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EDITORIAL

Are We Self-Righteous?

It is not a secret that the Jews of Christ's day were self-righteous. They were a very proud people, feeling that they were better than all others. They boasted that they were the children of Abraham and that they were God's people. The Pharisees and Sadducees especially gloried in their goodness. They stressed the letter of the law but overlooked the spirit of it. Take the story of the Pharisee and the Publican, for example. Jesus said, "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 rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 18:10-14).

Jesus constantly condemned the spirit of self-righteousness among the Jews and the various sects of the Jews of that

day. Matthew 23 is devoted to that and we'll read part of it. "Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: And therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their little fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi." (Matthew 23:1-7).

Continuing, he says, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayer; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!" (Matthew 23:13-16).

Going on, he says, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, Judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter; that the outside of them be clean also. Woe unto

you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwards, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes, hypocrites ! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell ?" (Matthew 23:23-33).

After the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and the beginning of Christianity, one of the great problems was of dealing with these self-righteous Jews. They reasoned that they were God's people, and they didn't want to give up the Law. They had already crucified Christ, and it was certainly not easy for them now to accept him as their Saviour. Neither was it easy for them to accept the Gentile as having a right to hear the gospel and to become a child of God. Even in the church there were problems over the Gentile's acceptance, and because of the hardness of the hearts of the Jews, Paul turned his attention to the Gentiles and preached mostly among them.

Although we in the church are not Jews, because of our teaching on the church, the plan of salvation, worship, etc., we are still labeled as being self-righteous. Denominational people often point to us and say that because we will not fellowship them, but rather we condemn Catholicism and Protestantism, we are saying that we are better than they are. Is there any truth to this ? Are we self-righteous ?

First, let it be understood that we as Christians and members of the church of Christ recognize that we are not perfect by any means. We are sinful as are all people. We make mistakes. However, we are trying to follow Christ only. We want to be only what he would have us to be. We want to be

Christians only and members of his church. We want to encourage all others to be the same. Surely there is no wrong in this.

We do not feel that we are better than others. We do not say that our moral living is better than some of our religious friends. We do not look down on anyone. Instead, we love all people. We cannot agree with our religious friends but we do not hate them. We do not have fellowship with other religious groups but that does not mean we are not interested in them.

If we are different from others, if we cannot fellowship various denominational groups, it is because we are trying to serve the Lord instead of following the teachings of men. Denominational people often find fault with us because we will not accept them religiously. If the Lord would do so, we would. But since he does not, then we cannot.

What is wrong with trying to get people to go back to the Bible and follow it only? (I Peter 4:11). How can we be condemned for encouraging people to obey only the teachings of the Bible, to be Christians only, and to be members of the church that we can read about in the Bible? (James 1:22; Acts 11:26; Matthew 16:18). Who can find fault with us for condemning division and the teachings of men? (Romans 16:17, 18; Matthew 7:21-23). Who can say we are wrong when we are pleading even as Christ did that we all be one religiously? (John 17:20-23). Surely no one can if he knows the Bible, because this is what the Bible teaches and this is what Christ wants one and all to do. Surely we are not self-righteous in encouraging people to do what Christ would do.

We would like to encourage you to investigate the church of Christ. Do you know about this church? Do you know what its members teach? Are you sure that you are a member of it? We would ask that you go to the Bible itself for your study. If you will do this, you may find that although we are not self-righteous for the things that we do and teach, we do have the truth. Thus, when we all obey that truth then we will

be Christians only and members of the Lord's church, and therefore, brethren.

Usually people judge the church without ever making any study or investigation. They listen to rumors, remember what others have to say, and as a result they become prejudiced against the Lord's church and condemn it out right. This not only keeps them where they are but then they allow themselves to become instruments to oppose the very church for which Christ died. This could border on being self-righteous, couldn't it? So sometimes people are guilty of what they accuse others of being.

All of this is to say again, we want you to consider the Lord's church in light of what the Bible teaches. Judge us by God's word. Give us a fair trial. If you will do this, then we have no fear of what your verdict will be, that is, if you will conduct a fair and honest investigation. We are asking people here and everywhere to do this. If more people would study God's word there would be more members of the church of Christ. Try it and see if it doesn't work that way.

ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL

Who is a Pastor ?

Now-a-days it is very common to call any person, who is preaching for a church, or a group, a Pastor. Often a preacher is heard to say, "I am the Pastor of—church." But what does the word Pastor mean? Is every preacher a Pastor? Who is, in fact, a Pastor? Let us discuss these questions in the light of the scriptures and see what the Bible says upon this subject.

