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The Mysteries of God

The New Testament speaks often of the mysteries of God. This is further defined as the mystery of Christ, the mystery of faith, and the mystery of the gospel. What does all of this mean?

A mystery is that which is puzzling, secret, that which we know little about, or that which is difficult to understand. Scripturally and spiritually, it may be that which has not been revealed to us or explained to the point that we can understand it. Perhaps in many cases we have not studied sufficiently to know the truth about the matter.

From the time of creation, God had many things planned for man and his salvation. Not all of this was revealed at once. There were promises, prophecies, and the oral and written word through which God, little by little, made known his will. Back under the Old Testament period, in particular, many of the things that were yet to come were couched in mystery. As it has often been explained, at first the people lived in a period of time that might be described as the Patriarchal age or the starlight age. That is,

they had some light, but not enough to fully understand what God had in store for them. Next, there was the Mosaical age or the moonlight age. There was more light than before, but there were still many things yet to be explained. Finally, the Christian age or the sunlight age came. This has become known as being a period of time in which the major mysteries of God and salvation have been made known to man.

But thinking about the days of Christ and the apostles, just prior to the ushering in of the Christian dispensation, the people as a whole, and even the apostles, did not fully understand all the things that the Lord was trying to tell them. For instance, the apostles did not comprehend the sayings of Christ concerning the fulfillment of the law, his promise of rising from the grave, the establishment of the kingdom, the new birth, and so many other things. This was why it was necessary for the Holy Spirit to be sent to guide them into all truth.

When Christ was asked by the disciples why he spoke in parables, he said, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 13:11). Paul said that he would not have his brethren to be ignorant concerning the mystery of the Gentiles being accepted of God as well as the Jews. (Romans 11:25). On another occasion, he said, "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." (Romans 16:25, 26).

Christ himself worked primarily among the Jews, and even the first time the Lord sent the apostles out he gave them what is called the limited commission, meaning that they were sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel or to the Jews. (Matthew 10). Even on the day of Pentecost, the gospel was preached only to the Jews. (Acts 2). Later it was preached to the Gentiles. (Acts 10). Of course this was in keeping with the great commission that had already been given, that the gospel was to be taken to every creature under heaven. (Mark 16:15, 16). We can see, though,

that all of this did not happen overnight, but that it took time. With the passing of time, they became more fully acquainted with the whole will of God and were therefore better prepared to bear it or to understand it.

Paul said to the Christians at Corinth, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of this world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can we know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:7-16). He goes on to refer to himself and other ministers of Christ as being the stewards of the mysteries of God. (1 Corinthians 4:1). As such, as preachers of God, he was saying that they were entrusted with the truths of God and that the Lord expected them to proclaim those truths to the world.

In writing to the Christians at Ephesus, Paul said that he had made known to him the mystery of Christ's will. (Ephesians 1:9). In Ephesians 3:3, 4, he said that the Lord had made known unto him the mystery of Christ and salvation by revelation. He went on to say that one of the mysteries was how Gentiles could be fellow heirs in the same body or church and partakers of the promise by the gospel. Continuing, he said, "Wherefore I was made

a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me who am less than the least of the saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 3:7-10). In Ephesians 6:19 Paul asked that they pray that he might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. In Colossians 4:3 he talked of the mystery of Christ and the church.

In all of these verses, and others we could refer to, the writer is saying that the mysteries concerning Christ, the gospel, the church, the bringing together of Jews and Gentiles, have now been made known. The truths concerning them have now been revealed and it is up to man to read, study, believe and obey those truths that he might be saved.

Sad to say, however, even to this day some still look upon God's will, the church, and such like as being a mystery, something that is hard to understand and to accept. Such people dwell in ignorance, darkness, and in a lost state, because they themselves choose to do so. All who desire to know God's will may know it. It has been revealed for that purpose. The mystery has been replaced with knowledge. The only mystery that remains is why all do not understand, and why all do not take advantage of the opportunity to be saved.



**associate
editorial**

Where Art Thou?

When man in the beginning sinned by breaking God's commandment and consequently wanted to hide himself from God, the Lord God asked him the question: "Where art thou?" The

Lord, no doubt, knew exactly where Adam was. He asked him this question, however, to show Adam where in fact he was. Adam was in a wrong place. He was in sin, in shame, and in rebellion. Perhaps Adam himself didn't realize where he was actually until God asked him the question under consideration. It was surely a soul searching question for Adam and Eve, Adam's wife. And as I think about this question today, I believe it still is a very thought provoking and soul searching question for every one of us. "Where art thou?" Let us examine ourselves in light of this question to ascertain where we are spiritually today.

In the way, or in some way?

