"

"It's true that what you did was wrong, Anthony, but we're proud of you for wanting to make things right. Most of all, we're glad that you're

concerned about your relationship with God.

"You're old enough now, Anthony, that you are more concerned about disobeying God than we will be upset about something you've done. This means that you are reaching the age when you understand right from wrong, and when you know that disobedience is really a sin against God," Peter explained.

Aseema spoke up. "My friend, Sujata, says that everyone sins—even babies. She says we all have Adam's sin and that when a baby cries it's because of sin—that we're born with sin. Her mother had her sprinkled when she was a baby. Were we sprinkled?"

"No," answered Peter. "That is a wrong teaching. It isn't in the Bible. Turn to Psalm 51:5 and read that to us, Aseema."

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."

"But isn't that saying that he was a sinner from the time he was born?" asked Anthony?

"Look closely at the wording. David was saying that he was conceived *in sin* and born *in sin*. Being *in* something, and being *filled with something* are two different things. David might have said, I was conceived in a garbage dump, and I was born in a garbage dump, but that wouldn't have meant that he was garbage or that he was filled with garbage. It was *his mother* who was a sinner—not the baby. And David was *born into a world of sin*, but he was not saying he was a sinner himself.

"In fact, let me remind you of a story so you will better understand. Do you remember that David sinned with a woman named Bethsheba, and then he had her husband killed in battle so he could marry her? From this sinful background they had a baby, and the baby was sick and died. David said of him, 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.' So he was expecting to see his baby again in heaven. He didn't believe the baby was a lost sinner."

"Look up Ezekiel 18:20 and read that for us, Aseema," Mary said.

"The soul who sins die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."

"So we are not counted guilty of Adam's sin, or of anybody's sin but our own. In fact, do you remember what Jesus said about children?" asked Peter.

"I know!" volunteered James. "That was my memory verse: 'But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them;

for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:14)

"So Jesus was saying that people have to become like children in order to be in His kingdom. If children were sinners, He wouldn't have said that."

"Then when do we become sinners?" Anthony asked, "And how?"

"You had a memory verse that explained that," answered Mary. "I John 3:4 says what?"

"I remember," Aseema said. "Whoever committeth sin transgresses also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law."

"What does 'transgress' mean?" asked James.

"It means to disobey something. Like Anthony did when he acted angry and ugly toward his friend. He disobeyed what Jesus taught, and he used God's name in a very wrong way. Anthony knew he was doing wrong, and so it isn't enough to ask us to forgive him. He disobeyed God's law, and he must also be forgiven by God. When children become old enough to understand right from wrong, and what God teaches them to do in His word, they must answer to God for what they do. This is when they become sinners."

The doctrine of "original sin" began with John Calvin. Calvin taught that, since Adam was placed under the curse of death because of his sin, and since all humans die, then all humans must be sinners. He included even infants as sinners, because infants die.

But everything in creation was placed under the *curse* of death—or it may be, conversely, the *deliverance* of death—since it would be most terrible to live forever in mortal bodies in this sinful world. But *everything dies*—every living cell, whether it be plant, animal, or human life, every living thing dies, whether it sins or not. Plants cannot sin. Animals cannot sin. And humans who are too young to understand God's law, and thus to willfully disobey it, cannot sin.

God commands obedience to His laws in order for sinners to be forgiven. The very fact that He cannot and will not forgive unless there is obedience proves that children are not under the law of sin, because they are too young to understand and obey God's laws. God could not, in justice, demand that children believe in Him when they are too young to do so. He cannot require a turning away from sins that someone else, thousands of years ago, committed. He does not ask them to be baptized because they are not able to make that decision for themselves.

All of these commands are made to adults who have reached the age of understanding God's laws and of being able to do what He requires them to do.

God's Blueprint For Our Success

CLEM THURMAN

Is your life the success that you want it to be, and which God intended? Do you enjoy the happiness and peace of mind which God wants you to have? God gave certain directions to Joshua, then told him, "*And then thou shalt have good success*" (Josh. 1:8). God intends for you to succeed, to be happy and contented, and to achieve the purposes for which He gave you life.

