

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL

### ***Receiving Jesus As Personal Saviour***

One of the most frequently stated statements among the believers of Christ is to "receive Jesus as personal Saviour" or "I have received Jesus as my personal Saviour". What is meant by this? When preachers exhort people to receive Jesus as your personal Saviour; they, by this, mean that once people believe in Christ mentally that he is the Saviour; that he had died for their sins on the cross, then there at that point the Lord will save them from their sins. But, the truth of the matter is, that such an idea is not at all found in the Bible. The Bible does teach that one must believe in Christ to be saved from sin, but nowhere does the Bible teach that one is saved by faith or belief in Christ alone. If that would be true, for example, then, why did Christ teach at Mark 16:16 "He who believes and is baptized will be saved. . ." ? Why did Peter, the preacher, tell his listeners, about three thousand, after they had become believers in Christ, to "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"? (Acts 2:38). Can one be saved before receiving remission or forgiveness of sins? Yet, they were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. And listen to James, another New Testament Preacher, on the subject before we go any further:

James said, "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. . . But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? . . . You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. . . For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:7, 20, 24&26). A living faith is the saving faith; the faith that saves is a living faith; and the living faith is the one that does what God commands man to do to be saved.

Does this then mean that one is saved by performing or doing some works? No. Not at all. The Bible says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2:8, 9). The fact is that we cannot do anything to earn our salvation. When one believes in Christ; repents of sins; confesses Christ to be the Son of God; and is baptized in water for the remission of sins, as God has commanded through His Scriptures, one is not doing those things to earn salvation from sins; but only obeying those commands of God to show that he or she really believes in Him. Salvation is by grace through faith. Grace of God has appeared to all mankind by the sacrifice of God's Son Christ on the cross; where He bore our sins. The wages of sin is death, says the Bible at Romans 6:23, which means spiritual separation from God, the source of spiritual life. The Justice of God demands death of every person—that is, eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. But, "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Again, Romans 6:23. But, "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Again, Romans 6:23. Eternal life of heaven is in Christ Jesus; and it is a free gift; which cannot be earned. Man cannot do enough to earn his own salvation from sin. Yet, he must obey those commands of God which result in his salvation. Our obedience to Lord's command does not in any way obliterate God's grace. Salvation is by His grace, and we are saved by His grace through our faith. Yet not through a dead faith. But through the faith which lives and demonstrates its existence by obeying what God says. To understand this, notice the following illustrations:

Back in the wilderness, in the Old Testament, when Moses was leading His people to the promised land, they had sinned against God, and God had sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Next, people began to confess their sins and requested Moses to pray to God to save them from poisonous snakes. What did God do when Moses prayed to God? He could have as easily taken away those serpents as He had sent

them. But He didn't! What did He do? God told Moses to make the image of a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it shall live. And we read: "So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived." (Numbers 21:9). Notice! Who lived? Anyone who looked at the bronze serpent! God forgave them. But not until they had done what God had desired of them.

Next we go to 2 Kings chapter 5. There we read about a man who was great and honorable and his name was Naaman. The Bible describes him and says that he was a leper. One day he learned that there was, in a certain place, a man of God who could heal him. So he immediately went to see him. But the man of God, whose name was Elisha, told Naaman to go and wash himself in Jordan river, around there, seven times, and as a result he would be cleaned and his flesh would be restored to him. But Naaman, the Bible says, became very angry when he heard this from the man of God, and he went away back to his place in rage. But somehow, on the way, his fellow travelers, his servants told him that he ought to have listened to the advice of the man of God and should have done what he had told him to do. Naaman thought, and listened, and repented, and went back to Jordan, and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God, and consequently his flesh was restored like the flesh of the little child, and he was clean. (2 Kings 5:1-14). Who had restored the flesh of Naaman and had made him clean? God. Certainly, God. But, when? When Naaman's faith had led him to do what he was commanded to do through the man of God.

In fact, such examples abound, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament of the Bible, through which we learn again and again that man's faith is perfected by doing those things which God has commanded man to do. In Acts 8 chapter we learn about a certain eunuch, to whom Christ was preached. It didn't take too long for him to believe in Jesus. As a result he wanted to be baptized in water. Philip told him that if he believes with all his heart then it was possible. Eunuch said, Yes, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. (Acts 8:35-39). Philip didn't tell eunuch that as long as he believes Jesus is his personal Saviour then there was no need for him to be baptized. Neither did the eunuch think that as long as he believes in Jesus that He is his personal Saviour then he is saved. Nowhere such a thing is taught in the Bible. In fact, all those who believe that Jesus is the Saviour, must

repent of their sins, and must confess Jesus to be the Son of God and must be baptized for the remission of sins to be saved.

