

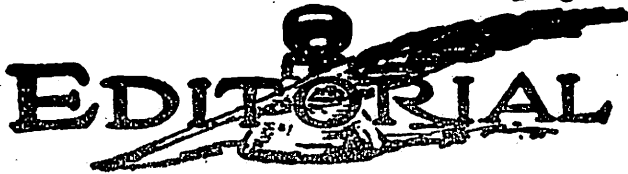
THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 20

May 1989

No. 1



All About The Bible

(1)

If sin didn't exist on earth, we would not need the Bible. But God has given us the Bible, because sin does exist. Not only does the Bible tell us what sin is, but it also reveals to us how we can be saved from sin and what will happen of the saved and the unsaved people. In the Bible, which is the book of God's revelation to man, our Creator has told us certain things of great importance which we must all face now or in future. The Bible tells us:

1. About Sin. According to the Bible sin means lawlessness or living in violation of God's will. (1 John 3:4). There are God's appointed natural and spiritual laws, when man breaks them then he sins. The Bible also teaches that sin is something which is personally committed, that is, one does not inherit sin. "The soul who sins shall die", God's book says, and, "The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son." (Ezekiel 18:20). Further, "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). Some teach

that sin is inherited, because the Bible, in Romans 3:23, says, "All have sinned." But does this not mean that all those who are capable of sinning have sinned? It does not say that all are born with sin, but that all HAVE sinned. Now there is a lot of difference in that. Some point to Psalm 51:5 and say "David was born with sin." Now, is this what it says there? King David has said there, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." Now to whose iniquity or sin David has referred here? to his mother's, not his. If someone says, "In drunkenness my father beat me." What do we understand from this? Who was drunk? Father or the child? Of course, father. It is the same what David has said. Little children are pure and holy they are innocent and sinless, and that is why Christ has said that of such is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 19:14). Those who are old enough to decide between right and wrong; those who are old enough to repent of sin, penitent people, are sinners. Sin, the Bible teaches, causes man to be separated from God (Isaiah 59:2), and this separation is death, spiritual death. (Ephesians 2:1).

2. About Redemption. Because of sin man needs salvation from sin. Salvation means freedom. Freedom from sin. Sin enslaves people. As long as man lives in sin he lives in a state of spiritual death. In Christ Jesus God came down on earth to save man from sin and its consequences. (Romans 6:23; John 3:16). The word redeem means "to buy back". Christ shed His blood on the cross so that we might be redeemed and come back to God. He is, the Bible says, the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 2:2; 4:10). With His blood He purchased our freedom from sin. (1 Peter 1:18,19). He did not yield to sin but He overcome sin, although He was tempted in every way as we are. (Hebrews 4:15). But the Bible says about Him that He became the author of eternal salvation to them who obey his commandments. (Hebrews 5:8,9). When we obey the commands of Christ, then we show through our obedience that we really believe in Jesus Christ that He is our Saviour. Without this kind of faith no one will be saved. (James 2:26). Obeying the commands of Jesus does not mean that one is trying to save himself through his works. We cannot perform enough works to save ourselves through works. According to the Bible, salvation is by His grace through our faith. (Ephesians

2:8). Yet, faith without works or obedience is dead. (James 2:24). But what kind of works? Not our works. But doing the commandments of God. Christ has commanded that to be saved one must believe in Him, and repent of sins, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3).

3. About Christ's Return. The Bible teaches that Christ will come back one day. When He was going back to heaven after accomplishing His work of redemption on earth, and as His disciples watched Him going up, suddenly two men or angels had appeared to them in white clothings and told them, "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11). Even before this, Christ had consoled the disciples by saying, "Let not your heart be troubledI will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:1-3). When His disciples, on one occasion, wanted to know from Him, when specifically he would come back? He told them, "Of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (Matthew 24:36). There are people who claim to know when Christ is coming. But they are false prophets. When Christ Himself said that not even the angels of heaven, who live with God all the time, know about the time of His coming then how can a man on earth know about it?

4. About Judgment. Christ is going to come to judge the world in righteousness. (Acts 17:31). There will be only one judgment at the same time of both the righteous and the unrighteous. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, according to 2 Corinthians 5:10. Christ warned and said, that when He would come back "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." (Matthew 25:32). According to God's book, He has appointed for all men to die once and then judgment. At Christ's coming, the living and the dead will be judged simultaneously. (2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5). About the manner of His judgment Christ said, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last

day." (John 12:48). From this it is clear that the standard of judgment will be the Bible, God's book, itself. God has given us this book in this life and the same will be opened on the day of the judgment from which all will be judged.

(to be concluded)

Striving For Excellence

J. C. Choate

We are living in the age of the casual, of just getting by, and of putting self before others. Prices are high but quality is poor. Not many take pride in what they do. Standards are down and unemployment is up. Violence and crime seem to be a way of life for many, and bribery is rampant. What a world to live in! What does it offer for our children?

While this is what we see in the world around us, the Christian life offers an alternative to those who want something better out of life. It offers quality life, quality time, and quality work. The Christian is not just trying to get by, to take advantage of his employer, to beat the customer, etc. Rather, he is industrious. He wants to give his full energies to his job, and even to give some extra time.