If we would build a house, we begin with a blueprint—the plan that reveals the design, the materials, method of construction, etc. A few years ago, Maxwell Maltz wrote a best seller entitled "*Psycho-Cybernetics*," in which he gave "seven elements in the pattern of success." What makes these so interesting is that they constitute God's blueprint for our success: every one of them is firmly rooted in the Scriptures! God's word reveals that the Christian life is the only way to real success and purposeful living. As Jesus said, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father but by me*" (Jno. 14:6). External forces cannot rob us of our peace of mind nor our purpose for living, for: "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*" (Rom. 8:35-37). God provides the blueprint for your happiness, joy and peace: the Christian life. Let us see what constitutes this blueprint.

The Christian Has a Sense of Direction

Man was created "*in the image of God*" (Gen. 1:27), and within each us there is a spiritual appetite that seeks fulfillment in the things of God. "*My soul thirsteth for God . . . That he should seek after God*" (Psa. 42:2; Acts 17:27). The Christian's sense of direction results from a proper attitude toward this life, and the next: "*For what shall man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*" (Matt. 16:26). Nothing in this life is of consequence, if we lose our souls. That realization gives us a set of priorities that enables us to make the right day-to-day choices.

If you want to succeed in this life, do not measure your life by years, money, or acclaim. Heed the words of Jesus, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of god, and his righteousness*" (Matt. 6:33), and, "*Present your bodies a living sacrifice*" (Rom. 12:1). The goal of the Christian is not centered in this life, and thus the disappointments of this life can never

rob him of peace and happiness: *"I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:14). The Christian doesn't mind sharing what he has with the needy (Lk. 10:30-37), because his purpose is to *"lay up treasures in heaven"* (Matt. 6:20). He has happiness and peace of mind because his treasure is where no man can rob him of it!

The Christian Has Compassion

The Scripture says of Jesus, *"When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd"* (Matt. 9:36). Compassion is that quality that enables one to feel what another is feeling: to experience with another his joy or his sorrow. That is the reason *"Jesus wept"* (Jno. 11:35) at the tomb of Lazarus; he knew Lazarus would come forth from the grave in few moments, but He wept for the sorrow of Mary and Martha. It has its risks, but if you want to succeed, you must get involved in the lives of others! The pattern of the Christian ethic is based on this: *"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them"* (Matt. 7:12). The successful person doesn't just react to the actions of others, he initiates the action that the other person wants and needs. That is the "golden rule."

The Christian, as a member of the body of Christ interacts with other members of that body. *"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another . . . The members should have the same care one for another"* (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:25). On that same basis, the Christian learns to *"count others better than himself"* (Phil. 2:3), and that becomes the cornerstone of his dealing with other people.

The Christian Lives with Courage

Jesus often lamented the lack of courage of His disciples: *"O, thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"* (Matt. 14:31). Frustrated by failure to cure a child, the disciples asked the Lord the reason; His reply, *"If ye have faith . . ."* (Matt. 17:19). when a man marvelled at the promise of Jesus on other occasion, the Lord said, *"All things are possible to him that believeth"* (Mk. 9:23).

The successful person lives a life of courage: the courage to resist the easy way and do it the right way, courage to maintain the principles by which God wants us to live, courage to stand up for the truth. The disciples, once afraid, bravely faced the ones who crucified Jesus and said, *"God made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified"* (Acts 2:36). They faced whippings, beatings, jails and the

constant threat of death (Acts 5:40; 16:24), but they persevered with courage: "I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord-Jesus" (Acts 20:24). When told that he faced prison if he went to Jerusalem to preach, the apostle Paul replied, "What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). To be successful, we must have the courage to live by our convictions, as Paul did.

The Christian is Motivated by Love

God tells us, "Let all you do be done in love" (1 Cor. 16:14). Because God loved us, He sent His Son to die for our sins (Jno. 3:16). When Jesus declared a new commandment, it was based on His own actions: "That ye love one another, even as I have loved you" (Jno. 13:34). As God was motivated by love for us, we must love Him: "We love because he first loved us . . . This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (1 Jno. 4:19; 5:3). When our lives are motivated by love for God, we will live as God wants us to live.

