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BIBLE
TEACHER**

CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Get Organized

Every group must be properly organized if it is going to be efficient and get its job done. This is true in the business world, in the field of education, and all other areas of endeavour. This is also true in religion. Christ recognized this in building his church. Although he is the head (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18), he directed that each congregation of the church would be independent with its own elders and deacons to give leadership on a local level. It would be necessary for the elders and deacons to meet certain qualifications before they could serve. (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). Once appointed, the elders would have the responsibility of providing spiritual food for the members, keeping error out, strengthening the weak, seeing that the needy are cared for, disciplining the unfaithful, and leading the church on to spiritual maturity. Beyond its own immediate needs would be the urgency of taking the gospel to the lost. The work of the deacons would be primarily to assist the elders and to see to it that their efforts were carried out. To make certain that no congregation ended up with a dictator, then the scriptures state that there must be two or more men in the local church that can meet the qualifications for being elders before they can be appointed. The same is true

with the deacons. Even as elders, the scriptures say that they are not to drive members, but rather, they are to lead. Peter wrote, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Peter 5:1-4).

But what about those congregations that are young, or yet they are small, and they do not have men that are qualified to be elders and deacons? Then obviously they cannot have elders and deacons. Not only so, but it is better to function without elders if there are no qualified men to be appointed to such offices, than to appoint those who are not qualified and then for them to abuse and misuse the offices that they hold. There is just one thing worse than not having qualified elders and deacons and that is having unqualified men appointed to these offices. But in the case of where a congregation is unable to have elders and deacons then there is just one alternative and that is for the men of the congregation to give leadership to the work. In that case it would be necessary for them to meet from time to time to discuss their needs, their work, and who will teach, preach, serve as the treasurer, and so on. These meetings are usually called business meetings. Maybe one or two will be asked to see to it that someone is called on to lead in prayer at the appropriate time and that others are asked to wait on the Lord's Table each week. Perhaps the men will agree that another one or two be asked to supervise the teaching program and their job would be to see it that qualified teachers be asked to teach the various classes. Sometimes these are called committies. Rather than to have all seeing about these matters, and for some of it to be done at the last minute, and for confusion to come out of such practices, or for it not to be done at all, then in a situation like this, it is usually wise to appoint one or two or more to do these specific tasks. Other such committies can be formed to take care of other phases of the work, depending on the men available and the need for such.

In a congregation, even a small congregation, it is amazing at all of the many things that must be done. For instance, decisions have to be made as to when the church will meet and what time it will begin each meeting. Then once such decisions are made then they should be followed. When they are not then the members and especially visitors, get the impression that the congregation is not very well organized, that they are not serious about what they are doing, and therefore the work will be hurt. If the leaders are not decisive in such matters then the members will lose confidence in those who are serving.

Then there needs to be an organized effort so that all of the faithful men of the congregation can be used. The ladies can also be used by being asked to prepare the bread and fruit of the vine for the Lord's Supper, to teach children's classes, to teach the women of the church, to help with personal work, to show hospitality to visitors, and to help in various other ways.

As to the more important work of the church, such as in the area of evangelism, the leaders need to plan for gospel meetings, special classes to train the members in preaching and teaching, filmstrip showings, visiting the sick and needy, as well as the unfaithful and members in general, doing personal work in the area, arranging meetings in other parts of the city, and even outside of the city, helping with special needs as they arise, and as the congregation is able to assist, both with physical needs and in preaching the gospel. Why not be planning for the day when the church will have its own meeting house and when there will be men in the congregation who can be appointed as elders and deacons? Why not be thinking about, and working toward the day, that the church can fully support one or more men, and perhaps before that on a part time basis.

The church, locally and worldwide, has a great work to do. Time is important and there are over four billion people to take the gospel to. How are we going to be able to do that? We must vision, faith, zeal, courage, and determination. But we also must be organized so that as Christians we can work together to accomplish the most good possible. By loving one another, sharing responsibilities, and working together, we can accomplish far more than we would ever be able to do otherwise. Of course it

will require individually and collectively our time, our money, and even our very lives, but what better cause could we give ourselves to? When we put God first, and count souls as being the most valuable possessions in the world, and function as the Lord intended for his church to function, then we will go on to the victory that God has promised to give us, both in this world and in the world to come.

Also, as individual Christians we need to be organized. We need to discipline ourselves to save our time and money so that they can be more wisely used. We need to have our priorities so that our emphasis may be major things instead of minor ones. We need to know what we believe and why we believe it. We need to practice what we preach. We need to know where we belong in our families, in our community, and in the church, and proceed to be as productive as possible in these areas for the cause of Christ. Our lives can be rich, rewarding, and useful if we give ourselves to the Lord and his cause or we can throw them away and waste them on worthless things. May God help us to put our lives in order, set a good example for those around us, and give ourselves unreservedly as a living sacrifice to him who has served us and given us the hope of eternal life.



**associate
editorial**

What Think Ye Of The Church ?

Before Christ promised to build or establish the church, he asked his disciples, what people thought about him. They told him that some thought that you are John the Baptist, and others say that you are Elias or Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Jesus then asked them : "But whom say ye that I am ?" Simon Peter, one of the disciples, answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the

living God.” Jesus told him, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock (*the confession, that Christ is the Son of the living God*) I will build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:15-18). A little later, at Matthew 22:42 Jesus asked some Pharisees, “what think ye of Christ ?” The Pharisees said that Christ was the son of David, who was the second king of the Israelites. But Jesus reminded them that David had confessed Christ his Lord, and then he asked the Pharisees, “If David then call him Lord, how is he his son ?” (Matthew 22:45).

