

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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EDITORIAL

Why Aren't Christians Persecuted Today?

The Apostle Paul said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12).

We know that Paul and Christians in general were persecuted in the first century. Many of them were beaten, stoned, put in prison, and even put to death. (2 Timothy 3:11; Acts 16:16-33; Acts 12:1-5). But why aren't Christians persecuted today? Did Paul's statement in 2 Timothy 3:12 apply only to those of his day? If so, he didn't say so. But if it is applicable to Christians of the 20th Century then why aren't Christians being persecuted more than they are?

All will admit that here in India, and in most of the rest of the world, the Christian has it good. We are not put in prison for worshipping God and neither are we executed for preaching

the gospel. Rather, we have freedom of worship; we have access to the press, and can use literature and radio for the preaching of the gospel; and we can come and go as we wish. For the most part, we are accepted and respected.

But again, we must come back to the fact that Paul said that if we were in Christ and living the Christian life, meaning that we are saved, are members of the church, and faithful to the Lord, that we would suffer persecution. Could it be that we are not persecuted because we are not as evangelistic as we should be, that we are not opposing sin and false teaching as we ought, and therefore we are actually being ignored by the world? Really, it means that we don't do enough for anyone to be upset with us or to pay any attention to what we do or teach. Isn't that sad? According to Paul's statement, can we be the kind of people in this case that the Lord would be pleased with?

We are living in a time when brethren don't want to rock the boat. They want to be liked by the world. Should there be those who so preached and worked that this brought opposition from the world, and especially the religious world, then in all probability our own brethren would be the first ones to find fault with it.

It should not be our purpose to deliberately do things that would bring on persecution, but when our faith moves us, stirs us up, fills us with zeal, and we go out and preach the truth, oppose and condemn all kinds of sin and false religion, and boldly work for the Lord, then we will get some opposition, and we will be persecuted. This news then will spread and cause people to become more hardened against the Lord or create a desire in their hearts to want to know the truth, to obey God, and to be a part of Christianity at work. Brethren, when we reach the point that we are persecuted for our faith and work then the cause of Christ will grow and spread. This is one of the marks of being true followers of Christ.



associate editorial

They Did Not Take The Fire Seriously

Recently there was a major fire in Delhi's Ansal Bhavan, a multi-storey office complex, situated in the heart of the Capital city. So great was the fire that it defied control for over five hours, during which the Delhi fire service and the Delhi police, led by their respective chiefs, were joined by Air Force, Army, Navy and Railways personnel and equipments. When the fire was over atleast three or more people were declared dead and several hundred were injured, and equipments worth Crores of rupees were destroyed. While reading the newspaper, Indian Express, of July 1, 1987, I noticed where it said, "They Did Not Take The Fire Seriously." The reporter there was describing, how some who died and were seriously injured, were first told about the fire, but they did not believe that the fire would spread and would cause so much damage. They continued to sit and work in their offices. Evidently, they took the fire very lightly, they did not take the fire seriously, and they had to pay a great price for that.

As I was reading that I thought of various people mentioned in the Bible who did not take God's warnings seriously and therefore they had to pay a great price for that. I thought, first, about Adam and Eve. How God had warned them that they should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that if they would they would die the same day (would be separated from God). But we know that Adam and Eve did not take God's word seriously, because they did exactly what God had told them not to do, and consequently they were driven out from the presence of the Lord, they died the same day, as God had said. (Genesis 2, 3). Also, I thought of the people of Noah's day. Even though Noah had preached to them for over hundred years what God

had decided to do about them, that God would send a great flood on earth and that every one of them would be destroyed, because they had become greatly sinful before the Lord. But how many did repent and sought forgiveness from God? None. Because, the record says, they did not take God's word seriously. (Genesis 6, 7). Again, I thought of the two Priests, Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, who presumptuously made a change in the worship of the Lord. They knew what the Lord had told them, but they didn't care, they didn't take God's word seriously, and this is what we read: "So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." (Leviticus 10:1, 2; See Numbers 16:46). Also, in thinking about those who did not take God's word seriously, I thought about Achan because of whom God's people had to face defeat at Ai. (Joshua 7). There, God had to remind Joshua and all Israel that they had not taken His word seriously and therefore they were facing defeat at the hands of a small group of people. And what about the Israelites? Certainly, the fire story of Ansal Bhavan reminded me of the children of Israel. God had brought them out of Egypt. He had promised them to take them to a land where milk and honey flowed. The only condition that God had put before them was obedience to His will. He knew what was best for them, so He wanted them to do what He said. But reading through the Old Testament we are reminded again and again that most of them did not believe that God meant what he has said. They did not take God's warnings seriously. One only has to read 1 Corinthians chapter ten from the New Testament of the Bible, to see what happened to all of them because they had not taken God's word seriously. Concluding their story in this chapter the writer reminds us at 1 Corinthians 10:11, by saying, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come."

