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“Lord, Teach Us To Pray”

In Luke 11:1 the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. When we go to Matthew's record of this account, Jesus explains to his followers that when they pray they should not be as the hypocrites who loved to pray in public places to be seen of men. Christ goes on to say that neither should they use vain repetition in their praying, thinking that they will be heard for their much speaking. Then he gives them what is commonly referred to as “The Lord's Prayer,” but which is actually a model or a suggestive prayer that the disciples could follow when praying to the Father. (Matthew 6:1-18).

Young Christians, in particular, of our day need to be taught both the necessity of prayer and how to pray. Prayer is simply talking to our Heavenly Father. It may be for the purpose of praising him, making requests, asking for forgiveness, and other things.

The privilege of prayer is extended to the Christian, that person who belongs to God. In this unique relationship the Christian is God's child and God is his Father. Prayer, then, is a very special blessing that comes to one when he becomes a child

of God. Those who are outside of the Lord's family, the church, do not have the same access to the Father as does the Christian. True, all have been created in the image of God, and all belong to God in that sense, but when one reaches the age of accountability, knowing right from wrong, then one becomes a sinner and is therefore alienated or cut off from God. It is only when that person humbles himself before his creator, and submits himself to God through obedience to his will, that his sins are forgiven. At this point in his life he comes into this special Father/Son relationship and is therefore in position to approach his Father in prayer. Concerning the unbeliever or the sinner, we are told that God hears not the sinner's prayer. (John 9:31). In the long ago, Isaiah said, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isaiah 59:1, 2).

As stated, it is the Christian who is in position to pray. He has been obedient to the Lord, has been saved, born again, and added to the church. He is now a child of God. He is therefore on speaking terms with his Father, provided he puts forth an effort to keep sin out of his life and he strives to be faithful to God.

Young Christians, especially those who have come out of other religious backgrounds, do not always know how to pray. In that case, they need to be taught. Here are some suggestions:

1. The Christian needs to pray often. Christ said that men ought always to pray. (Luke 18:1). Paul said that we should pray without ceasing or that we should always have the attitude of prayer, being consistent with our praying. (2 Thessalonians 5:17). If one has a proper relationship with his Father, he wants to talk to him, to seek his help and guidance, to thank him for all that he does for him, etc.
2. The Christian should direct his prayer to God his Father. Being a child of God, it is only natural that the child would talk to his Father. (Ephesians 4:6; Ephesians 3:14; Galatians 3:26, 27). Christ taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven . . ." (Matthew 6:9).

3. The prayer should be in the form of one's own thoughts, requests, and statements of praise. In other words, prayer is simply an opportunity to talk to one's Father. It may be short or long, depending on one's need at the time. It is not necessary that it be long, especially if it is being said in public. The Lord frowned on prayers that contained a lot of repetition, that is, just going on and on merely to be seen and heard of men. (Matthew 6:5, 6).
4. One should always pray according to God's will. Such is to say that requests should not be made of God that are contrary to his will, contrary to his nature and sense of integrity. One should not ask the Lord to perform miracles, to save sinners before obedience, to bless those in religious error, and such like. It is for this reason that we need to know God's will so that we may pray intelligently and with faith that he will hear and answer our prayers. John declared, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us : And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." (1 John 5:14, 15).
5. Prayer itself may be engaged in at any time, any where. One may be in any position, i.e. kneeling, standing, or prostrate. Prayer may be public or private, vocal or mental. When one is leading in a public prayer, he should pray loudly enough that all who are in the assembly may hear him, and thereby make the prayer their prayer. If one is following someone's prayer, he should keep his mind on what is being said, listening to every word, so that that prayer can be his own prayer.
6. The prayer should be made in the name of Jesus Christ. At the close, the one who is speaking says, "and in the name of Jesus Christ I pray" or "we pray." This simply means that it is through him or by his authority that we have prayed to the Father. You see, Christ is our mediator, our advocate. John wrote, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any

man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous . . ." (1 John 2:1, 2). Again, we read, "For there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5). We, as human beings, with God as our heavenly Father, cannot go direct to God. Neither can we approach our Father through other human beings, such as a preacher, a bishop, or a pope. Rather, there is only one who stands between us and God: Jesus Christ. He, as our mediator, advocate, spokesman, or go-between, is the only one through whom we may call upon God our Father. He then pleads our case for us. That is why we must always pray in the name of Christ.

7. Finally, at the close of the prayer, after we have said that we pray this prayer in the name of Christ, we usually say, "Amen." This means, "Let it be so." Another way of putting it, we are voicing our approval or agreement with the prayer.

Are you a Christian? Then I hope you are a praying Christian and that you will keep these things in mind when you pray. If you are not a Christian, I hope you will become one so that you can pray according to God's will. It is only when you become a Christian that you have the privilege to pray as a child of God, and it is only when you pray as a Christian as God has stated in his word that he will hear and answer your prayers.



**associate
editorial**

Acceptable Prayer

Not only do we need to pray but we should so pray that our prayers are acceptable to God. For the Bible teaches that not all

prayers are acceptable to God. The writer of the book of Proverbs, in the Bible, wrote, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight." (Proverbs 15:8). And "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." (Proverbs 28:9). Jesus was the man of prayer, that is, he always prayed, and not only did he pray but he also taught much about prayer. He said "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." (Matthew 6:5-7). At another place he also spoke a parable concerning two men who went into the temple to pray. But in the end Jesus said that when one's prayer was accepted by God, He rejected the prayer of the other man. They had both gone to pray at the same time and in the same place, but God accepted the prayer of only one man. Hear Jesus: "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 18:10-14). So we see that not all prayers are acceptable to God. How then can we pray to God acceptably? For our prayers to be acceptable to God the following essential elements are required:

1. *Humility.* The publican whose prayer God accepted humbled himself before God. He came to Him with all meekness and humility. And, of course, this is the main lesson that Jesus is teaching in this particular parable. While the self-righteous Pharisee was thanking God that he was not as the other man was,

a sinner, however, the publican was so much humbled that he bowed his head in shame and in respect for God and asked, "God be merciful to me a sinner." God knows us both from outside and inside. He doesn't need to be told how good or better we are. He knows our deeds and our thoughts. The prophet Isaiah exclaimed, "But we are all as unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6). We should therefore come to God through prayer to ask forgiveness for our sins with humility and lowliness.

