

THE BIBLE TEACHER

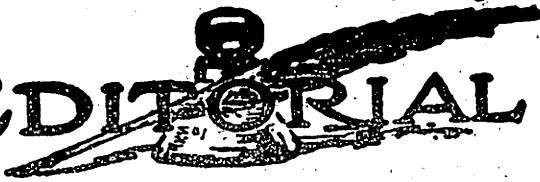
Pleading for the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 19

September 1988

No. 5

EDITORIAL



Baptism Of The Holy Spirit

John the Baptizer had told his audience, "There comes one after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:8). John, here was speaking about the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Who after his death and resurrection had told His disciples, "Behold, I send the Promise of my Father upon you, but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." (Luke 24 :49). Continuing, He said, "For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you." (Acts 1:5 and 8). After this the Scriptures says, "He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of thier sight." (Acts 1:9).

Accordingly, ten days after Christ had made this promise to the Apostles, His disciples were waiting for the Promise of the Father in the city of Jerusalem, we read: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one set upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and

began to speak with other tongues. (languages, S.D.), as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:2-4).

So the Apostles of Christ were baptized with the Holy Spirit as the Lord had promised them. The baptism of the Holy Spirit empowered the Apostles to speak in many languages they had not learned. Earlier they were told by the Lord to: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15). And, now, the Lord, through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, gave them the power to speak in languages of different people. They didn't need translators. Neither did they have time to go to a language school for learning new languages. Yet they had to preach the gospel to the whole world. So to enable them to preach the gospel in the languages of different people the Lord baptized them with the Holy Spirit. This answers the question of a large group of people who had asked, "And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?" (Acts 2:8). Remember, though, that the Lord had promised the Apostles: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." (Acts 1:8).

Not only, after they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, were they able to speak in the languages of different people, but the Scriptures also says, "*And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. . . . so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that atleast the shadow of Peter, (an Apostle, S.D.), passing by might fall on them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.*" (Acts 5:12, 15-16). Now, look, here, it says "**THEY WERE ALL HEALED,**" This means then that not even one was left unhealed. WHY? Because the Apostles had been baptized with the Holy Spirit. It didn't read, "And through the hands of the Christians. . . ." Or "And through the hands of the preachers. . . ." No. But says, "*And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people.*" Recently, here in Delhi, I went to visit a family. The wife told me that her husband had taken their daughter, who is affected with mental dis-

order and has been sick for several years, to a preacher who is visiting here from another part of the country, so that he could pray over her and heal her. But nothing has changed, that young lady is still ill. Why? Because that preacher is not an Apostle.

According to John 14:26 the Apostles had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit would be with them as their helper who would teach them all things and would bring to their remembrance all things that the Lord had taught them earlier when He was with them on earth. They were baptized with the Holy Spirit so that they would not make any mistake in writing the New Testament's books of the Bible for us. To them, the Lord had said, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on his own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (John 16:13). This is the very reason why the Apostle Peter wrote and said. ". . .that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of men, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:20, 21).

From all of this we learn: that the Apostles of Christ were indeed baptized with the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came upon them they were empowered to speak in languages they had not learned themselves, which made it possible for them to preach the gospel to every creature in the world. (Colossians 1:23). The power of the Holy Spirit also enabled them to perform signs and wonders before the people so that the people might believe their message to be from God. And finally, the Holy Spirit guided the Apostles to write the will of our God for us without committing any error or mistake.

Religion: Good or Bad?

J.C. Choate

There are several major religions in the world today. They

represent a powerful force. Many good things are done in the name of religion, but religion is also responsible for many bad things.

It is amazing what religion imposes on its adherents. It requires that they wear a certain type of dress, make trips, fast for weeks at a time, go through life unmarried, isolate themselves for a life time, make all kinds of sacrifices, fight in wars, keep traditions, engage in rituals, and no telling what else.

Some religious people become paupers, while others get rich. There are those who claim that they can do all kinds of miracles but never do any of them, but still people go on believing in such things.

Politicians use religion to manipulate and control the masses. They pretend that they are for some new religious law, when really they couldn't care less. They will lead processions to uphold a particular religion when they are unbelievers.

Wars are fought in the name of religion. One religious group may fight another religious group. In the end, both lose. Not even considering right or wrong, but if a religion does help man, make him better; if it doesn't uphold the good and oppose the bad; if it doesn't try to save life instead of taking life; then how can it benefit anyone?

