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Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive”

This statement made in 1 Corinthians 15:22 spells out the analogy stated in the previous verse, which says: “For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.” (1 Corinthians 15:21). Simply stated, this means that all who ever lived on earth shall one day rise from the dead, the righteous and the wicked or the saved and the unsaved; and all of this as a consequence of Christ's resurrection. Just as all who are born must face physical death as a consequence of Adam's disobedience and sin. Adam brought death, but Christ brought resurrection. This is the whole point that was discussed in the 15th chapter of the book of first Corinthians.

The writer, Paul said, “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Cor. 15:12). There were some there, as there are some today, who were denying the resurrection. And in denying the resurrection they were denying the gospel of Christ. Because that's what the gospel is, that Christ died for our sins and was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:1-4). In denying the resurrection of Christ, they were indirectly accusing

the apostles, the first disciples of Christ, of preaching untruth; Because they were the ones who first began to preach that Christ has risen from the dead; because they had seen Him, after His resurrection from the dead and had talked with Him and had spent time with Him and had received from His own lips the great command to go into all the world and preach the gospel of salvation to all mankind, before the Ascension of the resurrected Lord into heaven. (1 Cor. 15:5-15). Also, in denying Christ's resurrection, they were denying their own salvation; because only a living one can save another; and if Christ had died, as all others have died, and did not rise from the dead, then he is only a dead person and not a living Saviour. What hope did they have then? Why be a Christian?

The point is: that Christ is risen from the dead and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Cor. 15:20). For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. Yes, by the power of God almighty. To prove the truth of the resurrection, not only did the apostle use the instance of Christ's resurrection, but he also pointed to them to their baptism into Christ (Acts 18:8) In 1 Cor. 15:29, he said, if the dead do not rise at all, why then are they baptised for the dead? The very act of baptism portrays the death and the burial and the resurrection. Because before one is baptized, one must repent or die to sin, and then follows the burial in water, which symbolises the burial of a dead person, and then coming out of the body of water, which portrays the resurrection. (Romans 6: 3-6). The inference is, when one is baptized for salvation or for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), the proclamation of death and burial and resurrection is instantly made. And, if there is no resurrection then why be baptized?

Again, the apostle said, "But someone will say, how are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Foolish one," said the apostle, "what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a

natural body, and there is a spiritual body." (1 Cor. 15:35-38 & 42-44).

Here the writer used the example of a seed, and he said, the same seed that we plant into the earth does not pop up after some time. But from within the very planted seed comes out another beautiful body—a living body! Who makes that happen? God does, And its in the same way the resurrection of all the dead will take place one day by the power of God: who will raise all the dead from the dust of the earth. And, now, hear Christ, as He stated the reason for resurrection of all, "Do not marvel at this;" said He, "for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." (John 5:28 & 29). This is not to say that those who were not or are not buried in tombs, but were or are returned to earth after death in some other way, would not be resurrected. But all who ever lived on earth shall one day rise from the earth, so then each of us shall give account of himself to God. (Romans 14:12: Acts 17:30,31 and 2 Corinthians 5:10). For as in Adam, or because of Adam, all die, even so in Christ, or because of Christ, all shall be made alive.

Can A Child Of God Be Lost?

J.C. CHOATE

Many in the religious world teach that once a person is saved, he will always be saved; he cannot fall away, and he cannot sin to the point that he will be lost. To support this doctrine, they boldly quote such scriptures as John 10:27, 28: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand." Another favorite passage is Romans 8:35-39: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, . . . nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus."

Does the Bible teach that a saved person cannot be lost?

Are these verses upholding such a doctrine?

It is true that once a person becomes a Christian, a child of God, a member of the Lord's church, he will always be a child of God and a member of the church for which Christ died. Once one has been born again (John 3:3,5), he cannot be unborn.

But just as in a physical family, a child may behave in such a way that his parents are compelled to disown him, so the Scriptures show that even in God's spiritual family, a child may also be disinherited.