2. *Reverence.* When Jesus taught the disciples how they should pray, he told them, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." (Matthew 6:9). God is our heavenly Father and His name is holy. This also suggests that we should not take or use His name in vain, because His name is Holy. When we approach Him in prayer our hearts must be filled with honour and Godly fear. The Psalmist also wrote, "Holy and Reverend is His name." (Psalm 111:9). We should therefore pray with reverence. The main reason for bowing our heads in prayer and closing our eyes and folding our hands is to show reverence to God. But it must come out of our hearts.

3. *Sincerity.* There is a temptation to pray to the people, while praying in public worship, than to God. Some are afraid for people to criticize their prayers, and some would want to have the praise of people, so they want to use such words and phrases in their prayers which would impress people. Jesus warned that such people already have their reward, (Matthew 6:5), that is, men would praise them. Of such people the Lord said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." (Matthew 15:8). Our prayer should not be just an outward expression of words but the prayer must come out of our heart. Also we should not pray with malicious and envying heart, as the Pharisee did, but with all sincerity of mind we should pray to our heavenly Father.

4. *The spirit of obedience.* When Jesus taught the disciples to pray he told them to pray to God that "Thy will be done." (Matthew 6:10). Sometimes our attitude in prayer is one of commanding God to do a certain thing for us. Instead of requesting Him and saying, Thy will be done, we ask God to do

something for us because we want Him to do that. Such was the attitude of prophet Balaam about whom we read in the 22nd chapter of the book of Numbers in the Old Testament of the Bible. When Balak, the king of the Moabites, wanted Balaam to come to him and curse the Israelites, Balaam asked God, "Should I go or not?" God told Balaam that he should not go. But a little later the king Balak sent another message for Balaam and asked him to come. Balaam again went to God to ask Him, should he go or not? Balaam's attitude was obvious, that is, he actually wanted to go, that is why he went again to God to ask him for the same thing for which God had already told him. Balaam knew that God has told him that he should not go, but in asking God again for the same thing, for which He had revealed His will, Balaam was trying to force God to say "Yes". Thus Balaam sinned through his prayer and we read how God punished him for his sin. We can't expect to live against the word or will of God and be blessed by Him. God does not hear the prayer of a sinner. (John 9:31). If we are not doing things according to His will as is revealed for us today in His New Testament of the Bible, then He will not listen to our prayers. When we pray, "Thy will be done", we must do His will. The Apostle John wrote, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." (1 John 5:14). When the Saviour prayed in the garden in the shadow of his death, his words were, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matthew 26:39). And then when the time came for him to drink the cup he yielded himself to do the Father's will. With such submission we ought to pray.

5. *Trust and confidence.* We should always pray with confidence, trusting in God that he is faithful and that if our petition is according to His will then He will definitely grant it for us. James wrote, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." (James 1:6, 7). When Jesus stood near the grave of Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead, we notice from the record that even before Lazarus came out of his grave, Jesus proclaimed, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me." (John 11:41). What a great confidence he had in the Father. He knew

that He would do that for him. Likewise when we pray we must have that faith and trust and confidence in God that He knows even before our asking and that if our petition is according to His will then he has already granted it for us.

6. *Forgiving spirit.* Jesus, in the model prayer, taught the disciples to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." He further taught, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you : But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:12, 14, 15). God loves man. He want to forgive our sins. He gave His Son for our sins. The Bible says that if we will obey His command then He will save us from sin. (Mark 16:16). As God's children we can pray to Him for forgiveness of our sins. But He will not forgive us our sins if we have not forgiven those who have sinned against us. How can we expect God to forgive us when we are not willing to forgive others ? See Matthew 18:23-35.

7. *Unselfishness.* It is not wrong to pray for what we need. But it is wrong to pray for things to gratify our lust and selfish embitions. James says, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." (James 4:3). While praying we must guard our motives, knowing that to whom we are praying knows why we are asking. He knows our needs and He also knows our wants. However, He has promised to provide for our needs. (Matthew 6:33).

May God help us to pray according to His will.

Come Home

Roger McKenzie

A fundamental element of the Lord's church is the fellowship and brotherhood of the believers. The church is described in the scriptures as a family. Strength is gained by sharing our concerns with loving brothers and sisters in Christ. Any time a Christian misses this fellowship an essential part of the Christian life is missed.

God knew that we required this coming together. The early church began immediately to devote themselves to worship and fellowship. (Acts 2:42). They were instructed not to forsake the assembly. (Heb. 10:25). We "teach and admonish one another" when we sing together. (Eph. 5:19). When Christians fail to worship, the act of neglecting the assembly is only a symptom. The real problem is more critical, more difficult to recognize and more difficult to correct.

When a Christian deliberately neglects the worship, he not only disobeys God, but he also isolates himself from the source of strength God knew he required for spiritual growth. As first one, then another service is neglected, he gradually ceases to serve God in other ways. The environment of the world is detrimental to spiritual health. One cannot live spiritually and continue to forsake coming together with the saints to worship God. When one attends only occasionally, worship will be ritualistic and our profession of Christianity will be sterile.