The assurance of salvation must come from God and not from man. Man says "Accept Jesus as your personal Saviour and Jesus will save you." Where is such a thing written in the Bible? Is it? On the other hand, Christ, the Saviour, Himself made the statement and thereby assured all of salvation, when He said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." (Mark 16:16). His inspired apostle further taught, that before baptism one must repent of sin, as we read in Acts 2:38; and the Holy Spirit of God guided Philip to tell eunuch to confess that Jesus is the Son of God before he could be baptized for the remission of sins. (Acts 8:37). Let God be true but every man a liar!

## **Marking Brethren**

**J.C. CHOATE**

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offence contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." (Romans 16:17, 18).

Please notice that Paul was beseeching, begging, and pleading with his brethren to mark those members who were causing divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine or teaching they had received. He said this should be done because those brethren were not serving the Lord but their own belly, and even though they were giving beautiful speeches, they were deceiving the simple or unlearned.

What does it mean to "mark" a person? It means to make known the fact that those members are teaching error, that they are causing division, that they are in sin. Once this has been done, the faithful brethren should be aware of these marked people, that they are not faithful, that they are doing harm to the church. They should be avoided as much as possible, and Christians should be on their guard concerning their divisiveness and their bad influence. To mark people doesn't mean that they have already been withdrawn from, or

disfellowshipped. If they continue in such error they should be disfellowshipped by the congregation with which they worship, but until that is done, a marked person is only pointed out as in error.

In our day there may be various ones going around over the country, away from their home congregation, where they might be disciplined. It may be found that some are teaching false things. This comes to the attention of faithful brethren and in response they may send out a warning to other brethren that they should be on guard in dealing with such members because they are teaching things that are false or doing things contrary to God's will.

There is a difference between marking and disfellowshipping. "Marking" may be done by any faithful brother; "disfellowshipping" must be done by the leader's in the false brother's home congregation. (1 Corinthians 5). As already pointed out, there may be any number of reasons why an unfaithful man has not been disfellowshipped. His home congregation may not be strong enough to do that, or he may be away from home and the brethren with whom he normally worships may not even be aware of the error he has been teaching. In spite of this, brethren who have heard his error can at least warn others so they can be on guard against it.

Disfellowshipping, however, takes place between a man and his home congregation. It happens in this way: an individual is worshipping with a congregation, but he begins to teach error or he conducts himself in such a way that he is bringing shame and reproach on the Lord and his church. The elders or faithful members of the congregation find it necessary to discipline him. First, someone must go to him and talk to him about his error. If he chooses to correct himself, that settles the matter. If he refuses to listen, two or three brethren are to go and talk to him. Again, if he will hear them and repent, the matter is cleared up. But if he refuses to do so, it must be taken before the church. If he will hear the church and repent of his sins, the Lord will forgive him and the brethren will forgive him. But if he refuses to repent and ask for the forgiveness of his sins, the brethren will find it necessary to withdraw their fellowship from him. He is then out of fellowship until he returns to the church in repentance. Brethren will no longer have anything to do with him, and they are not even to eat a meal with him. The local brethren may also notify sister congregations of their action so the unfaithful person will be refused fellowship, hopefully, wherever he goes. Read Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5.

Now when discipline is practiced in this way—the way the

scriptures teach—then it can be very effective. If it is not done this way, but the man is merely “disfellowshipped” by individual brethren here and there, that accomplishes nothing. As a matter of fact, when one is disfellowshipped by brethren apart from his home congregation, it not only carries no weight, but it may even bring him sympathy, and sometimes by his own home congregation. It is the same as in a physical family. If members of other families try to discipline a child, they run into trouble. Outsiders may warn parents about him, of the problems he can bring, and they can encourage that he be shunned, but when it comes to true discipline, that has to be left to his own family.

John said, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, he hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” (2 John 9, 10). I cannot always know if everyone who comes into my house is a faithful Christian or not, just as I cannot know if every congregation I visit is sound in the faith on all points of doctrine; but if I know that someone is in error, or is teaching something contrary to God’s will, I cannot welcome him and accept into my fellowship as I would a person whom I count as being faithful. Neither can I bid such people God’s speed or ask God’s blessings to be upon him. In such cases, I should talk to him about his error in an effort to correct him.

It is possible for us to be too lax in dealing with our brethren who are in error, but it is also possible to be so strict in dealing with them that even the Lord or the apostles would not be fellowshipped if they were here. Take a close look at the church at Corinth and all of the problems they had. Paul did ask them to withdraw from the immoral brother in their midst but what about those who were involved in all of the other problems? He taught them, of course, and in time there was improvement. If we follow the scriptural plan of withdrawing from the erring and unfaithful, then we are right in doing so. On the other hand, if we withdraw from every brother who comes along, whom we have personally decided to be guilty, then we are in error ourselves. We must even be careful about marking people and be sure that our motive is not based on dislike for that person, or jealousy, and that we are simply trying to hurt him or get rid of him. Rather, we should be certain that he is teaching error and causing division, and we should try to teach him correctly before finding it necessary to “mark” him to others.