Does this mean that the Scriptures are contradictory? that the assurances in John and Romans are not correct? Certainly, every word inspired by God is true! But it is possible for humans to misunderstand what is said, or even to wrongly construe the meaning, causing a seeming contradiction.

What did Jesus actually say in John 10? He did not say that it is impossible for one of His sheep to be lost. What He was saying was that no person or spirit is strong enough to forcibly overcome Him and to jeopardize the security of His sheep. Jesus has the power to protect and keep all who give themselves to Him.

In Romans 8, the same assurance is made. No created thing is strong enough to separate us from God. As Jesus said in His prayer in John 17:12, "Those whom You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, except the son of perdition . . ." The very wording of Jesus' statement shows that one who had been His was now lost—Judas—and how was Judas lost? Because he allowed Satan to enter his heart and to tempt him to betray Jesus; then, unlike Peter who denied Christ and was forgiven when he repented, Judas was lost beyond forgiveness when he took his own life.

But all of this was done through personal choice. Yes, it is true that there is no power on earth that is strong enough to wrest us from the hands of God—but by our own choices we may walk away from Him, to be lost eternally. If this was not possible God would be unjust, forcing people to remain at His side in spite of the fact that they desired to leave Him. From the beginning, He has never interfered with the power of "free will" which he gave to Adam and Eve, and to all humans through them.

If it was not possible to leave God and be lost, the many

passages of Scripture which encourage faithfulness and warn of the danger of being lost would be totally unneeded and false. Let us consider some of these verses:

"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

". . . You have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; "repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent" (Revelation 2:4,5).

"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God, He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son" (2 John: 9).

"For some have already turned aside after Satan" (1 Timothy 5:15).

". . . at the end of this age . . . The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire . . ." (Matthew 13:37-43).

God has always given humans the freedom of choice, to love and obey Him, or to leave Him. Adam and Eve were created as perfect beings. No sin was in them. They were safe, and with God. But they chose to disobey God, and they fell into sin, even as we today can fall into sin by our own choices to do evil instead of good.

Especially For Women

True Worship—A New Experience

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Rachel woke earlier than usual, with a feeling of excitement. Their first Sunday as Christians! Their first day of worship!

She slipped quietly out of bed and went first to their sitting room to be sure everything was in order there. Then she went to the kitchen to make the bread for their first observance of the Lord's Supper. As she measured the flour, oil and water, mixing

them carefully and making the bread into a small flat loaf, she felt humbled that *her hands* could prepare such an important part of the worship of God. "Thank you, Father," she prayed, "that you have given us this supper, to help us remember at what price we were saved."

At nine o'clock, Andrew and Rachel welcomed Elizabeth and her husband. "James decided to come with me, to check out this 'new religion'," she laughed.

John, Andrew's friend at work, also joined them. And Rachel was very happy when her sister, Mary, came too.

"Thank you all for having the interest in spiritual things to come today," Andrew began. "This is a very special day for Rachel and me, our first time to worship God since our baptism! So you will understand that we're very new in all of these things, but we're eager to share what we're learning.

"I think it would be good for us to begin our worship with prayer.

"Our Father," Andrew began, "what a privilege to be able to worship You, and to know that we are Your children, that we can rightfully call You 'Father'. Please help us, Father, as we study your word today, that we may understand what we study, and that all of us always may want to know the truth above all else. Forgive us, Father, for the sins in our lives and the many times we fail to be what we should be. In Jesus' name we ask these things. Amen."

"By way of explanation," Andrew continued, "when Timothy was born we realized what a responsibility it is to actually shape a soul for eternity! Rachel and I began to seriously study God's word, wanting to be sure that we teach Timothy only the right things.

"I bought Bibles and a concordance at a book store, and we began. Since we already believed in Jesus as the Son of God, we decided to read, first, the book of Acts. But we also looked up words in the concordance, to locate other verses dealing with particular subjects.