You and your family need the strength of the church just as a child needs the strength of the home. Your soul is at stake; the souls of those whom you influence may be in danger. God loves you. He gave His Son for you, and Jesus shed His blood for you. Whatever caused you to neglect the assembly is too small to risk your eternal soul. Our plea, our prayer, is that you will come back to regular worship. Come back to God and come back home.

"Zealous of Good Works"

W.D. Harris

Scripture : Titus 2:14.

Zeal can be properly or improperly motivated. If improperly motivated, it is misdirected. Zeal in a good cause is one of the greatest powers in the world, but in a wrong cause or without knowledge (Rom. 10:2), it can be one of the most harmful forces exercised by man. Zeal for human tradition, false religions, and wrong causes have done immeasurable harm. Our text enjoins zeal (enthusiasm, fervor), in "good works," which is zeal properly

motivated and directed. Three aspects of such zeal are outlined in the text. They are as follows :

I. The Right Direction of Zeal—"Good Works". Such injunctions as "being fruitful in every good work" (Col. 1:10), and "Be ready unto every good work" (Tit. 3:1) are the directives of inspiration. These are called works of faith (1 Thess. 1:3), and works that are opposed to spiritual darkness (Rom. 13:12). In the New Testament all good works are grouped under one of three headings : evangelism, edification, and benevolence. These are all essential to the advancement of Christianity in the world. Reduced to its simplest ingredient, doing good works means doing the works that Christ did.

II. The Enthusiasm by which such works should be done—"Zealous". The primary meaning of the word is to be "boiling hot" (Thayer). We cannot serve the Lord acceptably by lukewarmness, as did the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:15, 16). He said to them : "Be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:19). "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord" (Col. 3:23). We should work with all our might (Eccl. 9:10). Lukewarmness is the only condition mentioned in the Scriptures which is said to nauseate the Lord. We need to get on fire for the Lord !

III. The Secret of this Zeal : Jesus' giving himself for us. Knowledge that Jesus gave himself to redeem us from all iniquity should be all the motivation we need to be zealous in good works. The secret to passionate zeal in serving God is redemption and conversion. To the unconverted a zealous Christian seems to be fanatical, because the unconverted does not know the secret or the motivation. An Indian, having heard from a white man some strictures on zeal, replied : "I don't know about having too much zeal; but I think it is better the pot should boil over than not boil at all."

Conclusion : Our text says zeal for good works makes God's people PECULIAR—not queer or oddballs, but peculiar in loving our enemies, doing good to those that hate us, visiting the sick, blessing those that curse us, helping the poor, making the world a better place to live, etc. This is the kind of particularity to which our text refers. "*The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.*" (Psa. 69:9). Do You Have This Zeal In Good Works???

It Takes Somebody Who Believes And Will Sacrifice

Dick Marcear

Elizabeth Blackwell was the first woman doctor in America. She began her practice in 1851 in New York. People were prejudiced against her. No hospital would allow her on their staff. She was unable to get any patients, and no one would even rent her a room, once she told them she was a doctor.

Finally, with the help of some Quaker friends, she opened her own clinic in New York City's worst slum. The clinic began in March, 1853. She put out a sign saying that treatment would be free. Yet for weeks no one came. But one day a woman staggered up the steps, collapsed in Elizabeth's arm, was treated and recovered. She returned to tell her friends about "the wonderful woman doctor." This clinic eventually expanded into what is now New York Infirmary for Women and Children, a large thriving hospital on East 15th Street in New York City. Her faith and sacrificial spirit made it a reality.

Three Lessons :

1. **Jesus Believed and Sacrificed to Start the Church.** He came to do the will of God. (Matt. 26:39). He had promised to build the church. (Matt. 16:18). And Paul said, "he bought with his own blood." (Acts 20:28). We are able to enjoy the church because of Jesus' faith and sacrificial spirit.
2. **If We Believe We'll Sacrifice to Build the Church.** Our work is in the world where we live. We are to be like "salt" and "yeast" to influence our friends. It is not going to be easy, but if we really believe we'll sacrifice our time, energy and money to see that Christ's church grows.
3. **God Can Do Great Things Through One Committed to Him.** We are "slaves" of God. (Rom. 6:22). The spirit God hates is indifference, lukewarmness (Rev. 3:15). That

repels men. But show me a person with the desire to build the church, like Elizabeth Blackwell wanted to serve the sick and I'll show you one through whom God can do great things.

The two requirements are these: You must believe, and be willing to sacrifice.

Sunday Is Made/Ruined On Saturday Night

Charles Hodge

The Jews are smarter than we give them credit—their Sabbath began at 6.00 on Friday night! What is wrong with us Sunday, is Saturday! We so abuse Saturday that we are drugged on Sunday! Sunday actually begins Saturday night!

Remember the "Good Ole Days?" Come Saturday night we got out our "Sunday clothes, shined our shoes, and prepared our Bible class lesson. Sunday was the "Big Event" of the week! There was something dynamic—an expectancy about Sunday. It was revered! You cannot be carnal Saturday night and spiritual Sunday morning! Airplane pilots cannot socialize Saturday night if they fly on Sunday. Baseball pitchers cannot socialize Saturday night if they pitch on Sunday! A preacher cannot socialize on Saturday night if he preaches on Sunday. A preacher ought to be the most rested man in town.

We need to study I Corinthians 14—not simply to debate charisma. We are participants—we bring psalms, hymns! Our hidden agendas ruin us. We are here to participate—not to spectate. Tragically, we have come to make the song leader—the preacher—YEA even GOD the participants! "Do something for ME, God!" ("A goose pimple!"). We have a receiving mentality in worship—a contradiction!!! The congregation is not the *AUDI-ENCE* (God is) but the *GIVER*! Performers must come prepared! Anything "spontaneous" took years of skilled practice! It all starts on Saturday night.