The Christian is a Christian because he has changed his life. He has repented of his sins and turned to go in a new direction. Being obedient to the Lord, with his sins forgiven, and having been born again in this way, he is able to live a new life. The Lord is there to bless him and God's people are there to encourage him. True, the world is also there to challenge him, but with every step forward he experiences another victory in his march onward and upward.

Even though the Christian is ever striving to better his own life, he also wants to help those around him. First, he desires to set a good example and to encourage his friends to follow him.

Second, he puts forth an effort to teach and to influence any and all that he may come in contact with.

The world represents a challenge to the Christian. He knows that every person in the world needs Christ, but he also knows that if others are to learn of Christ then he must put forth a personal effort to take the gospel to them. As he begins, his opportunities are multiplied for good. He is amazed at all he is able to do.

One of the great pleasures the Christian experiences is that of seeing souls obey the Lord and thus being a part of spreading the cause of Christ. Lives are changed, influences for good are brought to bear upon many souls throughout the world, and our present generation is made better because of the efforts of the Christian.

Christ is our great example, and heaven is our ultimate goal. Regardless of who one is, what he may or may not have, if he will continue to go forth with Christ, then one day heaven will be his home. What will it matter then whether he had much or little of this world's goods?

My friend, what is your goal in life? A job, a car, a family, wealth, a degree, a big salary, or what? Many aim only for the material things, but they will not save him. Neither will they bring satisfaction, happiness, and hope, as goals within themselves. As a matter of fact, when you stand before the Lord to give an answer for the way you lived, these things will mean nothing. All that will count will be what you did for the Lord. I urge you therefore to aim high, shoot for the highest, strive for excellence. Prepare to meet God.

Christ As The Perfect Man

Steve Williams

One powerful argument for the validity of Christianity is the moral Perfection of Jesus. When a man called Jesus "Good

Teacher" he responded, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (Mk. 10:18). While the man in this story may not have grown enough in faith to be ready for this truth, it is a truth that Jesus is the only person who has ever lived of whom we can say in the absolute sense, in a universal way, with no ifs, ands, or buts, with no qualifications, with no reservations, with no explanations, and with no limitations—"He is good!" This moral perfection of Christ is a powerful argument for the divinity of Christ and the truthfulness of Christianity.

Jesus is perfect in that he did no wrong and in the positive sense in that his obedience to the Father was perfect. Jesus holds all virtues and possesses them perfectly. You and I possess virtues, but we possess them in a partial sense and we do not possess all virtues. Many virtues comes in pairs which seem to conflict with one another. It is difficult to possess both virtues in the pair at the same time, yet Christ did and thus is the perfect man. As Hilarin Felder said in one of the most eloquent paragraphs ever penned,

In Jesus. . . all high qualities are to be found. . . in their highest perfection, they all possess the most complete symmetry. Thus we find in him ardent zeal and inexhaustible patience, noble fervour and indulgent leniency, holy seriousness and sunny cheerfulness, an impulse to solitude and yet worldly publicity, majestic greatness and the deepest humility, inflexible determination and the sweetest gentleness, powerful energy and quiet selfpossession, the warmest love for sinners and invincible hatred of sin, compassionate sympathy and strictest justice, irresistible attractiveness and fearless frankness, incorruptible truthfulness and extreme forbearance, mildness and force, resignation and resistance, adamant strength and motherly tenderness, indefatigable outward activity and inward contemplation, child like confidence in God and manly self-consciousness. In everything—in thinking, in willing, in speaking, in achieving, in precept and in practice, in doing and in suffering, in life and in death—he is equally great and perfect. . . . Jesus has not his equal, nor can there be found outside the history of Christianity either

his counterpart or, still less, his model (Hilarin Felder, *Christ and the Critics* [New York: Benziger Brothers; 1924], Vol. 2, pp. 211, 214).

“Wise Men Change Their Minds... Fools Never Do!”

Kevin L. Jenkins

Several days ago I was visiting downtown with a good friend of mine. We were discussing this and that when we began to discuss about who would not change their minds no matter what the reason may be. That is when my friend cracked this saying, “Wise men change their minds...fools never do!”

I had never heard that saying before but upon reflecting about it I believe it is a very wise and true statement. Only a fool would think that he always had all of the answers, that he always knew what was right from the very beginning and will never waver from it no matter what.

Yet, most all of us have met that individual who thinks he knows everything and simply refuses to listen to any other reasoning but his own. Would he allow someone else to change his mind? Absolutely not. To do that would be the same as admitting that he had been wrong. And in the mind of a fool that can never be. Only the fool would dare think he is never wrong. Only the fool would refuse to alter what he is doing once it is clearly shown his activity is clearly wrong or inappropriate. Yet the fool never changes his mind. Really, he never even considers that he could be wrong.

Would you consider the Apostle Paul to be a wise man? Paul was a man who changed his mind. In Acts 9:1-2 the Bible tells how Paul persecuted the church, threatening and imprisoning the disciples who professed to have faith in Christ. In Galatians 1:13 Paul says of himself, “how that beyond measure I persecuted the

church of God, and made havoc of it." Why did Paul do this? Was it simply out of indifference to the people involved? No. Paul was doing what he thought was right (Acts 23:1). According to the thinking of Paul's mind he was doing exactly what God would want him to do. Yet on that road to Damascus in Acts 9, Paul changed his mind. If not on the road, then after he entered the city and heard the convincing teaching and preaching of Ananias.