The wise man, in Proverbs 14:12, wrote, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." In John 14:6 Christ declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Therefore, if we are not in Christ today then we are not in the way of God. We have heard it said that there are many ways but they all leads to the same destination. In a way this statement is true, because they all lead to spiritual death, to eternal separation from God. But the way that leads man to God is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the way which God authorized and provided for man. (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By God's will in his death he suffered the consequences of Man's sin (Romans 3:23; 6:23), and by shedding his blood he provided the atonement for man's sins (Romans 5:9-31), and thus became the propitiation for the sins of the World. (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Are you in the way of God?

In sin or in Christ?

The Bible in Romans 8:1 declares: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Since there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ, therefore it follows that all those who are not in Christ are in sin. Because the cause of condemnation is sin. All fall short of the glory of God, the Bible says, because of sin. (Romans 3:23). And the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), separation from God (Isaiah 59:1,2), which means condemnation in hell.

(Revelation 21:8). But to them who are in Christ there is no condemnation. Because in him they have received the redemption and the forgiveness of their sins. (Colossians 1:14). They have been reconciled to God through the sacrificial death of His Son Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17, 21; Romans 5:8-10). Jesus said, he who believes on me and is baptized, (immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins, Acts 2:38 and 8:35-39), shall be saved from his sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16). The Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul declared, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27). Thus when we obey the command of Jesus, the Saviour, he saves us from our sins, and we put him on us. Then being in him we have the hope of salvation. (Romans 5:5-9). Because we have the assurance that he died on the cross to redeem us from sin. (John 3:16). Are you in Christ?

In Christ's doctrine or in man's doctrine?

It is not enough to believe in Christ or to enter Christ by obeying his command, but the most important thing is to abide in the teaching of Christ. Because the Bible teaches, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9). As believers in Christ we ought to examine ourselves, our faith, our practices, in light of the teachings of the New Testament of Christ to ascertain whether we are in the doctrine of Christ or we are following traditions of men. This means we should ascertain whatever we do, believe and practice religiously that must be supported by the New Testament of Christ. If a thing is neither commanded nor shown by example in the New Testament of Christ, which contains his doctrine, then we should not practice it religiously. Jesus, quoting the prophet Isaiah, in Matthew 15:8,9, said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Thus if our worship is not in harmony with the revealed doctrine of Christ in the New Testament then it would be in vain, and the same would be true about every thing else that we do religiously. When we do not

abide in the doctrine of the Son of God, which he has given us in his New Testament, then we go beyond his doctrine and transgress. Believe it or not but this is an undeniable fact that most of the things practised today religiously in the name of Christianity under Catholicism and Protestantism are not authorised by the New Testament of Christ, and therefore are not the doctrine of Christ. If you will honestly and sincerely examine this fact in the light of the New Testament teaching, you will find that this is true. Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48). Are you ready? Are you in the doctrine of Christ? where are you?

Biblical Evidences Of The Faith That Justifies

Max R. Miller

Justifying faith obtains a good report in the presence of the Almighty. (Heb. 11:2). Faith is the invariable, indispensable and irreplaceable condition for the attainment and maintenance of the right relationship of man with God. Without this faith man cannot have that right relationship with God. (Heb. 11:6). The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, after defining faith (Heb. 11:1), sets forth the principle of attaining and maintaining the approved relationship of man and God, and throughout the remainder of the eleventh chapter furnishes proof of his assertion. Abel, Enoch, Noah and others related to God in the approved way, through faith. Men in all ages, even now, favourably relate to God on the basis of that age-old principle of justification by faith.

Justifying faith is a sacrificing faith. This is demonstrated in Abel who offered "a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. 11:4). The acceptability of the sacrifice is determined by the matter of faith. Amram and Jochebed, willingly sacrificed the son of their love "because they saw he was a proper child" (Heb. 11:23).

Women were willing to sacrifice their men for the righteousness of God and for the glory and preservation of God's Israel. (Heb. 11:35).

The faith that justifies overcomes seemingly insurmountable barriers which could not be overcome in any other way. Physical deadness of the womb of Sarah, the deadness also in Abraham's loins gave way to the power of faith and brought forth life according to the promise. The Red Sea proved to be no barrier to Israel in their march to Zion for "by faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land." (Heb. 11:29). The impregnable walls of Jericho "by faith fell down." (Heb. 11:30). Jesus taught His disciples that the force of faith was such that it moved mountains; so what were the walls of Jericho!

