

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 21

October 1990

No. 6

EDITORIAL

Temporary And Permanent Offices In The Church

Whenever the Bible uses the word "Church" it is always speaking of "a called our group of people." The Bible also refers to the church as the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God's Son. (Matthew 16 : 18, 19; Colossians 1 : 13). Christ's church has no human head on earth, Christ, the builder of the church, is Himself the head of His church. (Ephesians 1 : 22,23; Colossians 1 : 18). The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, likens the organization of the church to a human body. A human body has many parts or members, but all of them together are one body. The foot in the body should not feel unimportant just because it is not hand. Neither should the eye say to the hand that it doesn't need the hand. Even the smallest parts are necessary and are equally important in the body. The same is true about Christ's spiritual body, His church. There may be small and big members in it, those who are rich and poor; black

and brown and white; educated and uneducated; weak and strong, and young and old. But they are all needed in the church. None are unimportant. This is the truth of the matter the Apostle was showing to the church at Corinth in his 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Then at verse 27 he said, "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." All different members together make up the spiritual body of Christ, which is the church of Christ.

When the church began almost two thousand years ago, it needed some special care in the beginning for its necessary growth. Just as when a baby is born he needs some special care and things, which wouldn't be necessary after he is grown up. For instance he needs diapers as a baby, and someone needs to hold his hand when he try to learn to walk. But after some time those things become unnecessary. Likewise when a building is being built it needs scaffoldings around it in the beginning, but after the building is complete they are not needed, so they are removed. So was also in the church in the beginning. In the church of the first century God had appointed some people to work in some special areas, but later He removed them because they were no longer needed or necessary. Paul wrote, "And God has appointed these in the church; first apostles; second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, Administrations, varieties of tongues." (1 Corinthians 12 : 28). From this we learn that in the beginning God had appointed in the church some eight types of people. There were some among them who were temporary, others, however, still continue. Let us learn about them.

First, there were the Apostles. The Apostles, were men who were selected by Christ Himself to be eyewitnesses of the events of His life, to see Him after His resurrection and to testify to mankind concerning Him. (Acts 1 : 21-22; I Corinthians 9 : 1). There were 12 Apostles in the beginning, according to Matthew 10 : 1-4. After the death of Judas Iscariot, however, the eleven Apostles gathered together and chose Matthias with God's approval, and he was numbered with the eleven to become a witness of Christ with them. (Acts 1 : 21-26). Later we learn that Christ chose Saul, who is popularly known as Paul, since

Acts 13 : 9; to be one of His witnesses, and He became an Apostle with the others. The fifth book of the New Testament is called the book of "The Acts of the Apostles." In this book we read what the Apostles did, how they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, how they went about preaching the gospel, working miracles and establishing congregations of Christ's church in different places. Almost all the Apostles died a violent death as a result of their preaching the gospel of Christ. There are no Apostles in the church today. The office of the Apostles was temporary. They were chosen to be the witnesses of what they had seen and heard, about all of which they first preached to the people then living, and they wrote about those things in the New Testament books for us.

Second, prophets were appointed in the church. The work of a prophet was to let people know the will of God, this included the prediction of future events. In the absence of the Bible, God spoke to those prophets directly and they in turn spoke those things to others. In the Old Testament of the Bible we read about many prophets, such as Isaiah, Daniel and Jeremiah. In the New Testament we read about Agabus (Acts 21 : 10), and many other prophets. (1 Corinthians 14 : 29-37). Today there are no prophets in the church, because we have the complete will of God available written for us in the Bible. (2 Timothy 3 : 16, 17; Galatians 1 : 6-9). God is not speaking today to any person directly revealing His will, because the Bible contains His will for us today. Whatever we need to know He has already revealed for us in His Bible. (Hebrews 1 : 1, 2; Revelation 22 : 18, 19).

Further we learn, God had likewise appointed teachers in the church. The work of a teacher was to teach or preach God's word. As long as man is going to be on earth, he is going to require someone to teach him God's word. The office of teacher or preacher in the church, therefore, is a permanent one.

Next in the list of those who were appointed in the church were the workers of miracles. A miracle means something that was contrary to the nature. For instance, someone comes and asks you to throw the book in your hand on the ground, and immediately, as you do that the book becomes a snake or an

