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## The Traditions and Practices of Men

Many of the people in Jesus' day were very religious. This would have been fine had they been sincerely following God's law. Most of them, however, had gotten away from the will of God and were instead following the traditions and practices of men. For example, the scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus and asked, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." (Matthew 15:2). There was nothing wrong in one washing his hands before partaking of bread. Neither was it a sin to leave off washing one's hands before eating. But in the case of the scribes and Pharisees, they had so emphasized the importance of the washing of the hands before eating that they thought it was wrong when one failed to do so. In this case they had made a law where God had not made one. While they were finding fault with those who were not

following their traditions, they were the ones who were actually at fault.

How did the Lord respond to the foregoing? Did he agree with them, ignore them, or answer them? Hear him, as we read, "But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 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." (Matthew 15:1-9). As you can see, Jesus was not pleased with them at all. He explained that they were putting their tradition before God and therefore were transgressing his will. He further explained that they were hypocrites in that they drew near to God with their mouth but their heart was far from him. He concluded that their worship was in vain, or empty, it was according to the doctrines and commandment of men.

Again, Christ said, "For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." (Mark 7:8, 9). As you can see, the traditions of men, or the practices of men, had developed over the years and, although they were not according to God's will, still these people placed them before the commandments of God. They had been born into this tradition, conditioned by it, and were so controlled by the pressures put on them from their elders that they accepted the traditions and practices without question. The Lord condemned them for such blindness and for their failure to truly obey the God of heaven,

Paul, in referring to his situation before becoming a Christian, said, "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers." (Galatians 1:13, 14). After turning from such traditions, and becoming a Christian, Paul could say to the Colossian Christians, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Colossians 2:8). Going on, he said, "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?" (Colossians 2:20-22). On another occasion, Peter said to the Christians of his day, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot..." (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

On two other occasions, Paul encouraged Christians to follow the traditions that they had been taught by word or letter. He said, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Again, he said, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." (2 Thessalonians 3:6). The traditions that Paul speaks of were not the traditions of men, but the things that they were to practice as rules in the inspired word of the Lord. There certainly is a difference here.

But the practice of following the traditions of men was not peculiar only to the people of the first century. Down through the years, and even to this good day, this is one of the faults of man. How many people of our time are in the denominations of men, wearing the names of men, worshipping God in all kind of ways, engaging in all kinds of religious practices that are unknown to the

teaching of the Bible? Think of the many who are doing this without question. They are even sincere and zealous about the things that they do. Have you ever been to the "Holy Land" to observe all of the churches there erected over the so-called holy spots and to see all of the rituals and practices that people go through? These traditions have been handed down to them from generation to generation. Some may hardly even know why they do some of the things they do. They just do them because they have been trained from early life to do them. They do them out of habit. How sad!

Christmas, Easter, and many other religious days and practices are accepted and celebrated without question by the masses. Yet, there is no basis for them in the scriptures. All of these are observed merely because someone began some things hundreds of years ago and, with the passing of time and adding more customs to them, they have continued to be handed down from year to year right on up to the present time. These traditional things have become so binding that if one says anything against them, he may be accused of not believing in Christ and the Bible, when in reality such practices did not originate with God or His word. What if the Lord were living today in the flesh? What would he say about these things? But the real question would be, how many would take him seriously? Wouldn't the majority go on blindly doing what they want to do just as they did in the days when he taught the scribes and Pharisees?

Dear friends, we are asking you this most important question: Are you following Christ or the traditions of men? Please examine carefully the things that you do and say in the name of religion. Are you conditioned and programmed to do what you do regardless of what the Lord says, or are you putting forth every effort to be what the Lord would have you to be? a Christian only, and to be a faithful member of his church. Remember that Christ said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32),



**associate  
editorial**

## **“Ye Do Err, Not Knowing The Scriptures”**

During the time Jesus lived on earth there were two most popular religious sects called the Pharisees and the Sadducees. These people never did like the true and plain teaching of Christ. They were always scheming with how they might entangle Jesus in his talk. So they would often bring to him very tricky and mischievous questions with such intentions. On one occasion when Jesus had silenced the Pharisees by giving a very fitting answer to their question, the record in the Bible says, “The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, saying, Master, Moses said if a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living”. (Matthew 22:23-32). Thus we find once again that

Jesus gave them a scriptural and an appropriate answer to their question. But I want you to notice here especially the words of Jesus which he said to them, before giving the answer to their question. He told them, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God".