Justifying faith imparts great strength to those who are bowed down in frailty and weakness. It freed the people of God from their enemy, the tyrant Pharaoh; it gave them release from the victory over the taskmasters of Egypt. Sarah, ravaged by the erosion of her great age "through faith...received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." (Heb. 11:11). The Prophets and Judges of old "out of weakness were made strong." (Heb. 11:34). The Apostle Paul, realizing his human frailties, knowing that faith was strength said, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for where I am weak then I am strong." (2 Cor. 12:10). He rejoiced in that he could do all things through Christ, the Christ who gave him his strength. (Phil. 4:13). The faith that justifies is a faith that fights. Without the fight of faith there can be no battle won, no crown to wear. "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life," was Paul's admonition to Timothy. Paul, and all the children of God who stand in His presence justified, knew what the fight of faith was all about: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." He instructed the children of God to put on the whole armour of God, taking the shield of faith that they might stand victoriously (Eph. 6:11-18). As the battle is waged often against unseen powers of darkness, so

also the source and power of the weapons of our warfare are unseen: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." (2 Cor. 10:4). "Time would fail me to tell of Gideon and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae, of David also" and multitudes of others of both the Old and New Testament dispensations who have mightily prevailed victorious in the battle of faith. A great consolation comforts the soul of the faithful warrior who is able to say as did Paul, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

The faith that justifies is a faith that fears yet a faith that fears not. There truly is the righteous fear of God. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; for our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 10:31; 12:29). "Noah, being warned of God," moved with pious fear and foresight, in preparing the ark. Moses, having seen God's wrath poured out on sinful and rebellious Egypt held a holy and righteous fear of that wrath lest it be directed toward himself. The wisdom of faith is to fear God and keep His commandments. (Psa. 111:10; Eccl. 12:13).

And there is an aspect of fearlessness in this faith. Where men are justified in fearing God, the justified have no need to fear man. Moses' parents, without fear of Pharaoh, did what they believed to be right in the hiding of their son. (Heb. 11:23). Naturally, in the time of trial their son followed their example and foresook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the King." (Heb. 11:27). The confidence of faith speaks to trembling hearts and says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." So that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Heb. 13:5, 6).

One of the most outstanding and basic qualities of the faith that justifies is its element of obedience. The gospel of Christ, the word of God, is the source of faith. (Rom. 10:17); the gospel was given "for obedience to the faith among all nations." (Rom. 1:5;

16:26). Condemnation comes to those who obey not the gospel of truth. (Rom. 2:8, 9; 2 Thess. 1:8, 9). Justifying faith is demonstrated in that Abel offered, Enoch walked, Noah prepared, Abraham obeyed and he went out. "Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac." Israel passed through the Red Sea, the walls of Jericho fell. These all are illustrations of obedient faith, actions that would have had no redeeming quality had they not all been prompted by obedience. "He that...worketh righteousness is accepted with him" was Peter's manner of expressing the fact that in one's obedience to the will of God he "worketh righteousness" and is accepted or approved of God. Nowhere do we find fruitful and justifying faith to be secured only in a mental concept of belief. Always there is the physical, mental and spiritual activity of active faith. One is to "work out" his salvation "for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Phil. 2:12; Eph. 2:10). Such works are the works of obedient and justifying faith.

The faith that justifies is one that is able to see the invisible! "Through faith we understand" (that is, seeing with the mind) things that one could not know or understand in any other way. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." (Heb. 11:3). Not only do we see, or understand, how that out of nothing all creation exists; that the word of God is of such power that at His word all these things came into existence; but through faith we also understand the nature and personality of Deity. Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit said regarding this, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." (Rom. 1:20). The personality of Father, Son, and Spirit can be known only by divine revelation. The created world lends understanding to this great revelation of Deity. So, through the eye of faith Moses, looking backward, understood the creation of the world and of man. (Gen. 1:3; 2:7). Looking forward he was also able to see "him who is invisible." (Heb. 11:27). It was through the eye of faith Paul saw the crowns laid up, crowns unseen by others, crowns reserved for those who loved and look for His reappearing. (2 Tim.

4:8). Abraham "looked for the city which hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. 11:10). John later was to describe the city as "the holy city, New Jerusalem," the home of the souls of those justified by faith.

The faith that justifies overcomes death. Abel, even after physical death "yet speaketh" to later generations. (Gen. 4:10; Heb. 11:4). Enoch, for his faith, was spared physical death (Heb. 11:5). Abraham, though he would kill his son Isaac, believed that "God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." (Heb. 11:19). Rahab perished not for "Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive;" by faith she "perished not with them that believed not." (Josh. 6:25; Heb. 11:31). Hebrew women by faith received their dead raised to life again; their faith was that they would obtain a better resurrection than a mere restoration to physical, earthly existence. (Heb. 11:35). John's victory of faith over the world includes a victory over death and the grave. (1 John 5:4).