Women are generally the losers in most religions. They either have no freedom at all or else it is very limited. Women and young girls are hidden away, kept out of sight, not allowed to go anywhere, must wear veils, and such like throughout their life time. What do they have to live for? What do they have to look forward to? In some societies they are not wanted. They represent more mouths to feed and a dowry to pay. Many of them are killed at birth. How sad?

A number of religions do not want to share religious freedom. They want it for themselves at home, and in other countries, but they do not want to give it at home. They want to protect their

people from other religions. But if a religion has to have such protection then that means that it is very weak.

Some religious people want to pull off to themselves to establish a country where the majority of the people there are of that religion. Some like to restrict themselves to a certain area of the country, a colony in the city, and such like. But can you imagine such places? That would mean that all of the bad things, the stealing and killing, the cheating and bribing, would be done by the members of that religion in that country. Then all of the people around you would be of that religion, so whether your relationship was good or bad, it would still be based on your brothers and sisters of that religion. Then you would be constantly reminded of that one religion on radio, television, through the press, and in all probability you would live in a society where freedom of religion was not allowed. You would be so isolated, and unfamiliar with other kinds of people, that you would become a misfit in the world today.

Most religions grow or decline in number on the basis of physical child birth. That means that the children grow up more in a particular culture or way of life than they do as members of some religion. They may not know anything about their religion. They are just there.

While this is true with most of the religions of the world, and as a result look on religion with a frown, there is one religion that stands out above all others, and that is Christianity. Christianity doesn't impose all kinds of unthinkable things on one. It does not promote and encourage bad things. It does not endorse killings and wars. In other words, all who claim to represent true Christianity do not.

Christianity brings freedom and hope to mankind. It encourages us to respect all other human beings. It frees woman from bondage and treats her as a human being. It encourages work and that the labourer is worthy of his reward.

Christianity believes in freedom of religion and in respecting

people of all religions and walks of life. It grows through making converts, through teaching and having a good influence on others, not on physical birth. Christians do not believe in isolating themselves in one part of the world, but living freely among all people.

The religion of Christ is not bad but good. Religion is a service rendered to God and one's fellowman. James wrote, "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27).

If religion doesn't make you better, your family better, your country better, and the world better, then what good is your religion? I don't know about your religion, but the religion of Christ, Christianity, does make people better. It benefits all who accept and practice it.

Do We Have Everlasting Life Everlastingly?

Bill Nicks

THE ASSERTION

In John 3:36, the believer is promised everlasting life. Since "hath" (echei) is present indicative, this has the force of continuation, that is, "The one believing on the Son keeps on having everlasting life."

THE PROBLEMS

The problems posed here are two extremes: 1) If we have everlasting life may we lose it? In other words, do we have it everlastingly once we come into possession of it? Do we really come into possession of everlasting life now? 2) If we do not have it now, or if there are conditions imposed upon us for maintaining it, do we have any assurance?

THE CONDITIONS

That there are conditions for the believer in order to keep everlasting life is an obvious truth. The very passage in John 3:36 suggests it. The believer may cease to be a believer, upon which event he ceases to obey the Son and then "shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." There is no question about the obedient believer. "He hath eternal life." But may the believers cease to believe and become an unbeliever? We have examples of this very thing happening. King Saul "had the Spirit of the Lord" and "God gave him another heart." (1 Samuel 10:9, 10.). But Saul obeyed not the commandment of the Lord (1 Samuel 13:12, 13; 15:11-16), and the Lord rejected him. (15:23.) God departed from Saul and he became the Lord's enemy. (1 Samuel 28:15-18.)

We read of Christians who departed from Christ: Simon the sorcerer was a believer who was perishing "in the bond of iniquity." (Acts 8:13-24.). Ananias and Sapphira were Christians who were contributing "at the apostles' feet" for distribution to the needs of saints (Acts 4:34, 5:6), but "lied to the Holy Spirit" and met God's extreme wrath in death. These are some examples of a fact plainly taught, namely, that children of God, bought with the blood of Christ, having been baptized into Christ for remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:4), fell away from the grace of God. (Galatians 5:4; 1 Corinthians 10:12).

THE PROMISE

But does John 3:36 not say the believer has everlasting life? Yes, there is a sense in which he has everlasting life. He enjoys spiritual life abundantly in Christ Jesus and the promise of eternal life in heaven. "And this is the promise which he hath promised us, even the life eternal." (1 John 2:25.) Our text does not say he has everlasting life everlastingly. It is in promise, the reception of which is at the end of life and conditioned upon his faithfulness. The future happiness is conditional, suggested by many "ifs." The elect may obtain salvation "if we endure" (2 Timothy 2:10-13), "if we do these things" (add the Christian graces, 2 Peter 1:5-18), and if we are not entangled again in the "defilements of the world." (2 Peter 2:20-22.).