But it isn't enough that we love God; we must also love other people: "Love the brethren . . . Love one another . . . Love your neighbor as yourself . . . Love your enemy" (1 Pet. 1:22; Jno. 13:34; Matt. 22:39; 5:44). If we follow Christ, we will love even those who belittle us, insult us and seek to harm us. Love for God will determine our response to Him. And love for other people will determine how we treat them: "Let all you do be done in love."

The Christian is Characterized by Respect

Knowing that "in him we live, and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28), the Christian has reverence for God. He is our Creator (Gen. 1:1-27), He is our Father (Eph. 4:6), He is the eternal and omnipotent God. "fear God and keep his commandments . . . The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7).

The Christian also respects himself as a creature of God, as one who is made in God's image. If God loved us enough to send His only Begotten Son to die for us, there is something about us that has value to Him! We must respect that. Therefore, we must respect ourselves and respect other people. Really, people who do not respect themselves, do not respect God.

The Christian Has Self-Confidence

When one speaks of self-confidence, people often perceive it as

egotism. But it isn't. It is faith in one's self, as a child of God through whom God works to accomplish His purpose. As Paul wrote it: "*God works in you . . . I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*" (Phil. 2:13; 4:13). If God is working in me, there can be no failure! That is the self-confidence we need to succeed. It is not really faith in self, but faith in Christ: that he works in us.

When we "*die to sin*" and are "*baptized into Christ, baptized into his death*," we then are "*raised to walk in newness of life*" (Rom. 6:3-4). We have then put off the old man of sin (Rom. 6:5-6) and, "*have put on the new man, which is renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him*" (Col. 3:10). This "*new man*" has the promise of Christ, "*Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world . . . I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*" (Heb. 13:5). That is the confidence that brings success: when we serve Him, the Lord goes with us wherever we go. And He gives us the strength we need to overcome any obstacles, any problems.

The Christian Accepts Himself

It is easy to blame self, to disparage what self is or does. But the Christian realizes, "*I am what I am by the grace of God*" (1 Cor. 15:10). Therefore, there can be no failure because God's grace does not fail. We are born again (Jno. 3:3-5), saved by His mercy (Titus 3:5), accepted as God's children because we are "*in Christ*" (Gal. 3:26-27). I fail so often, it would be easy to give up if all depended upon me. But it doesn't. As long as we "*walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*" (1 Jno. 1:7). Thus, the Christian does not see the weaknesses of himself, but the forgiveness and strength of the Lord.

No man's life measures up to the life of Jesus Christ. And no other kind of life measures up to life in Jesus Christ. No matter what you may attain in this life—money, possessions, prestige, honor—the root of all your efforts to a successful life is Jesus Christ. With such a blueprint for success given us of God, there is charted for us the way of happiness, joy and peace, Jesus said, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*" (Rev. 3:20). Is your life a real success? It can't be without Jesus. Make Him your goal, the center of your life, then "*thou shalt have good success.*"

The Wrath of God

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Even though Isaiah was the poet laureate extolling the beauty of the coming Messiah, he also dramatically illustrated the wages of sin. His pen was dipped into the cup of God's wrath as he warned "*rebellious children who add sin to sin*" of the doom of never-ending restlessness (Isa. 30:1; 57:21). This is parallel to statements in the book of Revelation of unending torment for enemies of the Lord: "*The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever . . . And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever*" (Rev. 14:11; 20:10). Truly, there is no peace, now or later, for servants of Satan. We shall reap as we have sown (Hosea 8:7).

I have actually witnessed brethren who were far more afraid of a tornado, or even a storm cloud, than they were of forsaking the assembly or living impure lives. Yet Matt. 10:28 clearly states, "*Fear not them which kill the body . . . but rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.*" We are due to pay the sad benefits of preaching that virtually omits this dimension of Bible teaching. Many of this past generation have failed to learn that God means what He says, and that disobedience will result in our being sentenced to HELL. It is still true that "*the fear of the Lord is beginning of wisdom*" (Prov. 9:10). People who have enough sense to be afraid of a speeding train or a volcano often lack the deeper wisdom of standing in awe before the power of the Creator. Could it be that Rom. 3:18 is the classic critique that defines the fall of Rome as well as the decline of our own civilization?