Our aim in marking and withdrawing fellowship should never be just to try to get rid of someone or to destroy him. We should be more

concerned about him being saved than being cut off from the church and being eternally lost. Our attitudes, concern, and how we deal with the weak or erring brother may determine the direction in which we will go. He may be lost eventually, in spite of all we can do to save him, but let us be sure that if he is lost it is not because of us.

*Especially For Women*

## **Teaching Children Values**

**BETTY BURTON CHOATE**

**"My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; Tie them around your neck. When you roam, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life." (Proverbs 6:20-23).**

Every night Peter and Mary take time to sit with their children, to sing hymns with them, to teach them from God's word, and to pray together. They realize that it is very important that the children learn a close relationship with God, and that they learn the values or standards of right and wrong taught in God's word.

"The best protection we can give our children, as they grow up and live their separate lives, is a knowledge of God's rules," Peter tells Mary, "because God know what is best for us to do."

So Mary made a large chart for the wall. On it, they are writing some of the values—the rules of right and wrong—as they read them from the Bible.

"Not all people follow these rules," Mary explains to the children, "and not all religious books teach these things. All religious books have some truths, but the special thing about the New Testament which Jesus gave His people is that it contains all the truths to help us know how to live right lives—and nothing that is written in it is wrong."

Peter said, "There are some laws which change with the change of

governments, but real truths never change. They are always right and must always be followed simply because they are *the truth*. Some people try to say that there is no real standard of right and wrong, that whatever is right for you at the present time is *right*. Many people believe this lie these days, so they don't want anyone else to talk to them about the really bad things they may be doing."

"Some people at school say this," Anthony answered. "They say it is not wrong to lie, that sometimes it is very necessary."

"But these truths that are truths, regardless of what any law says or what anybody believes, have built-in consequences for breakage," Peter warned. "People may lie, and they may think they are winners when they are able to deceive others, but they and the whole society are the losers. Do you know why, Aseema?"

"No. I know that you spank me when I don't tell the truth."

"That's because it is so important that you learn to be honest. People who lie can never be trusted. When a nation is filled with liars, all the good things that are built on trust are destroyed—not just because one lie was wrong but because lies automatically destroy trust. That's what I mean when I say that there are laws of God that have always been the rules for all people. When they are broken, it is not necessarily through the government and its laws that punishment comes, but it comes as the natural result of breaking that law of God.

"Now", Peter said, taking up a pen, "let's write some of these laws from God's word:

- \* We are to worship only God. (Exodus 20:2, 3) [Following God brings His blessings into our lives.]
- \* We are forbidden to worship any other god. (V. 1, 5), [If we worship some other god, we will also follow their laws, which will bring many bad consequences.]
- \* We are forbidden to use God's name in cursing. (V. 7) [Violating this law will bring God's punishment into our lives.]
- \* We are commanded to remember God on the day of His worship. (V. 8; under the New Testament, God has given the first day—not the last—to remember Him. John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2) [Hebrews 10:25 says that to forsake the assembly of the worship of God is willful sin and will be punished by God.]
- \* We are to honor and obey our parents. They will teach us the right things, and as we live righteously, as our parents taught us, our



lives will be blessed in every way. (V. 12; Ephesians 6:1).

- \* We are forbidden to murder. (V. 13) Jesus said that even to hate another person, or to be angry without a just cause, is wrong (Matthew 5:21, 22 [Besides the legal punishment for murder, the conscience will plague the murderer, unless he is so calloused he can feel nothing; anger secretes poisons into the body, so it is personally harmful.]
- \* We are forbidden to commit adultery or to live immorally. (V. 14) Jesus said that even to look on a person with lust is wrong, because of the evil it will lead one to do or to think. (Matthew 5:27-30) [Immoral living causes many emotional problems, as well as sexually transmitted diseases].
- \* We are forbidden to steal, or to take what does not rightfully belong to us. (V. 15) the New Testament given by Jesus teaches that, instead of stealing, each Christian is to work so that he may have money to give to help those who have needs. (Ephesians 4:27).
- \* We are forbidden to lie or to witness falsely against others. (V. 16) In Revelation 21:8, liars are listed along with the worst of sinners. [To lie destroys trust along with all the positive results when the people of a society are able to trust one another. To lie or to witness falsely against a person is an attempt to destroy his good name. This will bring hatred, fighting, a guilty conscience.]
- \* We are forbidden to covet, or look with greedy eyes, on those things which belong to another. (V. 17) James 4:2 couples covetousness with murder; 1 Corinthians 6:10 couples covetousness with thievery. Hebrews 13:5 says that our conduct as Christians is to be without covetousness, but that we are to be content with whatever we have. [Contentment brings peace, and peace is healthful in its effect on the mind and the body. Besides this, as verse 5 says, God can bless those who keep themselves free from covetousness.]