THE SOLUTION

There is no passage which affirms that we come into actual possession now of eternal life in the sense in which we can have it in heaven. As we have seen, we have it only in the sense of the promise of it, and in the sense of the quality of the life we have in Christ. (John 10:10.) There is no such thought of our having everlasting life everlastingly in view of human frailties and the possibility of forfeiting that which has been so graciously granted unto us. "But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved)." (Ephesians 2:4, 5.) Among the passages presenting the thought of eternal life at the end of our life's journey are these: Mark 10:28-30 "... he shall receive a hundred fold now in this time . . . and in the world to come eternal life." 2 Timothy 4:8 "... henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing." Titus 1:2 "... in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal."

AN ILLUSTRATION

To illustrate these truths let us consider the word salvation, which is presented to us from two aspects:

- (1) Present salvation is that which is given to the believer upon compliance with terms of pardon. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16.) When is the believer saved? When he expresses his faith in obedience to the Savior's command to "repent and be baptized," after which he receives salvation, or remission of past, or alien sins. (Acts 2:38).

Notice the word now in 1 Peter 3:21 "... which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism." The salvation in this sense is present and is an actual state into which the obedient believer passes. If some one should ask such a person, "Are you saved?", his answer would be "Most certainly, since I have the

stated word of God to that effect." He does not live in doubt. He has had no miraculous operation of the Spirit, but has calmly received and obediently followed his Lord. He has everlasting life in the sense he is on the right road that leads to heaven, and if he does not veer away from the "straitened way that leadeth unto life" (Matthew 7:14), he will reach his destination. (2) The second aspect of salvation is future, as evidenced by the following passages: 1 Peter 1:4, 5 "... unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." The hope of this future salvation in heaven, says Peter, is an occasion of "great rejoicing", even though for a little while there are griefs and manifold trials that beset us. Both the writer of Hebrews and James gave as examples of patience the great patriarchs of old who endured because they "desired a better country, that is a heavenly." (Hebrews 11-16, 24-26; James 5:7-11.) Also see 2 Peter 1:10-12; Romans 13-11; Hebrews 5:9; Revelation 2:10.

THE ASSURANCE

Then what assurance does the child of God have? Every assurance that he is in the way of truth and holiness as a member of God's family, the church. He is assured of "... all spiritual blessings in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3), that God is in him by the Spirit which he gave us (1 John 3:24), and that he will continue to be cleansed by the blood of Christ if he continues to walk in the light. (1 John 1:7-10.) His continued cleansing is conditioned upon his confession of wrongs, repentance and prayer. (James 5:16.) This is a reasonable, healthy assurance.

He would be foolish to conclude that eternal life is his possession now, in the sense he can have it in heaven, and that he could never forfeit it regardless of his conduct. Rather, in humility, he recognizes his human proneness to err, and, out of gratitude for his present saved state, he "works out his own salvation with fear and trembling," knowing it is "God who works in him." (Philippians 2:12, 13.)

The Law of Christ

Kyle McWhorter

INTRODUCTION

Some have concluded that since the law of Moses was nailed to the cross when Christ died (Colossians 2:14-17), men are no longer under any law at all. They have declared that men in this day and age are under grace, and that this rules out both law and works.

It is true that all today live under a system of grace. (John 1:17). However, one must remember that being under a system of grace does not rule out law and works. These do not cancel out each other. Paul said, "For the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." (Titus 2:11-12.). It can very clearly be seen from the above passages that grace, law and works are all three involved in man's salvation.

These three verities appear together in the salvation of Noah and his family. Moses said, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." (Genesis 6:8.). God revealed a plan or rule of action Noah was to follow. God said to Noah, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood: rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch" (Genesis 6:14-21.) Moses then said, "Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him so did he." (Genesis 6:22).

Thus, Noah was saved by God's grace. But, he also was saved by the rule of action, or law God revealed to him. Then again, he was saved by his obedience in the building of the ark as God directed. Not one of these principles can stand alone. Each is dependent upon the other as seen in the case of Noah, and is also true in the great scheme of human redemption. Grace does not cancel out either law or works.

The Bible very clearly declares that men are subject to the law

of Christ. Paul said, "To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law." (1 Corinthians 9:21.) Paul refers to the law of Christ as the law of faith. (Romans 3:27.) This same apostle also said, "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death". (Romans 8:2.). Paul again refers to the law of Jesus Christ in Galatians 6:2.