"There is not fear of God before their eyes." Parents immediately need to make discipline a central feature of the home. Preachers must return to preaching the whole counsel of God—and this involves more than the grace of God and the beauty of heaven! Our society should indelibly record the words of Rev. 6:15-17 upon its memory. One of these days our affluent, arrogant, self-satisfied citizenry will pray for a place to shad them from the wrath of Him that sits upon the throne (Unless we change the emphasis of our preaching, a very good question, already asked in that passage, will pound in our ears: "*Who shall be able to stand?*")

Violation Of Autonomy

TIM RICE

It is wrong for a church to violate the autonomy of another church. Having said this, I should explain what it is to violate the autonomy of other churches. Such a discussion is needed and relevant, since people have said it is a violation of other churches' autonomy for me to refute some practice in which they are engaged. Some brethren have told me it is a violation of a church's autonomy for me to write an article questioning the use of certain speakers at one of their functions. Since we are hearing such charges, we feel it is good to respond.

First, let us define autonomy. The term autonomy is not found in the pages of the Bible. Autonomy simply means "the quality or state of being self-governing." The Bible points out that churches are to govern themselves and not to be ruled by other churches or a central earthly headquarters. The only central government for the church is in heaven (Ephesians 1:22, 23). Elders are to oversee the local church of which they are members (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:5), and their standard of shepherding is to be God's word (Titus 1:9). Hence, God's plan is that each church be self-governing and that the elders use his word as the standard of that government, giving God the central authority.

Now let us consider the following questions. If I discover that a church of Christ of which I am not a member is beginning to practice error, is it a violation of their autonomy for me to try to influence them to do right? If a church publishes error in a bulletin or periodical, am I violating their autonomy when I publish an article in a periodical to refute that error? If I try to encourage someone not to participate in error at a church practicing error, am I violating the church's autonomy? The answer to all these questions is an emphatic no! When we fight error which originates in another church, we are actually trying to get that church to exercise its autonomy in quitting their error. Since I am not in a position of authority over the other church, I can only hope they stop practicing their error. If I were actually in authority over them, they would quit in subjection to my decision. It has long been the practice of churches going off into error to say about the churches that point out that error, "They're violating our autonomy." Not only does this show a misunderstanding of autonomy, but also, it fails to address the questions raised about the error.

Did Paul, James, and Peter violate the autonomy of the churches they wrote when they told them to correct error? Not at all. They used inspiration to warn them to obey God. Then why would it be a violation

of others' autonomy today for us to use the New Testament to try to get people and churches to do right? If those churches had not obeyed the truth, at some point God would have removed their candlestick (Cf. Revelation 1-3). At some point, Paul, James, and Peter would have severed relationships with those to whom they wrote if they continued in error. We might have to do the same today with some churches. But first we say to them "repent, and do thy first works" (Revelation 2:5).

In all cases this writer could imagine, when a church's autonomy is violated, that church shares in the sin. A church can govern itself if it will! If it won't, it sins as much as the outside individual or church that governs it. For example, church in Delhi cannot be governed by a man or a church in Bombay without its doing wrong itself. This is ecclesiasticism, and a faithful church should have no part of it. Suppose it tells the southern church when to appoint elders and who they shall be. Suppose the large church tells it satellite when to build a building or whether to rent. Suppose it tells the small church to disband and move to Calcutta. Such a situation, is violation of autonomy. In this arrangement, both parties are in error.

History shows that real violation of autonomy has always resulted in wholesale introduction of error. Early in the history of the Christian religion, leadership became centralized and error originating with the leadership blanketed the entire church. It is ironic that today those who are fighting error are being accused of violating autonomy. Indeed, if today leadership were centralized, we as churches could not warn one another against error! Whatever error existed would be a universal fixture.

Who Said So?