The point is, when Paul found the truth he was willing and even eager to change his mind, to completely disregard what he had formerly thought concerning Christianity. When Paul saw the truth of the gospel, he let nothing hold him back from obeying it. He did not try to justify his original position, he did not try to rationalize it, nor did he attempt to ignore the truth of what he had learned. He simply complied with it.

How sad it is today to find people who refuse to change their minds religiously when and if they find they have been living in error. Just because something was good enough for mom and dad or grandma or grandpa does that mean it is right for you too? When the facts are clearly presented by a wise man and change your mind if the need be. Remember, fools never do.

The Undenominational Church

John Pigg

Churches of Christ seek to restore the original church which is identified and described in the New Testament. To restore does not imply that we seek to create a new denomination better than existing ones. Even a better denomination would still be unacceptable, because the church of the New Testament was actually undenominational.

What is wrong with the concept of denominationalism? It signifies a division, and in a religious sense, a sect. Our Lord did not align himself with any sect or division during his earthly life. Each of the four major sects of Judaism advocated some

truth, but our Lord identified with none of them.

When He announced He would build his church (Matt. 16:18), he did not mean a variety of denominations. He was stating his intention to establish his one body of saved people who would be called out of the world by the gospel (II Thess. 2:14), by obedience thereto (II Thess. 1:6-9), over which Christ would rule as head (Col. 1:18).

Our Lord prayed earnestly before his death for the unity of his single church, the very opposite of denominationalism. "Neither do I pray for these (his apostles) alone, but for them all (Christians today) which shall believe on me through their word (New Testament), that they ALL BE ONE" (John 17:20, 21). Our Lord paid for unity, the opposite of denominationalism. He died and shed his blood "that he might reconcile both (Jews and Gentiles) unto God in ONE body by the cross" (Eph. 2:16). Our Lord pleaded for unity, the opposite of denominationalism. He urged that we "all speak the same thing, and there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together" (I Cor. 1:10). Our Lord planned for unity, the opposite of denominationalism. He taught that, "there is ONE body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. 4:3-6). Therefore our Lord was undenominational and anti-denominational.

What is the cure for denominationalism? A complete return to the authority of the Bible and an allegiance of every believer to that single objective authority. When all men will lay down their feelings and modern concepts and objectively consider the church of the New Testament humbly and honestly, diligently studying all the scriptures on that subject, the result will be the death knell to denominationalism.

Forgiveness

Thomas Premanandam

The Greek word 'APHESIS' admits of several meanings—

forgiveness (Mk. 3:2) release and deliverance (Lk. 4:18), remission (Acts 26:18). Besides forgiveness is implied in, 'letting go', 'passing over' which are the meanings found in the Greek Lexicon. The word PARDON is synonymous with forgiveness but its use is restricted to the Old Testament.

Among the attributes of God, forgiveness may be said as standing second in His relation to man, the first being LOVE. The necessity for the exercise of this supreme and noble virtue arises when man prefers to offend God and wrong his fellow-men. But a man of pride may say that forgiveness is a weak indulgent attitude which may not necessarily bring about a radical change in the forgiven.

Nature never forgives. If we break the laws of health, disease will lay its palsied hand upon us. If the child plays in the sun, he will be laid up with fever or suffer a sun-stroke. The Nature is governed by the law of cause and effect.

As a rule, Society does not easily forgive: the thief is punished; the murderer is executed: the cheat is chastised. In a word, any man who has no respect for the Law and Order of the country shall not go scotfree but shall be dealt with suitably. Juvenile delinquents may be forgiven in consideration of their age. Some one has said 'abolishing capital punishment is like neglecting pasteurisation of milk.'

'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' was the retributive law in operation in the Hebrew society. But God demanded repentance as a pre-condition for His pardon of the guilty. "Let him (the wicked) turn to the Lord and He will have mercy on him." (Isa. 55:7). "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (Jer.31:34).

'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors' is the prayer that the Lord taught His disciples. (Matt. 6:12). Debt is a designation for sins. (Lk. 11:4) Five Greek words are employed in the New Testament to express different kinds of sin.

The word OPHEILEMA means debt to God or failing to do one's duty to man and to God. Only when we can fathom the humiliation of Christ in the act of redemption for the fallen world, only when we can understand what is contained in the expression, 'He emptied Himself', then shall we be able to measure God's unspeakable gift to us and our incalculable debt to Him.

As the daily bread we pray for, we need forgiveness for our daily life because we commit sin through thought, word, and deed. As surely as we faint and die without bread, so surely do we faint and die from all godly life and all godly purposes if we obtain not divine forgiveness.

When we pray this petition, we expect God to forgive our debts in the manner we forgive our debtors. In other words, divine forgiveness is absolutely preconditioned upon the petitioner's forgiving of others. The implication is that we are forgiving the people that offend us in our daily life. But if our practice is different and contrary to our prayer, are we not telling a lie to God? We should remember that our unforgiveness cannot obtain divine forgiveness. Some thoughtlessly and flippantly and mechanically make this petition merely from their lips. Don't we thereby become either hypocrites or formalists?