"Since I had a Catholic background, and Rachel's was Baptist, one of the first things Rachel tried was to look up the various familiar churches in the concordance. It came as a real surprise when none of them were listed! How could we learn more about the Catholic Church or the Baptist Church if they

were not even in the Bible?

"So we decided simply to try to understand what the Bible itself teaches about salvation. As we've studied, we've learned some surprising things. We located, in Acts 2, the story of the actual beginning of Christ's church, as He had promised in Matthew 16:18: '... *On this rock—the fact that Jesus was the Son of God, the confession Peter had just made—I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*' At the end of that chapter He had promised the disciples, '... *there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom*' (Matthew 16:28).

"As we read in Acts 2, the story of the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to build His church, we mentally put ourselves in that group. We heard Peter explain, first, that the coming of the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles was fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy through Joel, that the kingdom was finally and actually beginning.

"Then he taught us, using other prophecies spoken by David, that the Man, Jesus, whom they had crucified, was the Lord and Christ they had been looking for. We already believed in Him so we were ready to ask with them, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'"

"*Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"*(Acts 2:38).

"Rachel and I knew that we had not done this. As Catholics, my parents had me sprinkled to dedicate me when I was a baby. Rachel had been baptized, but not to have her sins forgiven. So we realized that we needed to do what those 3000 did on that first day. This past Friday we were baptized, and we have faith that God forgave us and added us to His church, just as He forgave those people on that day. '*And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*' (Acts 2:47).

"You might say, 'But you are not an ordained pastor. You haven't attended a theological seminary. What makes you think your interpretation is right?'"

"Rachel and I are not saying that *we, as humans*, are right, and that others are wrong. The fact is that **the Scriptures**, God's word, is *right*, and anything or anyone who disagrees with it is wrong. I came across a verse in Romans 3:4 which says, *Let*

God be true but every man a liar.' This is what we believe, and wherever the churches and doctrines of men disagree with God, **all of us** must agree that **God alone is right.**

"This is what we want to study together in the weeks to come, so that all of us can be united in that one church we read about in the Bible."

To be Continued . . .

By Faith But Not By Faith Only

FRANCIS DAVID

Hebrew chapter eleven is the great faith chapter of the Bible. The writer tells us the definition of faith. He says: "Now faith is the substance of things, hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We read about many old testament characters who had great faith and how they achieved their goal through faith in God. Talking about the faith of Abel He says: "Abel offered to God more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and further he mentions that Enoch was translated so that he did not see death, by faith Noah being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterwards receive as an inheritance." All these people had the kind of faith which had some action in it.

We turn to the book of James and here also James talks about faith. He says that "Faith without works is dead." "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? . . . thus also faith by itself, if does not have works is dead . . . he further says: you believe that there is a God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble! But do you want to know O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 14-22 verses. Here we see James is stressing that faith if it has no works then it is dead. Now we come to the book of Ephesians and here in chapter two verses 8

and 9 Paul says: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Now some people misquote this verse by saying what we are saved through Faith Only. We are saved by faith when we do the thing what God asked us to do. In Romans chapter six we read Paul's word, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? Therefore, we are buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." In seventeen verse we read: "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which you were delivered." No doubt, we are saved by faith but we are saved by faith when we put our faith in action and do exactly what Paul says in these verses.

When a person has faith in Jesus he must proceed further and put his faith in action. He must obey the doctrine of Christ from the heart. We must understand that our salvation is not based only on faith. In Galatians Chapter three verse 27 we read and Paul says: "For you are all sons of God (or children of God) through faith in Jesus and for as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ." Faith is essential but not only faith. In this verse we see, in order to put on Christ one must be baptised. The salvation would only be possible through the obedience. When a person has faith and as he is baptised he would be automatically added to the church of Christ, the body of Christ. (Acts 2:47).