## ***The Bible Speaks*** ***Sayings of Men Vs. The Word of God***

**BILL BROWN**

There are many who contend very firmly and earnestly that

anyone can be saved by "faith only". However, if a person will read the book of Acts there will *not* be found one single biblical example of anyone being saved by faith only. "Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well: *the devils also believe, and tremble*. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:17-20). But let us investigate more scriptures and learn that there are many factors involved in a person being saved. "For by grace are we saved *through* faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Eph. 2:8-9).

Some say there is a contradiction between what the apostle James wrote and what the apostle Paul wrote. But remember, the apostles were being guided by the same Holy Spirit. Therefore, the problem is, *that man does not search the scriptures and recognize that the Bible interprets itself.*

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the *works of the law*, but by *the faith* (the system of faith), of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by *the faith* of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified". (Gal. 2:16). "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the *deeds of the law*". (Rom 3:28). "For we are *his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that we *should walk in them*". (Eph 2:10).

The scriptures become very clear when we understand that there are: 1). The works of the law. 2). The works of Grace. 3). The works of faith. So the statement, "the faith of Jesus Christ" is *the system of faith*, the New Testament. Not my faith nor your faith. "But before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto *the faith* which should afterwards *be revealed*". (Gal. 3:23). Now what was to be revealed? The system of faith, the New Testament. So no human being is ever saved by only one thing revealed in the system of faith, but by obedience to those things within the system of faith, the New Testament. "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." (Eph. 5:17).

Hence, the following: "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). "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish". (Luke 13:3). "And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but

now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17-30). "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven". (Matt. 10:32). "For with the heart man believeth *unto* righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made *unto salvation*". (Rom. 10:10). Example: "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached *unto him Jesus*."

And as they went on their way, they came to a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized? and Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. . . and they both went down *into* the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." (Acts 8:35-38). "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee; Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5). "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants are ye to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. *Being then made free* from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness". (Rom. 6:16-18). "Know ye not, that *so many of us as* were baptized *into* Jesus Christ were baptized *into* his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism *into* death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should *walk in newness of life*". (Rom. 6:3-4). When does newness of life come? At the point of faith or after obedience? "Seeing ye have *purified your souls in obeying the truth* through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again; not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever". (1 Pet. 1:22-23).

The New Testament is a blueprint made up of many details to bring about a desired structure. However, there are those in the name of religion that say "We are going to take only one detail and bring about the structure (a Christian) and forget about all these other details since we do not need them"; even though they are part of that which is needed to bring about the complete structure that God designed. (A New Testament Christian). "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God". (Matt. 4:4).

# ***“Obedient to the Faith”***

**CLEM THURMAN**

In the early days of the church of the Lord, growth was spectacular. When the gospel was preached to the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), three thousand became obedient to the word of the apostles (Acts 2:41). Later, that number increased to 5,000 (Acts 4:4). Conversions were daily, and the number of obedient believers grew. *“The Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved. . . And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women”* (Acts 2:47; 5:14). As we read further, we find, *“The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith”* (Acts 6:7). Growth was occurring because people were *“obedient to the faith.”* In this passage and else where, the term *“the faith”* is used to denote the fulness of the gospel of Christ, the saving message God has given to man.

God shows that we all are in need of salvation, for *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:23). He continues, *“Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood”* (v. 24-25). We are saved by faith. The very basis of the process of salvation is faith in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul wrote, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”* (Rom. 1:16). But Acts 6:7 speaks of being *“obedient to the faith.”* This is not just the process of believing something, but of obeying something: *“the faith.”*

## **“THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED”**

Paul states that one who does not provide for his own household *“hath denied the faith”* (1 Tim. 5:8). Those who are subverted by a love for money *“have erred from the faith”* (1 Tim. 6:10). We are exhorted to hold *“faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith”* (1 Tim. 1:19). In each of these, the term, *“the faith,”* is used to embrace the whole of God's gospel. The Scriptures speak of churches being *“established in the faith”* (Acts 16:5), Paul *“Preaching the faith”* (Gal. 1:23) and some *“departing from the faith”* (1 Tim. 4:1). A study of the Scriptures will show many such

When we humbly accept the witness of those men who were inspired of God to deliver His gospel, we then follow a same and saving course. Concerning what the apostles wrote, Peter assures us, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but we were eyewitness of his majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16). They wrote of what they knew, and what God specifically revealed to them by the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say" (Luke 12:12). That is why Paul wrote later, "But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit. . . Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth" (1 Cor. 2:10,13). According to the promise of the Lord, the apostles were to be guided by the Holy Spirit to deliver God's word, "the faith," to man (John 14:26; 16:13). We must be "obedient to the faith" by accepting and doing what God's word requires. To do less is to disclose a lack of personal faith in God and His word.