Just as people then misunderstood Christ, many today misunderstand his church. We hear people say today, “Join the church of your choice,” and, “One church is as good as another.” This shows how much people are ignorant about the church of Christ today. I say, the church of Christ, because Christ said he would build HIS church. According to the Bible Christ himself adds people to the church. It says, “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts 2:47). The Lord has commanded what man must do to be saved (Mark 16:16), and he knows who are the saved, he himself then adds them to his church. This means then that there are no saved people outside of the church of Christ. All the saved ones are in his church, since he adds the saved to the church daily. The Bible also says that the church is the house or the family of God. (1 Timothy 3:15). When one is born in a family he becomes a member of that particular family. He doesn't have a choice; can't choose which family he should become a member of. The birth decided his membership to the family. Likewise, when one is born again, born of water and of the Spirit, as Jesus instructed in John 3:3,5, by obeying the truth, the word of God (1 Peter: 1:22,23), he becomes a member of God's family, the church, not by choice, but by birth. The church that Jesus Christ built cannot be joined, because it is not like a club, or a human organization. The word church means : “a body of the people who have been called out and are set apart.” The church of Christ is made up of the group of people of all the world who have obeyed the truth, God's word, and have thus become saved, that is, their sins have been forgiven. When one is saved today,

by doing what Christ has commanded one must do to be saved, then at the same time he becomes a member of the church of Christ, because Christ adds to his church daily such as should be saved, as we read in Acts 2:47.

We don't say that one God is as good as another. Neither do we say that one Lord is as good as another. Because we know that the Bible says that there is but only one God and only one Lord. (Ephesians 4:5, 6). But the Bible also says that there is but only one church. In Ephesians 4:4, we read, "There is one body." This one body is identified as the church in Ephesians 1:22,23. It says, God, "hath put all things under his (Christ's) feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body. . . ." The apostle Paul in I Corinthians 12:13 said, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." He is not talking here about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but is saying that we were all led to be baptized by one Spirit, the Spirit, of God as He directed through the written word. (2 Timothy 3:16). But notice, he says, we were all baptized into one body. The people on the day of Pentecost were told to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. When they did this then their sins were forgiven, they were saved, and the Lord then added them to the church, as we have noticed already from Acts 2:47. They were all added by the Lord to the same church. In other words they were all baptized into one body. Jesus Christ built only one church and he adds all the saved people to his one church only. Now, since there is only one church according to the Bible, therefore it is foolish to say, "one church is as good as another." While discussing about the church as the body, we also notice that the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:23 said that Christ is the saviour of the body. And since the body is the church therefore it means that Christ is the saviour of the church. True, one can be saved outside of a church (denomination) which established since the beginning of the Roman Catholic church, and it may be said about them that one denominational church is as good as another. But this is not true about the church of the Bible, the church that Jesus built and purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28). Like it or not, but the Bible teaches that one must be in the church of Christ, in the body of Christ, to be saved. Because Christ is the Saviour of the body. Are you in his body?

Who Is My Judge?

Phillip Gray

The late Bertrand Russell, notable British champion of atheism, charged the Bible with numerous contradictions, of which, he contended, Matthew 7:1, 2 and John 7:24 afford an obvious example. In the first citation, Jesus is recorded as saying, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." In the second, it is reported that he said, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." Upon examination of these passages, however, one can see that Russell simply misunderstood the meanings (or just willfully wrested them) in order to make a point.

Often we hear people say, "I can't condemn anyone or any church for teaching error since, after all, didn't Jesus say, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged?'" Like Russell, the one making such an argument apparently misunderstands the teaching of these verses.

In Matthew 7:1, 2, Jesus was condemning "capricious judgments and petty faultfinding." We know he must have meant this since he himself qualifies it by saying, "Judge not *ACCORDING TO APPEARANCE*, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). So, the kind of judgment we are forbidden to make is a premature; rash or unfounded assessment of someone's character or motives on the basis of insufficient evidence (or, the way these might appear to us).

Can we ever judge, legitimately, whether or not any given doctrine of any person or church is really false, or should we always withhold judgment? Scripture answers: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1); and again, "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21). How are we to "prove" the spirits (teachings) or "all things" and yet, withhold judgment? Obviously, we are to prove, or judge, religious beliefs according to "righteous judgment." (Incidentally, it is interesting to see the vehemence with

which proponents of the "non-judgment" view judge those who allow for the "righteous judgment" view). Righteous judgment is according to the standard of scripture (Psalm 119:172). God is the author of scripture (II Tim. 3:16, 17). Therefore, man is not the judge; but God is, and through scripture has furnished us with a standard by which to discern his righteous judgment on any issue.

Unity In Faith Demanded

Diversity in opinion can be good. Diversity in faith is condemned by God. The prayer that thanks God for so many churches so one may join the church of his choice is a false prayer. It is based upon the assumption a person has the right to believe anything in religion. This attitude confuses freedom with right.

From the dawn of creation God has given man freedom, but not the right to do contrary to his will. Adam and Eve had the freedom to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but not the right. When they exercised their freedom and ate the forbidden fruit, they were cast out of the garden of Eden never to return. (Gen. 3:1-24).