animal. That would be a miracle. This is exactly what happened in Exodus chapter four of the Bible. God asked Moses, "what is that in your hand?" "A rod", replied Moses. God told Moses to, "Cast it on the ground." As soon as Moses did that, the rod immediately became a serpent. (Exodus 4 : 1-3). The Apostles saw Christ walking on the sea. (John 6 : 19). It is said at Acts 5 : 14-16, that when Peter, one of the Apostles, passed by and his shadow fell on sick people they were all immediately healed. The purpose of miracles was to convince people. When the Apostles went out and preached everywhere, the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word they were preaching through the accompanying signs. (Mark 16 : 20). Not all in the church were able to perform miracles. First, the Apostles were given power to perform miracles. Since they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2 : 1-4). "And through the hands of the Apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people..." says Acts 5 : 12. Later on, because the Apostles couldn't be present everywhere, they laid their hands on certain Christians to impart the gift of working miracles, so the ones on whom the Apostles had laid their hands were also able to do miracles. (Read Acts 6 : 3-6 and Acts 8 : 4-8). The same was true of those who had received the gift of healings and the gift of speaking in different languages. The Apostles, as we have noticed specifically in the case of the Apostle Peter, originally had the power to miraculously and instantly heal people. But when they had laid their hands on certain Christians to impart the power of healings, they too then reproduced miraculous healings. As we read in the case of Philip, when the Apostles had laid hands on Him, he went to Samaria to preach Christ, there, it says, "the multitude with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed." (Acts 6 : 5, 6; 8 : 6, 7).

Similarly, the Apostles were the ones who in the beginning, after they had received the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1 : 1-3), spoke in tongues or languages that they had never

learned, and probably had never heard. They were given this miraculous power by God, in the beginning of the church, so that people could learn the message of the cross in their own tongues. (Acts 2 : 1-12). But, again, when the Apostles laid their hands on certain others, then they too began to speak in different languages. (Acts 19 : 1-6). This is how God appointed in the beginning, in the church, certain people who were able to speak in a variety of languages. It must be understood, however, that the Apostles were the only ones qualified to lay their hands on others for imparting those spiritual gifts. (Acts 8 : 14-17). Therefore, when all the Apostles died, then the only people in the church who were capable to work miracles, speak in tongues, and heal miraculously, were the ones on whom the Apostles had laid their hands. But when they also passed away, then there was no person left on earth to reproduce such miraculous works again. All of the offices of miraculous nature, such as, working miracles, healings, and speaking in tongues were temporary. They were to last until the Bible, God's perfect will, was given to men in its complete form. It should be kept in mind that God allowed things of miraculous nature to continue as long as the Bible was being written, since miracles confirmed, in the absence of the written word of God, that that what was being said or preached was in fact God's word. But once the Bible was completely written and was made available to man then those miraculous aids were withdrawn by God, as the Apostle Paul had predicted in 1 Corinthians 13 : 8-11, he said, "Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, (miraculous, S.D.), it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." There was a specific need in the beginning of the church for Apostles, Prophets, workers of miracles, those who could impart physical healings miraculously and speak in languages of the different people. Today we have in the Bible, in written form, the Apostles' doctrine and whatever the prophets has said. We read about all those things of the miraculous nature, which

confirmed the spoken word of God. Once confirmed, we no longer need a re-confirmation. Because now, the Bible says, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10 : 17).

Further, God appointed in the church elders for administration. They were men who had the responsibility to feed the church of God the spiritual food, to give leadership and guidance through the word of God. Different terms are used in the Bible to identify elders, to help us understand their vast area of work as administrators, such as, bishops, shepherds, overseers, rulers pastors (Acts 20 : 17-21; Hebrews 13 : 17; 1 Peter 5 : 1-3). About their qualifications one can read at 1 Timothy 3 : 1-7 and Titus 1 : 5-9. It is noteworthy though that offices such as, Pope, Arch Bishop, Right Reverend, Doctor, Father and Padri are not even once mentioned in the Bible. Such are therefore without God's approval. However, elders were appointed in every congregation of the Lord's church as we read in Acts 14 : 23 and Titus 1 : 5. Likewise, even today every congregation needs qualified elders who could guide and provide the leadership to the whole church.

Then there were helps or helpers in the church, they are further identified in the Bible as Deacons. the word "Deacon" means a servant. Surely, we need servants in the church even today. Like elders, not every man can work in the capacity of deacon in the church. There are certain qualifications that a man must possess, according to 1 Timothy 3 : 8-12, to serve as a deacon in the church.

Like every body, Christ's spiritual body, His church, must also be organized. Christ is the Head of His spiritual body (Colossians 1 : 18). Teachers or preachers should proclaim the word of God, elders should provide the spiritual administration, deacons should see after the physical needs of members, and all members should work together for the edification of the body. (1 Thessalonians 5 : 11). At first, in the beginning, a congregation may have only members and preachers and teachers. But as that congregation grows spiritually and numerically, and there are men available, within that congregation, qualified to serve as elders and deacons, then they should be appointed, as God did in the beginning.

The Problem Of Sin

J.C. Choate

We don't hear much about sin anymore. It is not even considered to be a problem by most people. Many just do what they do without considering it to be right or wrong. Some people don't like certain things, but they tolerate it.