Not knowing the scriptures leads to error. We have often wondered as to why there are so many conflicting doctrines and faiths in Christianity today? Some have contended that it is just a matter of interpretation. But, if so, this also is a sin. Since the Bible warns us that no prophecy or teaching of the scriptures is of any private interpretation. (2 Peter 1:21). The real problem, however, lies in the fact that most people, and this would include preachers too, have never studied the scriptures as they should be studied and therefore they have not learned to handle aright the scriptures. (2 Timothy 2:15). Most people want to understand a verse or a passage of the scriptures through their denominational pre-conceived view or belief. To understand, instead of searching the scriptures themselves, (John 5:39), they have often consulted commentaries and other such books written by uninspired men and "Bible Scholars". Now don't misunderstand me, there is nothing wrong in consulting a commentary or a book as long as we are not carried away by the thoughts and beliefs of the author if they are not contained in the scriptures. But in reality, and in most cases, people do not want to consult the scriptures as much as they would want to consult a commentary to understand a certain passage of the Bible, or on a certain subject. Instead of leaning on God's book they lean much on the books written by men, and moreover, often they get so much impressed by the popularity and aducational background of the authos that they would accept him as the authority on the scriptures. Thus if the commentator or the "Scholar" teaches error on some subject then they would uphold that error, not as error but as truth. This is exactly what has happened in the last few hundred years, of which we are reaping the consequences now. Uninspired men, so-called scholars, years ago advocated salvation by faith alone, infant baptism, sprinkling for baptism, use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of God, calling the Lord's Supper a Sacrament and, instead of observing the Lord's Supper on every first



day of the week, observing it only once in a month, and in some cases only once or twice in a year, and several other unscriptural teachings. And millions of people today around the world uphold these teaching and doctrines of men, regardless of what the scriptures teach about them.

Often people have asked me the question, what about going to a seminary, or to what seminary should one go? My reply has been, and is: do not go to any seminary, if you really want to learn God's truth as is revealed in His word and want to be able to teach it to others. The reason is, if one would go to a certain denominational seminary, he would be the product of that particular denominational group. His belief and teaching would be the same as of the teachers and the professors of that seminary to which he went. Thus, if one went to a Pentecostal seminary, he would learn the Pentecostal teachings, and this is exactly what he would teach to others. Likewise, if one would go to the S.D.A. Seminary, he would come out as a teacher and promoter of the Seventh-Day-Adventism. You can't expect otherwise. The same will be true if one goes to a Baptist seminary or a Methodist seminary. The fact is, one can't learn God's truth from a seminary which is set up and run by a denominational church or which has teachers of denominational background. All denominational churches have different beliefs and convictions; if not, they would be all together and not divided. Yes, they all believe in the Bible, but they also believe as much in their creed books, such as the common prayer book, catechism, confession of faith, manual and discipline, etc. In fact, they are not divided on what the Bible teaches but on what men have taught in these different creed books. There is not a single denominational church on earth which follows the Bible only! And if a church follows the Bible only it cannot be a denomination. We can all agree on what the Bible teaches, but we cannot all agree on what men teach, because men teach different. We can all agree to be Christian only, but we cannot all agree to be Methodist or Baptist or Pentecostal only. Therefore, all the denominational churches today exist contrary to the will of God. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; John 17:20, 21). They err, not knowing what the scripture teach about the church and about the true religion of God.

To Timothy Paul wrote, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15). If we will study the scriptures discerningly, we will be able to know what they teach, and we will be able to teach them to others too. But we err when we do not know the scriptures.

## There Is One Faith

J. C. Choate

Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6). But how does faith come? It comes by hearing the word of God. (Romans 10:17). How many faiths are there? Just one. (Ephesians 4:5). If faith then comes by hearing the word of God, and all read and study the Bible, and believe it, how could there be more than one? If we read in the scripture that there is but one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one baptism, one church, one hope, etc., and we all believe that, then it stands to reason that we would all believe the same thing. If the Lord tells us in his word what we should do to be saved, the name we should wear, the kind of worship he wants, and how to live the Christian life, and we all believe that and do that, would we not all believe and do the same thing? The Bible teaches that there is but one faith. Man says that there are many. Which will you believe?

## Is God Real?

Hollis Miller

It is not uncommon for all of us to need help when we are establishing our faith that God is real. Perhaps this brief, non-technical, little article will be one source of such assistance.

How did we (and the universe about us) come to be? In seeking an explanation there are only two options open to us: (1) God, or (2) a wholly material substance of some kind. What, and how, do you think about this?

Does eternity (or infinity) not demand that "something" be present "in it" besides an absolute vacuum. A line of zeros a trillion miles long would still amount to a zero. Eternity would also amount to a zero unless "somewhere" one can find a numeral.