GOD, IN HIS WORD, HAS GIVEN MAN A PLAN OF SALVATION. Similar plans have been devised by man. A counterfeit salvation is no better than a counterfeit dollar bill. Neither has any value, though similar to the original.

People are often confused because their leaders tell them that they cannot understand the Bible. Therefore they illogically conclude anything in the name of religion is alright. The inspired Paul commanded, "Wherefore be ye not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is." (Eph. 5:17). The same author states, "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)". (Eph. 3:3-4). Jude writes of "our common salvation". (Jude 3).

Salvation involves the divine part and man's part. God, Christ and the Holy Spirit have done their part. God gave his

Son. Christ lived the perfect example and gave his life upon the cross. The Holy Spirit revealed and confirmed the word of God through inspired men. But God requires man to meet certain terms of obedience. (Heb. 5:8-9). The alien sinner must believe (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24; Mk. 16:16), repent of his sins (Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 17:33; II Pet. 3:9), confess faith in Christ before men (Rom. 10:9-10), and be baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). The Lord adds the saved to the church. (Acts 2:47).

BEING A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH CHRIST ESTABLISHED IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF UNITY. Since the Lord adds the saved to the church, the question naturally arises, which Church? There was but one church until 606 A.D. It was the Lord's church. He promised it when Peter confessed him as the Son of God. (Matt. 16:17-19). He purchased it with his blood. (Acts 20:28).

The doctrine is revealed in the New Testament. The doctrine of Christ, revealed by inspiration, furnishes man completely unto every good work. (II Tim. 3:16-17; II Pet. 1:3).

The Bible tells man the items of worship and informs him how to worship. (Acts 2:42; I Cor. 11:23-24; I Cor. 16:1-2; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16, etc.). "In spirit and in truth" (John 4:24) is the form worship must take.

The Bible also tells us how God expects man to conduct his life in daily living. Paul said, "see then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." (Eph. 5:15). James illustrates the Christian. He said, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (Jas. 1:27).

Paul wrote the Romans: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). Paul not only indicates the possibility of recognizing false doctrine but commands the church to mark and turn away from those who teach it. This action is essential to maintain the purity of doctrine and unity of the followers of Christ.

To the Philippians Paul urged, "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Phil. 2:2). To the Corinthians he said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (I Cor. 1:10).

**MAY WE STRIVE FOR UNITY OF ALL BELIEVERS
IN CHRIST!**

The Indestructable Kingdom

R. W. Gray

Events of the past several decades augur no real hope for an era of peace in the world. Saneness, fair play, integrity—essential ingredients for stability—are seldom found among world leaders. Therefore we face a future filled with anxiety, as fear of carnal conflict remains an imminent prospect.

This generation has witnessed some of the most awesome, earth shaking crimes the world has known. From the time of the assassination of America's President Kennedy in 1964 to the assassination of Egypt's President Sadat in 1981, the headlines have been filled with such atrocities as threaten international peace and security.

In addition to the increase in crime is a deluge of obscenity, filth, and an increase of immoral acts of every sort, including the "legalized" murder of millions of innocent babies. Such defiance of law and open rebellion against every moral known to a civilized society will undermine and destroy us as a people.

Philosophers, theologians, politicians, and scientists have all been heard regarding the "cause" and would-be "cure" for our ills. But the stubborn fact persists, and the frightening truth is, our world, our nation, our society, is sick and dying. We are all but overcome by the most destructive malady known to God or man, and that disease the Bible calls SIN. "Righteousness

exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people," and, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." (Proverbs 14:34; Psalms 9:17).

America has become the most powerful nation, militarily and materially speaking, ever to exist. But in this very power we may discover our greatest weakness. We have mistakenly felt our nation invincible. Events of the past few years, however, underscore the stark reality that we are extremely vulnerable to attack from forces from without that could mean almost total annihilation.

With such ominous clouds hovering over us, with the fear of erupting violence, bloodshed and destruction ever before us, is there any reason to face the future with confidence and hope? If our nation, the most powerful on earth, is not safe, is there any place of refuge or realm of security?

The prophet in the king's court envisioned a "kingdom that shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14). The writer of Hebrews exhorted that "reverence and Godly fear" should characterize those who were "receiving a kingdom that could not be moved" (Hebrews 12:28). It is apparent that those who had come to a sacrifice that speaks better things than that of Abel, to Jesus the mediator of a better covenant, to mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the church of the first-born, were the same believers then "receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken or moved" (Hebrews 12:22-28).

Those who made up the church in Colossae were reminded that they had been "delivered from the power [*exousia*] of Satan," and had been "translated into the kingdom [*basileia*] of God's dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). In the same chapter and context the writer reminds them that they were in the body [*soma*] which is Christ's church [*ekklesia*] (Colossians 1:18). To be in the "basileia of God" is to be in the "ekklesia of God." Those who have embraced Jesus' new covenant, and are thus under his "rule", are in the church. God does not have a covenant people called the "kingdom" and another covenant people called the "church". The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. The kingdom is that which cannot be moved. (Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 12:28). They are one and the same.

As we see the kingdoms of men rise and fall, witness the execution of world rulers, and the removal of presidents and other leaders by the electorate, we perceive the transient nature of earthly power. But Daniel saw a kingdom that consumed earthly dominion, a kingdom that would not be "left to another" (Daniel 2:44; 7:14). This is the kingdom that shall be delivered to God (I Corinthians 15:24). This is the church against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. It is the body of believers that will be presented to Christ as a chaste bride. (Ephesians 5:25, 26; II Corinthians 11:2).