So what about us today? How seriously are we taking God's word today? The Bible says, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent. Because he has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts

17:30, 31). Have you repented? Have you prepared yourself to face the Lord on the day of judgment? Repentance means a change of mind. All must repent, according to God's command. All must change their lives. The Apostle Peter told his listeners, "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). All need to do this. Christ promised salvation to those who would believe in Him and would be baptized, but those would not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:16). Come on. Get ready. Do what the Lord says now. Take His word seriously. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10).

According to God's book the day is coming when every thing will go out of existence, nothing of physical nature will be left to exist; only things of spiritual nature will live in eternity. We read from 2 Peter 3:7-11, "But the heavens and the earth which now exist are kept in store by the same word, reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with great noise and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness". Are you striving, then, to live holy and godly life? The Bible also warns: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:15-17). This also reminds us of what Jesus has said, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall

enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 7:21). Are you doing His will everyday? Are you living by His will? The Bible is the book of God's will. God has revealed His will for us today in the New Testament part of the Bible. He who does the will of God abides forever. He who does the will of God shall enter the kingdom of heaven.

Notice also, God warns, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). See also Galatians 5:19-22. The Bible is a book of warnings. It tells us and warns us how we can escape the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. How seriously are you taking God's warnings? "Do not be deceived," the Apostle Paul says, "God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the spirit reap everlasting life." (Galatians 6:7, 8). Let's take seriously what God has said in His book, while it is time. What a sad thing it would be in eternity if someone from heaven would point his finger at us to say, "They did not take God's word seriously!" (Luke 16:19-31).

Our Worship

Douglas Sims

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Some Christians seem to think of worship as an unpleasant duty which must be performed to appease the wrath of an angry God. It would seem that some great catastrophe might befall them if they don't go through the motions of worshipping. Worship offered with an attitude like this is just time wasted for the worshiper. When we examine the items of worship God has

ordained for us, we see a benefit for the worshiper as well as an offering of praise and devotion to God.

SINGING : Surely, we are praising God in this act, but much more. Paul said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). Thus, the singing in worship will teach us and inspire us to be better Christians.

PRAYER : Did God give us the privilege of prayer just to make requests of our needs? Could we not offer prayers of praise and thanksgiving specifically as an act of worship to our God? Paul said, "... in everything by prayer and supplication with thanks-giving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). Prayer will be the greatest source of strength a Christian can find.

BIBLE STUDY : How many modern-day Christians really study the Bible? Not many, I am afraid, seeing the amount of Bible knowledge displayed by some. Obviously, Bible study is for the purpose of obtaining knowledge. Paul said, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Bible study helps us to know God, and to increase our faith in him in bad times. Those who diligently study will not need to worry about any judgment day surprises.

GIVING : Some have said this is not an act of worship. Some have even made attempts to separate it from the worship. God made giving a part of the activities of the church when it came together to worship. We are told how to give and with what attitude we are to give. Our attitude toward giving is truly our attitude toward the Lord's kingdom. Our giving is really a test of our faith and our love. Paul said "... see that ye abound in this grace also . . . prove the sincerity of your love" (II Cor. 8:7-8).

THE LORD'S SUPPER : Some Christians believe that partaking of the Lord's Supper will forgive sins without any additional action on their part. Some come to the worship service, and after partaking of the Lord's Supper, leave before the rest of

the worship is completed. This supper was given as a memorial of the death of our Saviour. As often as we partake of it we are to be reminded of his death and of his promised return. When we face difficulties in this life we should be encouraged by the fact that Jesus has promised to return for the faithful (John 14 :3).

There are many benefits for the worshiper, if the worship is sincere and offered "in spirit and in truth." What we receive from our gathering together will be determined by what we put into it.

HINDRANCES TO WORSHIP

1. *Trying to worship without preparation.* The world is filled with "instant" products. You just add water and use. "Instant worship" is just going too far. It is just not possible to turn the word off and turn on our worship at a moment's notice.

2. *Tardiness.* This is a problem in practically every congregation. Constant tardiness indicates a lack of desire to worship. It seems to indicate we feel our worship is an unpleasant obligation we would rather leave off. Some who would not think of forsaking an assembly actually miss several during a year's time by being late so many times. Tardiness hinders the worship of those already assembled when one comes in late.

3. *Indifference.* The worship means little or nothing. Some have just a "form of godliness." Such an attitude will surely be accompanied by an unwillingness to heed any teaching done.

4. *Preoccupation.* A preacher can look at the faces of many people whose thoughts are far away. The cares of the world have always choked out the word of God in the hearts of many. Worship requires our attention.

5. *Disturbance.* Children need to be brought to worship. Children also need to be taught how to behave in the worship. A constant flow of children in and out of the worship will hinder almost anyone from concentrating. Teenagers and adults account for much of the disturbance. Talking, clipping the nails, fumbling

through purses, and a multitude of other things indicate a lack of involvement in the worship.

Our worship to God is one of the most important things we will ever do in this life. We must do all in our power to make sure our worship is acceptable if we hope to be among those who praise God around the throne throughout eternity.—

Zealous For Good Works

Dan Flourney

The *Devil's Dictionary* defines zeal as a "certain nervous disorder afflicting the young and inexperienced." Certainly the devil would stifle all enthusiasm by leading people to believe that zeal is a mark of immaturity. But such is not the case!