In the Bible, the term Pastor, Elder, Bishop, Overseer, and shepherd, are used to describe the same person with the same work or office. They, in fact, are used interchangeably. In

support of this fact the following scriptural proofs may be noticed.

Please note, first, according to Acts 20 : 17, when Paul the Apostle came to Miletus, he sent word to Ephesus and called the *elders* of the church. Then while talking to them, he calls them Overseers" (K J V), or bishops (R S V), or shepherds. (N E B). Secondly, in the epistle to Titus, Paul commands him to, "ordain *elders* in every city" (1 : 5), but in the same epistle, in describing the qualifications of an elder he calls him a *bishop*, (1 : 7). Thirdly in 1 Peter 5 : 1, 2, Peter addresses elders and commands them to feed the flock, or the church, and to take the oversight, or to act as overseers. In other words, he says for them to exercise the office of the bishops over the flock, for the word bishop means shepherd. A shepherd then is an elder, or bishop, or overseer. Therefore, the terms bishops, elders, pastors, shepherds, and overseers were used for the same officers in the church. Just as different terms are used often to describe Christ, such as, Lord, Saviour, King, Lamb, etc. The idea is that elders are to watch over the flock as bishops or overseers, and to tend and feed as shepherds or pastors. Also the term "presbytors", which is in Greek "presbuterous", literally means old or elder. So now, let us remember, that a pastor is also a bishop, an elder, a presbytor, an overseer, a shepherd. These terms are used interchangeably.

Now the question is, "Is every Preacher a Pastor ?" According to the Bible. all pastors can be teachers or preachers, but all preachers cannot be pastors ! There are, in fact, some certain qualifications that one must possess in order to qualify as a pastor or bishop. They are listed in the scriptures as follows : Please note, he must be blameless—that is not under any charges; The husband of one wife—a married man; Vigilant—well balanced or self controlled; Sober—sensible, humble-minded, and modest; of good behaviour—that is well adorned behaviour; Given to hospitality—or hospitable, he must have genuine love for the souls ; Apt to teach—must have knowledge

and discretion fit to teach the flock; Not given to wine—not a drunkard; No striker—he must be gentle and not violent; Not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous—meaning he must not tangle with worldliness, he must not be a lover of money, etc; One that ruleth well his house—this implies that he must be a man of family and must manage his own household; Having his children in subjection with all gravity—he must be a father with obedient children who must be submissive and respectful in every way, that is, a quite and peaceful life, godly and honest in every way; Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil—he must not be a recent convert, he must be an old and tried man, who is well rooted in faith, and who has reached the spiritual growth and maturity, being a young man or a young Christian he may easily become puffed up or proud of his high position in the church; Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil—that is, he must be well thought of by outsiders, that is, those who are unconverted, he must have an established character before all, where Christians or non-Christians, so that he may not bring reproach on the church in any way. (See 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1 : 5-9).

As certain qualifications, so there are certain duties of bishops or pastors. They are to take heed unto themselves and all the flock, and to feed the church (Acts 20 : 28); To help the weak (Acts 20 : 35); To admonish disorderly and encourage the fainthearted and be longsuffering toward all (1 Thessalonians 5 : 12-14); to make ensamples to the flock (1 Peter 5 : 2, 3); to visit the sick (James 5 : 14).

Now to conclude our study on the subject let us remember once again, that only those who meet all the qualifications mentioned in the above cited scriptures could be appointed as pastors, bishops or elders. Therefore, everyone who preaches for a church or a group should not be called pastors.

"WIN A PRIZE" BIBLE QUIZ, NO. 8

SEND IN ALL CORRECT ANSWERS WITH SCRIPTURE REFERENCES THAT PROVE YOUR ANSWERS SO THAT THEY MAY REACH US WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF THE MAGAZINE'S BEING SENT OUT AND YOU WILL BE AWARDED A FREE BOOK.

1. "Moses did as the Lord commanded" is a common statement in the Old Testament. Does the statement—The Lord did according to the word of Moses—ever occur? Yes or No.
2. What is the meaning of Barnabas? Hint: Acts.
3. To Christians at Rome, Paul said, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by....." Fill in the few blanks using the King James Version.
4. Two of the gospel writers give the list of the Apostles in the same order. True or False. If true, mention which two. Also give the references in the gospels where the lists can be found.
5. James said that we should confess our faults to: (a) the Priest and let him pray for us; (b) one another and pray one for another. Give the correct answer and reference where you find it.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ NO. 7

1. Kohath, Exodus 6:16-20; Numbers 26:58, 59. 2. False, not in Luke 3. Judas, Luke 6:16. 4. Righteousness, Ephesians 6:14. 5. False, 1 Peter 5:8.