People become concerned about AIDS, not because of any immorality connected with it, but because there is not a cure for it. How many have you heard explain that AIDS grew out of homosexuality, and that such a practice is bad and wrong? Not a word. Rather than to find fault with homosexuals, there is an attempt to explain that this is a disease that any sexual class of people can contact.

What about abortion? The world doesn't see anything wrong with that, or in most cases, that which produced the supposed need for it, and that was immorality. But who would call it immorality? Look at bribery. Everyone complains about it but the majority practice it. They would consider it to be a necessary evil, but actually not an evil, but a necessary practice.

In some parts of the world the local schools do not even teach moral values. They argue that no one has a right to preach to these young minds what they should count as right and wrong. Therefore, they grow up without knowing right from wrong, or the difference between the truth and a lie, or that it would be wrong to take what the other person has. After a few generations of this, and seeing what it produces, then all of a sudden we are hearing from these educators that students need to be taught moral values in the class room, and indeed they should. Some of us knew that all along. Yes, it should be done in the home, but whether it is or not, it should also be taught in the class room too.

Even if the world does not recognize it, or will admit it, things are black and white in the world. There is a right and there is a wrong. There is truth and there is a lie. And neither are they equal. One is better than the other, and therefore more desirable.

And guess who your better people are, who have better morals and who are the best citizens. You are right, the ones who live good moral lives, tell the truth, obey the law, and always try to do the right thing.

What is sin? It is that which is bad and wrong, that which is immoral, ungodly, and unrighteous. It is falsehood and that which is opposite to law. The Apostle John, in the New Testament, defined it, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4). All of this has been explained as follows: The law of God is the target, and one aims at the law but misses it. Therefore, sin is missing the mark. John also said, "All unrighteousness is sin." (1 John 5:17). Then he said, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." (1 John 3:8).

Most people don't like to hear about sin or be told that something is wrong. They want to be free to do as they please without their conscience hurting them. A few years ago, the philosophy was, "If it feels good, then go on and do it." Others reasoned, "If you want to do it, then do it."

The sad part about all of this is that sin always produces consequences and hurts people. Immorality results in things like AIDS and other diseases. Lies can hurt, and breaking the law can bring a prison term. Drinking can damage the brain and also while drunk, if one drives, can produce a wreck that may kill the driver and others. Smoking can cause lung cancer and bring a heart attack. And on and on we could go with all sins. But even if one gets away with his sin, that is, he does not reap the consequences in this life, in the world to come he will have to answer to God for all the deeds done in the body whether right or wrong. (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 2:6). Paul said, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23). To the Galatians, Paul wrote, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Galatians 6:7, 8).

The reason most people continue in their sins is because they

are ignorant of what sin is and the consequences of it. They therefore must be taught not only of sin, and be convicted or convinced of their sins, but told how they may obtain forgiveness for their wrong doing. After explaining that those that commit sin are of the devil, then John says, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3 : 8). Again, John exhorted, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world, And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2 : 15-17).

But what is the will of God? We read that Christ was manifested or came into the world "to take away our sins, and in him is no sin." (1 John 3 : 5). Paul said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1 : 15). Then he explained, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5 : 6-8). Going on, he says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2 : 11-14).

So sin is real. It is in the world. And it is in us. But Christ Jesus came into this world, died on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and through him we may have the forgiveness of our sins. How would that be possible? First, we must believe in him. Christ himself said, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall

die in your sins." (John 8 : 24). Then once we believe, we must repent of our sins. Jesus said that we must repent or perish. (Luke 13 : 3). Repentance means to turn from something or to turn and go in another direction. In this case, we must turn from our sins, or quit our sinning. Then Jesus says that we must confess him as being the Son of God. Hear him, as he says, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10 : 32, 33). And finally, Christ said that we must be baptized. After his death, burial, and resurrection and before returning to the Father in heaven, Jesus commanded his Apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16 : 15, 16). Later the Apostles preached the gospel to a large group of people in Jerusalem, and after being convinced that Christ was the Son of God, and thus becoming believers, they asked what they should do, and we read, "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). Going on, we read, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized : and the same day there were added unto them three thousand souls." (Acts 2 : 41). And in Acts 2 : 47 it says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

So what do we have? We have man in sin, lost, with the heavy consequences to follow in this life, and in the end to be eternally lost. But Christ came into this world to save sinners. He therefore died on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. That means that each one that will believe in him and obey his commands, then he will save that one and add him to his church. In other words, Christ will forgive him of all of his past sins, and as a child of God, and a member of the Lord's family, the church, if he will continue to follow him and be faithful to him unto death, then not only will he be blessed in this world, but will after this life go to be with the Lord forevermore. (Revelation 2 : 10).