Robert L. Stevenson once said that he was not fit to pray "the Lord's prayer" as long as unforgiving spirit holds sway in his heart and added that if a man has not put things right with his fellowmen, he cannot put things right with God.

Although the all-forgiving God has enjoined upon us the practice of this godly virtue of forgiveness as the pre-requisite of character for divine forgiveness, we find it hard to forgive the little offences of our fellow beings even when our own misdeeds and guilt against God unceasingly urge us to cry for His pardon and mercy.

It is said that God is too benign a Deity who simply pities man and overlooks his failures: surely a mistaken idea. God's love is nothing soft, flabby and sentimental towards those who do not seek divine forgiveness. His is a Love that is stern, not

indulgent. It is a Love that dies for sin but lives for the sinner. It is a Love that is saturated with His blood flowing into the repentant sinner. Again, forgiveness does not exclude indignation any more than it precludes punishment. But many prefer in their heart of hearts to trade upon God's forgiveness. Of course forgiveness is with God and it is the inevitable offspring of love and the eternal witness of the cross.

The role of Christian forgiveness is significant where love is the basic foundation for the operation of this noble virtue: hating the evil and loving the evil-doer is the way of the Lord. But human pride of place and position, the source of hatred stand in the way of our embracing the offender. Forgetting that we are confirmed offenders and hardened sinners in the sight of God, we are reluctant to extend a hand of friendship to our debtors.

A perfect example of the height of pride and false prestige is displayed in the life of Elizabeth Barrot, an English poetess who married Robert Browning much against the will of her parents. She wrote to her parents once a week expressing her deep love for them and longed for reconciliation. After ten years, a box was received by her containing all her letters unopened. Had the parents cared to know the contents of the letters, the broken relationship would have been happily repaired.

An apology offered incessantly in true spirit of repentance for about a decade was coldly rejected by her inconsiderate and stony-hearted parents. The obduracy and self-righteousness rendered their union with the penitent daughter almost impossible. Elizabeth's father who was a prig, failed to recall how anxiously the sorrowing father of the PRODIGAL looked forward to receive his erring and disobedient son. The spontaneous parental forgiveness of Elizabeth would have pulled down the wall of separation.

Some are prone to argue that forgiveness is the most difficult thing which we, as Christians are called upon to practise and that this ideal of Christ is unattainable on the human level. And some of us tend to forget that we are confirmed offenders in

the sight of God and badly in need of His mercy and forgiveness. As members of the Body of Christ, we cannot afford to be delinquent in the practice of the teachings and precepts of the Lord who taught us that forgiveness should be offered times without number. (Matt. 18:21-22). Receiving divine forgiveness and offering pardon to our offenders should be a continuous process, not limited to a specific period but be an activity of the entire span of one's life.

Strangely when man fails in the show of forgiveness, some animals succeed. Sir Walter Scott threw a stone at a dog not to hurt but to chase it away. But unfortunately the stone broke its leg. And the dog instead of running away came limping to him and sniffed forgiveness by licking the hand that had thrown the stone.

One of the most idealised concepts of human relationships is forgiveness and a couple of types of it are observed in the parental exercises of disciplining the children:

- i. I forgive you, my boy, and I will pray for you.
- ii. I will forgive you if you are sorry and promise never to do it again.

Also we hear a brother saying, As a Christian I forgive him but I shall never speak to him.

In these types of forgiveness, the value is doubtful and psychologically they are not of much help.

Man's conceited and arrogant audacity to assume the office of the Most High professing to forgive human sins but thus making it a profit-making concern was recorded in the church history of the 15th century. This was a typical example of presumptuous sin. People could obtain a plenary remission of all their sins by purchasing letters of indulgence issued by the Pope who had arrogated to himself the powers of Heaven. Sincere and honest people were deceived into this false belief. What a

mockers of the gift of the divine pardon!

The quintessence of forgiveness is displayed in the prayer of the Great Intercessor, the God of love. Suffering shame and convulsive, excruciating agony of crucifixion, He uttered the soul-transforming and touching words. "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." (Lk. 23:34).

The word FORGIVE comprehends even much more than what we can imagine and embraces the whole register of sins and the petition for forgiveness includes miscreants, rebels, murderers and blasphemers that took part in the tragic story of the cross. Humility is the first step that leads us to the secret of forgiveness. The Lord humbled himself before He awarded forgiveness on the cross. And this supernal pardon is offered free to all repentant sinners. When we realize the magnanimity and the magnitude of this marvellous love, our hearts become imbued with deep humility, peace and joy along with which hardness towards our offenders cannot exist.

The unique example of the Redeemer has been perfectly emulated by great souls of faith. Stephen who was cruelly stoned, cried before his death, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts 7:60).

Forgiveness restores the present; heals the future, and releases the past, (2 Cor. 2:7), unites the offender with the forgiver in new and fresh fellowship; buries the wrong done; fosters love and brotherhood; guarantees divine pardon and establishes peace in home, church and society.