James said, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:25.) With all the evidence here presented, surely all can see that we are under a rule of action—the law of Christ. There are several questions that must be considered with respect to this law of Christ.

WHEN WAS IT GIVEN?

The law of Christ is also referred to as a will or testament. Therefore, this law could not have been given until Christ died on the cross. The Hebrew writer said, "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." (Hebrews 9:16-17.)

This means that the thief on the cross was not granted forgiveness under the New Testament dispensation. (Luke 23:39-43.) When the Lord spoke to him, the law of Moses was still in effect, and was in effect until Christ died. (Colossians 2:14-17.) The thief, therefore, is not an example of conversion under the law of Christ. One must come this side of the cross for an example of conversion under the New Testament age. (Acts 8:26-39.)

The law of Christ was given to man on the first Pentecost Day following the resurrection of the Lord. (Acts 2:1-41.) The apostle Peter, some years later, referred to this day, and the events that transpired at that time as the beginning. He said, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning."

(Acts 11:15.) Therefore, it is evident that the Christian Dispensation, or the law of Christ had its beginning, or was given on that Pentecost Day.

WHERE WAS IT GIVEN?

The prophet Isaiah predicted that the place where it would be given was the city of Jerusalem. He said, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his path: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isaiah 2:2-3.)

CONCLUSION

Jesus also said that the gospel was to have its beginning in Jerusalem. The Bible says "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:46-47.). The apostles were in this city when the Holy Spirit came upon them, and it was in this same city that Peter preached for the first time the great facts of the gospel of the Lord. (Acts 2:1-41.) It follows, therefore, that the place where the law of Christ was given was the ancient city of Jerusalem.

TO WHOM WAS IT GIVEN?

When God made the promise to Abraham it embraced all the families of the earth. (Genesis 12:1-4.) This promise involved the coming of Christ and his gospel. (Galatians 3:16.) The prophet, in predicting the establishment of the church, said that "all nations shall flow unto it." (Isaiah 2:2.) Jesus also said that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." (Luke 24:47).

When Jesus gave the Great Commission to the apostles, they

were commanded to teach all nations. (Matthew 28:19-20.) The apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost said, "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:38-39.) Thus, it can be clearly seen that the law of Christ is worldwide in its scope. All men are amenable to it despite the claim of some to the contrary.

WHY WAS IT GIVEN?

There are several reasons why the law of Christ was given. In the first place, it was given in order that men might realize that they are lost. (Romans 3:9-10; 3:23). Secondly, it was revealed that all men might know what God has done to save them. (John 3:16; Romans 5:8.) In the third place, the New Testament was delivered to men that they might understand that God does not want any to be lost, but desires the salvation of everyone. (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9.) Finally, the last Will and Testament of Christ was given that men might know what they must do to be saved. (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-39; Acts 8:5, 12; Acts 22:16.)

HOW LONG WAS IT TO LAST?

The Patriarchal period lasted for about 2500 years. It began with Adam and lasted until the giving of the law of Moses on Mount Sinai. The Mosaic dispensation lasted from the giving of the law of Moses until the giving of the law of Christ on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of the Lord. (Colossians 2:14; Galatians 3:23-25.) This embraced a period of approximately 1500 years.

The law of Christ began with the miraculous events, and the preaching of the gospel on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts chapter 2. It has lasted for nearly 2,000 years. The Christian dispensation is referred to as the last days. (Isaiah 2:2-3; Hebrews 1:1-4.) It is the last dispensation in God's dealings with man. The law of Christ is to last until the end of this age. (Matthew

28:18-20.) When this age comes to a close, the end of all things earthly will have come. (2 Peter 3:10-13.).

“Power To Become”

Ronald E. Ingle

INTRODUCTION

“But as many as receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12.)

Jesus came into the world to give us power to become the sons of God. Jesus gives us power to enter into his body, his church. Jesus gives us power to be cleansed from our sins and become as little children. In giving us power to become the sons of God, he gives us power to become whatever his body, the church, needs in order to grow and prosper in this world.

POWER TO BECOME MANY THINGS

People have the power to become elders, or elder's wives, deacons, or deacon's wives, gospel preachers, or preacher's wives, dedicated Bible teachers, or other servants for the church. Each has the power to become a living, vital part of the church where he lives and serves. Jesus does not make us become any of these things against our wills nor without conscious effort and preparation on our part. We cannot become any kind of faithful servant of Christ and his church without diligent study of God's word, which reveals how we must live and serve our Lord.