There is, then, a place of safety. Those under the rule of Christ are saved and they are safe. (Hebrews 13:5, 6). In the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the Living God, one is numbered with the "redeemed," "the sanctified," "glorified," heaven bound people of God. While the kingdoms of earth pass away one by one, the kingdom of heaven remains. And there every troubled soul may seek and find refuge. None are turned away who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

The indestructable kingdom Daniel foretold, the kingdom into which the redeemed have been translated is not the imaginary millennium of pseudo-fundamentalists that may be expected on some lonesome tomorrow. It is a present and grand reality. He who is Lord of lords and the King of kings now reigns over it in regal splendor. (Acts 2:29-36; Revelation 17:14; Ephesians 1:19-23). All who have been born again are subjects in it. (John 3:1-5). Are you in that kingdom? Do you sing in triumphant praise the songs of the redeemed? "I've anchored my soul in the haven of rest, I'll sail the wild seas no more. The tempest may sweep o'er the wild, stormy deep-In Jesus I'm safe evermore."

The Burdens Of A Preacher

John Waddey

There is no greater, grander work on earth than preaching the glorious gospel of Jesus. (Rom. 10:15). No vocation is more gruelling and demanding than that of a gospel minister (II Tim. 1:11-12). There is no worker that Satan hates more than God's

servant. The evil one will use every conceivable trick and tool to disrupt the preacher's work and discourage his efforts. (II Cor. 2:11).

Every man who enters the ministry of Christ should know full well the awesome weightiness of the task and the battle he must wage. Most men are prepared to pay that price. (Luke 14:28-33).

There are some additional burdens often laid on preachers that become unbearable for some.

I. There is the burden of working with a non-supportive congregation. It is strange but true that many congregations employ a man to work as their evangelist and then refuse to respond to his leadership and support the work he attempts to do. Many a preacher is burdened by a general apathy in the church towards their own needs and goals. Often the man in the pulpit is confronted with hostility and negative criticism from the very folks who asked him to help them serve God. Paul was broken hearted by such ungrateful treatment by his Corinthian brethren. (II Cor. 11:7-9). Even more distressing is the desertion of a minister by his congregation when the war with sin and sinners grows hot and deadly. Many a man has died with a crushed and broken spirit because those who should have stood by his side in the conflict fled and deserted him. Jesus knew this bitter cup as did Paul. (Mk. 14:50; II Tim. 4:16).

Another such burden for God's man is a lack of appreciation for his work and welfare by his brethren. It is a basic human need to realize some sense of appreciation from those we serve. Ingratitude is inexcusable. Yet many a church has shown such disdain for a brother's efforts that he walked out of the pulpit never to return. While we would not excuse his abandonment of his post neither can we excuse this ingratitude for one who faithfully taught them God's truth. (Acts 20:27).

II. There is the burden of a non-supportive eldership. Elders ask a man to work with them so that God's will can be done in their congregation and community. They have their work of overseeing the flock (Acts 20:28), he has his of preaching the divine Word. (II Tim. 4:2). Often, however, we see elders who expect their preacher to do their work and his also. This is a job too big for one man. Besides, it is contrary to God's plan.

Preachers are often burdened by elders who refuse to back them when carnal members resist the teaching of sound, healthy doctrine. (II Tim. 4:1-3). It is especially painful when a man is left standing alone when personal attacks are made against him. Space would fail us if we began to list the case histories of good men thus deserted by their elders, God : give us leaders of integrity who will not allow a worldly element to crucify a good man. Give us elders who will not sacrifice a preacher because of financial pressures or threats of powerful men or groups in the church. May they hold up their arms as did Aaron and Hur for Moses. (Ex. 17:12).

III. There is the burden of a non-supportive wife. A married man can never do his best for the Lord without the loyal support and help of a godly wife. Many an average preacher has been credited with a great work for God because of the dedicated help of his wife. Pity, however, the brother who labours to serve God with the burden of a mate who cares nothing for his ministry. Even more to be pitied is the preacher whose mate is antagonistic to his career for God. We have seen good men shamed and embarrassed by a mate whose love for God and the church had grown cold and calloused. Occasionally, a man succeeds in spite of his mate, rather than because of her. But if he did a good work with that burden, how much more could he have done with her loving, enthusiastic help! Surely any woman who loves Jesus and hopes to live in heaven would gladly help her husband in whatever honourable profession he serves; how much more if he be privileged to serve the Lord's church as a proclaimer! If he should honor her as the weaker vessel, surely she should honor him as her husband (I Pet. 3:5-7); head (Eph. 5:23), and a man of God (I Thess. 5:13). A wife that makes her preaching husband ashamed is as rottenness in his bones (Prov. 12:4).

Conclusion: We live in a day when gospel preachers are in short supply, when hundreds of men are dropping out of their gospel work. At no point in history has there been a more desperate need for evangelists to preach the word to lost souls, strengthen the saints and oppose the works of darkness. Let each of us daily pray that God will help us bear the burdens of preaching brethren rather than be a burden to them. (Gal. 6:2).

The Law Of Giving And Receiving

Curtis Dowdy

There is a most interesting story in the New Testament about a boy who gave up his lunch. The story is recorded in John chapter six. It was springtime and the passover was nearing. Jesus had miraculously healed many who were diseased; therefore, a great multitude followed him and the disciples across the Sea of Galilee and up a mountain.