If all the material substance (such as stars, dust, and planets) in the entire universe should suddenly go "poof" and disappear, leaving an absolute material zero, would there be anything left? If so, what? If not, what would happen to space? Could anything ever get started again? If not, why not? If something could not get started, again, then how did something (as we now have it) ever get started?

Whatever occupies eternity **MUST** possess these characteristics: (1) It must be eternal. (2) It must have "built into itself" the power to be eternal—otherwise it could not be since there is nothing standing "behind" it. (3) It can never be destroyed. Could it be destroyed, it would not be eternal. In your opinion what is the best answer to these three "musts"?

Some say such matters as suffering and natural calamities make the idea of God absurd. These do present problems, but they are not insurmountable. (See "Have Atheists Proved There Is No God?" Thomas B. Warren; Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville, Tennessee.)

Can God contradict himself? Let us remember that God relates to a number of realities: (1) He relates to himself. (2) He relates to created spiritual beings such as angels. (3) He relates to the whole material universe—earth, sun, stars, etc. (4) He relates to man both collectively and individually. In these relationships God cannot relate to one reality in any manner that would cause him to act inconsistently with the remaining realities.

For example: being truth, God cannot reveal to angels a truth which would be a falsehood if he should reveal it to men.

Is God limited in any way? God can do all possible things (though he does not always do so), but he cannot do an impossible thing. He cannot make a round square because there can never be any such thing. Neither can he treat sin and righteousness as though no distinction existed between the two.

It is important to remember that atheists are themselves believers. They believe there is no God.

Can God be fully understood? To wholly understand God requires that one be God. The creature can never rise to equality with the Creator. Therefore, it is essential for us to recognize that some questions we might ask about God must go unanswered.

## SUICIDE To Be Or Not To Be?

Cecil N. Wright

1. **A Growing Concern.** Suicide has not received much attention in our brotherhood journals, and not by society at large until recent years. But the increase of suicides in America, a simultaneous discovery in the United States and England that several times as many people attempt suicide as succeed in carrying it out, and that an attempt at suicide is essentially a "cry for help," has resulted during the past two decades in an unprecedented surge of interest in the phenomenon among psychiatrists, and among psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists as well.

According to a compilation made a few years ago, within the decade of 1957-1967 there were more than 1200 books and articles written on the subject, or over 120 per year, as against 2200 items during the preceding six decades (1897-1957), or slightly under 37 per year. What the count for the past decade is, this writer

has not learned, but there is every reason to believe it is even greater.

2. **Suicide Statistics.** It is said that aside from the mass suicide of more than 900 who had gone to Guyana, 26,800 Americans killed themselves last year. Strange as it may seem, the suicide rate among physicians is three times that among the general population, and among psychiatrists it has been calculated as twice that of physicians. But the most alarming is the fact that among those of school age, it has doubled in ten years, tripled in twenty years, and soared 92 per cent the past two years. Suicide is now No. 2 cause of death among the young, second only to "accidents," how many of which are in fact suicides not being known.

The situation bespeaks the spiritual crisis of our time—a considerable erosion of faith—with which we all need to be concerned, and do all we can about it. The purpose of this writing is to try to make a contribution to that end, by calling attention to some verities that need to be considered.

## DISCUSSION

1. **Not an End to Being.** If you ever contemplate suicide, thinking to end it all, don't! Shakespeare put into the mouth of one of his characters, who was considering suicide, the following words: "To be or not to be — that is the question." But it is not that simple. Death is not an end of being, or even of conscious being. It is only the termination of one mode of existence—namely, of the existence of the human spirit in a body of flesh—but not the annihilation of that spirit or its faculties.

Jesus says: "As touching the resurrection (after which follows a mode of eternal, conscious existence in either heaven or hell), have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22:32). When God made that declaration, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been physically dead for centuries, yet were still alive in a very real sense even before the resurrection.

Again, Jesus tells the story of a certain rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19-31), not in the eternal state but in the spirit world, as were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, between death and the resurrection. Lazarus was blissfully conscious, being comforted and highly honored; the rich man was grievously tormented. This is thought by some to be only a parable. If so, the lesson is the same for our purpose; for parables, unlike fables, are true to reality. So, if the case of the rich man and Lazarus was not an actual occurrence, it could have been.

Our Lord further says: "It is the spirit that giveth life: the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). The flesh does not give life to the spirit, but the spirit to the flesh. It is not literally the eye that sees or the ear that hears, but the spirit sees through the eye and hears through the ear while it is in the body. When the spirit leaves the body, the eye does not see nor does the ear hear; for "the body without the spirit is dead" (James 2:26). But it is not said that the spirit without the body is dead. The spirit loses neither its consciousness nor its faculties, as seeing and hearing, or memory. The rich man in Hades was admonished to remember his brothers back there. He likewise saw and communicated with others in the spirit world.