A lot of time we have been accused that we put much stress on Baptism. This is not right. We put stress on all the commands of the gospel. Faith, repentance, confession of Jesus all these things are essential. Salvation is by faith but not only by Faith. If you sincerely believe in Jesus, and you have your full faith in Him, I know you will not hesitate to obey the command of baptism. You can not ignore baptism. The Bible says: "it saves us." (1 Pet. 3:21). How can we ignore this verse? Dear friends, let us have the kind of faith which is based on obedience. We must obey from the heart the form of doctrine which is based on Romans chapter six. Please remember our salvation is by faith but not by faith only.

The Brazen Serpent

T. PIERCE BROWN

In John 3:14-15, we read, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Thus, Jesus points to the serpent as a type of Himself, From this, we can get some important lessons.

Of what does the type consist? The Israelites were a sinful people. We are a sinful people. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The cure was not found in men searching for an antidote, killing the snakes, compromising and making an offering to the serpents, examining their wounds and applying a mustard plaster, but in lifting up the serpent that they might look upon it and live. The antitype is Christ being lifted up and our trust being put in Him. If there is any one verse in the Bible which shows that believing in the Son includes obeying His commands, John 3:36 does. "He that believeth on (pisteuon) the Son hath everlasting life and he that believeth not (apeithon which means "does not obey") shall not see life." To state it another way, "Saving faith is always an obedient faith."

It does not really matter whether the command to them was "Look and live," or "Crawl out and touch the pole and live," the principle is that when the Christ was offered for our salvation from the position of sin, there was a God given method of appropriating the cure. No one was offered life on any other basis.

If a man had been too weak and sick to look on the serpent, would it have been fair for God to let him die just because he could not do what he was unable to do? Most of the denominational preachers I have known and many of those whom we have called our brethren reason that way today. There are two great truth we need to know about that sort of situation. We have no right to decide what would or would not be fair for God to do. Whatever God does will be fair and right. Second, we need to know that if a man bitten by the serpent died, he died because he was bitten by the serpent. He did not die because Moses was not nearby, or did not get the brazen serpent up in

time, or because he was too weak to look, or even because he did not choose to look. Those may be contributing factors, but the prime cause was that he was bitten by the serpent.

The point is that the prime cause of man's condemnation is sin. If a man falls into the water and drowns; the thing that causes him to drown is not that he fell into the water, or that he can not swim, or that you fail to throw him a rope, or that he refuses to take hold of the rope. The thing that causes a man to drown is that he gets water in his lungs and does not get it out. You can prove this logically to yourself if you realize that many men fall into the water and do not drown. Many cannot swim, but do not drown. Many men do not have you to throw a rope to them and do not drown. Many may refuse to take a rope, but do not drown. But, all who get water in their lungs and do not get it out will drown. You are guilty of contributory negligence if you see a drowning man, can throw him a rope, and do not. You are guilty of failing to obey the Lord if you know a man in sin, have the opportunity to teach him the Gospel and do not. But you are not the cause of his being lost. Sin, and only sin, is the cause of a person being lost. Of course, if we wanted to use a more complete logical analysis and talk of "instrumental cause," "contributing cause," "formal cause," "final cause" "material cause," "transeunt cause," "immanent cause," or some other philosophical division of causality, we might do that. But, the primary point I am now making is that whatever other related events, may or may not take place, the primary cause of a man's being lost is the man's own sin.

So, the religious, or irreligious world who finds a sinner, on his deathbed or any other place, who died without looking in trusting obedience to Christ, has no right to blame God for his being lost. He is lost because he sinned. We may be lost if we fail to care about his condition and deliberately fail to help him find salvation. This is one reason why any specific evangelistic outreach that helps you to evaluate how much you really care about the lost can be very valuable. If you do not care enough to help, you will not be lost because you did not help with that particular program, but because you did not really care about lost souls at all, and thus show that you do not really respect and love Jesus. We are not responsible for the sins of lost mankind. We are only responsible for ours. And whereas many are lost

because of the sins that society finds contemptible, we may be lost because we simply do not love our Lord enough to help Him in the task He died to accomplish. And, God is not responsible if we sin, then neglect salvation until it is too late to receive it, or never get a chance to receive it.