I don't know how long it was before Jesus looked up and saw the great company, but when he did he spoke to Philip about the problem of providing bread that all might eat. Now Jesus knew what he would do, but of course Philip didn't. Philip replied that eight months wages would not be sufficient to purchase enough to feed that crowd. It was then that Andrew pointed out a boy who was travelling and had his lunch with him. The lunch consisted of "five barley loaves and two small fishes." Andrew asked, "What are they among so many?"

About five thousand men took a seat on the lush grass carpeting the mountain side and the lad gave up his lunch to Jesus. What happened next is astounding! Jesus gave thanks for the food, distributed it to the disciples and the disciples to the multitude. Everybody ate until they could eat no more, including the lad who gave up his lunch. The disciples then gathered up twelve baskets of leftovers.

Now I can't prove it by the text, but I believe that the lad who gave up his lunch that day not only ate his fill, but received more to take with him than he had to start with. Nevertheless, I can prove from this account that blessings indeed come to those who freely give to Jesus. Notice some of them :

1. The joy of seeing others blessed by his gift.
2. The thrill of knowing that he did what he could.
3. The contentment that came by experiencing, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

This law of giving and receiving is just as real as the law of gravity. The law is expressed by Jesus: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." (Luke 6:38).

There is another story, not found in the Bible, about a tree growing outside the gates of a city in the Middle East. As the story goes, it was an old tree that in spite of its age continued to bear fruit profusely. Hundreds of weary travelers were refreshed on their journey by the old tree that gave freely to a tired, hot and dusty traveler.

But that is not the end of the story. One day a greedy merchant purchased the property on which stood the old tree, and to keep the passers-by from robbing HIS tree a high fence was built around it. No more sharing; it's mine, was the new owners attitude.

To make a long story short, the merchant and the travelers were shocked one day when they discovered that the old tree was dead. Can you figure out what happened? When the old tree was no longer allowed to give, it stopped bearing, and it died!

As we stated above, the law of giving is just as real as the law of gravity. Are we opening the door to blessings by giving and sharing with other? Better still, **WHAT IS OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LAW OF GIVING AND RECEIVING?**

If The Church of Christ Is A Denomination, Why ?

W. Douglass Harris

With unrelenting frequency, it is asserted by denominationals that the church of Christ is a denomination. It is often phrased in this way, "They say they are not a denomination, but they are anyway." Because of these unfounded assertions, we would like to ask ; **If the church of Christ is a denomination, why ?**

We are not using the expression "church of Christ" in a denominational sense to refer to the church of Christ denomination, but to refer to the church belonging to Christ—the church Christ founded (Matt. 16:18), purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28), and of which He is the head. (Eph. 1:22,23). We are referring to Christ's spiritual body, which is also called "the church of God" (1 Cor. 1:2) and "the church of the firstborn. (firstborn one)" (Heb. 12:23).

We are referring to that church which had its beginning at Jerusalem on the Pentecost of Acts 2. Was that church a denomination? If so, what was its denominational name? Since all will admit that it was not a denomination (none of the denominations were started that early), if a church today is just like that one in name, doctrine, organization, worship, and practice, would it be a denomination? If so, why? Remember, Christ established his church through His inspired apostles and they were members of it. Were the apostles members of denominational bodies? If so, to what denomination did Peter, Paul, John, James, the 3,000 of Acts 2, Cornelius, the eunuch, Lydia, the jailor and the Corinthians belong? Were they members of the body of Christ? If they were not members of any denomination, why cannot we be the same today?

What did the 3,000, the eunuch, Saul, Cornelius, Lydia, et al., do to become members? They all believed, repented and were baptized. (Mk. 16:15,16; Acts 2:36-41; 8:26-39; 9:1-17; 10:1-48; 16:30-34; Rom. 6:3,4; Gal. 3:26,27). If we do the same things they did, of what church would we be a member? Would we not be exactly what they were? After several became what they were, would it be possible for them to continue to meet together and worship according to the New Testament without "joining" any denomination? If they did, what denomination would they constitute? Would not they be simple Christians and members of the body of Christ? That is exactly what the church of Christ is a group of baptized, penitent believers who have refused to join any denomination, because the New Testament condemns division and denominationalism is division (John 17:20,21; 1 Cor. 1:10-13).

What makes the church of Christ a denomination, if it is, as many affirm? Does it have a denominational name? Will anyone

be so bold as to say the designations "church of Christ," and "church of God", etc. are denominational names? These are used by inspired writers. (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:22).

Does the church of Christ have a denominational creed? They reject every creed but the Bible and contend that it is all sufficient. (Gal. 1:8,9; 2 Tim. 3:16,17; 2 Pet. 1:3). Is it denominational to have the Bible only as a rule of faith and practice?

Does the church of Christ have a denominational organization? Each congregation is an independent unit with a plurality of elders and deacons. (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5; Phil. 1:1). It has no earthly headquarters or denominational machinery which joins all congregations together in a denomination.

Does the church of Christ have denominational worship? They worship as the New Testament requires—in spirit and in truth. (Jno. 4:24). Worship IN TRUTH requires authority from God's Word for everything done in worship. (Jno. 17:17). The New Testament authorizes the teaching of the apostles' doctrine, giving, the Lord's Supper, praying and singing. (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1,2; Eph. 5:19). Were the early Christians denominational in so worshipping? If we worship as they did, would it be denominational?