**2. Might Mean Damnation.** So, death, instead of ending it all, only makes one's condition at death a permanent one. It is appointed unto man once to die and after this the judgment (Heb. 9:27), which will be according to our works (Rev. 20:13)—that is, according to the deeds done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10). And suicide stands a chance of assuring our damnation. For it is written, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13; Rom. 13:9). And suicide is killing.

Our English word "suicide" comes from the Latin *sui* of oneself, and the French *-cide*, from the Latin—*cidium*, a killing. It means a killing of self, as "homicide," is the killing of another human being; "fratricide," the killing of a brother; or "infanticide," the killing of an infant. As the latter forms of death are covered in the prohibition against killing, so would suicide seem to be. Such was also the Jewish attitude.

Josephus, for instance, called it "an instance of impiety against God our Creator" and an "unmanly" act. Said he also: "And do you not think God is very angry when a man does injury to what he hath bestowed upon him? For from him it is that we have received our being, and we ought to leave it to his disposal to take it away from us....Accordingly, our laws determine that the bodies of such as kill themselves should be exposed till the sun be set, without burial, although at the same time it be allowed by them to be lawful to bury our enemies (sooner)." Wars, III, viii, 5).

**3. Stewardship Involved.** In the scriptures we read of no righteous person taking his own life—only the wicked, as Saul and his armor-bearer (1 Sam. 31: 4-5), Ahithophel (2 Sam. 17:23), Zimri (1 Kings 16:18), in the Old Testament, and Judas Iscariot (Matt. 27:5) in the New Testament. Job refused the suggestion of his wife to curse God and die (Job 2:9-10), notwithstanding his misery was so great he wished he had never been born (Job 3:1-26). The apostle Paul said he had "a desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better"; but he recognized that his presence was needed by others, and he expected to remain with them (Phil. 1: 23-25). He risked his life daily to serve Christ (1 Cor. 15:31), but made no effort to take it himself. He was "ready to die... for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). Yet he never needlessly risked death: Said he: "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death" (Phil. 1:20). This was because life in the flesh is a stewardship, which is intended to be ours as long as God gives it to us.

**4. Probation Involved.** But life on earth is also a probation—a matter of trial, of testing—which the Christian is called upon to face bravely, and is given assistance to do so. Consider the following: "There hath no temptation (trial) taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted (tried) above that ye are able; but will with the temptation (trial) make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10:13). "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations (trials)." (James 1:2). "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation (trial); for when he hath been

approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him." (James 1:12). In Christ we have "a merciful and faithful high priest" who is "able to succor them that are tempted." (Heb. 1: 17-18). "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). "Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7). "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13).

### CONCLUSION

While on one hand the Christian may proudly forfeit his life in the flesh as a martyr to his Lord's cause, if that is a necessary alternative to the compromise of Christian principles or shirking of Christian duty, on the other hand he should never sacrifice it upon the alter of shame and guilt (for he can repent and obtain pardon) or of self-pity, despondency, or grief (for he has the precious promises of God for needed help and strength). "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." (2 Pet. 2:9). Proper understanding and practice of genuine Christianity is the divine antidote against suicide.

## The Amazing Grace Of Jesus

Jim Mankin

S.M. Lindsay once told this story to a group in Richmond, Virginia.

"I was reared in Scotland. While I was a young man I taught a Sunday school class for juniors. One Sunday the subject was grace, based on Ephesians 2. I gave them this definition: *Grace is something you need, but do not deserve.*



“Probably the lesson did not sink in very well in the minds of my students. The next day I was invited to a formal tea. As I passed through the village, I saw Bobby, one of my students, who was tempted by my top hat and the snowball he held in his hand. After a moment’s hesitation, he gave in to the temptation.

“He threw the snowball, and instead of hitting the hat, hit me on the ear. It was such a blow that as I fell down, I saw stars. My hat sailed across the snow.

“At first I wanted to catch Bobby and thrash him. Then I thought I would just tell his father what had happened. But then I thought of the Sunday school lesson—grace is something you need but do not deserve. Bobby needed a fishing pole, so I went and bought him one.

“That evening I went over to Bobby’s house to present him with the gift. Bobby looked at me sheepishly when I held out the fishing pole. Almost wailing, he cried out, ‘Oh, Mr. Lindsay, I can’t accept this. I was the one who hit you with the snowball.’

“That’s why I gave it to you,’ I replied. Remember the Sunday school lesson we had yesterday? Well, what is grace?”

“It is a fishing pole!’ Bobby said, eyes lighting up.