Now does all of this sound like some story that someone has made up? Could all of this be possible? It is a story, but it is a true story. We know that sin is in the world and it is real. We see all around us what it is doing to our friends, and even to ourselves. Christ is also real, and the forgiveness that he offers to those who accept him and obey him is real too. And finally, heaven is real and will be a reality one day to all of those who have been faithful to the Lord. Hell will be just as real to those who have lived and died in their sins. So there is a decision to make. Will it be sin for you or forgiveness, salvation or damnation, heaven or hell? We pray that you will be wise and that you will let Jesus be your Saviour.

Marriage Is What ?

Leon Barnes

If you were forming a view of marriage and you listened to voices on radio and TV and from the songs that you hear, what kind of image would you have? Would your image of marriage be that it is something to be admired and respected, a place of honor? Would it be that it is a convenience, something you are passing through, a drudgery, something for those who have lost the adventure in life or something just for older folks?

It seems interesting to me that against a background of immorality, slavery, a poor view of the woman, where human life was held as being almost worthless, that the writer of the book of Hebrews would say, "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Let your conduct be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for he has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do to me." (Hebrews 13 : 4-6).

God speaks out of a background far deeper than man can imagine. While looking at the circumstances of our day or even

the day in which the writer of the book of Hebrews penned those words, one might have a difficult time seeing the honorableness of marriage. God spoke from a background of Eden. When he looked at man all by himself and declared, "It is not good that man should be alone, I'll make a helpmeet for him." (Genesis 2 : 18). And so he caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and from his side he took a rib and from that rib he made the woman and brought her to the man. The man declared, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She will be called woman, and for this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife and the two will be one flesh." (Genesis 2 : 23). Out of that background in spite of the fact that man had often messed up everything God intended by the marriage bond and in spite of the fact that divorce is running rampant and even in those marriages that were intact, the wife was often being mistreated and abused, God still said marriage is honorable in all.

Note the fact that one of the reasons marriage is honorable in all was the intent of marriage. Marriage was intended to be a solving of a problem. Man is not meant to be alone. He needs companionship. So God created the marriage bond to solve a companionship problem. The writer of 1 Corinthians wrote that there was a grave problem of fornication and in order to solve that problem he instructed every man to have his own wife, and every woman to have her own husband. That is the way to avoid the immorality problem of society!

In God approved marriage the bed is undefiled. The sex relationship that outside the marriage bond is immoral and brings judgment from God, inside the marriage bond is holy and right and good. So marriage is honorable in all. That is not to say that every marriage is honorable. Neither is it to say that everyone who is married is honorable. Neither of these statements are true. Marriage itself is honorable in all. And when man will live by the decrees of the God who made marriage, every marriage becomes honorable as well and fulfils an honorable purpose.

Marriage has always been under attack. It was in the day when the Holy Spirit had those words penned in Hebrews 13, and

it still is. I suppose the most amazing thing is that Satan uses the same things to attack marriage in our day.

Notice three things that Satan uses to destroy the marriage bond.

1. Immorality. Marriage is honorable in all. The bed is undefiled in that marriage bond. But, fornicators and adulterers God will judge. I know that our society would have us to believe that a little immorality does not hinder a marriage and as a matter of fact, sometimes it adds spice to the marriage relationship. But, God looking from a far deeper view and a far higher view says that fornication and adultery will destroy the marriage bond.

Even after immorality has stepped inside the marriage relationship and one or both partners have violated that sacred vow that they took to be true to one another alone, it is possible to put a marriage back together again. But it is also true that while you can put a marriage back together again, once the serpent of immorality has slithered into the relationship it may never be possible to take it back to where it was before. One can rebuild, and re-establish a relationship, but the innocence that was there before can never be regained. Something is missing. A trust has been violated that should never have been violated. While if it is possible to rebuild that relationship, and I would always encourage one to do so, let it be understood that it is far better to never violate the sacred bond and trust. Surely this is the reason that our Lord said, "Whoever puts away his wife and marries another, except for fornication, commits adultery and he who marries her that is put away commits adultery." The Lord recognized that fornication or immorality destroys that bond that was there and because of that he allowed divorce and remarriage under those circumstances.

Satan strives to attack every marriage by allowing lust to move in and sometimes, in the weaker moments, for one to think that may be there as something else out there that is being missed and if they just stepped outside this bond, stepped outside the marriage, they would find something that would really be worth

finding, but in doing so destroys the greatest thing in this physical life.

2. Satan attacks marriage by covetousness. The Spirit of God said "Let your conduct be without covetousness." Materialism, the desire for things, is haunting marriages in our day. It seems the idea is that if we could just get more things, if we just had more money, a bigger house, a better car, more clothes, nicer places to go, a beach house, bigger vacations, somehow in this thirst for things we could find real fulfillment in marriage. But every time a person fulfills one craving, a deeper craving steps in to take its place. John said. "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world for if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life, are not of the Father but are of the world and the world passes away with the lust thereof." (I John 2 : 15-17).