Zeal should characterize all God's people. Paul wrote to Titus concerning the Lord "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto possession, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). God never intended for his people to be halfhearted or lukewarm. Servants are admonished, "Whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance" (Col. 3:23, 24).

Lethargy is the greatest scourge of the church! Lukewarm Christians weaken the work and make the Lord sick (Rev. 3:16). Just claiming to be righteous and showing up for worship will never accomplish the work of Christ. Paul warned Titus of those that "profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him; being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).

The work of the church will be done by those who are filled with zeal. Zeal will overcome indifference and laziness. Christians need to rekindle their enthusiasm for spiritual things and increase their efforts in serving Christ.

There is work in the church for all who have the necessary zeal. The Lord would have us to be "fervent in spirit, not slothful in bussiness" (Rom. 12:11). May we all, with single-eyed devotion, zealously press on in every good work.

Will You So Will?

Dalton Key

David hid the word of God in his heart (Psalms 119:11). Jesus was able to recall appropriate passages from Deuteronomy during his confrontation with Satan (Matthew 4:1-11). The Lord chided the Sadducees for "not knowing the scriptures" (Matthew 22:29). Paul advised Timothy to read, meditate upon, and give himself wholly to the scriptures (I Timothy 4:13, 15-16). Again, the aged apostle instructed his "dearly beloved son" to "study . . . the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

These examples remind us of our need to know the Bible. Because faith is proportionate to Bible knowledge, we would do well to become better acquainted with the scriptures (Romans 10:17).

And yet many of us are sadly lacking in this area. Why? Could this lack be blamed upon lack of opportunity? We think not. The Bible is still the world's best seller. It is readily available to anyone interested in perusing its sacred pages.

Could our deficiency of Bible knowledge be attributed to a mental inadequacy? Hardly. The small space between our ears has an enormous capacity. The brain's storage capacity has been estimated at one quadrillon bits of information—that's a millon times a billion. Most of us use only about 10 to 15 percent of our brain's potential. No, the fault does not lie with meager mentality.

Perhaps our lack of Bible knowledge is due to our lack of will—our lack of will to delve deeply into Bible study. Unitil we

desire to know more about, and more of God's will for us, we will remain spiritually and Biblically ignorant. We must desire Bible knowledge as we would desire physical food (Matthew 4:4).

Christ taught, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching" (John 7:17, ASV). Yes, we will know more when we will to know more, and when we put that will to work! Friend, will you so will?

Aspects Of Salvation

John Waddey

With a theme as important as salvation one would think every intelligent person would be eager to know its meaning and ramifications. Sadly such is not the case. Few folks have more than a passing knowledge of the subject. Still fewer could discuss it from the scriptures.

What is Salvation? Salvation is deliverance from past sins. From that moment in adolescence when we become morally aware of and accountable for our deeds, we have been accumulating a debt of sin. Our sin alienates and separates us from God (Isaiah 59: 1-2). It carries the penalty of death (Romans 6:23). It burdens us with guilt and remorse (Rom. 7:22-24). In salvation, God washes away all our past sin and guilt when in faith we obey him in baptism (Acts 22:16). Peter says when we repent and are baptized in the name of Jesus, we receive remission of sins (Acts 2:38). This means our sin debt is paid in full. Paul paints a vivid picture in Romans, chapter 5: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us . . . while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son . . ." (5:8-10). Having paid the price to secure our pardon, Jesus charged his disciples to "preach the gospel to the whole creation" so that he that believes and is baptized could be saved (Mark 16:15-16).

Salvation means deliverance from Satan's power. Everyone who has lived long enough knows the reality of Satan's power in

our lives. In our foolishness we become willing servants to this evil, tyrannical master (Rom. 6:16). Realizing our miserable condition, we try to save ourselves, but to no avail. Like Paul, what we want to do, we fail in and what we despise we often do. We too cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:22-24). The apostle tells us how we are saved from Satan's evil dominion. It is through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 7:25). When we obey from the heart that form of doctrine (i.e., the gospel of Jesus), we are delivered and made free from sin (Rom. 6:17-18). Jesus became a man "that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is the devil: and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Salvation rescues us from God's wrath of judgment. "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him" (Rom. 5:9). Divine justice demands that sin be punished. The wages we have earned is death (Rom. 6:23), but "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Since he bore the penalty due us, God can now *justify* us. That means that we are treated just as if we had never sinned! Rather than impose the penalties we deserved, God can forego our punishment because we are saved.