The Bible teaches that God's justice demands punishment for sin, but nothing in the Bible suggests that God's grace demands that He offer more than one chance for a man to do the right thing. God may offer two or a thousand chances, but if man rejects the first or the first nine hundred, for a man to presume that God is not merciful because the man did not take the last one offered is unduly presumptuous. Don't sin by presumption or by indifference!

Failure Turned to Blessing

TOM KELTON

Paul, writing to the Romans, told them (Romans 15:24) that he hoped to see them on his way to Spain. Going to Spain was his great dream, his high hope. But, Paul never got to Spain. Instead, a prison cell in Rome was where his journey ended. It has been said that every man dreams of one life and is forced to live another. Out of frustrations, disappointments, and dead hopes can come new life. One of the lessons we learn as we read biographies is that very few get to live life on the basis of his or her first choice. Most persons have to settle for a second or third choice.

I remember when the disciples of Jesus were caught in a storm at sea. The waves beat over the sides of the ship until it was almost filled with water. It appeared that sinking was imminent. They could not cope with the storm. Many people have had this experience. They have been overcome by circumstances beyond their control.

Jesus was asleep in the stern of the ship. The disciples woke Him up and said, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" (Mark 4:38). They were not the last ones to wonder if God cares. Sometimes in seeing hopelessness, we can believe that we are forgotten, even by God. But, Jesus rose and said, "Peace be

still" (verse 39.) The wind ceased and the sea became calm. Then, He said to the disciples, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (verse 40). The disciples said to each other, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and sea obey Him?" (verse 41). Out of a seemingly hopeless situation, they gained a greater faith.

Sometimes a disappointment closes a door in a person's face and then he looks about for some other door, and opens it, and gets something better than he had been hunting for the first time.

Not every failure turns into blessing. Not every sorrow brings out the sunshine of life. Not every prison opens into glorious service. But listen to the apostle Paul, "... five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils, of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (II Corinthians 11:24-27).

What a list of hurting, disappointing, frightening experiences! But, through his trials, he carried a bright hope and was able to write to the Romans, as Moffitt beautifully puts it, "No one who believes in Him . . . will ever be disappointed . . . No one." (Romans 10:11).

The Spirit of Involvement

DENNIS GULLEDGE

In the book of Nehemiah, we are introduced to people who had "a mind to work." This is the same as saying that they had the spirit of involvement. It takes involvement to get a job done (Nehemiah 2:17-18). It takes involvement for the church to grow.

The spirit of involvement demonstrated here is opposed to the spirit of laziness, fear, contentedness, hopelessness, apathy and indifference. Enemies try to provoke a spirit of hopelessness

in us just as they did in Nehemiah's day (4:1-3), but we can respond to discouragement by prayer (4:4).

Interest and enthusiasm are contagious commodities as are their opposites, stagnation and non-involvement. Leaders can lead, urge, encourage, and provide the example for greater involvement in the Lord's work, but, until people "catch fire" with interest and zeal, there is little else they can do.

One of the problems we face in the church today is spectator mentality. Someone has suggested that most congregations are composed of people who are "100% willing—10% willing to work and 90% are willing to let them." No doubt all of us want to see the Lord's work prosper and grow, but what are we doing to help? We want to see the lost taught the gospel, the sick visited, the needy relieved, the weak encouraged and the body of Christ edified, but, who is personally involved in any of these areas? Are you? We have no aversion to being involved in clubs, sports, scouts, organizations, social interests and hobbies, however, how much will we commit ourselves to do in the greatest cause on earth?

The spirit of involvement, or, the "mind to work" comes from the following areas:

1. Everyone Feeling the Need to be Involved

That doesn't come from one sermon being preached on involvement. It comes from the spirit of Christ being in us (Matthew 20:28; Romans 8:9). There is no reason for anyone to feel that they are not a part of the work of the church (Romans 12:4-5).