Bible Questions And Bible Answers

A letter comes from a reader in Junagadh (Gujarat).

QUESTION: Dear Sir, It is stated in John 3:16-18 that there is no eternal doom awaiting those who trust him (Christ) to save them. But those who don't trust him (Christ) have already been tried and condemned for not believing in the only Son of God. As I understand, if we look to Asia, out of total population, 98% of them are non-Christians. 2% are Christians. The human beings on the Globe are all children of God. They, i.e., both Christians and non-Christians are born of Mothers Womb. They feed from their mother's milk on birth, eat the food on earth given by God and after certain years face death. So there is no difference in God's eyes in birth and death of Christians and non-Christians. Still will it mean that 98% non-Christians of Asia, many already dead, many living today and many yet to be born, are condemned as they do not understand the Bible? In fact even Jesus Christ was so noble that even he pardoned his killers. In view of this the words in John referred to above do not appear consistent with nobility, meekness of Jesus Christ. Does Christian religion not respect other religions which have existed since time immemorial? I shall be grateful if you will kindly enlighten me on this point. God bless you. Yours, etc.

ANSWER :

God gave his son for the sins of the world. Christ died for one and all. This, however, does not mean that all will be saved. There are conditions that have been given and these must be complied with if man is to have the hope of eternal life. (Hedrews 5:8,9).

It is true that the masses of Asia are not Christian although I don't know what the percentage is, one way or the other. Even the majority of those who claim to be Christian are not Christian according to the teaching of the Bible. What will happen to all of these? Paul writes, "And you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from

heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). We could turn to many other references in the Bible to show that the unbelieving, sinful, worldly, ungodly, and disobedient will eventually be lost. Does this mean then that God will be responsible. No, but it means that the lost will be responsible since they have rejected the salvation that has been offered them.

Those of us who are Christians have the tremendous responsibility of taking the gospel to all of Asia. Jesus himself said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved : but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15,16). What if we do not carry out the Lord's command to take the gospel to every creature? Then the Lord will hold us accountable especially if we could have done so but we simply failed or neglected to do it.

All people are the children of God physically, that is, God is their creator. At the same time, only those who obey God are his children spiritually. Listen to this statement: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3 : 26, 27).

One is not born into this world physically as a Christian. All babies enter the world alike, regardless of what their parents may be religiously. It is said that one is born a Hindu and another is born a Muslim because of the parents' religion, but this is not so in God's sight. Only when one becomes old enough to be taught may he accept these religions. In Christianity one is not born physically into it, and neither is he said to be a Christian because of his parents. Once he reaches the age where he can be taught, and can at the same time study for himself, then and only then is he in position to decide what

he will do. When he obeys the teaching that makes him a Christian then he becomes a Christian, but not until.

God does not condemn people before they are born and neither does he condemn them after they are born, that is; before they reach the age of accountability. Only when they grow to the age of knowing right from wrong—and if they then refuse to obey God—do they stand condemned. Even then, as long as they are in this life they may be saved from their past sin by accepting God's will. It is only after men have died in a rebellious state they stand in danger of being eternally lost. The final pronouncement, however, will not be made until the judgment day.

The same Jesus that forgave those who crucified him also placed conditions before every sinner. He requires every one of them to hear the gospel (Romans 10 : 17), to believe (Romans 10 : 10), to repent of his sins (Luke 13 : 3), to confess him as the Son of God (Matthew 10 : 32), and to be baptized to be saved. (Mark 16 : 16). Those who meet these conditions will be saved, but those who believe not will be damned.

Christians love and respect all people. That is why they desire to teach men and women everywhere about Christ and his religion. We believe that Christianity is the one true religion. When compared to the religions of men it stands out above all of them, in its teachings and the results of its teachings.

You, and all of our readers, are invited to read and study the Bible and to see if you don't agree that Christ's way is not only the best way but it is the only way to God and to heaven. (John 14 : 6).

Parables of Jesus

No. 1

K. Matthew

The word *parable* is a Greek word and literally means, "throwing alongside"—one thing is placed by the side of the

other, comparing the two things. But in the Bible a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Through simple stories were explained the great things. It is wrongly said that Jesus is the originator of parables. We can see parables in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. In the Old Testament times the prophets and priests also used parables. The Prophet Nathan explained to David about his sin through a parable. (2 Samuel 12 : 1-7). But Jesus taught more parables than any other Bible character. Almost one third of his teaching was through parables. Jesus used more parables because he was the master teacher. Today there are many leaders who will teach many good things and they themselves go against their teachings. But Jesus taught the wonderful message and kept it or did it accordingly.