We are saved from this present evil world, according to Paul (Galatians 1:3-4). Most folks overlook this aspect of salvation, but it is significant. Sinners may want to live on earth forever, but God's children anxiously look forward to a heavenly home (John 14:1-3). To depart and be with Christ is far better (Philippians 1:23). On earth there are continual trials and tribulations. Pain, suffering and sorrow are our common lot. In heaven all of these are done away (Rev. 21:3-4). It was a merciful act when God placed the cherubim with the flaming sword at the gate of Eden lest sin-cursed men eat of the tree of life and live forever in a world spoiled by sin (Gen. 3:22-24). Because we enjoy salvation in Christ we can pray, "come Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

We are rescued from death by our Saviour. Though it is the

common fate of all men to experience physical death, Jesus will resurrect us from the grave. "The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live . . . they that have done good unto the resurrection of life . . ." (John 5:25-29). Even though our natural bodies are buried in corruption and dishonor, they will be raised in glorious incorruption (I Cor. 15:42-43). We will then be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord and shall ever be with him (I Thess. 5:17-18).

Our salvation delivers us from the second death. "This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14-15). All who die in sin will spend their eternity in damnation (John 8:21). The saved will hear Christ say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). Jesus promises those who have experienced the first resurrection that the second death will have no power over them (Rev. 20:6). The first resurrection is that symbolic one which every saved person experienced when he died to sin, was buried with Christ in baptism and raised (resurrected) from the baptismal waters to walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:1-5).

You can enjoy this blessed salvation *now*. Hear the apostle John: "These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" (I John 5:13). To preserve this blessing we must *walk* in the light of his word and the blood of Jesus will keep on cleansing us from all sin. (Such is the meaning of the original Greek text.) If we do sin, we need only confess that and "he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:7-9).

Salvation—what a thrilling thought! It is available to all men of every race (Mark 16:15-16). It is a free gift from God (Eph. 2:8-9). Its conditions are simple and easy (Acts 2:38). It will last you from now unto eternity (Heb. 5:8-9). Will you not claim this marvelous gift today?

Give Me The Bible

Jerry L. Fausz

Marriage is a Bible subject, One must study the Bible to understand and fully appreciate marriage—truth which is painfully neglected. Originating with God, marriage began in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:24). Marriage is the cleaving together, after forsaking all others, of one man and one woman, and these two become one flesh. God, and not man, joins husband and wife together (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). God warns man not to tamper with this union. All the applicable information is in the Bible. Anything which contradicts the word of God, regardless of its source, is without authority. Marriages do not fail; people do, by rejecting God.

Divorce has become as popular as apple pie and Maruti. However, divorce is much more deadly. Divorce (*apoluo*), is defined by Vine: "to let loose from, let go free", and by Thayer: "used of divorce . . . to dismiss from the house, to repudiate." The terrible sting of divorce burns deeply within the very heart of society. It gnaws, and often rips to pieces everything for which Christianity stands. This issue must be considered only in light of what the Holy Scriptures teach. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:14-16). Divorce is never commanded. However, God does permit divorce when one mate has committed the sin of fornication. Fornication (*porneia*) is defined by Vine: "one who has unlawful intercourse with another's wife." Fornication includes homosexuality, bestiality, and adultery. Fornication is the only Bible reason given for divorce (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:9; Romans 7:1-3). God's law is universal. It applies with equal authority to both Christians and non-Christians alike. Marriage is sacred, and must be entered with this understanding.

Remarriage can represent the beginning of a full and happy life. Attack by the horrible monster known as divorce does not mean that one must stop living. However, the Bible authorizes remarriage in only two instances: (1) death of one's husband or wife, or (2) unfaithfulness on the part of one's mate, through

fornication. Divorce for any reason other than fornication is the automatic forfeiture of the right to marry. There is only one ground for divorce and remarriage. Those entering marriage without scriptural authority, enter into adulterous relationships. Eternal torment is imminent since such cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21). God's will demands that this adulterous relationship be severed. Difficult situations exist because many have failed to heed. When all is said and done, each shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ (II Corinthians 5:10).

Maturity is essential, Marriage is for mature adults. Success will not come by accident. This writer believes that marriage ought to be special. Too many merely exist. Please consider these suggestions: (1) Remember that marriage is the uniting of two, and that it is a relationship which is bigger than the individual alone. (2) Loving is giving, and giving is love made visible. Do not expect always to be on the receiving end. (3) Marriage is not always a bed of roses. It brings challenging and stressful moments. Both husband and wife must learn to adjust together. (4) Communication between mates equals the difference between wedlock and deadlock. (5) Become involved in things both enjoy, and spend time together. Study the Bible together. Pray together.

Marriage must be guided and sustained by the infallible word of God if it is to be special. Why not? It originated with God. Marriage is the second most important decision in life. May God help us to consider and appreciate it accordingly.

From Riches to Rags

Levi Sides

Stories of success make good news. People delight in recalling the names and stories of men and women who have risen from rags to riches. On the other hand, the story of one who inherits a large fortune only to lose it is bad news. Wonderfully, the gospel (Good News) is the story of one who went from riches to rags to riches again.

Perhaps no other single verse dramatizes more fully the message of Christ's coming from the heights of glory to accomplish our redemption than 2 Corinthians 8:9: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."

Three tremendous facts are stated. (1) He was rich; (2) He became poor; and (3) That you might become rich.