And certainly, justifying faith patiently endures all the conflicts of life, all its burdens, pains and hurts. Our faith must endure. Abraham patiently sojourned awaiting his heavenly inheritance. "And others had trial of cruel makings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned. They were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy) they wandered in deserts, and mountains and dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." (Heb. 11:36-40).

Conclusion

We today are deeply indebted to God who has so wonderfully shown us what it means to be justified by faith. We are to be grateful that He has made His revelation of truth to us and that He has providentially preserved that truth unto all generations, yea, forever. We too should have a high regard for those who have lived before us and have demonstrated by their precious examples just what faith really is and how it is to be recognized.

Today we should realize that Christ is the object of our faith. His word is the source of our faith; He has provided salvation by obedience to the faith, and the heavenly home is the ultimate victory of faith.

Saved Or Lost? Because Of You!

Salt, or stumbling block? Which one is it? Ideally, the Christian is the salt of the earth, the light of the world. He is one who has an influence for good to save souls, to lead them from darkness into the light of Christ. Unfortunately, some who profess to be Christian are not that salt, light, influence for good and salvation. Some are stumbling blocks, obstacles in the paths of others. Paul admonished "that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." (Rom. 14:13). There were those in the church of Pergamos who, like Baalam of old, were stumbling blocks to the children of God. (Rev. 2:14). The Christian is created "unto good works, which God hath before ordained." Certainly, God did not create him for the destructive work of causing others to be lost or making their salvation more difficult.

As salt or as a stumbling stone you, by now have caused someone to become a Christian—or become lost. The power of influence cannot be minimized. Good influence radiates into far places and effects many people. Bad influence does the same. No living soul is without influence. He influences someone somewhere.

Many Christians refuse to face the reality of their lives as the effects it has on the lives of others. Some women wonder why their husbands do not become Christians. The answer, in too many instances, is that the wife is a stumbling stone before her husband. This is also true of the husband toward his wife. Many children, as they mature, see the hypocrisy of their parents, yes parents who profess to be Christians, and later turn away from Christianity to the perplexity and confusion of their parents. Why so? Because the parents were stumbling stones rather than salt and light.

Many souls have been won to Christ by Christians who were not gifted teachers, who never preached a sermon or taught a class, but who showed the way to Christ to those who observed their life. Edgar Guest put it this way:

"I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day;

I'd rather one walk with me than merely tell the way."

There is more to Christianity than merely telling the way. There is the showing of the way.

Are there those in the world today who are not faithful to Christ—because you aren't? Are you a stumbling block to someone who would follow Christ—but for you?

Today—someone is saved because of you; or someone is lost because of you. What will it be tomorrow?

Divine Intervention

W. Ray Duncan

EVERYTHING that God made in the beginning was perfect, including man, but it was not long till man was seduced and ended in sin. In the first six chapters of Genesis almost two millenniums are passed and man becomes so sinful that God said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth." (Gen. 6:7). When man has altogether failed God comes in sovereign grace and manifests his saving power. Man's extremity has ever been God's opportunity. Man deserved to die, but in God's mercy man didn't have to die! Unless there was an immediate and great change in man the verdict was, "The end of all flesh is before me." (Gen. 6:13). Was what a poor end this was! "Evil, only evil, continually." The "daughters of men" (the carnally minded) had corrupted "the sons of God" (the spiritually minded), and to this day the "carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. 8:7). The carnal mind does the will of the flesh, and this is the precise reason that the Master said, "Ye must be born again." (John 3:3). There must be a change from doing the things of the flesh, and a turning to obeying the will of God. (See Heb. 5:8).

THE PLAN that God proposed was given, "God said to Noah...make thee an ark of gopher wood..." (Gen. 6:13,14). Noah and his family could never have escaped the flood had not God been pleased to reveal this way of deliverance. Revelation plus inspiration equals the infallible way of deliverance. Paul argued that no man can know the mind of God without this revelation. (See I Cor. 2:12,13). This is why faithful gospel preachers insist that unless "it is written in God's word, reject it." Jude said that the will of God has "once for all" been delivered to the saints! There are no fresh revelations today—we are all dependent on the written word of God. God's plan for our deliverance from sin is just as clearly given as it was to the people of Noah's day. There was no reason for anyone to be drowned in the flood just as there is no reason for anyone to be destroyed by the fires of hell. But it was repent or drown, and now it is "turn or burn." (Luke 13:3, 5).

THE WARNING was plain, "Behold I, even I, will bring a flood." (Gen. 6:17). How gracious is our God in giving us a Redeemer and providing a refuge in Christ. Beginning with the message of John on down to the last writer of the New Testament He has warned us of "the wrath to come" (Luke 3:7; II Pet. 3:9, 10; Rev. 6:13-17). New Testament readers cannot be ignorant, but that Jesus will come, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (II Thess. 1:8,9).