There are some purposes in Jesus teaching and using the parables. Jesus lived and taught in a very different time because the Pharisees and the high priest were searching to find fault with him. So Jesus used parables to reveal the truth to his disciples and to hide it from those people. Many times Jesus explained the parables to his disciples when they were alone.

Most of the parables are recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The gospel of John does not mention parables but one story is similar. The gospel of Mark mentions very few parables. Matthew and Luke recorded most of the parables of Jesus. In the gospels about 60 parables are mentioned and many other parabolic sentences, similes, and comparisons are used. In the gospels most of parables interpret themselves. For interpreting a parable we should know the differences between an allegory and a parable. An allegory has an inner meaning for each case. But a parable is a story and has a complete meaning. Example : The parable of the prodigal son. He went off and spent everything he had and he finally had to feed the swine in order to live. How can we find a meaning for the swine and the friends, who were with the Son ? So when we are trying to interpret a parable, we should find the whole meaning, not try to find word by word meaning. But in an allegory there is meaning for each case.

Most of the parables Jesus taught appeal to a certain kind of people. For example, there is the parable of the lost boy. (Luke 15). He was lost and found, explaining the idea that there is joy in heaven when one sinner (lost) returns to the heavenly father.

How are parables applicable? Why should we learn parables today? We can see that the Bible is the word of God and it is not a seasonal message but is for man in all ages. "The heavens and earth will pass away, but my word will not." (Matthew 24 : 35). Parables have an important part in the scriptures. If the scripture (Bible) is for all mankind then surely the parables are also included and we should study them. Many parables are good examples for our present daily life. Parables are very plain, practical for all ages. They speak to man and bind principles in a simple way.

The above lesson is an introduction to the parables, and in the following issues we will discuss some of the parables of the three-fold gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These parables are interesting and meaningful studies.

Power of the Word

Jess Willis

One knows nothing of God's desires and will, except as one has been taught through the medium of God's word. Man may set forth many teachings but God only knows what He wants man to do. Heaven is God's home and God has the right to tell man how man can get there. Christ died on the cross that He might reconcile man to God; being the Son of God and having paid such a price, Christ has the authority to tell man what man must do to get to heaven. All the instructions are set forth in the word of God.

The Word is God's dynamic power to cause one to be born anew (1 Peter 1 : 23), to be saved (Romans (1 : 16), to be translated from the power of darkness unto the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1 : 13), and by God's word man is sanctified (John 17 : 17).

Who is man to say that Christ does not have the authority to demand that man must "believe"? Christ said, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Can man say that Christ has no authority to demand "repentance"? Christ said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13 : 3). Or, does any have the right to say these commands are alright but Christ asked too much when He asked man to be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16 : 16; Acts 2 : 38; Romans 6 : 3-4)? Christ does have the authority to give any command that He so chooses. He became the author of eternal salvation to every one who obeys Him (see Heb. 5 : 9). Ours is not to design new orders but rather to learn and obey the ones that are already set forth in God's word, the Bible.

Jesus : Saviour or Fraud?

Jess Willis

Jesus is either the Saviour of man as He said that He is or else He is a cheating fraud that has deceived the world and should not be trusted in anything that He ever said. God has given us the freedom of choice and we can choose either position which we desire. If we choose to accept and trust Him, doing His every command, then He promises to provide us with an eternity of happiness, joy, and bliss. If we reject Him then He has promised that we should be cast with the devil and his angels where there is an eternity of pain. Is Christ in the position where He can fulfill these promises? If He is not a fraud then He can fulfill both the promises of bad and good.

Jesus said, "All power is given me in heaven and earth." Either this statement is true or Jesus is a liar. Jesus on another occasion stated, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me." Either man gets to the Father by Jesus alone or else He has deceived us. Again Jesus in speaking said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Also Jesus stated, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

You as an individual must make the choice; you can reject Jesus, or you can be His friend and do all the commands that He has set forth for you in His Word. We sincerely desire that you accept Jesus as being the only begotten son of God who proved Himself by His miraculous deeds.

परन्तु, मुझे क्या मिलेगा ?