Christ Was Rich

Christ enjoyed the glories of heaven with God. The description of heaven given in Revelation 21 and 22 is beyond full understanding. In heaven are gates of pearl, a street of gold, a river of life, and a tree of life. It is so beautiful that when John caught a glimpse of it, the only thing to which he could compare it was a young woman on her wedding day.

The prologue of John's Gospel reminds all readers that Christ was preexistent with God (John 1:1). His wealth was infinite as the possessor of heaven and earth (Colossians 1:16). He was the heir of all things (Colossians 1:15).

Christ was rich in glory. All the hosts of heaven worshiped and sang before Him their incessant praises. He was rich in power and authority. In a sense far greater than words can describe or imagination can conceive, Christ was rich before He came to this earth.

Christ Became Poor

Christ's earthly life was exemplified by His total poverty. A stable had been His birthplace, and a manger served as His cradle. For 20 years He worked as a Carpenter in a poverty-stricken and despised village; which bore the scorn of men.

Jesus began His ministry at the Jordan River with no organization to support Him and no patrons to enrich Him. He was an itinerant preacher. His support was little, and His treasurer stole part of the "little."

When invited, He entered men's homes for dinner. He ate grain from His hands as He walked through the fields. He slept often under the open sky, in the wilderness without cover, in the city without a home, and in the hills without a bed. He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20).

He was sold for 30 pieces of silver—the price of a slave. Finally, He was numbered among the criminals and became a scapegoat for religious hypocrisy and Roman pride. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves and stripped of His robe for which His tormentors gambled as He died. He was buried in another man's grave.

For what purpose did God allow these incredible events to happen to His Son? God allowed this to happen for the good of man.

That We Might Become Rich

Christ, by relinquishing His claim on heaven and assuming the rags of a lowly man, paved the way for untold spiritual riches to come to His followers, "He emptied Himself" of His glory so they might be filled with all fullness of God. He laid aside His glory so they might enter into His glory. He gave up all in order that they might receive all.

He walked up Golgotha's brow so His followers might tread the street of gold. He wore a crown of thorns in order for them to wear a crown of glory. He wore a purple robe in order that they might be clothed with His spotless righteousness. He suffered that they might reign. He entered into death so they could enter into eternal life. He laid in the grave that they might be resurrected from the grave.

Remember, Paul was encouraging generosity when he penned this verse. The supreme source of Christian generosity stems from the garce of God. Once one has experienced the grace of God in Christ, he sees people and their needs in a different light. Through the mirror of Christ's earthly rags, His followers realize that all

are as worthy of His great sacrifice as themselves. Once one has experienced that grace of God, it awakens an undying gratitude, He becomes conscience of a debt that must be paid. This unpayable debt becomes his lifelong ambition to repay.

G.K. Chesterton once said: "It is the highest and holiest of paradoxes that the man who really knows he cannot pay his debt will be forever paying it. He will always be throwing things away into a bottomless pit of unfathomable thanks."

The Seven I Am's of Paul

Bill Dillon

Bible students frequently make reference to the seven I Am's of Christ, as found in the gospel according to John. (John 6:35; 8:12; 8:58; 10:7, 11:25; 14:6; 15:1.) These wonderful statements help men to fully perceive the identity of Jesus as, the Christ, the Son of the living God. Just as significant and profitable are the seven I Am's of Paul. It will be seen that these sayings bear out much needed lessons.

THE FIRST I AM

The first saying to be noticed is a statement of men's sinfulness. In I Timothy 1:15 Saul humbly declared "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (emphasis added throughout.) In Romans 7:14 the apostle also said, "I am carnal." However, such statements do not describe the complete view of Paul, as he also wrote in Romans 7:24 the secret of his magnificent transformation from chief of sinners to least of saints, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Paul's life means hope for all men today; if Christ can save Paul; he can save any one,

THE SECOND I AM

The second saying of the gallant apostle is from Acts 18:6 and 20:26. In the former reference Paul declares to the disbelieving Jews "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." In the latter passage, Paul put the Ephesian elders in mind of the fact he had not withheld any portion of saying truth from them. "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men." Paul recognized he had been saved to save. Only a mad who has love as the ruling principle of his life will be able to say with Paul "I am clean." Many in judgment may richly call out, with sad tones of sorrow ever breaking through, "You never mentioned him to me;" but those of the acquaintance of Paul would only have themselves to blame for their unredeemed souls. The second saying of Paul is a declaration of fulfilled obligation.

THE THIRD I AM

The third statement of Paul is noted in Acts 26:29 when he replies to the almost persuaded, yet altogether lost. King Agrippa, that, 'I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.' Agrippa had said "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:28.)

Paul said, "such as I am." Paul was a Christian. But what kind of Christian? What sectarian name would Paul allow to preface the divinely given name of Christian? We search the Inspired Volume in vain to find early disciples being identified as any sort of Christian. They were Christians only—plus nothing, minus nothing!