Repentance Before Belief

John Stacy

There are those who tell us that men must repent and then believe in Christ to be saved. Let us look at the texts that they use and see what the Bible says. First in Mk. 1:15, "...repent ye and believe the gospel." Jesus was preaching to Israelites in the text, who had not lived in harmony with the laws of Moses. They had sinned against God. They were already believers in God. No one would deny that. In this text, they are commanded to turn from their sins and believe the gospel. The Christian age was to come shortly and they were to look forward to the establishment of the church. Remember, they were already believers in God before they repented.

A second text used for this doctrine is Acts 20:21 "Testifying both to Jews and also to the Greeks repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ." This does not say they were to repent before they believed. The order of mention is not always the order of the occurrence. Paul in Rom. 10:10 said, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." In this instance confession of faith would come before belief! This would be impossible.

Note, if you will, Paul's statement in Heb. 1:11, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." The word "substance" in this text means, "under, a basis, a foundation, sediment, or that which sinks to the bottom." If faith then is the foundation on which our salvation rests, how can repentance precede it? Consider the statement of Paul in Romans 2:4, "...the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." The sending of Jesus is a demonstration of his goodness and it should lead us to repentance. But can it lead the men to repentance who does not believe? This would be impossible!

Friends, consider these thoughts. In Luke 15:7 we read, "...there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth..." Consider with this verse Heb. 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to be pleasing unto him..." If repentance comes before faith and if it is impossible to please God without faith, then the angels in Luke 15:7 are rejoicing over one who is not pleasing to God! In James 2:19 we read, "...the demons also believe and shudder." The Demons believe in God. Yet, if repentance comes before belief, then we have devils who have repented! Surely, this cannot be! In II Cor. 7:10 Paul said, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation..." If godly sorrow leads to repentance, what leads godly sorrow if not the belief that precedes it? Finally if you were trying to teach an atheist who does not believe in God where would you start? Would you start with repentance? Surely, we would not!

Isn't It Strange ?

David Roper

"Only that which is done for the Lord will last." Think about that.

You work hard for a living. You work and sweat. You bring home the pay check. It goes for...groceries, utilities, clothes, school payments, furniture payments, house payments etc.

Now-in just a few years the furniture will be worn out, the clothes will be worn out, and you'll have to trade for a new house. Just a few *more* years and *you* will be gone and what you ate or drove or lived in will make no difference at all. Only one thing will remain-what you did for God.

In light of this fact, *isn't it strange* to see men and women so very, very carefully planning their lives—how they are going to get the physical necessities and luxuries of life—and *leaving God out of their plans?*

When we stand before God in judgment, we are not going to be asked, "How big a house did you have?" or "How much money did you make?" or "How pretty was your furniture?" Rather one question will be, "WHAT DID YOU DO FOR MY CAUSE?" It's something to think about.

Is The Alien Sinner Saved By Prayer?

Curtis A. Cates

Is the alien sinner saved by prayer? Since "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6), "for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), those who are painfully aware of heavy burdens that are grievous to be borne seek to have the "rest" promised by the Lord (Matthew 11:28-30). Does the alien find rest unto his soul through prayer? One's present and eternal happiness depends upon his examining this question in the light of God's inerrant Word and upon his meeting the conditions of pardon delineated therein.

The question is not, Does God answer prayer? Abundant evidence exists that he does answer the petitions of his children. (Psalm 34:15; Matthew 7:7-11; James 5:16). But, the question is, Is the alien—the sinner who is not in God's family, the body of Christ, the church—saved by prayer?

One seeking salvation must understand that God does not talk to men in prayer. Thousands, yea millions, are tarrying, seeking through prayer to have the gospel plan of salvation made known to them, and thus by some direct, better-felt-than-told experience to be saved. God does not direct the sinner to salvation through prayer; he talks to man through his Word. (Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; Romans 10:13-15). Not one time do the Scriptures instruct the alien to pray that his sins be forgiven! The false doctrine here considered had its genesis with human speculations regarding the fall of man. Because some championed the hideous error of original sin and of heredity total depravity, numerous theories arose regarding regeneration. Some came to affirm that man's heart is encased in a "hard shell" which must be penetrated by the Holy Spirit. This in turn led to such doctrines as "coming to the altar," "praying through," and "mourner's bench" religions, which inexorably emasculate the Word of God (Romans 1:16) in the minds of men. But, what saith the Scripture concerning the prayer of an alien?

For one thing, the Scriptures discourage an alien's praying for remission of sins. The prayer of a person who refuses to hear God's Word is an abomination. (Proverbs 28:9; 1:24-28). Likewise, the wicked person—one who regards sin in his heart—is not heard. (Proverbs 15:29; Psalm 66:18). God will not hear one whose sins have separated him from God. (Isaiah 59:1,2). The statement of the blind man whom Christ healed was correct; he had learned from the Old Testament that "God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he heareth." (John 9:31). The alien sinner would not be doing God's will by asking forgiveness through prayer, and thus his prayers would have no efficacy.

For a second thing, the Scriptures teach that prayer does not nullify the law of God. Prayer is not a substitute for the plan of salvation. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21). Saul of Tarsus was commanded to cease praying, "Arise, be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). The mourner's bench system of religion seeks to cancel God's plan for saving alien sinners.