The universal pardon proclaimed from the Mount of Calvary is meant for me and you and for the entire mankind. Should we not accept this marvellous gift of grace right now and forgive one another just as in Christ, God forgave us. (Eph. 4:32).

Love begets forgiveness and forgiveness in turn begets love.

What God Has Joined Together Let No Man Separate

Robin Watson

As the sins of our society have beaten the foundation of the church like waves upon the shore, so works the doctrine of "divorce for any reason." The slow but consistent pounding of this teaching is eating away the sanctity God has placed on marriage. Many a brother caught up in the waves, accelerates the erosion by teaching that it is not sinful to divorce one's mate for reasons other than fornication. But just as Jesus rebuked the stormy wind and waves that sought to harm his disciples, so must his rebuke, "Peace, be still," be used to calm this destructive doctrine.

First, the question must be asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" (Mt. 19:3, NKJV). Jesus stands against these waves with these words: "Have you not read ...?" (Mt. 19:4). He rebuked them for their lack of knowledge. Had they known what was meant, "and the two shall become one flesh," they would not have asked the question. Jesus' conclusive answer to their question was, "Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate" (Mt. 19:6). His answer was NO! This is the case because (1) It is God who joins people together in marriage, and (2) God has not given man the authority to separate this holy union.

One then might ask, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" (Mt. 19:7). To this assailing wind Jesus replies, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, BUT FROM THE BEGINNING IT WAS NOT SO" (Mt. 19:8). Divorce was not in the mind of God as part of his plan for the "one flesh" relationship of his children. God's attitude toward divorce has been revealed in past times through his holy prophets: "For the Lord God of Israel says that HE HATES DIVORCE" (Mal.

2:16), and in these last days through his Son Jesus Christ: "what God has joined together, LET NOT MAN SEPARATE" (Mt. 19:6).

Does this mean that no one can divorce their mate? As far as man's authority is concerned, you can divorce your mate for any reason. But marriage is not a contract between two persons, but a sacred covenant between three. And since God is the third party in the covenant, and since it is God who joins man and woman together, and since God has commanded that no person separate that which he has joined, then the power and authority to abolish that covenant rests wholly and exclusively with God. Therefore, if God has authorized a ground or grounds for divorce, then one can appeal to this authority for divine sanction of the abolition of the covenant. God will then abrogate the covenant. One can divorce, i.e., abolish an existing covenant only if God is party to the abolition.

God, through the apostle Paul commanded, "A wife is not to depart from her husband" (1 Cor. 7:10). The words "depart from," mean "divorce herself from," which any reputable Greek lexicon or dictionary will confirm (Thayer: s.v. chorizo; Collin Brown: s.v. "separate"; Baur, Arndt and Gingrich: s.v. chorizo). The wife who divorces herself from her husband breaks God's commandment. It is evident from Paul's statement, "yet not I but the Lord," that this command was given by Christ while here on earth. Christ said, "whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery" (Mt. 19:9). Here is found the divine authority that allows the marriage covenant to be abolished. The only ground for divorce and remarriage is "sexual immorality." With this in mind, it is easy to see that Paul had in mind a woman who might divorce herself from her husband for reasons other than "sexual immorality." This is why she must "remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband" (1 Cor. 7:11). Though divorced, or "unmarried" by man's authority, she still has a husband. If she marries another man, she will compound her sin by committing adultery (Mt. 19:9). She could not commit adultery if a marriage

covenant was not in existence. God therefore, did not abolish the marriage covenant.

Brethren, it is NOT lawful for one to divorce his mate for just any reason. Anyone who divorces his mate for reasons other than "sexual immorality" commits sin. Any person who is party to breaking up a marriage for reasons other than "sexual immorality," whether they be friend, counselor, preacher, elder, or judge, will be held accountable in the day of judgment.

Let us, therefore, work together to keep what "God has joined together."

Do It Yourself

Bob Plunket

In 1865 in Yorkshire, England, Sabine Baring Gould, who was a minister in a 'Christian school,' needed a song for a religious festival that the school could march to. He looked everywhere to find a suitable hymn. There was none available. He sat up all night to compose a hymn for the occasion. As day began to break he had written the great hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers." It is a moving hymn. The first verse says:

Onward Christian soldiers marching as to war
With the cross of Jesus going on before.
Christ the royal Master leads against the foe.
Forward into battle see his banner go.

The children marched proudly in their festival and thousands of Christians have "marched" since then to this great hymn. We need this man's great spirit today. Many complain that there are no songs to sing, and no good books to read, and no poems to inspire. Then write one! Many would have said, "Well, we don't have a song for our festival this year, so we won't march." Our Father was the master of all creation, and we

are made in his image. Why should not we be creative? Interdependence can be a good thing, but we need some individuality as well. Many people today are becoming mentally paralyzed. We let others think for us, and write for us, and sing for us. Not all the great songs, nor all the great books, nor all the great sermons have yet been written!