What Is True Spirituality ?

George W. Bailey

Often people mention a need for more spirituality. This is usually said with reference to worship. Worship must be spiritual. "I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day," said John. Paul spoke of praying and singing with the spirit, as well as with the understanding. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

But is spirituality limited to one day or one occasion ? Doesn't it extend throughout the week, exercising itself in one's every act and thought ? Aren't we told to be "spiritually minded ?" Aren't we to be "led by the Spirit ?" Aren't we admonished to "walk after the Spirit ?" Aren't we likewise expected to bear "fruit of the Spirit ?"

Spirituality, then, must affect not only one's worship, but his work as well. True spirituality is found not only in one's praise, but also in one's practice.

True spirituality results in a complete surrender of heart and life to spiritual things. When one has the mind of the Spirit and is led by the Spirit and is bearing fruit of the Spirit, this person becomes interested in and engages in anything and everything that would mean advancement to the cause of Christ.

As an example of such involvement, notice what the Lord said relative to one who has been overtaken in a fault..... "Ye who are spiritual, restore such a one." If we consider ourselves "spiritual", wouldn't we go all out to restore any who might have been overtaken in fault? Surely those who are truly spiritual would help bring others to the Lord !

Are you truly spiritual ? Does your spirituality stop with worship, or does it extend throughout the week ? Are you manifesting spirituality through your involvement in the Lord's work and service ?

On Cats And Dogs

Dub McClish

For several years we have had dogs and cats as family pets, giving me an opportunity to observe both of these animals quite closely. Moreover, I have been observant of dogs and cats that belong to others and have generally found them to have rather well-defined traits common to their respective species.

It is no accident that the dog is called "man's best friend." Most dogs are eager to please their masters. Dogs are almost always very responsive to any friendly overtures from humans. I believe it is no exaggeration to say that dogs enjoy the presence of their masters and generally try to be obedient to them. It is also observable that most dogs are happy creatures.

Cats can be very warm and friendly, but this is not their constant disposition. As often as not, when a hand is extended to pet them, especially if that of a stranger, they will slap at it rather than purr. Cats are independent, even haughty. They care not for the will of their masters, but for their own will. They are "free spirits" that cannot stand to be held down or restrained.

It occurs to me that dogs and cats are illustrative of two types of people and the way they respond to God. There are those who are very responsive to their Master and his word. They are most eager to please their Master in every possible way. If the Lord told them to "fetch a stick" they would gladly comply without question because they want to please the one who provides their every physical and spiritual need. Such a person loves to be in the presence of his Master and will never ever be heard to ask, "Do I have to attend Bible school and worship every time?" Neither do such individuals question what their Master commands, whether it be baptism, generous giving, soul-winning, practicing church discipline or any other requirement. These people are happy people because they are right with God and with the whole world!

Then there are the "cat people." They can be sweet as sugar, but do something that upsets them and they come at you with all fangs bared. Even intended acts of help or kindness will sometimes set them off. They will do the will of the Master as long as

it suits them, but when it doesn't, they go their own willful way. They never learn the meaning of restraint or discipline and are willing to risk their own souls rather than be "tied down." What about you?

Say What You Mean

Cleon Lyles

Preachers have an unusual opportunity to listen to people. In the course of their many conversations, many promises are given, statements made and excuses offered. Perhaps it is easy to see, then, that some people do not "say what they mean."

"They say" usually means "I heard it from at least one source but everybody must believe it."

"It needs to be done" means "I'm not going to do anything about it but the church ought to."

"I've heard some criticism" usually means "Two or three mouths have turned loose their venom."

"It might bring criticism" means "I know it should be done it just takes too much effort for me to do it."

"If memory serves me correct" really means "I'm going to say something I'm not sure of, whether true or false, but if somebody discovers me wrong, then I can always blame my memory."

"Preacher, I will be there if I am not Providentially hindered" nearly always means "If I'm not there you can blame God for it."

"I won't promise, but I'll do my best" means "Don't expect much out of me."

"I'll come everytime I can" usually means "If I don't have something better to do I'll be there."

"I'm still studying the question" usually means "I want to stay in position to agree with both sides."

You can take it from there. Christians should be far more careful to mean what they say and say what they mean than people of the world. (Matt. 12:35-37).

The Passing Of The Blush

Joe R. Barnett

Jeremiah had the goods on Israel. They deserved doomsday because :

- (1) they had stuffed cotton in their ears, refusing to hear God;
- (2) they were "greedy for unjust gain";
- (3) they glossed over the nation's real condition, "saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace"; and
- (4) when they sinned, they "were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush" (Jeremiah 6:10-15).

Hey! that sounds like a page out of the last quarter of the 20th century. Sin is having a heyday. We can hold hands with it without even the slightest blush.

When just one curse word was used in the movie "Gone With The Wind," people gasped—the nation's face turned red. Some were up in arms, but that's gone with the wind too. That's mild stuff now—bland as a brand new colouring book. Most "family movies" now are generously salted with profanity. Gutter language spews into the family room via TV, books, magazines. Even the educational value of the daily newspaper is more than offset by the filth of the movie advertisement page.

Whatever happened to good old-fashioned guys and gals who could blush? We've really arrived—nothing is dirty enough to make us blush. A real mark of intellectual sophistication, wouldn't you say?

Ezra was embarrassed by the people's sins. He fell to his knees, saying, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to thee, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens." (Ezra 9 : 6).

The iniquities of our age are stacked higher than that, Ezra, but not high enough to make us blush!