“Yes,’ I said, ‘that’s right. Grace is a fishing pole when you need it but don’t deserve it.’”

How beautifully that story and definition fits into the use of grace in the New Testament. Jesus, the Saviour, brought His amazing grace to save us from sin because we needed salvation, not because we deserved it.

In one of the great passages on grace in the whole of Scripture, Paul wrote of this:

“And you did He make alive, when ye were dead through your tresspasses and sins, wherein ye once walked...but God being rich in mercy, for His great love wherein He loved us,

even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus: for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory." (Ephesians 2:1-9).

## THE TEACHING OF JESUS

Look at two of the parables of the Lord to see that grace is the heart and core of this message.

In the story of the prodigal son, the word "grace" does not appear but the word "deserve" does (Luke 15:19). Yet the loving father did not give the prodigal what he deserved, but what he needed. He called him "Son." He gave him a robe and a ring. The feeling of being restored to fellowship was what he needed so much. The Father in heaven basically does the same thing for us as erring children when we decide to come back home.

In the story of the good Samaritan, we again see the principle at work. The Samaritan gave the poor victim, who had been beaten and robbed, what he needed; not what he deserved. The priest and Levite had passed him by, yet the hero of the story was moved with compassion (a form of grace) and offered immediate assistance, and took him to an inn where he could get long-range care and attention. (cf. Lk. 10:33-34).

Over and over in the teachings of the Master it could be illustrated that He spoke of grace as a gift man needed but did not deserve. In reality, the very coming of Jesus was to prove this point. "But God commended His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly," (Rom. 5:8).

## THE ACTIONS OF JESUS

When the Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus that had been caught in the very act of adultery, He showed her grace. The law said that she should be stoned, but the Pharisees posed as wanting to know what Jesus would do in such a case. He answered them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." The Lord took them and us out of the rock-throwing business forever. Upon reflecting on this truth, the woman's accusers all left; beginning with the oldest man down to the youngest. Then the Lord gave this woman what she needed but did not deserve. He said to her, "Neither do I condemn thee! go thy way; from henceforth sin no more." (See John 8:3-11). Jesus gave to this sinner a vision of the woman she could be.

In the town of Jericho, who would have imagined Jesus stopping to talk to a publican, or going to stay at his home? Yet this is what happened in the case of Zacchaeus. Since the publicans were the tax-collectors for Rome, they were among the most hated people. When the news came that Jesus would indeed visit Jericho, Zacchaeus desired to see Him. Because he was short of stature, and possibly to get out of the way of the people, Zacchaeus climbed up into a sycamore tree for a better view. When Jesus stopped at the tree to call Zacchaeus down, he must have been greatly surprised. He had been chosen by the Master as host for the day. The people of Jericho cried out in amazement, "He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner." Yet Jesus offered Zacchaeus salvation, truly what he needed but did not deserve. Zacchaeus willingly offered to give half of his goods to the poor, and to restore fourfold of any man he had wrongfully over-taxed. The story, found in Luke 19:1-10, closes with this truth, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Yet the greatest act of showing grace was demonstrated by Jesus on the cross. How can we explain His death? Or His shed blood? Or His pain and agony? What does the cross really mean? We who stand in need of salvation, but do not deserve it, are offered it by Christ. Salvation includes forgiveness of sins, fellowship in the church, and the hope of heaven,

Since we cannot ever fully understand His actions at Calvary in our behalf, we can only echo the words of Isaiah: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:5-6).

## THE MEANING FOR US

All of us have to learn to receive the amazing grace that Jesus offers to us. It is not because we deserve it, or have worked for it, but because God through His Son freely gives it to us. "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." (Tit. 2:11).

We know then that we are saved by grace through faith. Our faith must be an active, obedient faith. Man must do something to receive such amazing grace that is offered. When we understand our plight and what Jesus has done for us, it makes us ashamed of our lives. This leads us to a repentance of our sins. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation." (II Cor. 7:10). Gladly we will proclaim our trust in Jesus as the Son of God. "Because if you shall confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. 10:9). To wash our sins away, we will submit to baptism in Jesus' name. Since He commanded it, and it is through this act of obedience that we can be saved, we should willingly comply. It is a perfect picture of the Lord's own death, burial and resurrection. Speaking of Noah's salvation by means of the ark, Peter wrote, "...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).

When we have obeyed, we cannot boast of our works. Jesus has already done the work of salvation—we have accepted it by faith. Now we will work to glorify His name, and to share such

amazing grace with others. Truly Jesus Christ gave us what we needed, and not what we deserved.