The lust of the eye, that longing for things haunts marriages in our days. Somehow we must learn that unless we can be content with what we have right now, then the things of life will never bring any lasting joy. For contentment and fulfillment does not come in more things, but in a relationship with God. That is the reason that Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." (Matthew 5 : 3-9).

You see, that blessedness, that happiness in life, was not in outside things but in inward relationship. We must learn the lesson that real fulfillment and contentment comes not with more things but with a deeper relationship with God. This is not to say that one should not better himself when he can, but it is to say that more things will not bring fulfillment and happiness in our lives.

3. Satan attacks by lack of contentment in life. God says

let your manner of life or your conduct be without covetousness and be content with such things as you have.

If those with marriage problems learn that these cravings for everything, every kind of fun and every idea that shouts for joy will not bring what they claim they will, they will have gone a long way toward solving their marriage problems. Many times in talking with couples whose marriages are in trouble, one or both will say that "I just feel like I am missing something. We got married so young and I feel like I missed out on something. I just have to try something else." They are trying to reclaim something they think should have been there but may be never was and may be never should have been, and probably never will be.

Learn contentment where you are. Contentment is not in a different place. Because when you go to the new place you take the same old person with you. It is in changing the person where you are and then you can be happy in any place. God says learn contentment. Paul said, "I have learned contentment in whatever state I am in. I have learned to be full and to be hungry. I have learned to suffer want and I have learned to abound. I have just learned contentment wherever I am." He did not write those words from a throne or lying back on a soft pillow, but from a Roman prison.

There is something else that must be seen in this text and that is that God says here are the things that attack marriage. These are the tools that Satan used to destroy marriage. He also says that here is an answer. The answer to a strong marriage, to keeping it honorable all the time is found in these things.

1. It is found in allowing God to be the judge. You and I tend to want to look out to those problems around us and say, "I'll judge that and I'll tell you what's right and wrong." But God says, that's not it. "...fornicators and adulterers God will judge..." He is the judge and I need to allow him to be. He does not need my help to figure out what to do or to somehow bring punishment on those that have fallen under the standards that I think ought to be there. God will judge and so let him. If I just allow God to take the place of being the judge and

pull back my judging place, then I solve some of the difficulties in my own marriage.

2. You need to realize that God is with you all the time. I will never leave you nor forsake you. You may boldly say the Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do to me. It is the presence of God in marriage all the time that gives it real power. Jesus said, "Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world." He is with us in the good times and the bad. He is with us when everything seems to be going our way and he is with us when nothing seems to be going our way. He is with us when things seem to be in control and he is with us when everything seems to be out of control. He says he will never leave us. If both husband and wife can keep the relationship with the Lord correct it tends to keep their own relationship correct. It takes both to keep the relationship right. One person cannot make a marriage and if one member decides that they are going to give up on God and give up on morality, and give up on contentment and go out to the ways of the world in sin and rebellion against God and rebellion against the marriage bond, then all of the honor, work, prayer and faith of the other individual will not cause the marriage to stay together. It takes two and God to make a marriage work. Even then it is sometimes hard and there are sacrifices to be made but with God on our side, marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled.

Will you not meet the challenge of withstanding the attacks of Satan and lean instead on the power of the God who is always there ?

Church Discipline

Bud Causey

Discipline in the Lord's church is like discipline in the home—it is almost a thing of the past. Leaders of the Lord's church should make it their business to keep up with the flock

and know how they are living, encourage them in right doing, rebuke them in their sins, teach them how to mend their ways. Then if they will not repent they are to be further disciplined with the hope of saving their souls. I believe one of the greatest problems facing the Lord's church today is lack of discipline. No school can operate without discipline. No home can remain an honorable home without discipline (Proverbs 29 : 15). Therefore, the Lord's church cannot stand without discipline and still be the church God would have it to be.

What is church discipline ? In general terms, it is the way the church trains it's members to "walk in the light" (I John 1 : 7). Church discipline should have one goal in mind and that is to restore the erring soul, not to destroy it.

We should examine the command in Hebrews 12 : 6-9, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence : shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live ?"

Also, look at the command in II Thessalonians 3 : 6, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." In the 14th verse Paul says. "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." Also, Paul said "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned : and avoid them" (Romans 16 : 17).

Exercising discipline is necessary for the following reasons : (1) The honor of Christ is sadly impeached when open sin is allowed among those who profess to be his followers. To make Christ appear as a minister of sin is a greivous offense (2) The welfare of the offender himself is never to be lost sight of (Titus

3 : 10-12; Galatians 6 : 1-3). The wise, kindly, deliberate action of the church may save the erring one (James 5 : 19-20). And however humiliating and terrible the exclusion may have been, the poor is always left open for return. The purpose includes his restoration and recovery: and if he repents and comes to a right state of mind, nothing stands in the way of his restoration to the fellowship. (3) The welfare of the church requires that the transgressors be dealt with. For sin is like spiritual leprosy—it can begin in a small place and if not stopped quickly, can spread to the whole body, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (I Corinthians 5 : 6).