God's system of faith, or plan of salvation, is not to be abridged, condensed, altered, dissected and served in portions to suit the carnal appetites of men. It must be accepted as God delivered it, in its entirety. Reaching "the unity of the faith" (Eph. 4:13) demands that we accept God's word as a unit, not as component parts strewn with non-essentials. We must accept it all, or we reject it all. We cannot pick and choose. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). You cannot be obedient to the faith while obeying only those parts which you personally approve.

### THE OBEDIENCE TO THE FAITH

references to the gospel being called "the faith;"

The faith of which Acts 6:7 speaks is not simply a belief in something. It is what Paul describes as "One faith" and "the unity of the faith" (Eph. 4:5, 13). Jude writes to Christians, "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). What the Bible here calls "the faith" reveals the salvation which is given to all men in common, without "respect of persons" (Acts 10:34). And "the faith" was once for all "delivered" to the saints. That expression can only have reference to the gospel system, God's revelation of his salvation which is offered to mankind through Jesus Christ.

## THE NECESSITY OF OBEDIENCE

Over and over Jesus shows that if we believe in Him, we will do what He tells us. *"Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 7:21). It is vain to call on Jesus as our Lord and Savior while we refuse to do what He says! He still asks, *"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46). Faith in Jesus as Christ and Savior should lead to love for Him, also. But He said, *"If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments"* (John 14:15). James writes, *"Faith, if it has not works, is dead in itself. Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith"* (James 2:17-18). The only way to show our love for Jesus is by doing what He says. The only way to show our faith in Him is by doing what He says. That is the *"obedience to the faith."*

Jesus, in the life He lived on earth, set the pattern for all of us. *"Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation"* (Heb. 5:8-9). If we would please the Lord, we must *"follow his steps"* (1 Pet. 2:21). The apostle Paul shows that we are saved when we *"obey from the heart that form of teaching delivered unto you"* (Rom. 6:16). The apostle Peter writes, *"Ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth"* (1 Pet. 1:22). Only when faith leads us to obey the will of the Lord will that faith save. In fact, Paul writes that Christ will return from heaven, *"with angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus"* (2 Thes. 1:7-8).

## EXAMPLES OF OBEDIENCE TO THE FAITH

On the day of Pentecost, sinners were told, *"Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins"* (Acts 2:38). Their response is shown three verses later, *"They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls."* The same response occurred when Philip preached *"the faith"* in Samaria, *"But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women"* (Acts 8:12). When people gladly received the word of God (believed it), they became obedient by being baptized. The reason for

that is simple. When Jesus sent the apostles out, He told them, "*Preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:15-16). They preached that, people received it and responded to it.

Philip, directed by the Lord, went to preach to the Ethiopian eunuch: "*And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture, preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believes with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him*" (Acts 8:35-38). Here is a great demonstration of being "*obedient to the faith*". Philip preached Christ to him, he believed, his faith led him to be baptized. Notice how this reconciles with Acts 18:8, "*Many of the Corinthians, hearing believed, and were baptized.*" Their faith was manifest in their obedience.

Without a single exception in all of God's word, faith is always rewarded when that faith has prompted obedience to the will of God. Just read Heb. 11. Each of those people named there trusted the Lord and thus did exactly what He told them. "Faith only" has never secured a single promised blessing, not one. That is why the inspired James wrote. "*What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? . . . Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*" (James 2:14,24). It is only when one has sufficient faith in God, and His word, to simply obey without question, that he will be justified by his "*obedience to the faith*".

## ***Revelation and Reward***

**JOHNNY RAMSEY**

When Christians died for the cause of Christ, they won a victory over Satan that was remembered. Church historians often wrote these words: "The blood of the martyrs was the seed of Christianity." Stephen's death at the hands of the Jews (Acts 7) led to further persecution, which caused many of the believers to flee Jerusalem: "*They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word*" (Acts 8:4). Instead of persecution inhibiting the preaching of the

gospel, it actually increased it!

Though chained by the power of the gospel (Rev. 20:1; Rom. 1:16), the devil still has power—but only when weak and sinful people enter his domain. Like a mad dog which is chained, Satan can only operate within the periphery of that chain. As long as we stay close to Christ, the devil cannot harm us. At the end of Rev. 20, John is inspired to write of a final day of reckoning wherein men shall be "*judged according to their deeds*" (Rev. 20:11-15). Let us so live before God that the second death will not harm us.