Wonderful grace of Jesus,  
 Reaching to all the lost,  
 By it I have been pardoned,  
 Saved to the uttermost;  
 Chains have been torn asunder,  
 Giving me liberty;  
 For the wonderful grace of Jesus  
 Reaches me.

## A Prayer for Peace and Unity

Clem Thurman

In those final hours before His arrest, Jesus prayed for many things. It was just after "the last supper," the apostles had been told that Jesus would soon die. And the future work was evidently on Jesus' heart that night, because he mentioned them often in His prayer. Most importantly for us, Jesus prayed for us: in our day, in our country, today! And He prayed for religious unity, that all believers might be one. It is that prayer that we now want to study.

A great deal of media coverage has been given to ecumenical movements in recent years. The "World Council of Churches" and "United Churches of Christ" both reflect the feeling of differing denominational groups that some way needs to be found by which we can get together. New plans for unity of believers are often discussed in the religious pages of our local newspapers, and special news coverage is almost automatic for any "inter-denominational" religious activity. All this shows that many, if not most, religious leaders deplore the denominational division that exists.

The prayer of Jesus in Jno. 17 shows His concern for truth and unity. The first section (v. 1-5) deals with his personal relationship to the Father. The next (v. 6-19) contains His petitions on behalf of the apostles. The last (v. 20-26) contains His prayer for the unity and glory of the whole church in all ages. Let us look especially at that portion of the prayer that deals with unity: "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth...Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us; that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (Jno. 17: 17-21).

### THE AUTHORITY OF THE SON OF GOD

It is not simply the utterance of a great leader that we study. This One has authority! "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made...And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth" (Jno. 1: 1-3, 14). The apostles correctly acknowledge to Him, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16:16). This prayer, then, should not be considered as only a strong desire of a great man. This is the desire and will of the Son of God!

The opening phrases of the prayer indicate His authority: "Father, glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee: even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh" (Jno. 17: 1-2). These words remind us of His preface to the commission He gave to the apostles after His resurrection: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matt. 28: 18-19). This passage shows that His petition for the unity of all believers states the will of God for all Christians today!

Jesus prayed also, "I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou has given me to do"

(Jno. 17:4). This was the theme of His life—doing the will of the Father. He said “My Meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish his work...I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (Jno. 4: 34; 6:38). That He accomplished that purpose, to fully obey the Father, is confirmed to us: “Though he were a Son, yet learned obedience by the things suffered...Obedient even unto death, yea the death on the cross...Not my will, but thine, be done” (Heb. 5:9; Phil. 2:8; Lk. 22:24). The relationship of the Father and Christ, as is revealed in Jesus’ prayer and elsewhere, involved the Father’s delegation of His Son. The first part of this prayer reveals a relationship between the Father and the Son of mutual glory and delegated authority.

### HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE APOSTLES

The next section of this prayer tells us of Christ’s relationship with His apostles. He chose these twelve for special training and instruction in order that they might later be empowered to teach others. And it was through Him that they truly learned of God: “I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them to me; and they have kept thy word” (Jno. 17:6). The example of Jesus, His great loyalty to and faith in the Father, led these apostles to commit their lives to His cause. As Peter stated for them all, “Lo, we have left all, and followed thee” (Matt. 19:27). Now Jesus prays for them: “The words which thou gavest me I have given unto them; and they received them, and knew of a truth that I came forth from thee, and they believed that thou didst send me” (Jno. 17: 7-8).

Among other requests, Jesus petitioned the Father to guard the apostles and keep them united in Him: “And I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are.” (Jno. 17:11). That their protection was a matter of grave concern is further evidenced when He said, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one” (Jno. 17:15).

Jesus had told the apostles, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me" (Lk. 10:16). Empowered by the Holy Spirit (Lk. 12:12), they were guided "into all the truth" (Jno. 16:13). Being thus "inspired of God." (2 Tim. 3:16), they were to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). Whoever rejects their word is actually rejecting God's word. The importance of their work, in bringing the gospel of our salvation to us, was on Jesus' heart as He prayed.

### THE PRAYER OF JESUS FOR ALL BELIEVERS

With His personal petitions and requests for the apostles concluded, our Lord turned to His prayer for the whole church. We notice first that Jesus prayed for all believers: "For them that believe on me through their (apostles) word" (Jno. 17:20). The purpose in preaching the gospel was (and is) to make believers: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned....Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God...The gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Mk. 16: 15-16; Rom. 10: 17; 1:16). All believers today are believers because of the word of the apostles, as Jesus promised. His prayer, therefore, includes all believers today: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one." (Jno. 17:20).