What does the Bible teach us to whom we are to withdraw from? The answer lies “not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches” (I Corinthians 2 : 13).

Some of those whom we are to withdraw from are named. They are : One who commits a private trespass against another, but who rejects private or personal efforts to get him to repent (Matthew 18 : 15-17) : those who cause divisions and offense contrary to the sound doctrine which ye have learned (Romans 16 : 17-18); those who are guilty of fornication and covetousness those who are idolaters railers, and/or drunkards (I Corinthians 5); those who walk not after the tradition which we received from the apostles—and this includes sluggards and busybodies (II Thessalonians 3 : 6-15); those who teach other than the word, who consent not to whole-some doctrine; the proud and the ignorant; those who dote about questions and strifes of words : who produce envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, preverse disputings of men of corrupt minds; those destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness (I Timothy 6 : 3-5); those who wilfully miss services continually. The reason they should be withdrawn from is because they would not be following after the “apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2 : 41-42).

When should the church withdraw? This depends upon several factors, such as : (1) How long have they been members of the church? (2) How much knowledge of God’s word do they have? Each case should be considered independently. But let me emphasize that the time to begin is now, because tomorrow

may be too late. Discipline should be administered only after every effort has been exhausted, making sure the delinquent has received visits, encouragement, and that faithful brethren have prayed for and with him.

What are some objections to withdrawing fellowship? 1. Some say we do not have the right to judge. But listen to the apostle Paul "For what have I do to judge them also that are without? Do ye not judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (I Corinthians 5: 11-13).—Yes, Jesus says "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7: 1). But a close study of the entire context shows that Jesus was talking about a man with a beam in his own eye while trying to get the mote out of his brother's eye. What then is the teaching? Remove the beam from your eye, then you can remove the mote from your brother's eye.

2. Another objection is: No one is above sin (Romans 3: 23); so we cannot administer discipline. No Christian can live on this earth without sinning. **KEEP IN MIND THAT THERE IS A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SINS OF WEAKNESS. VERSUS WILLFUL SIN.** The Bible teaches that the Christian does not live in sin if he walks in the light. "But if 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" (I John 1: 7). In this narrative, the Greek word for "cleanseth" is "katharizel," which is a verb meaning a constant process.

3. The third objection is that it will hurt the church. Don't believe this for one minute! Because if church discipline is administered as God commanded, in love, it will not tear up, but rather will strengthen.

Concerning church discipline, brother Thomas B. Warren said: "Churches which fail in this point will fail in their mission of saving souls by holding forth the word of life. Failure to purge out sin leads to toleration of sin, and toleration of sin leads to a love of sin, love of sin leads to practice of sin. And this Christ will not tolerate."

I believe brother Warren summed it up, don't you?—that **TOLERATION OF SIN LEADS TO LOVE OF SIN?** As the church, we should have an active discipline program; and we will if we love the brethren Remember, withdrawing is as much a command as Acts 2 : 38 or Mark 16 : 16. So I exhort you to keep **ALL** the commandments of God, including II Thessalonians 3 : 6 !

Falling From Grace

Philip C. Wilkerson

One of Satan's greatest ploys is take the truth of God's word and give it a slight twist—just enough so that it still sounds like the truth; just enough so that people will believe it, and in so doing, believe a lie. This is what happened in the Garden of Eden, where Satan first deceived man and sin was introduced into the world. Listen to the command that God gave Adam : "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it *"you shall surely die"* (Genesis 2 : 16-17). Now listen to how Satan distorted God's command : "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden' ? . . . You shall not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3 : 1, 4-5). Satan only added one little word to God's command. One word. But the consequences were passed down to all humanity.

Satan still uses this tactic to deceive the unwary. He doesn't try to convince people that God doesn't exist, and he doesn't refute the fact that God has revealed a plan of salvation. But what Satan does do is distort that plan by changing key elements of it—just a little. One of those distortions is found in the doctrine of grace. The Bible plainly teaches, if one will study the subject thoroughly, that even if a person obeys the gospel and accepts

God's grace, by continuing to sin willfully, they can fall from grace and be eternally lost. However, the gospel according to Satan says this, "Once a person obeys the gospel and accepts God's grace, even if they continue to sin willfully, they can never fall from grace and be eternally lost".

Let's look at what the Bible says :

Of the 27 books in the New Testament, 21 are letters written to Christians. That is, they are written to people who are already saved. For example, in Romans 6 : 17, Paul writes, "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." In other words, Paul is writing to people who have already been saved. Now notice. If those who are saved cannot fall from grace, then why did Paul write to Christians and say in Romans 12 : 2 "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds" ? Why did Paul say in Romans 12 : 21, "Do not be overcome by evil" ? Look at Romans 13 : 14 : "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" ? In these verses, Paul is warning his saved readers that they can be overcome by evil.