NOAH and all the obedient were invited, "Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark" (Gen. 7:1) He who made the provisions sends forth the invitation. The call of Jesus to a lost world is, "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." (Matt. 22:9). In Noah's day all who refused to hear the call were drowned. In our day the Scriptures say, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3). It is God's gracious purpose to save you and your household just as he saved the Philippian jailor and his household, but like them, you must hear the gospel with more than a passive "faith." Your faith must exercise you to obedience just like it did the Philippian jailor. (Acts 16:33; 34).

Isn't it wonderful that when we enter at God's invitation that there is divine security. "The Lord shut him in." (Gen. 7:16). When God shuts them in there is safety. Jesus said, "My Father, which gave them to me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my hand." (Jn. 10:29). Now, he did not say that "no man can get out of my hand," but that you and the Lord are a majority—and without your consent "no man" can pluck you out. To be shut in by God is to be shut out from the world, and this is the life that Christians live!

When sin has made havoc of your life, when you feel that all is hopeless and there is no way out—why not try the life that Christians live? No case is too hard for God; in fact no case is even difficult for him. Give him your heart, obey his commands, receive his blessings!

God's Drawing Power

IVIE POWELL

From reading many advertisements, one would think (and rightly so) that many religious groups have gone into the entertainment field to draw crowds. Every tactic imaginable is implemented from magicians, puppets, to sport celebrities; all in an effort to create interest and get the folks out.

Beloved, we must keep in mind, that the only authorized drawing agent is the pure, unadulterated gospel of Christ! "No Man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me." (Jno. 6:44-45).

Again we are told what God's drawing agent is in Romans 1:16-17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness

of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written. The Just shall live by faith." Writing to the Thessalonians, Paul said, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2:14).

Neither God nor His people are in the entertainment business. If one has to resort to such tactics to draw folks then one thing is certain they aren't using God's only authorized drawing agent—the glorious gospel of Christ!

"I Won't Argue About The Bible"

Grady M. Miller

Perhaps you have heard the popular expression, "I just won't argue about the Bible." It may even be that this is your feeling on the matter. It is certainly understandable—at least to a degree. After all, we have all seen abuses of what should be open discussions about God's word. Too often, a candid discussion about the Bible among friends turns into a hateful, name-calling brawl, something completely foreign to the spirit of Christ. Naturally, this offends many sincere people and turns them against any discussion of honest disagreement about the Bible.

However, there are several inherent dangers in this attitude which we must face. There are some, for example, who will not discuss the Bible because they believe that it really doesn't matter what you believe about it, so long as you believe something—an idea found nowhere in all of Scripture. Then again, some refuse to engage in a Biblically oriented discussion because they feel that it is unimportant, that their time could be spent more profitably, or that it will do no good since, after all, "you can prove anything by the Bible." And, no doubt, there are many who refuse to discuss the Bible and their faith because of a lack of courage.

Nevertheless, we must take to heart Jude's exhortation to the saints of his day: "Beloved, when I gave diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write

-unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once (for all—ASV) delivered unto the saints:” (Jude 3). There can be no shirking from duty on this point: we simply must contend for and defend the faith—the gospel of Jesus Christ. To remain silent when truth is attacked is contrary to the express command of Scripture! Moreover, we are also encouraged to have a ready answer should someone ask us what we believe and teach. (1 Peter 3:15). There is a time and a place for us to discuss and, yes, even dispute with others concerning the meaning of God’s revelation unto man.

To reject this duty would be an indictment against many faithful warriors of years gone by. For instance, consider Elijah and his confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, recorded in I Kings 18. Stephen alluded to the continual disputations between the Hebrew prophets and the Jewish fathers in Acts 7, where in verses 51-52 he declared, “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One...” We need to learn from the example of Elijah and so many others who would not sit idly by and let the stronghold of truth be torn down.

In fact, what about Jesus Christ himself? Christ was, of course, the greatest controversialist of any age! Jesus divided families, one member against another; Jesus locked horns with the scribes and Pharisees on any number of occasions as He sought to lead the people closer to God. And what of Paul, His chosen apostle? In Acts 17:2, 3 we find him in Thessalonica reasoning with the Jews from Scripture, “opening and alleging” that Jesus is Lord. The Apostle Paul argued about the Bible! !