TWO REQUIREMENTS

One of the requirements for an elder is that he desire that good work. The desire alone is not sufficient, but is necessary to motivate the man to study, learn and practice those things which are listed as qualifications to be seen and judged by the congregation as representing the Christ-led life.

Another qualification is that the man not be a novice, or new convert, but a mature Christian who has lived the Christian life long enough to have developed a good reputation within and without the church. Jesus does not make a man a well-qualified elder, but he gives nearly all men the power to become such if their desire is strong enough.

TO BE PROVED

One to be appointed a deacon also is to be proved, or to have been a faithful Christian long enough for the church to know his fruits for the cause of Christ. It takes some time and study for most of us to learn to become a special servants for the church in our "self" oriented society. But, Jesus gives us the power to become a servant as willing as himself.

WIVES OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

The wives of elders and deacons are to be sober, not somber, women careful for things concerning Christ and his church. This attitude and manner of life only comes from study and practice in living the Christian life. This maturity is not limited to wives of elders and deacons but should be the goal of every Christian woman.

QUALIFICATIONS OF PREACHERS

The same letter in which Paul gives instructions as to the men to be placed into the offices of elder and deacon also gives instructions to those who would be gospel preachers. "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." (1 Timothy 4:12-13.) Jesus gives the power to become this kind of preacher, but only by a continual study of God's word.

A man trying to preach without a systematic daily study of the Bible is like a bird trying to fly where there is no air or a fish trying to swim without water. The preacher must make time for the organized daily study of his Bible which is the only way to

become the kind of preacher Paul describes. It is easy for the preacher to get tied down to visiting the sick, counselling the troubled and other daily tasks which are expected of him. He should never forget the most important of his tasks to which Paul exhorts Timothy to give attendance. "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt save thyself, and them that hear thee." (1 Timothy 4:16.)

GOOD TEACHERS

The congregation which has good dedicated teachers in its Bible classes is indeed richly blessed. I have been privileged to know a few truly great Bible teachers from the pre-school through the teenage and adult classes. Without exception, these teachers were all diligent students of the Bible and were practicing what they taught. Some had more schooling than others, some had the advantage of being reared in a Christian home and beginning their Bible study at an earlier age, but all retained a thirst for greater knowledge of God's word.

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for some one to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For every one who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil." (Hebrews 5:12-14 New American Standard Bible.). With study and practice Jesus gives us power to become truly great Bible teachers.

NOT REFERRING

You might be saying about now, "I'm not an elder, deacon, preacher or Bible class teacher so he's not talking to me." Wrong! The majority of most congregations don't fit into one of these categories, but Jesus gives you power too. He gives you power to become any number of other things which are just as important in building up the church where you attend and where you ought to be serving in some capacity.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (James 1:27.) Jesus gave us a commission, and the power, to care for the needs of orphans and widows if we are to be considered his faithful disciples. How much have you helped an orphan, widow or widower lately? Can you adopt an orphan? Become a foster parent? Drive an elderly person to the doctor’s office, drug store or grocery? Can you visit the sick in the hospitals and in their homes? Can you visit those who have lost loved ones? Can you babysit for others to do some of these things? Can you pray diligently for all those who have needs and problems? We may not be good at any of these things the first time we try, but with God’s help we can become as good as we want to be at any of them! There are hundreds of other good works to be done for the cause of Christ. Jesus gives us power to become!

CONCLUSION

“For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” (Romans 12:4-8 New American Standard Bible.)

Paul is here exhorting the Christians at Rome to become whatever they could, but to be sure they were becoming something of value to the church and not being envious of others who had differing gifts and abilities. It is of eternal importance that we use the power Jesus has given us to become the sons of God and to faithfully use this power for the glory of God.

The Holy Spirit Convinces Of Sin

Basil Overton

INTRODUCTION

Jesus promised his apostles that he would not leave them comfortless (John 14:18.) Comfortless in this passage is from the Greek word *orphanus*, which is the same as the English word *orphans*. Jesus, therefore promised that he would not leave his apostles without care. He said, "the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost" (John 14:26), would come to them and guide them into all truth. (John 16:13.). Of the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said to the apostles, "And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment to come." (John 16:8.)

The word translated *reprove* in the foregoing text is also translated *convict* and *convince*. The Greek word is said to be a strong legal term, and suggests that Jesus meant the Holy Spirit would make strong, persuasive arguments regarding sin, righteousness, and judgment. He did just this in the New Testament.