Paul said, "such as I am." Men and women eager to walk in the old paths of non-denominational Christianity will find the wearing of sectarian names and human appellations as appealing as a bushel of mice! Such thing are better left to those who have a desire for display and show, and seek, above all things, the good opinion of the world. Paul's third statement was a declaration of identity.

THE FOURTH, FIFTH AND SIXTH I AM'S

The fourth, fifth and sixth sayings come from Romans 1:14, 15, 16 respectively. Notice, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise." A debt is something owed. Since it is generally considered a dishonor to fail to pay one's debts; being a man who puts honor above convenience, Paul stated in Romans 1:15, "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also."

Since the giving of the Great Commission in Mark 16:15, 16, and since the Commission is still Great, every Christian has been under the load of unslumbering vigilance to traverse the earth with the word of salvation. The teachings of Christ were not given to hide away in dark corners but were to be held forth before the sun.

The carrying out of the Lord's Great Commission is within the pale of the possible and always has been. The best thing to do in all the world is to preach the gospel from China to Chicago; from Denmark to Detroit; and back again. The time to do it is now; if not now, perhaps not at all.

But, please note carefully, Paul said, "I am ready to preach the gospel." Our religious world has become a voice crying out for entertaining novelities instead of the gospel. Recently from California, news has come informing the world of the deaths of a number of movieland stars. No one need be alarmed, however, that there might be a shortage of entertainment in our society. Quite rapidly, churches have moved in to fill the gap in the amusement world, caused by the sad deaths in Hollywood's glamor world. The tragedy is that instead of fulfilling the Lord Jesus Christ's directive to banner the world with the good news of salvation, many of his professed followers are using his name as an excuse to flaunt secularism in a world already too materialistic for its eternal good. Yes, we should be ready to tell of the wonderful Saviour who died, shedding his precious blood that men might be redeemed—not, emphatically not, to pass the church off as the best country club in town. Better it would be to leave the Bible altogether alone than to prostitute the church of Christ before the world on the altar of compromise.

In Romans 1:16 Paul penned, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." Paul was set not only to diffuse the gospel but also to defend it. He said in Philippians 1:7, 17 that he was "in the defense and confirmation of the gospel."

Paul also felt it his duty to encourage others to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel (verse 27.) Since his conversion in Damascus, Paul had stood like a colossus for the truth; sparing neither blood nor life in defense of the faith. Repeatedly called into question regarding the gospel (Acts 23:6; 24:21), yet he maintained the faith unflinchingly (Acts 20:24.) Standing against the torrents of paganism, Judaism, etc., Paul manifested enthusiasm only for the right. He was no lover of wrangling controversy yet necessity was laid upon him time and time again to quench the fires of heresy and apostasy; enduring mockery and railings without any poison of bitterness.

So well did Paul and the first century Christians defend the gospel that the wrongness of the world was turned upside down (Acts 17:6) and its rottenness inside out. The fourth, fifth and sixth I am's of Paul are declarations of intention to unashamedly, without alteration and hesitation, preach the sublime of truths of the gospel of Christ.

THE SEVENTH I AM

The final utterance of the grand old apostle is in Galatians 2:20 Where he says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." These words form the obedient believer's declaration of dependence. Paul had become one with Christ by faith and baptism. (Galatians 3:26, 27.) He was dead (to the world), yet alive (to God.). Christ's love compelled him to give himself as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28); and by our love in return we give ourselves to him: The sweetness of heaven is to be found in Christ. O' what a foretaste of glory divine! Dear reader, can you say, as Paul, "I am crucified with Christ?" Will you say.

"I am resolved, no longer, to linger,
Charmed by the world's delight,
Things that are higher, things that are nobler,
These have allured my sight,
I will hasten to him, hasten glad and free,
Jesus, greatest, highest,
I will come to thee!"

How Do We Determine Right and Wrong

Ralph Gilmore

Too often people are led to believe that Christianity has no usefulness apart from its function in providing us a road map to heaven. I do not dispute the ability of Christianity to lead us to heaven, but I strongly affirm that Christianity does have usefulness in its contemporary application in solving contemporary problems. Christianity is for the here and now and is practical in helping us to determine right and wrong.

Because God does exist and the Bible is the inspired Word of God, we can understand why God's creatures feel the weight of being caught in ethical situations in which right and wrong choices are not so easily known to them. God has made man with a sense of moral oughtness and with a need to act in accordance with one's own value system. But being finite, we often do not know the right choice (s) to make. Therefore, it is vital to examine a simple biblical approach to help us in determining right and wrong. This approach is a series of seven questions which, when answered by the person who is in need of ethical answers, will provide guidance in answering our questions about right and wrong.

First, is a specific action right or wrong in-and-of itself? This question is first because if an action is wrong in-and-of itself, then the answer is "no, you can not do it" If an action is intrinsically

right. then the action is right in-and-of itself because it is reflective of the absolute goodness of the nature of God. If an action is intrinsically wrong, then the action is wrong in-and-of itself because it is contrary to the absolute goodness of God's nature. If something is intrinsically wrong, it never can be right, and vice versa. Therefore, if the Bible teaches that something is always right or wrong. then the decision already is made for the person who believes the Bible, and there is no need to proceed to any other questions on this particular list.