2. Everyone willing to do his part in the Work

After the dispensers of discouragement had done their work in Nehemiah's day, the Jews returned "every one unto his work" (4:15). Often members of the church are not willing to do the work of which they are capable. What do we need to make us willing workers?

3. Everyone Realizing the Seriousness of his Task

How often do we think that any contribution that we might make is of minimal significance? We are all in this work together and we need the mind to work rather than the mind constantly to fight, argue, and tear down.

When people work together, they grow together. The church that is busy at work is busy growing. How busy are we?

Seven Hated Things

CHARLES BOX

All seven of these things are hated by God because any one of the seven can mar the godliness and beauty of a life. "These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16-19). God hates these things because they violate every principle of decency and morality. They are sins against God and man.

God Hates a Proud Look

God is never pleased with prideful, haughty things. Pride is an offense against the holiness of God. Pride always leads to unkindness and irreverence.

God Hates a Lying Tongue

A lying tongue destroys through untrue statements. Lying always comes from an impure heart. Lies always hurt. They destroy good names, disappoint, and hurt others and God.

God Hates Hands that Shed Innocent Blood

Shedding innocent blood shows an utter lack of sympathy for God's creation. Those who shed innocent blood are out of tune with their Maker.

God Hates a Heart that Devises Wicked Plans

Such a life is spiritually rotten inside. When the heart is wicked, the life will be wicked. Some hearts are so bad they are always inventing ways to do evil. (Genesis 6:5).

God Hates Feet that are Swift in Running to Evil

Some are eager to do that which is unholy. They do not wait, they do not walk, instead they run to evil. They not only do wrong, but they do it eagerly.

God Hates a False Witness Who Speaks Lies

Because of false witnesses, good men have suffered and evil men have escaped. A slanderer is a thief as he robs others of good reputations and the confidence of friends.

God Hates One Who Sows Discord Among Brethren

This person tries to undo the good done by faithful brethren. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

Christians must hate what God hates and love what God loves. To become a Christian, hear (Romans 10:17), believe (Mark 16:16), repent (Acts 17:30), confess (Acts 8:37), and be baptized (Acts 2:38). After baptism, allow Christ to be formed in you (Galatians 4:19).

Nothing More Wonderful

JOHN AIGBOKHAODE

The social stigma associated with crucifixion in the world at the time of Christ can hardly be overstated. Among the Jews, it carried an additional disgrace. According to Deuteronomy 21:23, anyone who died upon a tree was under God's curse. This was understood by the Jews to mean that the very method of death—hanging from a tree—brought a divine curse upon the one concerned. The idea of a crucified Messiah was totally repugnant to the Jesus. Often, in the days following the resurrection, they used the manner of Jesus' death as an argument to counter the claims of those who preached the Gospel. Yet here, in the passage before us (Galatians 2:20), Paul links the Deuteronomic curse with a thought he had raised earlier, namely, that he had been crucified with Christ. He showed there that the sentence of capital punishment which the law imposed on a sinner had been carried out, but carried out in the body of Christ on the tree. The curse that is upon all sinners was taken by our Lord and dealt with on the cross. Thus, the sinner who would be condemned to death by the law can now be alive to God. Free from the curse, he is open to the blessing of God that come through Christ!

This is a truth that I find many Christians pass over too quickly. They say it is too difficult to understand. But, it isn't. It simply means that Christ, by His atoning sacrifice on the cross, has borne our shame, and bearing that shame, has put to death

the demands of the law over us. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). He died for us and because He lives, we live in Him. Nothing is more wonderful than our God and the salvation He has made possible for us in Christ.

Some People Who Touched Paul's Life

ALLEN WEBSTER

There are at least 100 different men and women named in Acts and Paul's letters, as a part of his circle of friends and fellow labourers. Paul could not do the job by himself. A number of these are listed in Paul's last book, actually in his last chapter (2 Timothy 4:11-13). He is sitting in a prison cell, knowing that death is near, and he muses about those who have touched his life. Here are some of those he names and lesson we can learn from each.