We cannot imagine the Father and the Son being divided, "holding membership" in different denominations! They are one. When Jesus prayed for unity of all believers, He described that unity as being the same as the unity He had with the Father: "That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us" (Jno. 17:21). The Father and the Son have one teaching: "I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal." (Jno. 12:49). The command then comes to all believers: "Speak the same thing...If any man speak, let him



“speak as the oracles of God.” (1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Pet. 4:11). When all believers have only one teaching, there will be unity!

We learn from this prayer, also, that our unity results from our fellowship with God: “That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us” (Jno. 17:21). When we are “baptized into Christ” and thus become children of God (Gal. 3:26-27), we become part of God’s family and are brethren in Christ. He invites us to “abide” in Him as branches abide in the vine (Jno. 15:1-8). As long as we abide in Christ, we are “one body in Christ, and severally members one of another.” (Rom. 12.5). This is the unity for which Christ prayed, and it results from a right relationship with Him. We can never have a right relationship with God and be divided from others with the same right relationship with God! When “our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,” we have fellowship with other believers (1 Jno. 1:3).

The unity for which Christ prayed is the kind commanded by God through Paul’s writing: “That ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). This unity is linked with the “glory” Christ gives to those who obey Him: “And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one.” (Jno. 17:22). This is the only God-honoring Christ-exalting, Holy Spirit-respecting unity that men can achieve in our time. Such unity will appear when we decide to “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). As directed by His word, we achieve fellowship with God and Christ when we put our trust in Christ, genuinely repent of our sins, openly declare our faith and are baptized into Christ (Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:46-47; Acts 2:36-38; Rom. 6:1-6; 1 Jno. 1:3-7). In this surrender, guided solely by the word of God, we will achieve membership in Christ’s body, the church for which He died and to which He adds the saved. (Acts 2:47).

# "Train Up A Child"

C. Bruce White

We have two extremes in our society which have caused a difficulty to parents. One is the rising juvenile delinquency rate. There will be over one million young people, under seventeen years of age, to appear before our courts this year. The other is child abuse. We do not have valid statistics on this problem but it is suggested that over 250,000 cases of child abuse are reported annually.

This leaves the parent to decide what constitutes proper discipline, without being abusive. There is a definite need for discipline in our society and far too many parents have not given diligence to this responsibility.

The root word, from which we get our word discipline, is **MATHETEUS**. This is the word that is translated disciple in many passages in the New Testament from the greek language. It has the meaning of learning or instruction at the basic level.

When we realize that discipline should be a learning experience, then we can approach it with more confidence. There are some specific "do's" and "don'ts" when one approaches this area of parenting.

## NEGATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

**Don't punish your child in anger.** Proverbs 29:22. A man of wrath stirs up strife, and a man given to anger causes much transgression." This is true with children as much as with other relationships. Paul admonishes, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4. Remember discipline is teaching and the lesson should be positive.

**Don't scream, shout, or lose emotional control.** These actions

only support the unacceptable behavior of a child. If the child throws a "temper tantrum" and the parent throws one as a corrective measure, then the child is supported in that behavior by identifying a "temper tantrum" as adult behavior. Children will mimic adults.

Children will learn your "volume level". If you tell your child to take a bath, he does nothing. Then you raise your voice and he still does nothing. Then you shout and he goes to the bath. It might be that he has measured your intention to control by your volume. The child has become aware that you do not mean business until you reach a certain stage of emotional disturbance.

**Don't punish developmental errors.** It is important to know the learning tasks of children at different age levels. The muscular development of a child at age 2 or 3 makes it difficult for him to grasp a circular object. Therefore, spilled milk can be avoided by using a container with a handle.

Pre-teens are developing their coordination and will, therefore, be clumsy. It is discouraging to them to be constantly corrected for something which cannot be helped.

Be sure that the actions which are disciplined are not simple growth tasks. Praise and assistance will help children through learning tasks, punishment may retard their growth in these areas.

**Don't embarrass the child.** It profits nothing to demean the child before others and may damage his self image. The only lesson that will be learned in making a spectacle of the child is that he learns that his parents will enjoy a laugh at his expense. This, in turn, causes him to lose confidence in himself in crowds. It would be hard to define this as discipline which leads to self control.

**Don't develop a negative attitude.** Parenting can accept the theory that the perfect child is gained through removing all negative actions and impulses. One must be careful not to accept this theory since the result will be that the child who is reared in such

a negative atmosphere will begin feeling a total failure. The attitude will be assumed that he can do nothing right.

## POSITIVE CONSIDERATIONS

**Discipline in love.** The child should be learning that you are concerned about him and not that he is "bad" or "ugly". His behavior should be directed by your love; not your anger. Discipline should draw a parent and child closer together.