God's Attitude Toward Sinners

John Waddey

While serving their time in Babylonian captivity, the children of Israel were saying: "Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them, how then can we live?" God's word to Ezekiel was, "Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn away from his way and live.....turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die....." (Ezek. 33:10-11).

Great and wonderful lessons can be learned from the Old Testament. The above scripture beautifully illustrates God's attitude toward sinners in every age.

This illustrates the despair of men without God "Our sins are upon us.....we pine away in them; how then can we live?" Sinners must learn that iniquity bear its penalty with it. It injures the mind and weakens the body. It shortens the life and degrades the spirit. It robs us of our dignity and God's approval. There is no peace to the wicked. (Is. 57:21). Sin becomes an increasingly heavy burden to bear. It tends to harden and sear the conscience if left in the life. Many sinners do not even recognize the danger of their condition. The God of this world has blinded them. (II Cor. 4:4). Sin always ends in hopelessness and despair. Like Saul before his salvation, we cry out, "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24).

The death penalty of sin generally does not come as lightning, from heaven, rather it works as a slow poison. (Jas. 1:15).

Our text demonstrates the divine disposition toward sinners. "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." The pagans of that generation and ours, needed to hear those words. In their false religions, their gods were generally "devil gods" out to harm men. These vindictive gods had to be placated and appeased. Sadly, millions of Jehovah worshippers have been led to believe

that God decreed the damnation of specific sinners. (This of course came through the influence of Calvinism). Some of God's children mistakenly have conceived of God as being anxious to destroy them. Perhaps they mistook their own emotions of God's. All with such distorted notions need be reminded that our God's nature is one of love for all men. (I John 4:16). That holy love is manifested to all men in the sacrifice of his only begotten Son for sin and salvation. (John 3:16). His personal oath is given to confirm this fact: "As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah." "Since he could swear by none greater, he swore by himself....." (Heb. 6:16).

Ezekiel shows us the heavenly challenge. "Turn ye from your evil way; For why will ye die?" What a remarkable scene! The great Jehovah is pleading with rebellious sinners to come back to him. Here then is a universal summons to repentance. In every age, repentance has been an absolute necessity for salvation. Jonah preached repentance to the citizens of Ninevah. (Jonah 3:10). John the Baptist called upon his contemporaries to repent for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. (Matt. 3:1). Jesus warned all men to repent or perish. (Lk. 13:3). The apostles declared that God "commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent." (Acts 17:30). No impenitent person can hope to be saved!

To repent means to turn back to God. It is not just emotion, nor is it simply a reformed life. Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation...but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (II Cor. 7:10). It is a change of heart that grows out of the emotion or conviction and results in a change of life. "A tearless change of heart and life is true conversion, while weeping without change is worthless sentiment."

We hear God's searching question, "Why will ye die?" This pointed question lays the burden of responsibility upon the individual. How foolish for a man to refuse to repent and allow God to save him. A sick man who refuses to take his heart medicine is foolish. A drowning man who stubbornly refuses to grasp a lifeline is considered insane. What of a dying sinner too proud to turn to God and thus escape the hell of fire?

The reward for obedience is clearly set forth. Turn and *live* is God's offer. Life! How beautiful the word. We take it for granted, we act as though God owed it to us. It often takes a

narrow scrape with death properly to focus our view of life. God's people enjoy the abundant life now. (John 10:10). No sinner has known the full joy of living until he lives in the light of God's saving love. Then there is life in eternity. To Paul the life beyond the grave was "very far better" (Phil. 1:23). Some foolish souls race madly through life as though it would never end or as if there were nothing beyond. Like the rich man of Luke 16:23, they will be rudely awakend one day in torment begging for a drop of water for their parched tongue.

God has no pleasure in the death of sinners. His only wish is that they would turn from their sin and live. Now that you know and understand God's attitude toward you, what will be your response toward him?

A Worthless Piece Of Cloth

John G. Shaver

I have just finished reading a newspaper article entitled, "New Studies Indicate Jesus Died Of A Heart Attack." I find this article to be filled with assumption and supposition. The so-called "noted Jesuit review *Civiltà Cattolica*," in setting forth such foolishness, may be noted only for such foolishness. There are no "apparent inconsistencies" in the Gospels, as Dr. Malantrucco falsely stated. The only inconsistencies are in those who fail to "rightly divide the word of truth." (II Tim. 2:15). This so-called "new evidence" could *help* to prove that the Shroud of Turin is the burial cloth of Jesus, because there has never been any irrefutable proof given before this time that such is the case. The only statement of truth in the whole article was made by Vittorio Marcozzi, "Christ died on the cross, there's no doubt about that."

The Gospel according to John does not state that Christ was stabbed in the chest. The Bible states, "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his *side* . . ." (Jno. 19:34). When one quotes the Bible, he should quote it correctly. But with all the other inconsistencies stated by these so-called experts, it is no wonder that they misquoted God's word. The Bible record says nothing

about Christ bleeding profusely. It states, "... forthwith there came out blood and water." (Jno. 19:34). It is a sorrowful thing to state that Jesus died of a heart attack just to prove that a worthless rag was his burial garment.

Crucifixion was a most horrible form of death. Peloubet's Bible Dictionary states, "A death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of the horrible and ghastly—dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds, all intensified up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries, especially of the head and stomach, became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and, while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst." According to Webster, the word "surcharged" means, "to overcharge, overload; overburden, to fill to excess or beyond normal capacity." This would explain the flow of blood from the side of Jesus. Dr. Aetano Della Site's findings would be inadmissible as supporting the so-called proof of Dr. Malantrucco, because those people who had died of a heart attack had not undergone the cruel punishment of crucifixion.