लेखक : सनी भाई

मनुष्य का स्वभाव बहुधा बड़ा ही स्वार्थी रहा है। प्रत्येक कार्य करने से पहले मनुष्य अपने मन में सोचता है कि “इसके फलस्वरूप मुझे क्या प्राप्त होगा”। मनुष्य का स्वार्थीपन यहां तक बढ़ चुका है कि वह परमेश्वर की सेवा, उपासना, तथा भक्ति भी तभी करना चाहता है यदि परमेश्वर कि और से उसे कुछ आशिष मिले। आपने बहुधा कितने ही लोगों को यह कहते सुना होगा कि, “मैंने परमेश्वर को बहुत माना व उससे बहुत प्रार्थना की, परन्तु तो भी उसने मेरी नहीं सुनी, जिस वस्तु को मैं चाहता था वह मुझे नहीं प्राप्त हुई व उसके विपरीत मैं और कठिनाईयों में पड़ गया हूं, इसलिये कोई परमेश्वर है ही नहीं, मैं परमेश्वर में विश्वास नहीं करता।” वास्तव में, बात यह है कि ऐसे लोग सच्चे व साफ हृदय से प्रार्थना नहीं करते, वे प्रार्थना अपने स्वार्थ की पूर्ति के लिये करते हैं। लोग परमेश्वर व उसके धर्म को भी स्वार्थ के तराजू में तोलते हैं।

मेरा परीचय बहुतेरे ऐसे लोगों से हुआ है, या उनके पत्र मेरे पास आए हैं, जिन्होंने अपनी इस अभिलाषा को प्रगट किया है कि वे मसीही बनना चाहते हैं। प्रत्येक ने यह स्वीकार किया कि मुझे यह धर्म ही सच्चा धर्म लगा व मुक्ति इसी में है क्योंकि इसमें एक मुक्तिदाता, यीशु मसीह है, परन्तु इसी के साथ-साथ प्रत्येक ने यह भी कहा कि “मसीही तो मैं बनना चाहता हूं, परन्तु मुझे क्या मिलेगा ?” बहुतेरे लोग लिखते हैं, “मैं मसीह धर्म स्वीकार करना चाहता हूं...परन्तु क्या आप मेरी पढ़ाई में मदद करेंगे...परन्तु क्या आप मेरी नौकरी लगाने में सहायता करेंगे ? इत्यादि, इत्यादि।” कुछ समय पूर्व एक सज्जन को कहीं से पता चला कि मैं यीशु के सुसमाचार का प्रचार करता हूं, वे मेरे पास आए और कहने लगे, “हमारे मोहल्ले में लगभग २०० से भी अधिक लोग रहते हैं, मैं उनका अगुवा हूं वे मेरी बहुत सुनते हैं, मैं चाहता हूं कि उन्हें आपके हाथों में सौंप दूं, आप उन्हें मसीही बना लीजिए, मैं नहीं चाहता

कि वे इधर उधर की किसी गलत शिक्षा में पड़ जाएं इसलिये आप हमारी सहायता कीजिए।” मैंने कहा, आप मुझे उस जगह का पता दे दीजिए मैं वहां अवश्य आऊंगा और प्रचार करूंगा, यदि आप किसी निश्चित दिन को सभा रखना चाहते हैं तो मुझे खबर कर दीजिएगा। जवाब में वे बोले, “यह तो ठीक है, सभा रखेंगे और आपको बोलने के लिये बुलाएंगे, परन्तु अभी वे बेचारे बड़ी कठिनाई में हैं। उन्हें एक पानी के नल की आवश्यकता है; बेचारों को पानी की बड़ी कठिनाई है, और बच्चों को स्कूल में बैठने के लिए चटाई चाहिए, एक ब्लैक-बोर्ड की भी आवश्यकता है, तथा एक टीचर हमने रखी है जिसे एक सौ रूपए महीना बच्चों को पढ़ाने के लिये देना पड़ेगा। आप इतना कर दीजिए, इससे उनकी मदद भी हो जाएगी तथा कुछ प्रभाव भी पड़ जाएगा ... मैं सभा का प्रबन्ध करूंगा और आपको अवश्य बुलाऊंगा...”

लोग सोचते हैं कि मसीही बनना फूलों की सेज पर चलना है, वे सोचते हैं कि मसीही बनने से उनकी कठिनाईयां हल हो जाएंगी तथा भौतिक व शारीरिक रूप से उनका जीवन बहुत अच्छा हो जाएगा। वास्तव में लोग सच्ची मसीहीयत से बिलकुल अज्ञात हैं। मसीहीयत के प्रति लोगों का इस प्रकार का स्वभाव इसलिये है क्योंकि उन्होंने कभी भी बाइबल का अध्ययन नहीं किया है, वे इस विशेष बात से अज्ञान हैं कि मसीहीयत स्वभाव में आत्मिक है, व यह संसार की नहीं है, इसका सम्बन्ध स्वर्ग से है। मसीह, इसका संस्थापक, स्वर्ग से आया तथा फिर स्वर्ग में वापस चला गया, और जाने से पहले उसने यह प्रतिज्ञा की कि वह एक दिन फिर से वापस आएगा ताकि अपने विश्वासियों को अपने साथ ले जाए ताकि वे उस के साथ हमेशा तक रहें। देखिए (यूहन्ना १४:३ तथा प्रेरितों १:९-११)।