This sermon has to do with the Holy Spirit's convincing the world of sin. We hear much about the Holy Spirit and what he does; some of it is good and right, and much of it is not true and scriptural. However, we do not hear much about the Holy Spirit's convincing of sin! Yet, this is the first thing Jesus mentioned relative to the work the Holy Spirit would do when he would come to the apostles.

The evidence the Holy Spirit has presented with regard to sin is in the New Testament. Without this evidence preachers and teachers could not convince or convict anyone of sin. There can be no conversion without this convincing!

Please observe carefully some truths concerning sin about which the Holy Spirit convinces the world.

THE FACT OF SIN

The devil tries to convince us that sin does not even exist.

Sin means missing the mark. The Holy Spirit does not convince us about sin with philosophical arguments, but he guided the New Testament writers in a manner that they presented sin as being so real there was no question about it. Holy Spirit guided preachers are presented in the New Testament, not as barely mentioning sin, but as presenting the fact and reality of sin so convincingly there is no question about its being real! "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23).

THE FOUNDATION OF SIN

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would convince of sin "because they believe not on me." (John 16:8.). Jesus seems to have singled out the sin of not believing on him as a prime offense against God. Obviously, the "sin that doth so easily beset us" is the sin of unbelief. (Hebrews 12:1.). Sin springs from unbelief; from refusal to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that he has all authority. Not believing in Jesus means not trusting in him; not having confidence in him; not believing he has all authority. Refusal to believe in Jesus in this sense fills the world with vice; it overflows the land with sin.

Unbelief lurked in the heart of Judas. Unbelief caused the motley crew to cry out "crucify him, crucify him." Unbelief nailed Jesus to the cruel cross!

God has so arranged his scheme of things that it is actually easy to believe in Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour of the world. If one does not believe the truth about Jesus he will have to believe other things about him which are much more difficult to believe than believing the truth about him. It is easier and more reasonable to believe the truth about Jesus than to believe anything else about him. "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." (1 John 3:23.). Believing on Jesus is obedience to God! Truly believing on Jesus is a great restraining power in one's life. A man who truly believes on the Lord orders his life according to the Lord's will. Think of the vice, debauchery, immorality, crime and disobedience that would be eliminated were all to truly believe on Jesus.

THE FOLLY OF SIN

The Holy Spirit convinces us of sin's awful folly. Just the sin of rejecting Jesus is colossal folly, because the sin of rejecting Jesus is sin against sin's only cure. If a dying man rejected the one loving physician who could save his life he would be a fool indeed.

The folly of sin is seen in its deception. There is no one formal definition of sin in the Bible intended to be an adequate description of sin, but sin is best defined in terms of its great power to deceive and also in its awful consequences.

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death". (James 1:13-15.). Sin is so deceptive that it can make you think you are on the road to happiness when you are on the road to death!

In West Tennessee where I grew up, we used to have "hog killing day." That was a big event. A hog would be led to his slaughtering place with a bucket of feed. He thought he was going to be fed when he was going to be dead! So it is with sin! Sin deceives by making people think they are really living when they are really dying.

If I should tell a group of young people they could fly through the air without wings, parachute or anything, I would be telling the truth. One can go up in an airplane, jump out and plunge through the air at great speed without any effort! But, of course he will hit the ground and be killed! Sin fails to tell that ground hitting time will come! Sin is deceptive.

Sin's folly is also seen in its consequences. One may get rid of the guilt of sin by getting God's forgiveness and not get rid of all of the consequences of sin. The scars of sin may linger as long as one lives, even though the sin is forgiven.

The story is told of a man who reared his boys and taught

them the wrong way of life by word and deed. He drank whisky with them; he involved his sons in fights and brawls along with himself. Finally two of his sons were killed in one of these escapades. Later the father became very religious. He went from place to place trying to correct things he had done that were wrong. Each time he made restitution he would say, "That takes care of that." He went by the cemetery on his way home one time and seeing the graves of his sons, he said, "I can't take care of that." Sin's folly is magnified by its painful and sorrowful consequences!

THE FILTH OF SIN

The Holy Spirit convinces the reader of the New Testament concerning the filth of sin. "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls." (James 1:21.). Peter pictured a Christian's returning to a sinful worldly life as being like a dog returning of his own vomit and a sow to her wallowing in the mire. (2 Peter 2:22.). The world has glorified sin, or made it to appear all right; the world continues to do this. For an example, the world calls fornication, love! But fornication is a translation of the Greek word which means filth. But all sin is filthy in God's sight.