Luke (4:11), the Loyal Labourer

He is the "beloved physician" (Col. 4:14) who had constantly traveled with Paul since the stay at Troas on the second missionary journey (Acts 16:8-11; cf. to Philippi, Acts 16:10-12; to Jerusalem on the third missionary journey, Acts 20:5-21:17; to Rome, Acts 27; during first imprisonment, Col. 4:14; Phile. 24). Being a doctor, he was probably a great help to Paul as he faced numerous injuries in his labours. Paul may have even dictated this letter (2 Timothy) to Luke (being a doctor, Luke must have appreciated Paul's reference to gangrene, 2 Timothy 2:17). Luke may have stayed to testify in Paul's behalf. All others had either forsaken Paul or been sent on errands, "only Luke is with me." From Luke we learn that being dependable is one of the chief characteristics of a good servant of God. Ability is good. Availability is better.

Crescens (4:10), the Anonymous Co-labourer

He was likely sent by Paul to Galatia. We know nothing else of him, but gain encouragement that he was there to help Paul in

the hour of need. The RV margin gives Gaul as an alternative reading here; and, if that is correct, Crescens' going there may have indicated that Paul on the trip to Spain (which he very probably made between the first and second imprisonments), might have established congregations in Gaul (France) (Coffman). From Crescens we learn that we do not have to be noticed to be helpful to the Lord's cause. Let God have the glory and we care not who gets the credit.

Titus (4:10), the Trusted "Troubleshooter"

Paul's close associate was first taken, probably as a recent Gentile convert, to the Jerusalem Council as a "test case" regarding circumcision (Gal. 2:3). He had been involved in helping straighten out the problems in the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 2:12,13; 7:6, 13-16; 8:16-24). Paul, during the first Roman imprisonment, had left Titus in Crete to straighten out the problems in the churches there (Tit 1:5). Titus had met Paul at Nicopolis during the period between Paul's arrests (Tit. 3:12). Now Paul had summoned him to Rome and sent him to Dalmatia, across the Adriatic Sea from Southern Italy (modern Yugoslavia). From Titus we learn that we can help the Lord's cause by smoothing our problems that develop between brethren (cf. Mt. 5:9).

Mark, the "Come Back" kid (4:11)

He was a cousin of Barnabas, Paul's first partner in missionary service (Acts 13:1-3). His mother was a noted Christian in Jerusalem (Acts 12:5, 12) and he was chosen to travel with Paul on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). He was an "assistant" (*hupereten*, a keeper of documents in the synagogue, cf. Lk. 4:20). Unfortunately, John Mark failed on that journey (Acts 13:13). Paul refused to take Mark on the second trip, and this led to a falling out between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). However, Paul would not close his portion of the Bible without a full "reinstatement" of Mark. Paul had twelve years earlier mentioned him as a worker during the first imprisonment (Col. 4:10; Phile. 24). Mark was also involved during this time with Peter in Rome (1 Peter 5:13). He now admitted that John Mark was a valuable (*profitable*, *euchrestos*, 2 Tim. 2:21; Phile. 11) worker ("ministry" is *diakonian*), and he wanted Mark with him in Rome. How Mark must have felt to finally hear words

of commendation from Paul! The one who had had no use for him now said that he was useful! How good it is to know that one failure in Christian service need not make one's whole life a failure. Tradition says that Mark was a pioneer in Egyptian mission work (Alexandria). From Mark we learn that one mistake, even a serious one, does not keep one from being of valuable service in the kingdom.