Sabine found (along with many others) that necessity is the 'mother' of discovery and invention. How many have said, "I am not pleased with my country?" Then make it better. Still others say, "I am not pleased with my community." Then make it better. How many great songs, and great books, and great poems have been buried in a cemetery because he or she never tried. I admire our sister Beulah Hand who made the world a little richer by writing some beautiful hymns herself. We must not lose confidence in our individual abilities. So you don't know Sabine Gould who lived over a hundred years ago, but you have sung his song and that is what counts. Jesus admired and praised creativity. He said, "Well done, good and faithful servant" to the men who had used their talents. To the man who had buried his talent, he said, "You wicked and lazy servant...you should have invested my money...Take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents" (Matthew 25). If what you see and what you hear is not suitable, then do it yourself!

The Two Talent Man

David Courington

The parable of the talents is found in Matthew 25:14-30. Many lessons have been taught from this pointed parable. Usually the one talent man is emphasized. He was given less than the other stewards, and he failed to use the little that he had. The five talent man was given the most, and he used it to make the most. However it is the two talent man that we will consider here.

First, note that he pleased his lord just as much as the five talent man. The Lord told him the same thing that he did the five talent man: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou has

been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (verse 23). This should be comforting to those of us who do not have the ability, means, or money that others do. One can please God just as much as if he had more, by using what he has. One does not have to be the biggest, or best, to please God. Our society puts great emphasis on being "Number One," yet God was in this case just as pleased with "Number Two"—because he used what he had to the best of his ability.

Also, the two talent man could have done just what the one talent man did. There were some who had more than he did. There probably was no way that he could have gained as the five talent man, no matter how hard he tried. He could have said, "I cannot, because there are others who can do so much better." It may be that one elder can never, no matter how hard he tries, do as much as another elder. This does not mean that he should not be an elder, nor that he must be ashamed. The same can be said of teachers, song leaders, parents, Bible students, personal workers, etc. One must do what he can rather than bemoan what he cannot do. Paul warned against measuring oneself against others and commending oneself because he does more than someone else (II Corinthians 10:12). God does not judge us according to what others do, but rather according to what we do with what he has given us. Runners often talk about running their "personal best" time in a race. Christians would do well to strive for their "personal best," and not become discouraged and quit because they do not do as well as others.

On the other side of the coin, the two talent man did not look at one talent man and say, "I already have twice as much as he does; so I will do nothing." One must exercise caution lest he become self-satisfied with little, and not try to do more and/or better. The church at Laodicea made God sick because they said, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). The child of God has not learned enough, worked enough, or become good enough. Likewise the church must never become self-satisfied. Not until the whole world is converted to Christ, will our work be done.

Two talent folks must be diligent that they not lose their reward.

“All Shall Not Enter”

Garland Elkins

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt.7:21).

This passage declares in a most emphatic fashion that God demands absolute obedience to His will in order for one to be saved. Obedience is the doorway into the church and ultimately into heaven (Rev. 22:14). To do God's will entails obeying that will, for God has no plan of salvation for an unsundered will. Jesus asks a question and then discusses of what obedience and disobedience consist in the following scriptures.

“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Every one that cometh unto me, and heareth my words, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who digged and went deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when a flood arose, the stream brake against that house, and could not shake it: because it had been well builded. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that built a house upon the earth without a foundation; against which the stream brake, and straightway it fell in; and the ruin of that house was great” (Lk. 6:46-49).

Jesus not only taught others to obey, but He himself obeyed. When we first hear from Him as a lad, how strikingly this is enforced and illustrated when He said to Joseph “How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” (Lk. 2:49).

Partial obedience is not true obedience. From numerous standpoints it would appear that the “Rich Young Ruler” was a

most likely prospect for a faithful disciple of Christ, for when the Master tested him by the commandments, he was able to truthfully—say that I have kept all commandments from my youth.” However, when Jesus opened the door so that he might enter into His service, he went away. This he did not because the Lord drove him away. He failed to follow the Lord because he was not willing to renounce self and to follow the Lord. Jesus on another occasion said, “So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:33).

• As the “Rich Young Ruler” appeared to be so full of promise as a follower of the Lord, even so from the viewpoint of many Matthew would have appeared to be a most unlikely prospect. Many of his fellow Jews considered that he, like all publicans, had sold his social standing and his good name. To the religious leaders of the Jews he was absolutely beyond hope. But, one day he came in contact with the Lord. “And as Jesus passed by from thence, he saw a man, called Matthew, sitting at the place of toll: and he saith unto him, Follow me And he arose, and followed him” (Matt. 9:9). That day Matthew became a follower of the Lord despite many a handicap. When Jesus commanded him, “Follow me,” he immediately did so, for the Bible says, “And he arose and followed him.”

Obedience, the Acid Test

The Father sent Jesus into the world with a message to mankind. To reject that message is to reject Jesus, and to reject Jesus is to reject the Father. “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me” (Lk. 10:16). The Father’s will has commandments as well as promises. Many hope to enjoy the promises while they disregard and even disdain the commandments. They hope to reap the benefits of the will of God, but they absolutely refuse to be obedient to its demands. Jesus emphasizes the necessity of doing the will of the Father. Unless we do His will, we cannot enjoy the promises of the Father!

Many will Argue with the Lord

In this warning against disobedience Jesus reveals the fact

that many in the judgment will expect to be saved because they have lived up to their own requirements. Men are inclined to set up their own standards as to what one must do in order to go to heaven. Jesus in this passage teaches us that it is God who determines what a person must do or not do in order to be acceptable to Him in the day of judgment.