मसीह जब संसार में था तो उसने अपने शिष्यों को यह कहकर शिक्षा दी, “इसलिये मैं तुम से कहता हूँ, कि अपने प्राण के लिये यह चिन्ता न करना कि हम क्या खाएंगे ? और क्या पिएंगे ? और न अपने शरीर के लिये कि क्या पहिनेंगे ? क्या प्राण भोजन से, और शरीर वस्त्र से बढ़कर नहीं ? आकाश के पक्षियों को देखो ! वे न बोते हैं, न काटते हैं, और न खत्तों में बटोरते हैं, तौमी तुम्हारा स्वर्गीय पिता उनको खिलाता है; क्या तुम उन से अधिक मूल्य नहीं रखते ? तुम में कौन है, जो चिन्ता करके अपनी अवस्था में एक घड़ी भी बढ़ा सकता है ? और वस्त्र के लिये क्यों चिन्ता करते हो ? जंगली सोसनों

पर ध्यान करो, कि वे कैसे बढ़ते हैं, वे न तो परिश्रम करते, न कमतते हैं। तौमी मैं तुम से कहता हूँ, कि सुलैमान भी, अपने सारे विभव में उन में से किसी के समान वस्त्र पहिने हुए नहीं था। इसलिये जब परमेश्वर मँदान की घास को, जो आज है, और कल भाड़ में भोंकी जाएगी, ऐसा वस्त्र पहिनाता है, तो हे अल्पविश्वासियो, तुम को वह क्यों कर न पहिनाएगा ? इसलिये तुम चिन्ता करके यह न कहना कि हम क्या खाएंगे, या क्या पिंएंगे, या क्या पहिनेंगे ? क्योंकि अन्यजाति इन सब वस्तुओं की खोज में रहते हैं, और तुम्हारा स्वर्गीय पिता जानता है कि तुम्हें ये सब वस्तुएं चाहिएं। इसलिये पहिले तुम उसके राज्य और धर्म की खोज करो तो ये सब वस्तुएं भी तुम्हें मिल जाएंगी।” (मत्ती ६:२५-३३)।

यीशु मसीह ने स्वयं स्वार्थ-हीन तथा आत्मपरित्याग का जीवन व्यतीत किया तथा उस ने अपने चेलों को भी ऐसा ही जीवन व्यतीत करने की शिक्षा दी। उसका सारा जीवन पीड़ाओं व कष्टों से भरपूर था। यद्यपि, वह परमेश्वर का पुत्र था तौमी उसने एक चरनी में जन्म लिया, जहां पर गाय-बैल बान्धे जाते थे (लूका २:७)। जब वह बड़ा हुआ उसके पास अपना कोई घर नहीं था। एक बार एक शास्त्री ने उस के पास आकर कहा, “...हे गुरु, जहां कहीं तू जाएगा, मैं तेरे पीछे पीछे हो लूंगा” यीशु ने उसे उत्तर दिया, “लोमड़ियों के मट और आकाश के पक्षियों के बसेरे होते हैं; परन्तु मनुष्य के पुत्र के लिये सिर धरने की भी जगह नहीं है।” (मत्ती ८:१६,२०)। एक बार यात्रा करने के लिये उसने किसी दूसरे से एक पशु मांगा। (मत्ती २१:२)। और अन्त में जब वह मर गया तो उसे किसी अन्य व्यक्ति की कब्र में गाड़ी गया (मत्ती २७:६०)।

मसीह ने कभी भी अपने अनुयायियों से सरल जीवन को प्रतिज्ञा नहीं की, न ही उस ने यह कहा कि मसीही होने से उनकी सब कठिनाईयां हल हो जाएंगी। उसने, एक बार, अपना वर्णन करते हुए कहा, कि जबकि लोगों ने मुझे सताया तो वे तुम्हें भी सताएंगे। एक अन्य स्थान पर अपने चेलों को उपदेश देते हुए उस ने कहा, “धन्य हो तुम, जब मनुष्य मेरे कारण तुम्हारी निन्दा करें, और सताएं और भूठ बोल बोलकर तुम्हारे विरोध में सब प्रकार की बुरी बात कहें। आनन्दित और मगन होना क्योंकि तुम्हारे लिये स्वर्ग में बड़ा फल है इसलिये कि उन्होंने उन भविष्यद्वक्ताओं को जो तुम से पहिले थे इसी रीति से सताया था।” (मत्ती ५: ११, १२)।