For a third thing, the Scriptures teach that God's command must be obeyed in order to obtain remission of sins. Then, the Lord will hear one's prayers, for the same plan which saves one from alien sins also places one into the family of God. Though Jesus stated "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4), conditions must be met before the comfort can become reality. The Pentecostians mourned, having learned that they had murdered the only begotten Son of the Father. They cried out, "What shall we do?" The answer came, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:36-41, 47.) These are the mourners—those who obeyed the commands of the gospel—who were comforted. The Jailor also mourned, having been accessory to the criminal acts upon Paul and Silas. After Paul "spake the word of the Lord unto" the Jailor and his house, and after these alien sinners were baptized, they who had mourned now "rejoiced greatly." (Acts 16:31-34). Inasmuch as they had been born into the kingdom, or family of God (John 3:5), they could now "lift up holy hands" in prayer (1 Timothy 2:8).

But, what saith the Scripture about the direct operation of the Holy Spirit? Does the Spirit operate on a man by direct saving power? Christ affirmed concerning his kingdom that "the seed is the word of God." (Luke 8:11). Since every seed is to bring forth after its kind (Genesis 1), Paul stated that one who hears the Word of God and exhibits saving faith based thereon shall be saved (Romans 10:12-17). Faith "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" and which brings life in his name comes through the written Word of God (John 20:30,31), not through the direct operation of the Spirit. (Ephesians 6:17). The Holy Spirit works through the word. (1 Corinthians 2:11-13).

Were the Holy Spirit to save the alien through prayer, he surely would have saved Cornelius, of all people, through his means. But, when did Cornelius have saving faith? "God made choice among you, that by my [Peter's] mouth the Gentiles [Cornelius and his household] should hear the word of the gospel, and believe." (Acts 15:7). When did the Holy Spirit fall upon Cornelius? "And as I [Peter] began to speak, the Holy Spirit

fell on them." (Acts 11:15). The Holy Spirit fell on them as Peter began speaking; however, it was the word which Peter spoke which produced faith and saved them. (Acts 11:14). Peter affirmed in Acts 15:8, 9, that the Spirit fell on them to "bare them witness" that God "made no distinction between us [Jews] and them [Gentiles]." But, God cleansed "their hearts by faith," which came through hearing Peter's words. (Romans 10:17). Likewise, Saul was cleansed not by seeing the Lord but by the preaching of Ananias, when he ceased praying, arose, and was baptized to wash away his sins. (Acts 22:16). In like manner, the Eunuch was cleansed when he obeyed Philip's preaching of Jesus, upon making the good confession and being baptized in water; neither the angel nor the Spirit worked directly on the naked heart of the Eunuch.

When the alien prays for forgiveness of sins, he first attempts to be saved apart from the blood of Christ and apart from the mediatorial work of the Son of God. (Revelation 1:5,6; John 19:34; Romans 6:3,4). Second, the alien sets aside the apostles, through whose inspired Word people would believe on Christ. (Matthew 17:17-21). Third, he sets aside the work of the Church, "the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15). Fourth, the alien praying for forgiveness makes the gospel a "dead letter," unable to save the lost. Peter said, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth." The alien disregards that one is "begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." (1 Peter 1:22, 23). Fifth, the alien sets aside all attempts to carry the gospel to the world through the Bible, tracts, radio and television programs, evangelists, missionaries, and correspondence courses; these are less than useless. Sixth, this alien rejects the fact that "it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe." (1 Corinthians 1:21). He rejects preaching as foolishness; he looks for a sign. Seventh, he rejects the fact that human beings are accountable before God. If one is saved without obedience to the will of God, God violates his own will and thus ceases to be God. On the other hand, if one is not saved, God must take the blame. (Acts 10:34, 35).

The alien who is willing truly to obey God and who is struggling under the load of sin will not hesitate to submit to

the will of "the lamb of God." Dear sinner, do not sin away the day of grace by waiting for some direct manifestation of the Spirit. You can become God's child by believing in God, repenting of alien sins, confessing Christ before men, and being baptized in water for the remission of your sins. Your prayers will then be heard by God, and answered!

The Faith That Saves Is Never Alone

Carroll B. Ellis

The Bible teaches a man is saved by faith. "Therefore, being justified by faith," writes Paul, "we have peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1). Really, we are not saved by faith but by Jesus. It is not faith in faith, but faith in Jesus which is necessary.

Faith is the instrument by which we receive justification. Yet in straightforward, bold language James says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2:24.) Are James and Paul in disagreement? Did Paul withstand James to the face? Certainly not. When people say that James 2:14-26 is a difficult passage, it is because they have a human system to uphold rather than accept the whole counsel of God. John Ruskin was right when he said, "I have met with but one book in my life that was clear on the subject of works and faith, and that book is the Bible."

The Bible teaches man is saved by faith, but saving faith is never alone. It is foolish to take passages out of context which say we are saved by faith and others which say we are saved by works and try to make them contradict each other. In the second chapter James is talking about two kinds of faith, the genuine and false. James is combatting those who say that salvation has no relationship to how you act, to what you say, or to the quality of life. When James speaks of works, he is talking about works of faith. (1 Thessalonians 1:3). Works of faith include obedience, kindness, graciousness and love.

Many who teach salvation by faith alone deny in their preaching the importance of baptism and the relationship it has to salvation. This was certainly not true with the apostle Paul for he says, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26). He then explains in the next verse one specific element in that faith. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27). The two great words WORK and FAITH are joined by Paul when he says, "For in Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." (Galatians 5:6).

The works of the law do not justify, neither are we justified by personal morality apart from Christ. A ritual in and of itself is meaningless. None of us can be good enough to earn the right of salvation. The cross is God's plan of salvation. There is power in the blood, but only when the blood is applied in baptism. (Romans 6:3-4).