Here's another example. The book of I Corinthians is addressed to those "who are sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 : 2). The readers are "in" Christ, therefore they are saved. Why then was Paul (the writer of the letter) worried about the sexual immorality in the church at Corinth ? Why did he say in 5 : 11 to stay away from brothers who are fornicators, covetous, drunkards, extortioners—not even to eat with them ?

Another example. Why did the Hebrew writer say in 10 : 23, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering" ? Why did he warn those Christians (10 : 26) against sinning willfully after having received the knowledge of the truth ? Warnings are like road signs, telling people to watch out for dangers. If a person ignores a warning, they are imperilling themselves, are they not ?

Why did James say in 1 : 12 "Blessed is the man who endures temptation" if there was not something to lose by giving in to temptation. Why did he say in 2 : 17 that "faith without works is dead" if grace is all-sufficient for salvation? Why did James mention turning a brother back to the truth (5 : 19-20) who was wandered from it, saying that a soul would be saved in the process? This verse clearly teaches that one can "wander" or "fall away" and that in so doing, that person **WILL BE LOST**.

Why did both James (4 : 7) and Peter (1 Peter 5 : 8) command their Christian reader to "resist the devil"? These verses tell us that succumbing to the devil is possible, even for a Christian.

Why did John say in I John 2 : 15 not to "love the world or the things in the world"? The second part of verse 15 must mean what it says : "The love of the Father is not in such a person." How can a person be saved and not have the love of the Father within him?

All these statements and warnings were written to Christians. If a Christian cannot fall from grace, then statements are irrelevant. But they are not irrelevant. They are a message from God. Christians can fall from grace. We must be vigilant to keep our faith, lest we fall from grace and lose our souls.

Why Did Jesus Appear To Saul

W.A. Holley

Yes, Jesus, on the Damascus Road, did appear to Saul. Did Jesus appear to Saul for the purpose of saving Saul miraculously, directly, separate and apart from the preached word?

When sinners were converted to Christ in the New Testament, the preacher was always present; the word of God was always declared. Those who wanted to become Christians always believed, repented of sins, confessed Jesus Christ, and were baptized into Christ for remission of sins.

Hear Jesus : "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16 : 16). Listen to Peter : "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do ? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone 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 : 36-38). Is it possible that both Jesus and Peter are wrong in what they said ? Certainly not !! Surely, honest and sincere readers of the Bible would make no such assertion.

Reasonable men and women will agree that Saul obeyed the same gospel that all others obeyed in becoming Christians in apostolic times (I Peter 4 : 17; II Thessalonians 1 : 7-9).

If Saul were saved on the Damascus Road, Saul didn't know it; for he asked "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?" (Acts 9 : 6). If Saul were saved on the Damascus Road, Jesus didn't know it; for his reply to Saul's question was, "Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9 : 6). And if Saul were saved on the Damascus Road, Ananias didn't know it; for he understood that Saul's sins were as yet unforgiven. Ananias commanded Saul : "And now why tarriest thou ? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22 : 16).

Does "... Calling on the name of the Lord" in Acts 22 : 16 refer to praying to God and asking to be saved through prayer ? The answer is No ! There is a rule in grammar which says, "The active participle following an injunction points out the manner in which it is to be obeyed." Jesus did not say, "He that believeth and PRAYETH shall be saved" (Cf., Mark 16 : 16; Acts 2 : 38; 10 : 48; Romans 6 : 3-4).

Why, then, did Jesus appear unto Saul? We shall permit Jesus Christ to settle this matter : Listen as Saul quotes Christ : "And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul,

why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26 : 14-18). Other scriptures having great bearing on the subject we are discussing are Acts 9 : 15 and 22 : 14-15; I Corinthians 9 : 1; 15 : 8.

From the scriptures cited it is evident that Jesus wanted Saul to be an apostle. Qualifications necessary for one to be chosen as an apostle are stated in Acts 1 : 21-22 : "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."

Thus Saul (later called "Paul") became an apostle, "Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead :), and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia. . . ." (Galatians 1 : 1-2). Here is the biblical reason why Jesus personally appeared to Saul. It is not necessary for Jesus personally to appear to any one now. The written word of God (John 20 : 30-31) possesses power to convert sinners to Christ, if sinners will but believe and obey (Hebrews 4 : 12; I Peter 1 : 22-25).

We still have the ORIGINAL apostles as recorded in the New Testament; they need no successors (I Corinthians 4 : 9). The New Testament apostles guide and direct and rule through their words as written in the Holy Bible. The Lord Jesus saved Saul (as he saves all sinners), when he heard and believed and obeyed the Lord's gospel truth.