"Victory in Christ"—Rev. 21 and 22—form the grand conclusion of the Bible: What a glorious crescendo for the people of the Lord. Through twelve gates of pearls John sees the procession of the saints on higher ground. In a land of fadeless day, where no darkness, sadness, sickness or separation ever enter, Christians will reap an enchanting reward. Pearls are made by friction, tribulation and pressure. The greater the tribulation the grander the pearls. And heaven belongs to those who press on to higher ground (Phil. 3:14).

*Jesus is coming—My destiny to seal.*

*Jesus is coming—I pray that He will.*

*Jesus is coming—In His presence may I stay.*

*Jesus is coming—O glorious day!*

No temple nor cathedral is needed in heaven, for the Lord God almighty is the only temple needed (Rev. 21:1-3). Those whose names are in the Book of Life will walk that golden strand of beauty. The persecuted Christians of the Roman era, to whom this book was addressed, were blessed by the eloquent treatise known as "Revelation." And so are we, twenty centuries later.

Finally, as the last golden page of inspiration beckons us to its dramatic unveiling, we see the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life restored. The first real story of the Bible comes back again to our view in this panoramic document known as revelation. What man lost in Adam, we gain in Christ (1 Cor. 15:20). Obedience to Christ brings us back into His sublime presence (Rev. 22:14), and "*whosoever will may come*" (Rev. 22:17). The apostle Peter wrote of Jesus, "*Who his own self bare our sins in his body on the tree*" (1 Pet. 2:24). The tree of the cross becomes our hope to partake of the "*tree of life*" forever (Rev. 22:1-5).

The Bible closes with the promise of Christ's return (Rev. 22:20). May we so live that when that precious occasion comes, we may rise "*to meet the Lord in the air*" (1 Thes. 4:17) and so ever be with Him. The



book of Revelation comforted persecuted Christians in the first century, and it still challenges us today. Let us read it and study it for daily strength.

*Beyond the sunset, O glad reunion*

*With our dear loved ones*

*Who have gone before.*

*O day of gladness, O day unending,*

*Beyond the sunset, forevermore!*

## ***Doubting Thomas???***

**JIM FAUGHN**

We all have heard him referred to as "doubting Thomas." He wanted proof. He wouldn't take the word of the other apostles that Jesus had conquered death. When that proof was made available to him, he exclaimed, "My Lord and My God" (John 20:28).

Following Thomas's statement we read:

*Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. And 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 20:29-31).*

Compare the simple, yet profound, statement of Thomas with the thoughts of some present-day "believers" as reported in *Newsweek* magazine in the April 4, 1994 issue. Keep in mind that these are the thoughts of some who have access to the things that John (and others) wrote concerning Jesus. Their "Scholarship," however, has led them to a different conclusion than the one expressed by Thomas:

The *real Jesus*. . . was no more a child of God than anyone else. He was probably a Jewish peasant—possibly not the firstborn in

his family and probably illiterate... This 'historical' Jesus performed no miracles; but he did have the healer's touch, a gift for alleviating emotional ills through acceptance and love. . . Jesus lived on in the hearts of his followers old and new, but he did not physically rise from the dead. Taken down from the cross, his body was probably buried in a shallow grave—and may have been eaten by dogs.

I think I'll Stand with "doubting Thomas" instead of this modern "scholarship." How about you?

## *Focusing On Grace*

GLENN COLLEY

The word "grace" can be found 159 times in the Bible. The subject of grace in the lives of people is wonderful and worthy of our diligent study. There is however, a huge difference in the way some are teaching grace, and what God says on the subject.

None would be saved without grace. Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." Praise God for His marvelous grace!

What we need to remember, teach, and warn, is that the grace of God is not unconditional. It's only too easy to preach to people in sin and leave with them the impression that because of God's grace they can relax their attitude toward their sin. It is easy to preach about grace to care-free, live-like-the-world Christians and leave the impression that they don't need to worry about the necessity of dedicated service. Let's preach about God's grace! But let's teach the whole truth.

1. The grace of God doesn't mean we can be any less serious about avoiding sin in our lives. Romans 6:1 says, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein? Romans 12:9 says, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."

2. The grace of God doesn't mean we can be passive about living righteous lives. In fact, His grace is intended to teach us to live in faithful

service! Titus 2:11, 12 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." Fellow preachers, when you preach on the grace of God, do you remember to teach that we must live soberly, righteously, and godly?

Let's all rejoice in the abundant blessings of God given by His grace, and let us make certain we never misrepresent Him.

## ***Ineffective***

**NEAL POLLARD**

God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). He sent His Son to this world through the miraculous process of incarnation (cf. Galatians 4:4). He sustains us with His divine providence (cf. Psalm 3:5). The Spirit of God moved men to write the inspired word of God over the span of many centuries (cf. II Peter 1:21). By the cross, man had the hope of eternal life restored (John 3:16). The events described above detail the power of God, whose ability far surpasses the greatest feats of man's feeble hands. Philippians 2:10-11 tells us that the day will come when every man who has entered into life will submit to the mighty Son of God. Every image of God revealed in the Bible shows His great effect on the world and on mankind. However, the New Testament reveals some who, in spite of God's overwhelming power, have made the salvation extended by heaven of no effect. HOW IS SUCH POSSIBLE?