Jesus Never Approves Disobedience

To those who have not obeyed Him but make claims that they have done His will He will say, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23). He will not deny that they were busy in religion, but He will simply say that He did not approve of what they did! The solemn truth is "all shall not enter, but only the obedient. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

Miracles Have Ceased

Ed Mosby

Miracles Happened, Miracles Ceased

The same Bible which teaches that miracles happened in Bible times also teaches that miracles have now ceased. If one believes Bible teaching that miracles happened, he must also believe Bible teaching that miracles ceased. God began all things by miracles, but He continues all things without miracles. God never created but one man by miracle—Adam, the first man. He began mankind with miracles but continues mankind without miracles. Was your body created by miracle like Adam's? If not, then you see that God began all things by miracles but continues them by natural processes without miracles. Read Genesis 1:27,28.

The Bible was Created by Miracles

God began the Bible by miracles. Inspired men spoke and

wrote miraculously to bring us the Bible. They preached in languages that they had never studied. They prophesied or spoke by inspiration for God. God miraculously used men to bring into the world His message, the Bible. But once the Bible was completed, miracles no longer happened. When the process of miracles produced the product intended—the Bible, then according to God's great plan, miracles ceased. And God's message, the Bible, is now carried on by non-miraculous teaching by uninspired men. No more men are being created, and no more Bibles are being created. God's plan for miracles has ceased. Read 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21 and 2 Timothy 2:2.

God Tells Why Miracles Ceased

God's two reasons that miraculous speaking and writing have ceased are that they were (1) part-by-part, and not complete, and (2) they were temporary, and not permanent. Each inspired man was given only a part of God's revelation, but the completed Bible is "all truth." All miracles were temporary, but the Bible is permanent.

Miracles were Written that Men might believe

John 20:31 teaches that the miracles of Jesus were written down in Scripture so that men might believe that He is the Son of God. God's plan was not for continuing miracles, but for permanent and continuing record of miracles for all ages, the Bible. Readers believe in Jesus because of His written Word which is a permanent and error free record of His miracles which prove that He is the Son of God. A truth once confirmed is forever confirmed. A fact once proved is forever proved. Men in all ages have believed in Jesus by His Book of Miracles, but they have never seen a miracle, nor do they need to see a miracle to believe. Miracles served God's purpose and no longer needed.

Apostles & Prophets were Inspired so that the Bible could be Written

Apostles and prophets were God's temporary men who were given the power of miracles. They were temporary because their purpose was to write the Bible. But God's permanent plan for all generation to know His will was the Bible. Paul explains this plan in Ephesians 3:3-5, where he says that God's revelation was

made known to him (and other apostles and prophets) so that these inspired men could write by the Holy Spirit. This writing was done so that those (like us) could read the Scripture written by holy men and understand God's revelation as they understood it. Apostles and prophets were temporary because their purpose was temporary. Their purpose was to write the Bible, so that now their purpose is completed and their power is ceased.

The completed or Perfected Scripture caused miraculous gift to cease

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 explains God's timetable for miraculous gifts to cease, when the perfect revelation came (the complete and permanent Bible), the temporary and part-by-part miraculous power would cease. Prophesying would fail, tongue-speaking would cease, and miraculous knowledge would be done away. What stronger words could have been used to say the miraculous powers of inspiration were to stop? [Do you believe this plain Bible teaching that miracles were to fail, to cease, and to vanish away?]

Present-Day revelations contradict the completeness of the Bible

The apostles whom Jesus taught were guided into all truth (John 16:13). This means that after the Bible was written, no more truth from God was revealed. All revealed truth was once-for-all given in the Scriptures. This enables the inspired Scripture to thoroughly furnish the man of God unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Because the Bible is perfect, no further revelation or addition to it is allowed (Revelation 22:18, 19). The idea of more truth from God today contradicts the once-for-all completeness of the Bible (Jude 3).

Incomplete part-by-part revelations ended with the perfect revelation

We do not need more parts to God's complete revelation, the Bible. If more parts are needed, the Bible is not complete or perfect. God's perfect revelation has come, and the miraculous part-by-part revelations have ended (1 Corinthians 13:9, 10).

Jesus gave miracles until the faith as a unit was completed

Ephesians 4:13 clearly says when miracles ceased. Jesus gave

them till the unity of the faith or till the faith as a unit. This unity of the faith is also called the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God and the measure of the stature of Christ's fulness. Miracles were given until the Bible was completed as a unit rather than as part-by-part segments. Miracles were given until the revealed knowledge about Jesus was a complete unit. Miracles were given until the Scripture was completed which measures the fulness of Christ's stature.

Verses 7—13 liken the temporary gifts of miracle—working power to the gifts of booty given by a king in the Bible days. Descending out of his walled city on a hill he conquered the enemy and then ascended back into his own city to give to his people gifts of booty from the battle. In this manner Jesus descended from heaven into the lower parts which are the earth and led captivity captive when He died for our sins and rose again. He then ascended back to heaven and gave gifts unto men. But He gave these gifts (miraculous powers) only until the faith as a unit was produced.