This "new theory says that Jesus suffered a heart attack after the Last Supper, in the Garden of Gethsemane." Where is their proof? Dr. Malantrucco's interpretation of Matthew 26:38 is completely false! Jesus, who had been the comforter of those with him in every hour of danger and trouble, now calls on them for the help which their wakeful sympathy would give him in the hour of his agony, and they failed him. That, dear friend, is simply what the passage shows. Dr. Malantrucco says that the statement of Jesus relates to the pain of a heart attack. Ridiculous! Malantrucco then states that the condition of Jesus worsened, and he died on the cross after shouting out in pain. Let us examine this fallacious position in the light of scripture, and a little common sense.

Matthew 26-27, Mark 14-15, Luke 22-23 and John 18-19 relate that Jesus underwent six different trials in a twenty-four hour period, without rest. He also underwent scourging and other physical abuse. He then was forced to bear his cross through the streets of the city until Simon was conscripted to carry it for him. Does this sound like a man who had just suffered a heart attack? I know of no man after surviving a serious heart attack, being able to be subjected to such cruel and inhuman treatment, as was Jesus, surviving to be nailed to a cross of crucifixion. He likely would have died before being crucified. Dr. Malantruccio also relates that "... he died ... after shouting out in pain." The scriptures nowhere state that Jesus cried out in pain. They plainly state, "... when he had cried again with a loud voice. . ." (Matt. 27:50). Luke relates what was said after Jesus cried out. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (Lk. 23:46). Now honestly, does that sound like a man who just died from a severe heart attack? Ridiculous!

Now we come to the real reason behind these false assumptions and suppositions stated in this article. Dr. Malantruccio "first presented his findings to a convention on the Shroud of Turin in Bologna last fall". We can now see why it has been stated that Jesus died from a heart attack instead of the horrible pain of crucifixion. To give credence to a worthless piece of cloth! Now watch as we have another assumption and supposition placed before us as if it were fact. "Scientists who examined the cloth in 1978 said evidence *suggests* the image is that of Jesus and that it was 'projected' on the surface wrapped around his body, perhaps by a burst of some kind of radiation emanating from all parts of his body." How do we know that it was the body of Jesus wrapped in this cloth? Where do we find the likeness to compare this image? Where is the proof that this image was not that of one of the thieves crucified with him? Do we actually think that a piece of cloth can exist without special treatment for 2000 years? Examine the language of the experts that you and I are put stock in. Suggests? Perhaps? Some kind? Dear friend, if you allow me language like that, I can prove that you are a Martian with two heads, six arms, and five legs! In this world of ours, infidelity runs rampant, and this false theory is just one more tool of Satan to instill doubt in the hearts of mankind in relation to

God's infallible word. Let us not fall prey to the deceptive ploys of Satan and his disciples.

A Plea For Peace

Dalton Key

"Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men . . . Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:16-18,21).

The foregoing advice is forever timeless, forever timely. Peace, unity and union are always relevant topics. It is still good—and will always be good—for brethren to dwell together in unity. (Psalm 133:1). A house divided has no better hope of standing. (Matthew 12:25).

Peace and unity are built upon a foundation of selflessness. This involves putting your needs, wants, and rights ahead of my own. I will not insist upon always having my own way, for love "seeketh not her own" (I Corinthians 13:5). I will allow myself to be hurt before letting you suffer hurt. As Paul said, "Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" (I Corinthians 6:7). I will not sulk, complain, or murmur when things don't go just as I would like them to go. In short, I will do my best to follow the Golden Rule. (Matthew 7:12). Loving my neighbour as myself (Matthew 22:39) demands selflessness and thus contributes to "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:3).

We realize our society has become addicted to self. Taking overshadows giving; "we" has become superseded by "me." The world seems to revolve around strikes, riots and boycotts. Our culture has duped itself into believing that we all have the right to fight for our way about anything and everything. This "me first" philosophy may be understandable in a godless society, but such selfishness is neither understandable nor excussable in the church founded by the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). The world flouts the

concerns of others and submits to no one. The body of Christ lives in harmony with the inspired advice which teaches, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." (Ephesians 4:21).

Let us throw our "rights" to the wind and concentrate upon the needs of others. This, as nothing else, will aid us in developing a larger measure of Christ's spirit.

The Problem Of Overcoming Daily Temptation

NO. 1

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

In Matthew 6:9-13 our Lord gave the disciples a model or a pattern by which to guide them in the prayers they sent to the Father's throne of grace and mercy. Jesus said these words in Matthew 6:13, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." In the parallel passage of Luke 11:4 the Lord said, "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." In a short series of timely lessons for The Bible Teacher, I want to discuss with you, our kind readers, the topic of "The Problem of Overcoming Daily Temptation." This is surely a theme that confronts and challenges all of us regardless of age, regardless of where we live and regardless of our circumstances in life.

SOME OPENING OBSERVATIONS

Temptations face the young; they face the aged; they face all those in between these two extremes in age. In the daily challenges and confrontation with temptations we surely do not want to be like the man who said he could resist everything but temptation!! We do not want to be like so many of our day who stand for nothing and fall for everything that comes along. In the past

there was a group of people who practiced free love and a community of wives who boasted that they had conquered the problem of lasciviousness or illicit lusts. No, they had not conquered it. They had turned the lusts into the easy and convenient system of having what they formerly desired but could not and should not have demanded and not even desired. That is not the way to overcome temptation !