CAN GOD'S FAITHFULNESS BE MADE INEFFECTIVE? Romans 3:3 plainly teaches that God's faithfulness is not changed despite man's disbelief. Paul tells us that "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Corinthians 1:9). The Israelites were told to "know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." (Deuteronomy 7:9). God's fidelity to His word and His nature, His love for man, and His flawless character effectuate the salvation He offers. yet God's faithfulness is useless to those who have no faith in Him. Jesus said, ". . . if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). The Hebrew writer warns, "without faith it is impossible to

please Him" (Hebrews 11:6). John adds, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he beliveth not the record that God Gave of his Son" (1 John 5:10). God's faithfulness is made ineffective by man's failure to believe.

**CAN GOD'S WORD BE MADE MORE INEFFECTIVE** (Mark 7:13)? Oh, let us not believe that God's word is without power and authority. And, if man allows his heart to be softened by the power of that written word, he will know its effectiveness. Hebrews 4:12 describes the word of God as "living and active, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." Jeremiah reported the question of God, saying, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces" (Jeremiah 23:29). The effective word can transform hardened, habitual, and stubborn sinners into submissive, obedient, and sweet children of God. However, Jesus spoke of some who made the word of God of none effect through their tradition. The word of God is ineffective if it is not studied (1 Timothy 4:13). The word of God is ineffective if it is not practiced (Mathew 7:21). The word of God is ineffective if it is taught falsely (Galatians 1:6-7).

**CAN THE CROSS BE MADE INEFFECTIVE** (1 Corinthians 1:17)? The centre piece of time and hope, the symbol of regeneration, and the seal of pardon, the cross, held the world's only Savior. The cross' effect was felt from the Garden of Eden and will be felt by all the faithful children of God who stand justified before the King at the judgment. Without the cross, these faithful would stand condemned with the reprobates and infidels. Christ made peace through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20). Yet, the cross is ineffective for the enemies of the cross (Philippians 3:18). For those who can, in their mind's eye, sit around Golgotha and watch the cross wring the lifeblood from the perfect man and still reject God's grace, what hope remains? As far as their eternal destiny is concerned, Christ's death was of no effect. Surely a long look at Calvary will cure attendance problems, divisive spirits, filthy hearts, and hypocritical lives. As Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians 1:17, we should throw aside the philosophy, wisdom of words, and human creeds for the preaching of the cross. Unless the cross provides one with that living hope (1 Peter 1:3) which causes one to conform to the image of Him who hung upon that tree (cf. Romans 8:29), the cross serves no purpose for the individual.

God's power cannot be limited His plans are infallible. His word will never fail. His scheme of redemption is perfect. It is when man chooses

not to have faith that the faithfulness of God is ineffective. When man decides to reject God's word, it will not be effective for him. It is when man turns his back on the cross of Christ that the blood shed there becomes of no effect in his life! Isaiah wrote, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace: and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever" (Isaiah 32:17). Let us guard our minds from anything that would alter the effectiveness of God in our lives.

## ***"We're Not All Like That"***

**MICHAEL GIFFORD**

It's one of the more unsettling experiences that a Christian must bear. I was talking with a non-Christian friend when he began to relate some immoral activities engaged in by another member of the Lord's church. My friend had had the dishonesty and ungodliness of this member of the church proven to him and again. What's more, I had as well. Consequently, I could not defend my brother. All I could do was listen and then, with a confident yet apologetic look into the eyes of my friend, say, "Not all members of the church of Christ are like that, you know."

This really hurts, brethren. Here's an individual of the world we are trying to win to Christ and, in spite of all of our efforts, he has this one horrible example sticking out in his memory like a sore thumb. We have on occasion heard the phrase, "I'm already as good as Mr. (or Miss) So and so in the church of Christ, so why should I bother becoming a member?" Then there's: "I don't want any part of a church that has members like that."

To be sure, we could say quite a bit about the need for people to not judge the entire church based on one person or the ways in which we could answer such statements, but that's not the purpose of this brief treatise. Instead, I want us to think for a moment about what kind of impression we as members of the Lord's church are making on the world.

We cannot live perfect lives. Jesus said, "*It is impossible but that offences will come*" (Luke 17:1). But now hear the rest of His statement: "*But woe unto him, through whom they come!*" We have heard it said that our lives are the only Bibles some people read. Fair or unfair, it is nonetheless true. People praise or blame the entire church often

because of only one member. Again, it is indeed unfair, but we can't change it. We can, however, change ourselves so as to bring honor rather than dishonor to the Lord and His spiritual body.