Surely, we too must see the need of discussing God’s word with others. On occasion, there will arise the need to contend for the truth of the gospel. (cf. Galatians 2:5). Nevertheless, let us recognize that there is a right way and a wrong way to discuss the Bible. When we get ugly and bitter; when the best attack against a person’s belief seems to be a personal attack against his family, reputation, race or whatever; when we become master of deceit,

as were the Pharisees, then we have abused our right and responsibility to reason with any man. However, when it is evident to all that we are seeking to uphold truth in the spirit of love (Eph. 4:15); when we are "wise as serpents but gentle as doves," then we are following the perfect example of our Lord. This is the only proper way to "earnestly contend for the faith."

God Draws, Calls And Saves By The Gospel

God's purpose for the gospel is greatly disregarded by so many people. Denominationalists, while giving lip service to the greatness of the word of God, generally deny God's purpose for the gospel. Most of them, if not all, claim salvation through some direct manifestation of God's power, grace, love, or whatever.

Draws By His Word

Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:44). This passage definitely teaches that those who come to Christ are drawn to Him by God. Some teach that this drawing is mysterious, better felt than explained. Others declare the drawing to be miraculous in its nature. Many deceived and mistaught souls have long waited, prayed fervently, and finally despaired when no miraculous or mysterious power of the Almighty drew them from their lost state to the loving side of the Saviour.

One needs not be confused about God's power to draw the sinner to Christ if they would consider the verse following (v. 45). There Jesus said "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Plainly, those who come to Christ are those who have been taught; those who have heard and learned. That which they heard, were taught and learned was that which brought them to Christ. Therefore the teachings

of God, the gospel of God (Rom. 1:1), is God's drawing power to bring men unto Christ. No mysterious or miraculous power is needed. The gospel is able to do that which God intended it to do.

Called By The Gospel

Paul declares to the Thessalonians that God "called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:14). The call to salvation is not "a wee small voice," neither is it the voice of God shouting from the thunder of heaven, nor is it the voice of the inner conscience of man. Jesus said, "come unto me..." He calls. Men learn how to come to Him by hearing the word of God and submitting thereto. It is plainly stated that one is called by the gospel. This is no mysterious calling. None need await that calling for the call rings forth now for all to come to Christ and be saved. As one hears the gospel, believes and obeys it, one heeds God's calling and obtains the glory of salvation with Christ.

Saved By the Gospel

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..." (Rom. 1:16). Here the gospel is the power, not a power among many powers, but the exclusive power of God unto salvation. The basis of salvation is the grace of God and the blood of Christ. This salvation is communicated to man only in the gospel. God's plan of salvation, briefly comprehended is this: man is to believe that Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24), he is to repent or perish (Luke 13:5), he is to confess Him as the Son of God (Rom. 10:9, 10; Matt. 10:32, 33; Acts 8:37) and then to be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Rom. 6:3, 4; Acts 2:38). That plan for man is made known only in the gospel. There is no other plan, no other revelation other than that revealed in the gospel.

God draws men unto Christ through His truth. He calls sinners unto salvation by the gospel. His power of salvation is the gospel. The humble and pious accept with gratitude the gospel of the grace of God "...which is able to build you up, and

to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20:27, 32).

How To Overcome Satan (No. 2)

John Stacy

In last month's article we offered six suggestions that will help us overcome Satan.

Would like to add to these few more points that will help us defeat the archenemy of our souls.

New Birth

Certainly, the spiritual rebirth of a person can give him victory over Satan. Consider Jesus' discussion of the new birth in John 3:1-5, "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Note also the same terms in Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." John later declared, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." (I John 5:18).

Blood of Christ

The blood of Christ is one of the major defenses against the god of this world. We've inferred this in the previous points. But look at Revelation 12:11, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives upon the death." The blood of the Lamb not only helps us to overcome when we first obey the gospel, it helps us to keep on overcoming. I John 1:7 says to Christians, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The verb, "cleanseth" is a present tense verb and means that it keeps on cleansing on a daily, habitual basis!

Prayer

Prayer is another major weapon in the Christian's arsenal. Jesus prayed for Peter. He said, "...Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." (Luke 22:31, 32).

In the so called "Lord's Prayer" Jesus taught his disciples, "...but deliver us from the evil one." (Matt. 6:13). (See also Luke 22:40; Acts 2:42; Luke 18:1; I Thess. 5:17).

Fear of Hell

Surely, our fear of hell should serve as a deterrent to succumbing to the Devil. Please notice the following concerning hell: (Matt. 5:22, 29; 10:28; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 47-48). Hell is a place of no rest (Rev. 14:11). Hell is eternal (Matt. 25:46). It is a place of no hope (Prov. 11:7). Hell is darkness (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6, 13). Fire, smoke, and brimstone characterize hell! (Revelation 20:15; 14:11; 21:8; 20:10). Pain, unbearable pain will plague the damned forever and ever (Mark 9:47-48). All the scum, the garbage, the trash of humanity will inhabit hell along with the chief of sinners, Satan! No right thinking person wants to go to hell!