The Bible does condemn many actions universally, and it does affirm certain actions universally. A classic example is Paul's list of the sins of the flesh (which would be intrinsically wrong) and of the fruit of the spirit (which would be intrinsically right) in Galatians 5:19-23. The Bible lists those who practice such wrong actions as having a place in hell (Revelation 21:8).

However, many actions have no intrinsic value. If they did, and if we could ascertain what the value was, there would be no need for further questions. But there is a need, so we must examine the areas of things that might be instrumentally right or wrong (i.e., things that might be right or wrong according to reasons other than their intrinsic value).

Second, does it violate my conscience? The Bible teaches plainly that a Christian should not violate his conscience in any matter, irrespective of the intrinsic nature of the act one is considering doing. For instance, I might see someone doing something I could not conscientiously do even though I cannot find a place in the Bible to prove it to be wrong. Romans 14:23 reads: "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin". Paul, instructing the Roman brethren relative to eating meat forbidden by Jewish dietary laws, tells them a Christian should not eat such meat in violation of his conscience, even though such an act would not be wrong in-and-of itself (Romans 14:17-22). If I do something that violates my conscience, then it is wrong.

Third, does it cause my brother to stumble? Also relative to eating meat sacrificed to an idol, Paul instructs the Corinthians

(1 Corinthians 8:13) not to eat such meat in the presence of weak brethren if it would cause the weak brethren to stumble. The Greek word for stumbling block, *scandalon*, indicates a baited trap. If I do things that damage the faith of weaker brothers and sisters in Christ to the point that their souls are in danger of being ensnared by the devil, then these things would be wrong and should be avoided.

Fourth, does it put me with the wrong associates? According to Paul, bad companionship corrupt good moral living (1 Corinthians 15:33). It is impossible to be a friend of the world and a friend of God at the same time (James 4:4). Therefore, a Christian must be transformed (Greek word *metamorphosis*) by a renewed mind (Romans 12:2). Many things become wrong because of the company in which the actions would of necessity place the Christian.

Fifth, does it hurt my influence? Jesus taught that Christians should be like cities set on a hill and lights put on candlesticks so others may see our good works (Matthew 5:14-16). Christians conceivably could do many things that are not intrinsically wrong, but by being involved in such actions, the cause of Christ might be hurt.

Sixth, does it quench the spirit? Some actions may be right when practiced in moderation, but wrong when carried to excess. When this happens, the Bible says the Holy Spirit can be grieved or "quenched" much as one would throw water on a burning fire until the fire is gone out (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19). Too much involvement in particular forms of recreation, too much time spent in secular work, and too many outside distractions could result in one's spiritual death. The cares of the world crowd out the Spirit and the spiritual activities.

Seventh, is it an incentive to holy living? Paul warns Timothy and Christians to run from the love of money because having our "hope on the uncertainty of riches," we may "fall into temptation and a snare" (1 Timothy 6:9,10,17-19). Desiring to be rich is not an incentive to holy living. We should stay clear of those actions that would darken our goals and future life in Christ.

Examining these seven questions has been helpful to me on many occasions in helping me to determine right from wrong. They are written to be of benefit to the reader as well.

Training up Children

Bill R. Swetmon

Proverbs 22:6 is, no doubt, the most often quoted scripture in relation to child rearing. It reads, "Train up a child in the way he should go even when he is old he will not depart from it."

Some have interpreted this verse to mean a child should be trained in the path of obedience and faith in God, and when he is old or mature, he will not depart from that way. Of course, a child should be taught the way of God and obedience to that way. However, the author of this verse did not have that in mind. Rather, he is giving some very valuable insight into how children should be reared.

This verse has created a great deal of guilt for parents who have tried to train their children the right way, but when the children were older, they departed from that way. It will be helpful to understand more clearly what this verse is teaching.

First, note the phrase "train up." In Hebrew the word "train" is associated with the mouth (palate, roof, gums). The Hebrews used this word in two ways. In Solomon's day it was used to refer to the breaking of a wild stallion. This was done by directing the mouth so as to bring its spirit under submission. It was also a term describing a midwife rubbing the palate of a newborn's mouth with a fruit juice or paste to stimulate sucking and to cleanse the mouth. Solomon simply is stating that training a child involves bringing that child into submission by creating a taste for what is good and proper very early in life.

The second word that should be noted is "child." The original Hebrew word was used to refer to children of all ages, from infants to those who were already married. It can refer to any person of any age who is living under the parents' roof. It does not have to refer to infants and small children.

The phrase most often misunderstood in the text is "in the way he should go." The Hebrew literally is "initiate a child in accordance with his way" The New American Standard Bible has an alternate reading to this passage that says, "literally, according to his own way." A paraphrase might read, "according as he is capable." Keil and Delitzsch observed.