TOMMY J. HICKS

A few congregations have already initiated plans for their public worship services to include women waiting on the Lord's Table, women song leaders, women leading prayers, and, even women preachers. When confronted with the fact that the Bible expressly prohibits women assuming such roles, they answer that the Bible was written in compliance with the customs of its times. According to them, in Bible times, women were not allowed to do much of anything. But, they assure us, with women's lib today, it's okay to have women taking roles of leadership in the worship and work of the church.

Who said so? Did you know that in Bible times the pagans had female deities? One among the Babylonians, Ashtoreth, stood on an equal footing with male divinities. "The chief seat of the worship of Istar in Babylonia was Erech, where prostitution was practiced in her name, and she was served with immortal rites by bands of men and women (empt. mine, TJH). In Assyria . . . prophetesses were attached to her temples to whom she delivered oracles."

In Ephesus, there was the Temple of Diana, where the priestesses were divided into three different classes with each class having its own special duties. Corinth had a temple with over 1,000 priestesses. In an article on "Woman" the I.S.B.E. (Vol. 5, p. 3101) says: "That she everywhere participated freely in the religious rites and customs of her people is evident from the fact that women were often priestesses, and were often deified."

No! It was the custom of women in Bible times to take an active role in leadership and service in the pagan religions. Contrary to the customs of the times, the Bible says: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (I Corinthians 14:34-35). "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Timothy 2:8, 11-12).

Three Usages For The Word "Church"

GLENN COLLEY

Value is often determined, not just by the quality of a particular product, but also by the price someone is willing to pay for that product. If one applies that system of measurement to determine the value of the church, the amount becomes almost unthinkable;

" . . . to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28) ". . . as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

The word "church" is found 76 times in the Bible. However, the Greek word "Ekkleesia" (1577), translated "Church," is used in at least three different ways.

I. THE CHURCH: LOCAL CONGREGATIONS OF CHRISTIANS

a. Colossians 4:15—"Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house."

b. I Corinthians 4:17—"For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church."

c. I Corinthians 16:19—"The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house."

d. Acts 11:22—"Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch."

II. THE CHURCH: THE WORLDWIDE BODY OF CHRIST

a. Matthew 16:18—"Upon this rock I will build my church . . ."

b. I Timothy 3:15—"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

c. Ephesians 5:25—"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it. (29)—"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church."

d. Colossians 1:18—"And He is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence."

III. THE CHURCH: AN ASSEMBLY OF CHRISTIANS

a. I Corinthians 14:19—"You in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

(vs. 28)—"But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God."

(vs. 35)—"And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

In a study of the word church in the Bible, you will not find these other common usages:

1. "I'm a church of Christ, or "He's church of Christ."

2. "Let's go to church."

3. "All of us are part of the invisible church, but not all the saved are part of the visible church."

4. "We are seeking a carpenter to build a nice church for us."

From The Inside Out

DALTON KEY

I read a few words from the pen of Henry Weiman some time ago which are hauntingly applicable to many of us. In describing a college roommate who desired to increase his capacity for learning, Weiman wrote, "He procured a large, comfortable chair that was thought to be good for study. He got slippers and a lounging jacket. A book rest was fastened to the arm of the chair to hold the book at the right angle before the eyes. A special lamp was installed and an eyeshade, pencils, paper, and a revolving bookcase were provided. He would come into the room after the evening meal, take off his shoes and slip into the slippers, adjust the study lamp, put his book on the book rest, recline in the comfortable chair with his eyeshade over his eyes and, when everything was perfectly adjusted, he would go to sleep."

Here was a student who prepared everything but himself. He failed to realize that atmosphere, in and of itself, guarantees nothing. Genuine growth has always come from the inside out, not from the outside in.

Elaborate and expensive church buildings don't always assure the presence of faithful, consecrated believers. We may invest millions in steeples, in neon signs, in beautiful song books; in padded pews, temperature controlled auditoriums, and state-of-the-art sound systems, yet those disciples of the first century, huddled together in cramped rooms and stench-filled catacombs, may well have outdone us in their depth of worship.

We have the inside track on "atmosphere." In fact, we've made ourselves so comfortable, many of us have to fight to stay awake through a one hour service.

Jesus taught, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23, 24).