God loathes, detests, despises and abhors sin while those who practice it may smile upon it. Sin is so bad in God's sight that in his infinite wisdom only his sinless Son could suffice as a sacrifice for it. Any honoring of sin is an impeachment upon the infinite wisdom of God almighty!

THE FOUNTAIN OF SIN

The fountain of sin is the human heart. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man." (Mark 7:21-23.)

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9.)

Some ask, "why did God make man so he could sin?" One might as well ask: "Why did God make water so it would drown people?" Or, "Why did God make fire so it would burn?" If water would not drown, neither would it satisfy man's thirst or wash his body. If fire would not burn man's flesh, neither would it cook his food!

Here is a question for the person who may ask why God made him so he could sin. Would you want to be changed and made some other way? Would you want to be made so you could not sin?

If man had not been made as he is, he would not be capable of vice or virtue. He would not be subject to reward or punishment. He would not be of any more moral degradation or elevation than a mole or a bat.

With being a man, a free moral agent, there goes the possibility of his deviation and failure, as surely as the possibility for his accomplishing rewarding, and fruitful deeds. To deprive man of his ability to fall would likewise deprive him of all ability to rise, and it would rob him of any sense of accomplishment!

THE FRUIT OF SIN

Sin destroys both body and soul. Those who sow to the flesh, reap corruption. (Galatians 6:7, 8.) The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23.) He who serves sin pays his own wages in that he pays with himself being eternally separated from God and all the redeemed eternally, if he does not renounce sin.

Lost

Charles Cook

The saddest word in the English language is the word "lost."

Imagine being lost for a week in a dense jungle or the frozen arctic or some barren desert. Imagine how dreadful that would be. But to be lost for eternity is beyond our ability to imagine; it is unfathomable. The matter becomes even more unthinkable when one considers that more than 5 billion souls upon this globe are facing the prospect of being separated eternally from their Creator . . . lost in eternity. The problem, of course, is sin, which separate us from God (Isaiah 59:1,2).

There are those who argue that the ignorant masses of the world who never have heard of Jesus and His saving gospel are safe. After all, a loving Creator never would condemn them to eternal separation simply because they never heard the gospel. And, that is right; He wouldn't.

You see, the Bible says the problem is not with God, but with man. The Bible says, "all have sinned and fallen short of God's standard." Thus, they are unsuited for God's perfect heaven (Romans 3:10,23). We fail to understand the nature of sin. It separates us from God's fellowship, and its paycheck is death (Romans 6:23). We further fail to understand why Jesus had to die; He died to save us from our sins (Romans 5:8;2 Corinthians 5:21). People are not lost because they have not heard the Good News about salvation in Jesus; they are lost because of their own personal sins (Ezekiel 18:20). Christ commissioned all of His followers to take the saving power of His gospel to all the nations (Matthew 28:19,20).

The whole human race that is of an accountable age has sinned and thus has separated itself from God. Jesus came teaching, "I am the way . . . no man comes to the Father except by Me" (John 14:6). Jesus also said, "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me" (John 6:45). God gave the sacrifice of His "only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). All men are lost. What they need is to hear about Jesus' power to save and then to accept Him (John 1:12).

We Christians need to rethink this elementary teaching and

re-evaluate our attitudes toward those who never have heard of Jesus. All mankind; whether here or abroad, is responsible for its lostness. But our love for their souls should be like the love of God who made the ultimate sacrifice toward savingt he lost. God's sacrifice was unto blood. Our sacrifice is to give ourselves to the task of carrying the saving message of Jesus to those lost as we once were. To do this job some may need only to teach their neighbors while others will have to cross many seas . . . but the job must be done. The lost are depending on us.

Neither Cold nor Hot

W. Edwin Kearley

To the church at Laodicea John was inspired to write :

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and, increased with goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see (Revelation 3:15-18 KJV).

Those who composed the church at Laodicea felt themselves a superaffluent society. Their life was flowing along encountering no obstacles. All of their wants were being filled, and they were in a self-satisfied state. But they were blind to their real spiritual condition. John sought to reveal to them their actual state.

Many in the Lord's church today stand where the church at Laodicea stood: The only thing that matters is their standard of economic living. Too many wake up after selfishness has destroyed

their homes or themselves. They may awake to their spiritual needs after their children have left home without spiritual training and conversion to Christ.

John counseled the church at Laodicea to open its eyes to see that it was naked spiritually. Today, many who are doing well economically are spiritually naked. They have very little knowledge of the Word of God. Some are depending on the preacher to do their studying for them. Others are not concerned at all, or they are defiant of God and His Word.