In strategic matter of facing and overcoming daily temptations there needs to be a keen recognition of some vital principles as relating both to temptation and to sin. First of all, there needs to be the keen recognition that temptation and sin are not synonymous terms. If they were synonymous terms, then James could not have written as he did in the opening syllables of his inspired epistle, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." (James 1:2,3). James was not telling the Christians of the Dispersion that they should count it all joy when they fell into manifold sins. He said "divers temptations." The ASV has here for the rendering "manifold temptation." There is a difference between temptations and sins. If temptation and sin are synonymous, then look where this will place the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew 4 and Luke 4 set forth his temptation in the Judean wilderness just subsequent to his baptism in the waters of the Jordan River. To say that temptation and sin mean precisely the same thing will make of Jesus a sinner because the Bible teaches he was tempted by Satan. To take this position, as some have erroneously done, will make Jesus a sinner many times over. How, you may be thinking? In this way. The Bible says in Hebrews 4:15, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Was Jesus tempted? The Bible says he was? Was he tempted in the very ways in which we are tempted today? The Bible so affirms. Did he sin? Absolutely not. Did he sin in all points like we do? Positively not !! The Bible portrays his asking this question to his generation: "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" (John 8:46-ASV). The Bible affirms that he "is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. 7:26). Peter said in regard to him that he "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." (I Pet.

2:22). Jesus was tempted but he did not ever sin. Therefore temptation and sin are not synonymous terms. One may be tempted and sin; one may be tempted and not sin. The temptation comes before the occurrence of sin. James makes this matter very clear by saying, "but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death". (James 1:14,15).

WHEN DOES SIN OCCUR?

Man sins when he gives in to the desire to sin; the sin occurs when he yields to the temptation. There is a great Christian song that we have sung through the years which exhorts, "Yield Not to Temptation." The song supplies the reason why the persons should not yield by saying, "For yielding is sin." And that, reader friend, is the way sin develops within the human heart, within the human personality. Allow me to illustrate what I mean. Suppose here is a man that has a weakness for the drinking of alcoholic beverages. He recognizes his problem and is seeking to overcome it. As he is walking down the street in the city where he lives he suddenly realizes that he is about to come near a place where alcoholic beverages are sold. Strong drink advertisements meet his eye. He is tempted to go in and buy himself a drink. But then he thinks, "No, I am a Christian. This is one of my great weaknesses. The Lord could not and would not approve of my doing this. Drinking 'the eternal waters of destruction' is not compatible with Christianity. I will not, I cannot do this act of evil." He walks right on by and goes his own straight way toward a continued life of sobriety and abstaining from these destructive waters. Was he tempted? You had better believe he was. Did he sin? No, he did not. But consider it from another angle. As he was about to approach the place where the alcoholic beverages were sold he had already made up his mind that he was going to go in and buy himself a drink. But just about the time he was ready to turn and walk into the bar he looked across the street and recognized a fellow Christian. About this time the fellow Christian waves to him and speaks a word of greeting. The man walks right on and does not go in. Was he tempted? Yes. Did he sin? Indeed he did. All that kept him from executing the full intent of his previously

established purpose, already established in his mind, was the unexpected presence of someone across the street that he knew. He walked on down the street and entered the very next bar for that drink when he thought no one was watching him. Now he simply carries out his sinful intent that was already a part and parcel of his thinking.

Consider another illustration. Here is a man away from home on a business trip. He is tempted to commit adultery and thus be unfaithful to his good wife back home. The opportunity is available and a potential partner is near at hand. But he says to himself, "Though she is desirable and the opportunity is available, yet I am a Christian. I have a good wife back home. I have children. I cannot, I will not do this evil thing." Like Joseph of the Old Testament he flees the scene and gets far removed from the explosive situation. Was he tempted? Yes. Did he sin? No. He did not yield. Had he yielded he would have sinned but he resisted the temptation. He did what Paul counseled the Corinthian to do in I Corinthians 6:18: "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."

Consider another illustration. A man is trying to overcome his weakness to gamble. Much of his life has been spent with gambling and among people who love to engage in betting, poker and the like. He has vowed to give it up. He has just recently obeyed the gospel of Christ, thus becoming a New Testament Christian. For many months now he has not wagered a single bet either for a small amount or a larger amount. Then he finds himself with some of his former gambling buddies. They begin to apply the gambling pressure to ensure him into his former manner of life. They offer him a wager that is a sure winner with only a small amount due from him. He is tempted to engage. Then he thinks to himself, "No, this will draw me back into the very type of life that I am working desperately to escape permanently. My new found Christian friends are counting on me. So is my Lord. I have promised him on high and them here below that I will not go back into that type of life." He walks out upon his former friends and leaves them holding the gambling bag of the sure winner. Was he tempted? He surely was! Did he sin? Positively not! Why not? Because he

resisted successfully the temptation. He did not yield. Remember that yielding constitutes the sin.

“I Changed My Mind”

Bob Duncan

A very dedicated Christian gentleman and close personal friend for more than two decades was visiting in our home a few days ago. He is a part time preacher, and in the course of our conversation we naturally discussed some of the developments in the church. As we were discussing the problem of worldliness and its effect upon the church, my friend made the following statement: “Until just a few years ago I simply was not convinced there could be anything wrong with public swimming.”

Now, a statement like that just cannot be left hanging. “What changed your mind?” was my next question.

My friend then related a very casual incident, and yet an incident which changed his mind. It involved an occasion upon which he and his wife joined another couple at the lake. When he saw his friend’s wife in her bathing suit he recognized that he immediately had thoughts about her which were wrong, and which he never would have had about her had she been properly clothed. He spent the rest of the afternoon with his back turned to her to avoid evil thoughts. He said he told himself over and over, “This is what preachers have been trying to tell me for the past twenty years, and I didn’t believe them.”

Jesus knew there is such a thing as a lustful look (Matthew 5:28). David, a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22), became guilty of a lustful look (II Samuel 11:2-5). Sometimes preachers are accused of being evil minded for thinking of such things. Was Jesus evil minded because he warned a lustful look? Then why should preachers of our time be accused of such when they issue such warnings?