Worship improves when the worshipper puts more of self into the worship. In the absence of a sincere, reverent, and worship-ready heart, "atmosphere" contributes nothing to meaningful worship.

Let's go to work at improving our worship from the inside out.

“Born A Sinner?”

MIKE BENSON

“Is a child born a sinner or is he pure and clean until he comes to know right from wrong?”

1. *Sin is a violation of God's will.* John wrote, “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). James wrote, “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:14, 15). Finally, Paul wrote, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). See also Psalm 14:3; 1 John 5:17; Romans 14:23.

How could a child violate/transgress God's will when he/she has no awareness of, nor understanding of His will?

2. *Sin cannot be inherited from one's parents.* “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself” (Ezekiel 18:20).

If a husband runs a red light HE has transgressed the law, but NEITHER HIS WIFE, NOR HIS CHILDREN WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE for his crime. Sin is an act of an individual and the individual is held accountable (II Corinthians 5:10).

3. *A child is sinless and therefore “safe.”* He is safe because he has no sins from which to be saved. If children were born in sin Jesus would have never held them up as examples of purity and humility. He said, “. . . Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

Was Jesus telling us to become like sinners?

Things Related To Remission

WINFRED CLARK

You will find that there are ten occasions in the New Testament where this word appears. It is found in relation to several very important things. If we take the time to look we can gain some additional insights about this very vital topic. One can often learn some very good lessons

by looking at a thing and then seeing the kind of things that are closely related to it. After all, we can learn many things about someone by the company he keeps.

One of the first things we need to have in mind is a good clear picture of the meaning of remission. What does the Bible mean in the use of the word? W.E. Vine would say, "a dismissal, release, or, the forgiveness of sins." Thayer says, "release, as from bondage or imprisonment: forgiveness, pardon, of sins, the letting them go as if they had not been committed, the remission of their penalty." So we know that the use of the word will have to do with the forgiveness of sins, the full and complete pardon. That is what we are talking about when we are talking about when we talk about "things that are related to remission."

1. THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS RELATED TO REMISSION

Take the time to notice the conversation our Lord had with his disciples on the night he instituted the Lord's supper. It was then that he said, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). None of us would doubt the fact that Jesus had in mind the cross. In fact this was the night before he faced the cross the next day. Jesus saw his blood being shed. We know that Paul said at a later time, "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross . . ." (Colossians 1:20). Notice that we are looking at "the blood of his cross." so we know there is a connection between the blood and the cross. He also saw that blood being shed for many. He saw that blood being shed for the remission of sins.

The Hebrew writer would tell us, ". . . and without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). So we would come to the conclusion that the cross of Christ is necessary and essential to the remission of sins. Jesus had to die on the cross and that is the only means by which we can obtain the remission of sins. This is what Paul had in mind when he said, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). So the remission of sins, or the forgiveness of sins, is available only through the blood that was shed on the old rugged cross. No wonder the apostle Peter would refer to "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:19). What could be more valuable and precious than that which makes possible the forgiveness of sins.

2. THE NEW COVENANT IS RELATED TO REMISSION

When you return to the Lord's own words, as recorded by Matthew, you will see that there is a very definite relationship between the new testament and the remission of sins. Listen to these words, "For

this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). The Hebrew writer refers to it as the "blood of the everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20). You will find that the apostle Paul would repeat the words of the Lord to the church at Corinth (I Corinthians 11: 23-26). So we have no doubt that we can expect to find the remission of sins related to the new testament and to the blood that sealed the new testament (Hebrews 9:15-28). One who ignores that covenant which bears a direct relationship to the remission of sins, cannot expect to obtain that remission.

3. THERE ARE CONDITIONS RELATED TO REMISSION

It would not be right for man to set conditions if there were no conditions. On the other hand, it would be folly to ignore such where they have been prescribed. One would need to take into account a statement that Jesus made to his apostles. He said, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:23). So we can see the apostles were to have something to do with the remission of sins. But take another look at something else Jesus said to these same men. ". . . Thus it is written, and thus it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins would be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47). So we know that the apostles were to remit sins, but we also know they were to preach remission of sins and such preaching was to begin at Jerusalem. So we should have no trouble understanding how those apostles would remit sins. Such would be by their preaching as they were guided by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). They were not given the right to say just anything they had decided about this matter. That is the reason they were not to depart from Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). This would insure that they would say only what they had the right to say. It would mean that they would say what the Holy Spirit inspired them to say. It would mean they would say what the Lord would have them say. In so doing they could be assured that those to whom they spoke would be doing the only kind of preaching the Lord would have done.