**Explain the punishment.** It is very important that the child understand why he is being punished. There should be a time either before or after administering the punishment, where it is defined. This explanation might be, "this is being done because we love you and cannot accept such behavior. It is inconsistent with what will make you a productive citizen and an honor to yourself and God. If we did not love you, then we would just let you do anything. But our love for you is the reason that we are punishing this action." The explanation doesn't have to be long or burdensome but is very important.

**Be consistent and fair.** It is very important that the discipline suit the circumstance. It is also vital that the praise of a child be equal to the correction. A child who is encouraged and praised will form a healthy self image, along with a self confidence in the ability to accomplish a task.

If discipline is consistent, then the frustration level of the child is controlled. If the child does not know what to expect and cannot count on the parent to direct him, then he is confused as to what is right and wrong. This frustration can lead to a failure to determine the seriousness of actions. The person may find it hard to distinguish the difference in breaking a window and robbing a bank.

**It is important to establish expectation.** Children respond to goals which are clearly presented. Discipline should have an atmosphere of what is expected of a child in the family.

One good practice is "quiet time". It involves knowing the attention span of each age level. Then, each day the child is to sit at a table or desk and perform a task for a certain period of time. He is not to get up, move around, or make noise during this periodically until he can sit for 30 to 45 minutes by age 6 under self control.

One should instill honor in a child. The child should learn that the family expects its members to honor the family name. This must be learned through example as well as instruction.

The wise parent will place the burden of proof on the child. A good way to do this is to use the three time method. The parent tells the child to do or not do something. After the command, then let the child know that this is the first time the request is made. If action is not forthcoming then calmly repeat the command and remind the child that this is the second time. If the command is not obeyed, then repeat it a third time reassuring the child that it is the third time. After that (if the action has not come) then see that the command is obeyed by use of corporal punishment.

After this has been done consistently for a few months, then move down to two reminders. It will, eventually, lodge in the child's mind that you mean business and the commands will be received on the first issue. This prevents continual shouting and wondering if obedience will ever come.

**Remember that self control is the goal.** The parent cannot go with a child all through life. There is that time when "he gets old" and must "choose the way". Discipline should cause him to "not depart from the training received as a child." Proverbs 22:6. But, "the child left to himself will bring his mother to shame." Proverbs 29:15.

We want to so discipline, train, teach, instruct, guide, and love our children that they will "rise up and call us blessed" and be a glory to the Lord. This is the task that God has given to parents and we must assume it with knowledge, humility, and prayer.

## “Writing Out Loud”

Bob Hurd

DEUT. 32:46:

“SET YOUR HEARTS UNTO ALL THE WORDS WHICH  
I TESTIFY AMONG YOU THIS DAY...”

Set your hearts! That is the key. To set the heart means we determine to make as our goal the way of the words of God. As we read on in this text, verse 46, reveals some fruitful truths we must be aware of. Today, many regard the Word of God so lightly. God's Word is reduced to mere thoughts of men. “Scholars” often equate the Word of God with mythology, and so make man think it non-sense, stupid, and foolishness to even believe is such dribble! This isn't just an isolated attitude in our land, but the same attitude prevails from earliest schooling on up into the higher sphere's of learning. We are saying to our youth, “There is no God!” No, we admit to the Existance of God, but, refuse the “Reality of God!” God has become whatever we desire Him to be. As we feel it, as we see it, and controlled by us and our emotions, we determine the limitations and boundaries of God!

Why are we to set our hearts on God? The text says, “BECAUSE IT IS YOUR LIFE!” God's Word is nothing, meaningless and unneeded, it is the first thing ever in this category, unneeded by man that gives us life. We ban it from our schools, ridicule it by our hypocrisies, show our young there is nothing to it by our low esteem and disrespect for it and its guidance in our own personal live's. Moses said it is our life! Moses told Israel, if they wanted to live, be at peace, have great prosperity, live long...then that demands we know, love and live the Word of God...FOR IT IS LIFE! Paul cries to us today, Col 3:2, “SET YOUR AFFECTIONS ON THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON THINGS ON THE EARTH.” Peter pleads we “sanctify God in our hearts...and in each of these there is the need to set God and His Word into our hearts...and why? LIFE! Separate and apart from God's Word there is no life. Eph. 2:12, Paul told these people that before they knew God, had heard His word, and obeyed the gospel of Christ, they were DEAD! No life! Why, they had not set their hearts on God, and we can't set our heart, until we hear God. We can't hear God without the Word, Rom. 10:17. Here is why we beg brethren to study...life. Life is in God's Word SET YOUR HEARTS ON THE WORD AND LIVE!

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