Heaven's Rewards

Finally, heaven with all of its rewards should motivate Christians to fight to win against the Devil. In heaven we'll receive the crown of life, white robes, an inheritance, mansions, and the right to eat of the tree of life. (Revelation 2:7, 10; 3:5; Rom. 8:17; John 14:13).

In heaven we'll be reunited with loved ones and friends that have gone before us (Luke 16:9, 19-31; Matt. 8:11; 17:31). In heaven we'll be free from sin, hunger, night, pain, tears, and death. (Revelation 21-22).

In heaven we'll be with God, the angels, and redeemed of all ages. (Rev. 7:1-17). Surely, every sane, sensible, rational, intelligent, God fearing, Christ loving person wants to go to heaven!

If we are overcome of Satan and stand with the goats on the left hand, we'll not be able to blame God, for not providing all we would ever need, to stand victorious at the end of time.

Let us say with Martin Luther:

“And though this world, with Devils filled

Should threaten to undo us,

We will not fear, for God hath willed:

His truth to triumph through us.

The prince of darkness Grim, we tremble not for him,

His rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure.”

Church Does Not Save!... Or Does It?

Thomas F. Eaves

Before we can accept the statement, or answer the question which gives title to this article, we must answer honestly from God's word the question “what is the church?”

The apostle Paul wrote thirteen or fourteen books of the New Testament. Several of these he addressed to churches, "the church of God which is at Corinth" (I Cor. 1:2), "churches of Galatia" (Gal. 1:2), "church of the Thessalonians in God," (I Thess. 1:1). From this use of the word church we understand that Paul was writing to groups of people. Not to just ordinary people however, but to people who had entered a new relationship with God and His Son Jesus Christ. The church at Corinth is referred to as "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints," (I Cor. 1:2), the church at Thessalonica as those "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." In Acts 2:47 we learn that the church is made up of those who are saved. It is true, the church does not save—IT IS THE SAVED. It consists of God's people.

Although salvation is attributed to several sources in the New Testament, it is never attributed to the church of Jesus Christ.

According to the scriptures we are saved by:

THE GRACE OF GOD: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8).

JESUS CHRIST: "And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21).

THE LIFE OF CHRIST: "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." (Rom. 5:10).

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST: "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we be saved from the wrath of God through him." (Rom. 5:9).

THE GOSPEL: "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believe in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received:

That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures." (I Cor. 15:1-4).

FAITH: "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1).

WORKS: "Ye see that by works a man is justified and not only by faith." (James 2:24).

CALLING ON HIM: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. 10:13).

BAPTISM: "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (I Pet. 3:21).

SAVING OURSELVES: "And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, save yourselves from this crooked generation." (Acts 2:40).

HOPE: "For in hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth?" (Rom. 8:24).

If The Church Does Not Save, It Is Important?

If the church of our Lord is not important, the greatest price known to mankind was paid for an unimportant institution. The church was purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:28). When men and women today, through their obedience to the Gospel, become united with Christ's death, and the blood He shed in His death (John 19:34; Rom. 6:1-6), they are added by God to the blood bought institution. (Acts 2:47).

The church is the spiritual body of Jesus Christ: "And he put all things in subjection under his feet; and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:22-23). "And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." (Col. 1:18). Christ has promised to save the body, "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body." (Eph. 5:23). Man can not enter the physical body of Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27), but he can enter the spiritual body of Christ, the church, upon his being cleansed by the blood of the Saviour.

Authority In The Church

As our physical bodies follow the dictates of our heads, the spiritual body of Christ (the church) follows the will of Christ (the head) and is subject to Him in all things. (Eph. 5:23). No man or group of men posses the authority to make rules or laws to govern the church of our Saviour. "And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." (Matt. 28:18). "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16-17). "Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue." (2 Pet. 1:3). This truth is also emphasized in the fact that Jesus Christ is a king, in His Kingdom. Paul writing to the church at Colossae spoke of them being in the kingdom: "who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col. 1:13). The apostle John also spoke of the seven churches of Asia as being a part of the kingdom, "...and made us to be a kingdom, to be priest unto God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever." (Rev. 1:6). The church is made up of the saved, God's people, saints. The government of these people is a monarchy—a kingdom. As King, Christ has absolute authority in His Kingdom, the church.