But when you move to the preaching that began in Jerusalem you will find them preaching the remission of sins and salvation (Acts 2:21, 38, 40). But there is something else that you will also find. You will find that this remission was not an unconditional matter. It was not an unconditional matter when Peter went to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:43); "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." So the condition of faith or belief is clearly spelled out by the apostle Peter. But

remember that Jesus had said, "whosoever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted." But here it is condition of faith. So the remission of sins is not without conditions. But what of those to whom the apostles preached in Jerusalem? After they had heard them preach it is said, "Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Now listen to these men who were to remit sins. What will they say? Notice, "Then Peter said unto them. Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Would you conclude that one could obtain the remission of sins without doing what the apostles said they were to do? Were not these men doing what Jesus had told them to do when he said, "repentance and remission of sins was to be preached in his name?" Did they not require those to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ? Is that not preaching in the name of Christ or the kind of preaching that Jesus would authorize? Now is such with or without condition? One has only to ask that question. The answer is very, very obvious. All would reply with a resounding yes. We have no problem at all understanding who would receive the remission of sins. It would be those folks who did what the apostles told them to do. In fact, some three thousand people did just that and they were added to the church (Acts 2:47).

Scriptural Conditions Of Salvation

W.A. HOLLEY

"Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be completely furnished unto every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17, ASV).

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God . . ." (I Peter 4:11).

God's word is true, if everyone believes it; but His word is true if no one believes it (Romans 3:3-4, cf. John 3:33).

It is possible for one to become blinded to the truth of God by the doctrines and commandments of men (Matthew 13:13-15). Some set up "idols in their heart," thus blinding them to the truth of God (Ezekiel 14:3). "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God: for to draw

nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools" (Ecclesiastes 5:1).

In the midst of thousands of conflicting voices, truth of God can be heard and understood (Ephesians 3:3-4; 5:17). We humbly ask, Would God be so unkind, unloving, and unjust as to give man a Divine Revelation by which he is to be judged, yet beyond man's comprehension?? (John 12:48; Luke 10:16).

(1) Hearing the Gospel is one condition of salvation (John 6:44-45; Hebrews 8:11). One must hear the Gospel because this is the means by which faith is generated (Romans 10:17; Acts 15:7). To understand implies an honest heart (Matthew 13:10-16). Work at understanding the Scriptures as you would sincerely try to understand mathematics or any other branch of science.

(2) One must believe that Jesus is the Son of God if one would be saved from one's sins (Hebrews 11:6). Without faith it is impossible to please God. The sinner is justified by faith but not by "faith alone" (James 2:21-24). The sinner cannot be saved by "works of merit," but by "works of faith" (John 6:28-29; I John 3:23). To try to be saved by "faith alone" is to try to be saved by a dead faith. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). That settles it!

Faith is not a miraculous gift of God; one is not saved in answer to prayer. Prayer is wonderful in its place, it cannot be substituted for other commands of God. For example, Jesus did not say, "He that believeth is saved and may be baptized, if he wishes." Now, will you read Mark 16:15-16?

(3) Repentance Is One Condition of salvation which the Lord Jesus Christ demands. he said, "I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). What is repentance? Repentance is a change of mind with regard to all misdeeds and moral shortcomings (Acts 2:38; II Peter 3:9). A fine example of Bible repentance is found in the ancient city of Nineveh. . . . God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways . . ." (Jonah 3:10). Centuries latter Jesus referred to this incident in Matthew 12:41, thus giving his endorsement to that historical fact, although many Modernist scholars now refuse to do so. Dear reader, it is repent or perish. What will you do about repentance?

(4) The confession of Christ as the Son of God is another condition of salvation. On the banks of the Jordan, after Jesus' baptism, God confessed him, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:13-17).