It is true, of course, that some will think evil thoughts regardless of what women wear. Concerning these there is little, if anything, we can do. Jesus knows, however, that there are

others—such as my friend and David—who can be tempted and ensnared by the right set of circumstances. The devil also knows this. He does not need the lure of immodest apparel to ensure the wicked and evil minded; he already has them in his clutches. But those who are good and upright, pure and undefiled, may be led to become impure and defiled by those who choose to dress indecently.

I have to admire my friend's honesty in frankly confessing his own impure feelings toward the wife of his friend when he saw her in her bathing suit. I am afraid not all my brethren are that completely honest.

Yes, Sin Is Real

Bobby Key

“Christian Science,” falsely so called, denies the reality of sin. But this denial is neither Scientific nor Christian. Sin is a scientific fact, an omnipresent, awful, damning, hellish fact, and it is the part of a fool to deny it. The Bible says, “Fools make a mock of sin” (Prov. 14:9). The Gospel of Christ is simply this: “Christ died for our SINS according to the scriptures” and rose again (I Cor. 15:3); or that “Christ came into the world to save sinners” (I Tim. 1:15). “For all have sinned.” In my judgment the Christian Science movement is neither Christian nor scientific. They see no need of the atoning blood and deny it. Since it believes there is no reality to sin, it sees no hell or judgment.

Why did Jesus die if men are not sinners? Why should anyone try to save sinners, if such do not exist? The death of Christ was an awful blunder, a terrible senseless act, unless men are sinners doomed to an awful hell as the Bible teaches.

Only the blood of Christ can solve the sin problem. Since “our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29); and God is “angry with the wicked every day” (Psa. 7:11), we are all helplessly lost without the death of Christ.

Yes, all have sinned, but thank God all can be saved! We have hope. Jesus died to save sinners. He “came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32). If you are a sinner, there is hope for you. Jesus is able to save. He is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. (Heb. 5:9).

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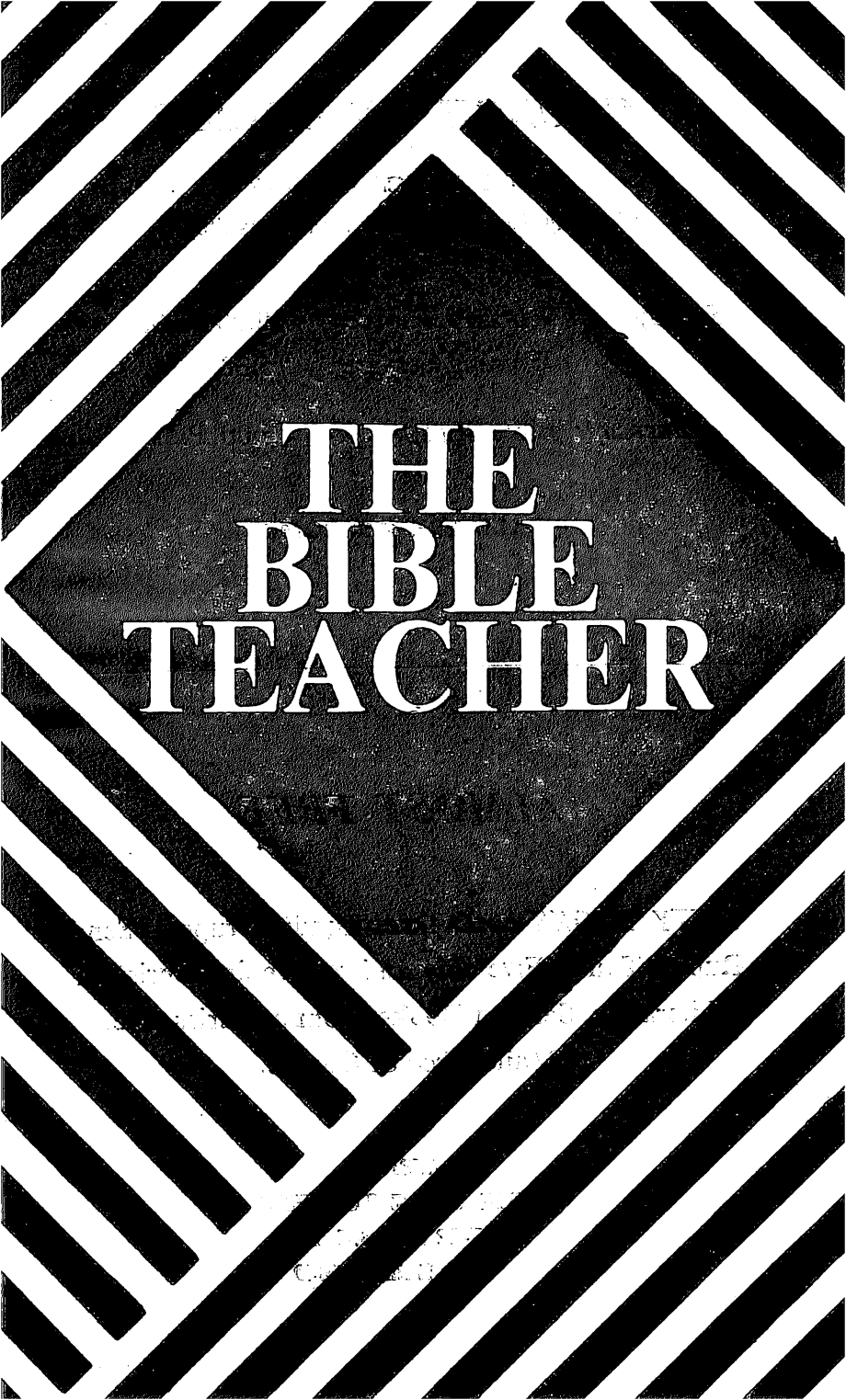
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