Each child of God needs to engage in daily self-examination (II Corinthians 13:5). We need to consider our ways (Haggai 1:5, 7). We need to be sure that we are conducting ourselves in a manner that is befitting the name we wear. Why? For one, because we want to go to heaven. Secondly, because we want to lead others there as well. But how successful will we be in either case if our lives are stained with dirty dealing, inconsistent assembling with the saints, unholy language, etc., etc., etc.?

They who have ears to hear, let them hear. The world is looking at us. They hear us saying that we are Christians. They want to see what a Christian looks like. If we conduct ourselves no better than they, we will surely turn them away from God (cf. Matthew 5:20).

We are salt of the earth, the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). We are to be the resounding influence for truth and godliness in this life. We are to walk in the pristine steps of Jesus (I Peter 2:21). Dear brethren and sisters in the Lord, what have you given the world to think about you as a child of God? And what will they think of the church of Christ as a result of their analysis of your life?

Yes, it is an awesome responsibility we have. Perhaps some have never thought of it. Perhaps others want nothing to do with being placed under the scrutinous eyes of the masses. But if we are true Christian, we are in that position already. And rather than hide or run from the viewing eyes of the world let us study God's Word and pray so that our examples of Christian living will outshine the sun for brightness. May no one ever have to say apologetically about your life or mine as a Christian, "Not all members of the church of Christ are like that."

## **"Just Why Are You A Christian?"**

**PEGGY T. CRUMP**

Being in mission work for so many years as I have, I have been asked the question many times, "Just why are you a Christian?" My first thought is because I was taught to love God and the Bible by my

parents and grandparents. But this is not the answer for which they are searching. Thus I did some research several years ago and found the following reasons.

(1) I am a Christian because I was taught to love God. I have faith in God. Since God loved me (John 3:16) that he gave his only Son for me and since this Son shed his blood for the remission of my sins, I love him because he first loved me (I John 4:19).

(2) I am a Christian because my faith in Jesus Christ tells me to do what he says. It was this faith that led me to be baptized thus becoming a member of his church (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:47).

(3) I am a Christian because the Bible tells me "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23; I John 1:10). I did not want to remain in sin because there would be no escape of eternal damnation if I neglect this great salvation offered to me (Hebrews 2:3).

(4) I am a Christian because it makes me a better person. It keeps me away from the world and sin (Romans 1:11; James 1:21; John 6:44-45). The way of the sinner is hard (Proverbs 13:15). But Christ tells me to seek FIRST the kingdom of God and I will be in His care (Matthew 6:33; Galatians 6:7-10; Matthew 13:23; Mark 10:29-30).

(5) I am a Christian because God wants me to be his child. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance and be his child (II Peter 3:9).

(6) I am a Christian because of the assurance Christ gives me through his word (Hebrews 10:22; Romans 10:17). I know I can have eternal life waiting for me because I am saved by the blood of Christ (I John 1:7; 2:2). This blood has redeemed me from my past sins (Ephesians 1:7) and will be there in the future if I walk in Christ and do as he commands (I John 2:3). I know I am in Christ because I have been baptized into him (Galatians 3:26-27; Romans 6:3-4). I do not have to depend on seeing or feeling to "know" (Hebrews 11:1; John 20:30-31; II Thessalonians 1:10; I Corinthians 1:6).

John uses the word "know" twenty-four times in the book of I John, thus assuring me that I can know. Peter stood on Pentecost and said, "Let all the house of Israel KNOW assuredly. . ." (Acts 2:36). Paul wrote, "I KNOW him whom I have believed" (II Timothy 1:12). These men saw evidences of his existence. There are no miracles today but on the basis of their testimony the Bible says we can know just as they knew (John 20:30-31).

(7) I am a Christian because this assurance gives me joy

unspeakable. Real happiness is the fruit of Christian living (I Peter 1:8). I have peace with God made by the Cross (Colossians 1:20). No sweeter verse can be found than Psalm 103:11-12 which says, "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

(8) I am a Christian for many, many reasons but most of all because I want to go to heaven and be with my Lord throughout eternity. "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusteth in him and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song I will praise him" (Psalm 28:7).

## ***You, And Preaching***

There isn't a word that a preacher can say,  
No matter how lovely or true,  
Nor a prayer that his eager lips may pray  
That can preach a sermon as you.

You vowed to serve Christ, And men know that you did.  
They're watching the things that you do:  
There isn't one action of yours that is hid,  
Men are watching and studying you.

You say You're no preacher?  
Yes, but you peach a powerful sermon each day.  
The acts of your life are the things that you teach.  
It isn't the things that you say.

So Christians, remember you bear His name.  
You are living examples, men praise you or blame,  
And measure all Christians by you.

***—Author Unknown***