The instruction of youth, the education of youth, ought to be conformed to the nature of youth; the matter of instruction, the manner of instruction, ought to regulate itself according to the stage of life, and its peculiarities; the method ought to be arranged to the degree of development which the mental and bodily life of the youth has arrived at (Volume 6, pp. 86, 87).

This verse is not referring to the parents' way or God's way, or even to the right way, but it is referring to the child's way. The child's nature, temperament, idiosyncrasy and mental ability must be considered as the parent helps the child develop into maturity

This verse does not have reference to the direction the child should go, but rather to the makeup of the child's personality: his own characteristics and mannerisms.

It is also interesting to note how Solomon uses the word "way" in other passages to refer to mannerisms. For example, Proverbs 30:18,19 reads:

There are three things which are too wonderful for me,
Four which I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the sky,
The way of a serpent on a rock, The way of a ship in the middle of the sea,
And the way of man with a maid.

It is obvious that the word "way" can refer to the nature of things or the nature of a person.

What Solomon is telling parents in Proverbs 22:6 is that every child has his own way or characteristics. Parental responsibility involves studying the child carefully to determine his mannerisms, his characteristics, and how that child differs from other children. The parent must adapt God's Word to the child accordingly.

Two common mistakes that parents often make are: (1) They try to use the same approach in child rearing with all the children. (2) There is a tendency to compare one child with another.

It is important for parents to spend enough time with each child and listen to that child carefully to determine his or her characteristics and to know how these differ from the other children. Each child has his own nature and his own peculiarities. Parents must study each child's personality and learn how to relate to that child individually.

The Results

Solomon gives this promise: "Even when he is old he will not depart from it." In Hebrew the phrase "When he is old" literally means, "when he has hair on the chin." This refers to the time of adulthood when a child is old enough to grow a beard. When parents spend enough time with a child to learn the child's characteristics, mannerisms and individuality and then adapt God's teaching to that child, they can be reasonably sure the child will grow up to be the kind of person that God desires.

The fact is some children are easier to know than others. Two children may grow up in the same home; one is easy to know and understand, and the other is distant from the parents. Both may be taught the truth of God's Word, and yet the one who was distant or difficult to know and understand, may not respond properly to that teaching. On the other hand, the child who was easy to know was also easy to train in the way of the Lord.

When parents understand this, it will relieve a great deal of guilt if they have taught God's Word properly and yet discovered that a child departed from it when he was older. Perhaps the real problem was that the child was difficult to know or understand and thus difficult to communicate with in relation to God's Word. Maybe more time and effort should have been invested in the child's life. However, when parents do as well as they can, they should feel no guilt if the child chooses to depart from God's way.

This verse is not a guarantee that if a child is taught properly, he will not depart. Rather it teaches that parents must become involved in the lives of their children to the extent that they know each child well. This way the children learn from the parents through personal contact. Parents who are insensitive, preoccupied or out of touch with the lives of their children need to take heed to what this verse is teaching.

What Love Causes Us to Do

Johnny Ramsey

A Bible teacher once told a group of men an illustration none present ever will forget. As a lad he had a dog that was very dear to him. There was mutual admiration between them. The boy

and the dog were real pals. They hunted, fished and played together constantly.

One day the boy came home from school to find the dog in serious difficulty. His hind legs were caught in a meshed-wire fence, Try as it might, the dog could not gain freedom. The dog not only was hurt but also extremely perplexed and frightened.

Quickly his master rushed to the aid of the dog. He grabbed the legs trapped in the fence and began to pull. Much to his surprise, the dog bit his hand and drew blood. It was animal instinct. The dog knew nothing better to do.

Did the lad kick the dog? No. Instead, he rushed around to the other side of the fence to work from another angle to free his friend from imprisonment and pain. Why was this reaction so natural? Because in a child's heart he loved the dog more than anything else on earth. Love has a way of overlooking things strangers cannot tolerate (1 Peter 4:8).

It reminds me of Paul and the Corinthians or David and Absalom or Hosea and his unfaithful wife. At times the more they loved, the more they were rejected (2 Corinthians 12:15). As these great men extended efforts to extricate their loved ones from the throes of error and the fiery darts of Satan, they often were rebuffed ignored or, if you please, bitten on the hand by the individuals who reacted like mad dogs.

When each can feel his brother's sigh,
And with him bear a part;
When sorrow flows from eye to eye,
And joy from heart to heart.

Then truly, love is that golden chain that binds us together. Sometimes, however, we take a great Bible principle like this and abuse it. Love does not white wash sin or overlook error. It propels us into righteous action that corrects the situation. Discipline, according to the Scriptures, is love in action (1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:20). Shakespeare may have been right, in reflecting on human nature, when he said, "But love is blind and lovers cannot see."

However, the sentiment is not necessarily best for all concerned. For instance, take the words of Jesus in Revelation 3:19, "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline." In Hebrews 12 we learn God always has disciplined His true children.

The only way love can cover a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8) is for us, in love, to restore the erring one so a soul may be saved (James 5:19,20). We cannot release a man from his sins by just saying: "I love you." Winking at sin will never erase it from God's book of remembrance. (Malachi 3:16).

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