James is talking about an intellectual acceptance of a dogma or a series of beliefs in and of themselves. A beginning or elementary faith is different from one which is developed and completed by love. James clearly states three characteristics of a dead faith.

A Dead Faith Has No Compassion

Here is Mr. Self-Righteous. He has the holy wine and the stained glass voice. He knows the right words, but he has no feeling or concern for his fellow man. Mr. Down-and-Out knocks at his door: "I am hungry and cold. Please help me." Mr. Self-Righteous could help, but he doesn't. Instead, he pats him on his back and says, "God bless you. I'll see you around." James explains that this kind of faith is barren and useless. In fact, to quote him, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (James 2:17).

Dead Faith Has No Communion

Here is another step which James takes in explaining it is not faith alone that saves. You believe. That is good, but remember the devils believe and tremble. They have more real faith than

you, because they are at least frightened in the presence of God. (James 2:19). You see, we cannot play games with God. He does not want lip service but real service. The devil attends worship with more regularity than many church members. He even comes on Wednesday night, but he does not accept Christ as Lord: There are a lot of Bible-quoting folks who are going to hell.

A Dead Faith Has No Conversion

When James speaks of justification by works, he is actually using the same arguments which Paul used in Hebrews 11. He wants a faith which changes life. In fact, Abraham is called in as a witness. The kind of faith which inspired Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice was an act of obedience to God's command. Abraham had the kind of faith which could say I trust God with my life, my son and my future. The faith that saves is not alone.

Rahab, the harlot, is brought in as a witness. She harbored the spies, protected them and helped to get them out alive. What good to say I believe in God and do nothing to help the spies? She is lifted from the darkest paganism to the lineage of the Messiah, because she had a living faith which linked her with God.

James says a dead faith is like a dead body. I remember vividly when my mother died. We had her for 86 years. When I went for the first time to funeral home and they opened the casket for me to see her body, in an overwhelming sense I said, "That's not my mother." All of us realize a dead body is without life.

We are saved by faith. We are saved by works. It is neither mere orthodoxy nor mere morality. Really, believing is doing something. Throughout the New Testament you find the concept "doing the truth." There is not a contradiction between faith and works in the Bible. You will find it in the doctrines and the creeds of men. It is a living, active faith which saves. If your religion does not change your life, you had better change your religion. We are saved by faith, but the faith that saves is never alone.

The Remedy For Sin

Johnny Ramsey

The great disease of soul must be cured. It is a cancerous condition that spreads like fire. Only the Great Physician (Mark 2:17) can successfully deal with sin. In Matthew 26:28 we learn that the blood of Christ was shed "for the remission of sins." Jesus, as "the lamb of God," came to take away our iniquity. The Redeemer was the one offering for sin that makes it possible for lost humanity to be saved. (Hebrews 9:26). Notice the powerful thought contained in Romans 3:24: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

What does the Bible teach men to do in regard to salvation? One radio preacher has said: "You can do nothing! God must do it all!" His sermon topic was "The Process of Salvation." His conclusion, although commonly accepted, is as foreign to the New Testament as is polygamy. Since man was endowed by the Creator, with the ability to choose the path he would tread, there is something for us to do if God's remedy for sin would be a reality in our lives.

Our sins are not hid from God (Psalm 69:5) and they will surely "find us out" (Numbers 32:23). The "deceiver of the whole world," even Satan, does not want us to be pure for even a day. He realizes, as our spiritual adversary, that a person who falls into the pit of iniquity is not apt to soar as high again. The great poem by Hezekiah Butterworth concerning the bird with the broken wing has a brilliant middle stanza:

"I found a young life broken

By sin's seductive art;

And, touched with a Christlike pity,

I took him to my heart.

He lived with a noble purpose,

And struggled not in vain;

But the life that sin had stricken
Never soared as high again."

In Romans 7, Paul freely admits the personal struggle with sin. He had informed us in chapter six of that epistle that we are dead to sin having crucified the flesh with its lusts. Therefore, sin shall not reign in our mortal bodies; it shall not have dominion over us; we are not its servant because we do not yield ourselves to the wiles of the Devil. (Ephesians 6:11). Now, in Romans 7 we learn of the civil war that rages within us. Flesh and spirit struggle mightily for the ascendancy. There is only one avenue of victory for the saint in this battle with "the law of sin and death." This victory is "through Jesus Christ our Lord and the spirit of life in him."

One of the supreme tragedies of sin is the scar it leaves behind in our lives. Someone has aptly stated: "You can bury the past but you can't keep the ghosts from walking."

How desperately we need to "purpose in our hearts not to defile ourselves" (Daniel 1:8) as we "cleans ourselves of all defilement of the flesh and spirit" (2 Corinthians 7:1), because it is forever true that we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7-8).

The precious promise of the New Covenant is the abolishment of sin when we comply with God's terms. It is through Christ alone that sins can be remitted. (Acts 13:37-39). Beginning "at Jerusalem repentance and remission of sins" were proclaimed. (Luke 24:47). God has promised to "be merciful to your unrighteousness and your sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Hebrews 8:12). The powerful language of Acts 3:19 becomes a balm to our souls: "Repent and turn again that your sins may be blotted out, that there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

Because a fountain for cleansing and for sin was opened through the shedding of the blood of Jesus (Zechariah 13:1; John 19:34) sinners like us can be snatched as a brand out of the burning fire (Jude 23). Thank God for such infinite love.

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