If I stated that you could ride with me until your house, would you keep riding with me beyond your house? When Jesus gave gifts until the faith as a unit, does He still give gifts now that we have the faith as a unit? The word "till" clearly states how long temporary miracles were to last—only until the Bible was completed.

The Holy Spirit dove was given for a purpose which has been accomplished

John 1:32—34 describes the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus as a dove. Verses 33 and 34 show that this appearance of the Holy Spirit as a dove was to identify Jesus as the Son of God who would baptize in the Holy Spirit. When John saw the dove, he got the point. He began to bear record that Jesus was the Son of God.

Here is a coming of the Holy Spirit for a clearly-stated purpose. When the purpose was accomplished, no Holy Spirit doves have ever come since. No one expects the Holy Spirit as a dove,

because we can clearly see that the purpose has been accomplished. When we understand the purpose, we know that Holy Spirit doves have ceased.

The coming of the Holy Spirit upon apostles and prophets to work miracles had a purpose. That purpose was to write and confirm the Bible as the Word of God (Mark 16:20). Now that we have the Bible, we do not expect miracles, since their purpose has been accomplished. Miracles have ceased. This is easy to see when we know the purpose God had for each.

Just because the Holy Spirit Fell on the apostles does not mean that this will happen to me today

A terrible mistake is made when I read in the Bible a promise made only to the apostles, and then try to apply that promise to myself and all men today. The apostles were men guided to write all truth in the Bible (John 16:13). What they bound (as they wrote the Bible) is bound upon all men. (Matthew 18:18). God set the apostles first in the church (1 Cor. 12:28), because they were in the founding of the church (Eph. 2:20). But all are not apostles (1 Cor. 12:29), and for me today to claim to be an apostle by claiming promises of inspiration made to the apostles is false. The twelve apostles received the Holy Spirit like fiery tongues sitting on their heads, but I have not. I must apply apostolic promises only to apostles and not claim them today.

Satan works false miracles called "Lying wonders"

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 says that Satan works through signs (miracles) and lying wonders (or false miracles). But these miracles are deception or lies, they are not real. They are a strong delusion sent by God that those who do not love the truth might believe a lie and be damned. Revelation 13:13 describes the False Prophet as doing great signs like making fire come down from heaven in the sight of men. Matthew 7:22 shows that false teachers will claim to prophesy, cast out demons, and do many mighty works in Jesus' name, but He does not know them. 2 Corinthians 11:13, 14, 15, describes false apostles, deceitful

workers, who claim the powers of apostles but are in reality ministers of Satan who will be destroyed.

False Miracles and False Teachers Must be Proved

The only way to know false teachers is to prove them. Christians must prove all things and avoid every appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22). 1 John 4:1 commands us not to believe every spirit but to prove the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are in the world. Verse 6 gives the way to prove every teacher. The apostles are of God, and their writing in the Bible are of God. He that is of God will hear or read what the apostles have said in the Bible. By this (or hereby) we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Acts 17:11 says that if what you hear is true when you search it in the Scriptures, it is so. 1 Corinthians 14:37 shows that the man who thinks himself a prophet or spiritual must acknowledge the writings of Paul as the commandments of the Lord.

Modern Tongues Fail the Bible Test, You Make the Test

Acts 2:6, 8 shows Bible tongues were actual language, but modern tongues are nonsensical jibberish. 1 Corinthians 14:19 shows that tongues in the Bible were inferior to understandable teaching, but modern tongues are claimed to be superior to teaching. Verses 33, 34 command the women to keep silent in the assembly, but modern tongue speakers are often leading speakers in the assembly. Modern tongues, when proved by the Bible, must be abstained from. They must not be believed. They are spirits of error. They are not so (1 Thess. 5:21, 22; 1 John 4:1, 6; Acts 17:11).

Modern Miracle-Healing Fails the Bible Test, You Make the Test

Acts 3:2 shows that persons healed were unquestionably lame and no one doubted the unhealed condition. But modern victims claim internal problems that are out of sight and cannot be verified. Acts 4:16 shows that there were no doubters of Bible miracles, even the enemies of the apostles admitted the miracles. Today there are many doubters, and rightfully so. Real Bible miracles

could not be disproved, but present false miracles can be. Acts 5:16 says that the apostles healed every case, but many cases today are not healed by false apostles. Acts 19:11, 12 proves that Bible healing was immediate without long hours of emotional agonizing and disappointment. But the opposite is usually true of false healing today. Modern false miracle-healing fails the Bible test. They must be abstained from. They must not be believed. They are spirits of error. They are not so!

Why Don't Modern Miracle-Workers Walk on Water?

Both Jesus and the apostle Peter walked upon the sea (Matthew 14:25, 29). Why don't men do this today? Both Jesus and the apostles raised the dead (John 11:44, Acts 9:40; 20:9, 10). Why don't modern miracle-workers raise corpses that are stinking (John 11:39)? They do not because they cannot! They cannot because the Bible plainly teaches that miracles have ceased. Miracles have ceased because their purpose to bring us the Bible has been accomplished. Do not be misled by fake healers and lying miracles today. True miracles have been written so that you can believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and believing, you can have life in His name (John 20:31).