Mission Of The Church

The mission of the Lord's church is to bring a knowledge of Jesus Christ as Saviour to a world in sin (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47). It is increasingly evident that many are becoming concerned over the "new image" which some would impose on Christ's spiritual body. God's people, the church, stands for truth—the principles of Jesus Christ—but when men would make it a marching, demonstrating, boycotting, or political pressuring machine, it then becomes an instrument of men to accomplish their goals in society. The Scriptures (God's will for His people) teach that the church of Jesus Christ is to preach the gospel to every creature thus transforming, through obedience to the Good News, the lives of all. The concept of changing man's environment (physical

surroundings) to change the man is fallacious. Change the man through the gospel to a humble dedicated, obedient, member of the spiritual body of Christ and his very purpose in life changes—he becomes a new creature. (II Cor. 5:17).

Many problems in the labour field could be quickly remedied if the principles of Jesus Christ were inculcated by the employer and employee alike. Sign carrying, demonstrating groups will do little to foster better understanding and brotherly love.

As children of God the church will worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24), and they will also minister unto the physical needs of God's creatures, practicing the compassion taught by the Master Teacher. (Luke 10:25-37).

Membership In The Church

Membership in the church is open to all regardless of colour of complexion, station in life, or sins committed. (Mark 16:15; Acts 2:39). In Acts 2 the Jews who were guilty of the blood of God's Son were accepted into the church, Christ's spiritual body. Note the progression of events in the second chapter of Acts.

Peter preached Jesus Christ, 2:22-36.

The Jews responded, 2:37.

Peter answered their response, 2:38.

God added the obedient unto the church, 2:41,47.

No one voted on them, for no man has the power to decide whether or not another can obtain forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ and become a member of Christ's church.

Those on the day of Pentecost entered Christ's church or kingdom by obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ and being born of the water and of the Spirit. (John 3:5). Today, you have the same opportunity to become a member of the body of our Lord and to glorify Him by wearing the name Christian. Jesus invites, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28).

Faith Only?

Clifford Dixon

The most popular doctrine in Protestantism today is that man is saved by faith only. The Methodist Discipline states: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord

and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works of deservings; wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." (Articles of Religion, Article IX). The Baptist Way Book states, of justification, "that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the redeemer's blood; (Rom. 4:4, 5)." (Declaration of Faith, Article V). This by no means exhausts the number who believe this doctrine because most other Protestant bodies hold to the same view but these statements are representative of all who believe in justification by faith only. We shall notice this from the standpoint of their proof texts with answers thereto.

Why do these people hold to such a doctrine of salvation by faith only? Because of the statements made in John 3:14, 15, 16; John 3:36; 5:24; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5; Acts 16:31; Romans 5:1 and other passages that show salvation by faith. However, not one of these passages teach salvation by faith only. For instance, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). This teaches that the one believing in him should not perish—not that he was saved by faith only and would not perish. John 5:24 emphatically states, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation: but is passed from death unto life." This would have to read, "He that heareth my word, and believeth ONLY him that sent me, hath everlasting life..." to teach the doctrine of faith only. Justification is by faith but what kind of faith justifies? James answers this, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2:24). The kind of faith that saves is a faith that works in obedience to the Lord's commands. The proponents of salvation by faith only say that if a man had to do any thing to be saved then he would be working out his salvation and Paul said, "not of works lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8, 9). Now there are two kinds of works. There are works of human merit which will not save. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." (Rom. 10:3). Paul was praying that these people might be saved—they were lost because they were

trying to save themselves by righteousness of their own merit. However, we must work the works of God to be saved. Even faith is such a work. "Then said they unto him, what shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:28, 29). The house of Cornelius was told that God is no respecter of persons. "But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." (Acts 10:34, 35). Working the works of God, or working righteousness saves. Works of man's own merit will not save. It is works of man's own merit that was spoken of in Ephesians 2:8, 9.

Proponents of the doctrine of faith only feel that they have a case of salvation by faith only in the thief on the cross to whom Christ said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Lk. 23:43). The will of Christ had not been ratified when He told the thief this. He hadn't even commanded baptism. The thief wasn't any more commanded to be baptized with Great Commission baptism than was Abraham. While on earth Christ had power to forgive sins on any terms he chose. (Matt. 9:1-6). However, when He died and His will came into effect the only conditions of salvation are upon hearing, believing, and obeying the gospel (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38).

Proponents of the doctrine of faith only use the Philippian Jailer as a case of salvation by faith only, He asked the direct question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" and was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:30, 31). They feel that then and there the case closed. However, all you have to do is keep reading and you will find that he had to hear the word, he showed fruits of repentance by washing their stripes, and was baptized. Then the sacred record says he brought them into his house, set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house (Verses 32-34). This man is not an example of faith only but of faith working by love in obedience to the Lord's commands.

We have looked but have not found any cases of justification by faith only or faith alone in the New Testament. We have not found any passage that says or teaches salvation by faith only or faith alone. Though this is a popular doctrine among men it is not a New Testament doctrine.

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