Neutrality is a position desired by many. Jesus stated, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). Jesus will not accept neutrality. Either we are actively engaged in His Kingdom, or we are registered by Christ as being against His righteousness and kingdom (Matthew 6:33).

Let's ask ourselves the following questions:

Do you take the stance of neutrality concerning the deity of Christ? The Bible declares Jesus was born of a virgin and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20). Paul gives a list of eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). On the road to Damascus, Paul was the last eyewitness. On the Day of Pentecost, no one challenged Peter's declaration: "Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24).

Do you take a stand on the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures? Peter declared, "But men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). Paul affirmed, "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:13 ASV). Therefore, we have Paul's testimony concerning the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures.

Are you a member of the church Jesus purchased with His

blood? He promised to build it (Matthew 16:18). He shed His blood to purchase it (Acts 20:28). The first saved were added to it on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection from the grave (Acts 2:41, 47). If you have done what they did, you are a member of Christ's church.

Are you zealous for the cause of Christ? The apostles were zealous enough to give their lives for the cause of Christ. History tells us only John died a natural death. However, he suffered much for his faith. How much does the Lord's cause mean to you? How active are you in His vineyard?

Are you morally pure? Are you a stumbling block to others, or are you an example of purity? (Matthew 5:13-16).

How do you view your spiritual responsibility to your children? I have heard some say, "I will wait until he is grown and let him decide." The truth of the matter is that he is making his decision every day. He is not living in a vacuum. His life is being molded by what he sees, hears and learns each day. Two forces are vying for his allegiance. The forces of evil influenced by the devil are on one side. The forces of righteousness influenced by God are on the other side. All religion is not good. The Bible, the Word of God, is the standard of righteousness. You need to teach him and allow him to be taught the Word of God now, without addition to or subtraction from the Word of God.

Are you dead spiritually? Or are you alive and on fire for the Lord? Or are you lukewarm? Only those on fire for righteousness are pleasing to God. The lukewarm make Him sick at His stomach

Rise Up In God

Pearly David

The Bible says, All have sinned and therefore fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Walking through the foggy routes of our lives, we, many a

times find ourselves away from God, living in sin. Even being Christians, children of God, we fail to do what is right and what our Heavenly Father expects of us. Instead of patterning our lives after His Son, we try to follow the world.

Every person has two personalities, the outward which is physical, and the inward which is spiritual. God has created every person as a responsible being and has fixed a great responsibility on each individual that one should be very much careful about his or her conduct as we live in this world. If a person follows God's standard then the two human personalities would remain in perfect harmony after the will of God. But if a person leaves God's way and persists living in sin against God's will, then there comes imbalance. And if such imbalance continues then the spiritual person would be paralysed. It would be as if a mother takes care of only one of her two children, but neglects the other, resulting in loosing of that neglected child ultimately. In that case, mother is the one to be blamed for the loss.

If the spiritual side of a man is not healthy due to leading a sinful life, his soul gets separated from God, and thus dies. (Isaiah 59:1, 2).

What must one do then to come back to God, to be alive spiritually again? Is it possible? Or is a person lost forever? How suffocating these questions would be if we did not have a God who is concerned about us and who loves us and is feady always to forgive us.

As it is well said, if there is a will then there is a way. The way which brings back one to God again is repentance and submission to His will. One ought to realise that he has sinned and must be willing to submit himself to the will of God. Like a loving Father God awaits all his erring children to turn to Him with repentance and obedience so that He could embrace them with love and forgiveness. Remember the story of the prodigal son. (Luke 15). The prodigal left his father's house in search of worldly pleasures, and then at the end of all the fun he landed into a shameful situation, without any of those friends who once

were with him in his "good time". But then, when the prodigal returns to his father's house and asks forgiveness of his sins, his father readily forgave him and gave him much more than he really deserved. To others his father said, "For this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." (Luke 15:24).

Our God is Just and Almighty, but one more remarkable fact about Him is that He is our Father. He loves His children and forgives them, when they repent of their sins and ask His forgiveness. In fact, He is ready to forgive all, because He commands all to believe in His Son Christ (John 3:16), who has died for our sins on the cross, and he commands all to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 2:38).

Once one has come back to God with faith, repentance and obedience then he is required to guard his salvation with armour of faith, and the sword of righteousness, which is the word of God, so that he might not be lost again in sin. As we read in Ephesians 6:10-16, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the viles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one". And with that I would say—"Onward Christian soldiers."