मसीह में विश्वास तथा उसकी आज्ञाओं को माने बिना कभी भी कोई मसीही नहीं बन सकता। किसी भी प्रकार से कोई धूस अथवा लालच लेकर या देकर कोई भी वास्तव में एक मसीही नहीं बन सकता, न ही किसी को बलपूर्वक मसीही बनाया जा सकता है। यीशु मसीह ने कहा, सुनिए, "यदि कोई मेरे पीछे आना चाहे, तो अपने आप का इन्कार करे और अपना क्रूस उठाए, और मेरे पीछे हो ले।" (मत्ती १६:२४)। इस में कुछ संदेह नहीं कि हूबहारों ऐसे लोग हैं, संसार भर में जिन्हें मसीही समझा जाता है, परन्तु वास्तव में वे नहीं हैं। उन्हें कुछ लोगों अथवा संगठनों ने विभिन्न परिस्थितियों में अपनी-अपनी मंडलियों अथवा कलीसियाओं में सम्मिलित कर लिया है, वास्तव में इन लोगों व संगठनों का हमारे प्रभु यीशु मसीह की कलीसिया से कोई भी संबन्ध नहीं है। (देखिये मत्ती १५ :६ तथा १३)। उन्होंने, किसी कारणवश, मसीह के नाम को स्वीकार कर लिया है, वे उसके नाम को ही अपने ऊपर रखते हैं परन्तु अपने कामों से उसका और उसकी शिक्षाओं का इन्कार तथा विरोध करते हैं।

मसीही बनने पर आप को क्या मिलेगा, इसका उत्तर जानने से पहले यह याद रखें कि मसीही धर्म, स्वाभाव में, भौतिक अथवा सांसारिक नहीं है, यह आत्मिक है। इस में आपको आप के पिछले पापों से क्षमा प्राप्त होगी, यह आप की ऐसी अगुवाई करेगा कि आपके आगे के जीवन में पाप आप पर प्रभुता न करने पाएगा। यह एक ऐसा मार्ग है जो कि सही है व कभी भी गलत दिशा में नहीं ले जाएगा। यह आप के मन में आपको अनन्त शान्ति प्रदान करेगा तथा आपके जीवन में अकथनीय प्रसन्नता तथा आशिष का कारण बनेगा। इस में आप परमेश्वर के समीप रहेंगे, तथा आपके पास अनन्त जीवन की आशा होगी। (देखिए कुलुस्सियों १:५ तथा यूहन्ना १४:१-३)। और अन्त में, वे जो वास्तव में मसीही जीवन व्यतीत करेंगे, जीवन का मुकुट प्राप्त करेंगे (प्रकाशितवाक्य २:१०), आर्थात् स्वर्ग में परमेश्वर के साथ आनन्दमय अनन्त जीवन। किसी को, इस से अधिक और क्या चाहिए? प्रभु यीशु ने कहा, "यदि मनुष्य सारे जगत को प्राप्त करे, और अपने प्राण की हानि उठाए, तो उसे क्या लाभ होगा? या मनुष्य अपने प्राण के बदले में क्या देगा?" (मत्ती १६:२६)।

अनुचित मार्ग

तथा

उचित मार्ग

लेखक : एफ० डेविड

आज, जबकि हम इस संसार पर दृष्टि डालते हैं तो हम देखते हैं कि सब लोग किसी न किसी प्रकार से अपने जीवनो को व्यतीत कर रहे हैं अथवा सबने अपने-अपने लिए कोई न कोई ऐसा मार्ग चुन रखा है जिसके अनुसार वे अपने जीवनो को व्यतीत कर रहे हैं। अधिकांश लोग अपने जीवनो में अनुचित मार्गो को ही चुनते हैं। अनुचित मार्ग तो बहुत से हैं, परन्तु उचित मार्ग केवल एक है। बाइबल हमें बताती है "सब लोग भटक गये तथा सबने अपना अपना मार्ग लिया..... (यशायाह ५३:६)।

आईए सबसे पहिले हम देखें कि वे अनुचित मार्ग कौन-कौन से हैं जो लोगो ने अपने लिए चुन रखे हैं। परन्तु एक विशेष बात याद रखिये वह यह कि सारे अनुचित मार्ग हमें विनाश अथवा नरक की ओर ही ले जाते हैं।

१. दुष्टों का मार्ग :— "क्योंकि यहोवा धर्मियों का मार्ग जानता है, परन्तु दुष्टों का मार्ग नाश हो जाएगा (मजन १:६)।