The Deity Of Christ According To John 1

Scott Harp

Who was Jesus of Nazareth? Was he the one whom the prophets of old foretold? Was he really the Son of God? How certain can anyone be that he arose from the dead?

These are typical questions that many in the late first century were asking. John wrote his Gospel to answer these questions. "Any many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book : but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20 : 30, 31).

In the first chapter, John gives his strongest support to the deity of Christ by revealing the witnesses of Jesus. The list of dignitaries is impressive. They include John the Baptizer, Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, and John himself.

1. THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIZER

The mission of John the Baptizer was to reveal the truth of the coming Messiah. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light." (John 1 : 6-8).

Consider his claims. (1) Jesus was preexistent. "John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me : for he was before me." (1 : 15). (2) Jesus is the source of grace and truth. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (1 : 17). (3) Jesus is the only one who has ever seen God. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (1 : 18). (4) Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. ".....John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith,

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (1 : 29; cf. vs. 36). (5) Jesus is the Son of God. "And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." (1 : 34).

II. THE TESTIMONY OF ANDREW

Andrew was one of John's disciples when he met Jesus. Though he was committed to John's ministry, when Jesus told him to come with him he did not hesitate to do so. His first priority was to go tell his brother Peter that he had found the Messiah. "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." (1 : 41). Andrew stands as a strong witness for the Messiahship of Christ.

III. THE TESTIMONIES OF PHILIP AND NATHANAEAL

Philip was with Andrew when John pointed out the Christ. He too left John and followed Christ. Like Andrew, his willingness to follow Jesus in an instant gives strong favor toward the deity of Christ. As Andrew went immediately to Peter, Philip went to Nathanael and revealed his witness of the Messiah. "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph." (1 : 45).

When Nathanael went with Philip to see the Messiah, Jesus proved who he was by revealing that he had seen Nathanael under a fig tree before Philip called him. (v. 48). At the Revelation of Christ Nathanael said, ".....Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel." (1 : 49).

IV. TESTIMONY OF THE WRITER

From the pen of John are some of the most profound words in all the Bible concerning the deity of Christ. In 1:1-5; 14 John reveals the characteristics of the preexistent and preeminent Christ: (1) his presence with God in the beginning; (2) his nature as God, deity, himself, at the beginning of time, and when he became flesh; (3) his creation work in the beginning; and (4) his being the source

of life are all resounding claims for the deity of Christ. When Jesus became flesh, John said, "...and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (1 : 14) John witnessed the divine Son of God.

The carpenter's son from Nazareth was more than a man. He was God in the flesh. John, therefore, proves by the witness of himself and others who walked and talked with Jesus that Jesus was deity.

Is The Servant Above His Master ?

Gary McDade

As the question before the reader is considered, thoughts immediately turn to the passage which reads, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." (Mt. 10 : 24, 25a.) Jesus is the Master, and "he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." (Mt. 23 : 8, 10-11.) But, obviously, it is needful for the question to be answered by those who are called servants : "Is the servant above his Master ?" A brief look at three elements of Christ's example of service will remind the Christian of his standard of servitude.

First, Jesus was a willing servant. Regarding Christ's service the apostle Paul wrote, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus : Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God (or 'counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped'. ASV) : But made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2 : 5-8). The willingness of Christ's service is emphasized in a parallel verse in John's gospel. John wrote Christ's words, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have

power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (Jn. 10 : 17, 18).

Second, Jesus' service involved sacrifice. Paul declared, "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." (Eph. 5 : 2.) The point of this passage is not only did Jesus make the ultimate sacrifice of giving his life up on the cross to save the lost (1 Cor. 5 : 7; Heb. 9 : 26, 10 : 12, 12 : 2), but he also presented himself as a "living sacrifice" to God each day. (Rom. 12 : 1, 2; 1 Pet. 2 : 21).

Third, the completeness of Christ's service is noteworthy. In Mathew 5 : 17-20 Jesus moves from his mission to fulfil the law of Moses concerning him to the disciples' proper attitude toward fulfilling all the commandments not just selecting a few favorites and emphasizing them as the scribes and Pharisees were doing. The Christian must "fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal. 6 : 2; 2 Thess. 1 : 11, 12).

In Conclusion, it should be pointed out that fulfilment and genuine happiness in life comes to the Christian servant who is not above his Master. (Jn. 13 : 13-17.) The Christian as a servant isn't above his Master when his service is done from a willing heart, in a sacrificial manner and is complete or subject to the entire New Testament. Jesus taught that in disposition the Christian is a servant, but the relationship he sustains to Christ is that of a friend. (Jn. 15 : 14-16).

The only things we can be sure of accomplishing are the things we do today.

× × ×

Blowing out someone else's light won't make yours shine any brighter.

× × ×

The Bible never suffers from neglect; it is only those who neglect it who suffer.

× × ×

A hammer sometimes misses its mark—a bouquet never.