Later, on the Mount of Transfiguration, in the presence of Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, and John, God again confessed His Son, saying,

"This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:8; Luke 9:28-36). There was a time when people should have heard Moses and Elijah, but that time is now gone. The apostles were to carry the gospel of Christ to the ends of the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Colossians 1:6, 23; Romans 10:18). If we want Jesus to confess us, we must confess Him (Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 12:8-9). We must confess with our mouths the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 10:10; Acts 8:37). To say, "I feel that God for Christ's sake has saved my soul" is not confessing Jesus, but one's feelings.

(5) Baptism is one of the conditions of salvation from past sins. One must be baptized to follow Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:13-15; 16:24; I Peter 2:21). Jesus was not baptized because of remission of sins, nor was Jesus baptized in order to have remission of sins, because Jesus had no sins to be forgiven (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus was baptized "to fulfill all righteousness." If Jesus had rejected John's baptism, He would have "rejected the counsel of God" (Luke 7:29-30).

The command of baptism is addressed to the alien sinner and not to the Christian (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:36-38; 10:48; 22:16; 8:11-25; I Peter 3:20-21). Baptism is a test of one's love for God (John 14:15, 23). Do you love Jesus enough to be baptized? Although, it may be contrary to one's thinking, one is baptized into Christ, where salvation is located (Romans 6:3-4; II Timothy 2:10).

Eternal life is in Christ (I John 5:11), but one is baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:26-27). There is but one baptism in force today and that baptism is water baptism (John 3:3, 5; Acts 10:47-48; Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5).

There is but one baptism (Ephesians 4:4-6, just as there is but one Lord, one God, et al). There had been two baptisms; Holy Spirit baptism and water baptism. But by A.D. 64, Holy Spirit baptism had ceased (I Corinthians 13:8-13).

Those who contend that I Corinthians 12:13 teaches that Holy Spirit baptism initiates one into Christ are in error. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" means by the guidance, direction, instruction of the Holy Spirit through the word of God. Just here I Corinthians 12:3, should be considered. ". . . no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." The meaning is: But for the fact that the Holy Ghost revealed it through His word or divine revelation, no man could have known that Jesus is the Son of God.

Does the Holy Ghost speak directly, separately, apart from the word of God, to the human family today? No, indeed! The Holy Ghost speaks, guides, instructs, and directs men and women through His word (II Timothy 3:15-17; II Peter 1:20-21; I Peter 1:10-12).

Man is lost and needs to be saved. This is the right way of the Lord. Do not resist Him. Obey Him today.

Bible Classes And Spiritual Growth

DEAN FUGETT

One cannot be acquainted with the Scriptures and discount the importance of regular Bible Study. Ever since God started putting his Word into written form, he was willed that it be read, understood, believed and obeyed. He commanded the Israelites to teach it to their children in each generation to keep their faith constant. We can do no less.

It cannot be denied that there is serious trouble in spiritual Israel today. Every poll shows that we are losing large numbers of our young people. That "we" is not the church; it is the parents. Our children are not being prepared for the challenges to their faith. That failure begins when parents do not emphasize the need for Bible Study and do not demonstrate by personal example.

Some children may still be lost even when parents do stress regular Bible Study and attendance at the Bible Study periods of the local congregations, but what chance do the children have whose parents are not careful to maintain regular presence at the Bible classes and follow up that attendance with study at home where the children can observe that study and even be involved in that study.

Parents begin to lose their children in religion when they devalue Bible study at home and in the local congregation. When that foundation is not laid and reinforced, young people have no foundation for the ethical and moral decisions that they are called upon to make. Thus, their decisions are based on less than that which is acceptable to God. The decision is made that sets their feet on the path away from God rather than toward him. The source of their decision making process is other than the objective guide provided by God. It is still not in man that walks to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23). Whenever he tries, he is doomed to tragedy.

The children of all church members are provided with an opportunity to learn about God and his will as revealed through Christ in the Bible Study periods of the local congregations. We cannot over-ride the parents actions and steal the children away from the home for the Bible Classes. It will do no good even if we could.