२. टेढ़े मार्ग :— मजन संहिता नामक पुस्तक में हमें टेढ़े मार्ग के विषय में भी पता चलता है "परन्तु जो मुड़कर टेढ़े मार्गों में चलते हैं उनको यहोवा अनर्थकारियों के संग निकाल देगा (मजन १२५:५)।

३. चौड़ा मार्ग :— इस मार्ग के विषय में बाइबल कहती है "क्योंकि चौड़ा है वह फाटक और चाकल है वह मार्ग जो विनाश को पहुँचाता है; और बहुतेरे हैं जो उस से प्रवेश करते हैं (मत्ती ७:१३)। चौड़ा मार्ग बड़ा ही सरल मार्ग है। इस मार्ग पर चलने वाले लोग, सब प्रकार का सांसारिक आनन्द लेते हैं। इस मार्ग में किसी प्रकार की कठिनाई नहीं है। अर्थात् यह मार्ग एक प्रकार से संसार का मार्ग है। बहुत सारे लोग हैं जो इस मार्ग पर चलते हैं। परन्तु बाइबल इस मार्ग का परिणाम भी बताती है, वह यह कि यह मार्ग अनन्त काल के विनाश को पहुँचाता है।

इसी प्रकार के और भी अनेक अनुचित मार्गों के विषय में बाइबल बताती है। आज अधिकतर लोग इन मार्गों पर चल रहे हैं। बहुत से लोग इन मार्गों पर चलना ठीक समझते हैं। उनके अनुसार ये मार्ग उनके लिए बिलकुल ठीक हैं। परन्तु बाइबल इसके विषय में कहती है, "ऐसा भी मार्ग है जो मनुष्य को सीधा देख पड़ता है परन्तु उसके अन्त में मृत्यु ही मिलती है (नीतिवचन १६: २५)।"

अब जबकि अनुचित मार्ग है, तो उचित मार्ग का भी होना आवश्यक है। क्योंकि यदि दिन है तो रात भी है। आइए देखें कि वह उचित मार्ग कौनसा है। यह उचित मार्ग है यीशु मसीह। यीशु मसीह ने कहा, "मार्ग और सच्चाई और जीवन मैं ही हूँ, बिना मेरे द्वारा कोई पिता के पास नहीं पहुँच सकता।" हाँ उचित मार्ग एक है केवल एक। स्वर्ग में जाने का केवल एक मार्ग यीशु मसीह है। वह एक सच्चा मार्ग तथा अनन्त जीवन का स्रोत है। हमारा बिचवई भी यीशु मसीह ही है, अर्थात् परमेश्वर से हमारा मेल कराने वाला (१ तिमथियुस २:५)। प्रिय पाठक आज आप अपने विषय में सोचिये कि आप कौन से मार्ग पर हैं। क्या, आप अनुचित मार्ग पर तो नहीं हैं। यदि हाँ, तो क्यों नहीं उचित मार्ग को अपनाते? परन्तु उचित मार्ग के विषय में एक बात याद रखिये। यह मार्ग सकरा है, अर्थात् इस मार्ग पर चलने वाले को तरह-तरह की कठिनाईयों का सामना करना पड़ता है, परन्तु इस मार्ग पर चलने वाले के लिए एक बहुत ही बड़ी आशा है। वह यह कि वह अनन्त जीवन का वारिस होगा। सकरे मार्ग के विषय में बाइबल कहती है, "क्योंकि सकेत है, वह फाटक और सकरा है वह मार्ग जो जीवन को पहुँचाता है और थोड़े हैं जो उसे पाते हैं (मत्ती ७:१४)।" अब हमने आप को परमेश्वर के वचन बाइबल से उचित मार्ग बता दिया है। अब यह आपकी इच्छा है कि आप इस मार्ग को ग्रहण करें या न करें। कोई व्यक्ति कनाट प्लेस जा रहा हो, और यदि वह किसी अनुचित मार्ग पर जा रहा हो जो कनाट प्लेस न पहुँचता हो। और यदि कोई दूसरा व्यक्ति उसे उचित मार्ग बता दे, तो क्या वह उस उचित मार्ग पर न चलेगा जो सीधा कनाट प्लेस पहुँचता है? जहाँ तक मेरा विचार है वह उस उचित मार्ग पर जरूर चलेगा जो उसे सीधा कनाट प्लेस पहुँचायेगा। इसी प्रकार स्वर्ग में जाने के लिए बाइबल ने भी आप को उचित मार्ग बता दिया है। क्या आप इस मार्ग पर चलना पसन्द नहीं करेंगे? यदि आप इसके विषय में और जानकारी प्राप्त करना चाहते हैं तो हमारे यहाँ से बाइबल के निःशुल्क पाठों का अध्ययन करें।

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