Tychicus (4:12), the "Relief Pitcher"

Tychicus was a believer from the province of Asia (Acts 20:4) who willingly accompanied Paul and probably ministered as a personal servant to the apostle. He was one of the messengers (apostoloi) who carried the contribution to the poor saints in Jerusalem (Acts 20:4; 2 Cor. 8:23). Since he was from Asia, Paul sent him, along with Onesimus, with letters to Ephesus (6:21; 22) and Colossae (4:7) during his first imprisonment. Paul may have sent Tychicus to Crete to relieve Titus (Titus 3:12). Now he was sending him to Ephesus to relieve Timothy. A relief pitcher may not get much glory, but he wins a lot of games! From Tychicus we learn that someone needs to be there to continue a good work after it has been going for a while. There are some who are good at starting, but we need "finishers" as well.

Each of the men mentioned to this point (except Luke) was sent to an area that Paul had personally evangelized. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that Paul wanted to send a last message to each of these regions and also to have his companions to explain the situation to them. Also, Paul had been left alone in Rome (with Luke), and this may have been his own devising. Perhaps he was fearful of the imprisonment and execution of his friends.

Carpus (4:13), who Shared what he had with God's Servant

Carpus lived at Troas and showed Paul much hospitality. Paul must have departed in a hurry (perhaps being sought for arrest) because he left his cloak and books behind (or perhaps the weather was warm and he did not want to carry the cloak or need the books) Carpus was a faithful brother; he would guard them until somebody picked them up to take Paul. Even such so-called menial tasks are ministries for the Lord. As Timothy hurried to Rome, he could stop in Troas and get the cloak. He also wanted him to bring the books, and parchments, which may

have been with Timothy all along (the grammatical structure seems to indicate this, 4:13). Paul probably left them there in haste to depart. Some have thought that he was arrested there and not given time to get his things.

The *cloak* (*phailones*, only here in the New Testament) was a coarse, circular cape which fell down below the knees, with an opening for the head in the centre. It had no sleeves and somewhat resembled the pancho popular in south Texas and Mexico. The cold in the Roman nights, even in summer, is well known; and Paul's prospect of possibly spending the winter in a dungeon without heating or proper clothing was not a welcome thought. We are not surprised that a scholar such as Paul wanted material for study and writing. Paul was a student until the very end of life. The first word *books* (*biblia*) probably refers to papyrus rolls and scrolls which likely contained Old Testament Scriptures. (Our word Bible come from this.) The second word *parchments* (membranes, only here in the New Testament) literally means "skins" and refers to scrolls made of animal skins. It is not known for certain if the parchments had materials written on them (like New Testament books) or if he needed them to write letters to friends and churches. It may have been something he needed for his legal defense.

None of these men became as famous as Paul, but they all laboured in the cause for which he died. He could not have done what he did without the assistance of others. Thanks be to God for co-workers.

The Personal Touch

JOHNNY RAMSEY

We now want to discuss the book of John, the fourth account of the life of Christ, written to all mankind, stressing the Deity of Christ and his interest in the individual human being. The emphasis is on the human touch of Christ. The book of John is different from the other three accounts of the life of Christ because it was written much later than the other three and it indicates the reaction of the world to Christ and his kingdom. It

also corrects errors that had arisen through the years since the establishment of Christianity on the day of Pentecost. It was written by the dearest friend the Lord had, the one to whom Christ committed the care of his mother in John chapter 19. It is a unique and beautiful book. In fact the opening stanza of the book of John is one of the richest. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." We read that "He was the light that shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not." He came unto his own and His own received Him not. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And we learn that the Law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ. All this in the prologue, the first 18 verses, of the beautiful first stanza of the book of John. John the immerser said in John 1:29 of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." And in this opening chapter of John, Jesus begins his human touch, his interest in the individual, in Andrew and Simon Peter, in Philip and Nathanael. In John 1:49 the explanation "Rabbi", thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel" is indicative of what we'll find in the rest of the book. In the last verse of the first chapter of John, we learn that Christ is our leader to Heaven, and by him and through Him we ascend and descend in the heavenly places. In John chapter 2 we read that Jesus knew what was in a man. And at the beginning of His personal ministry as well as at the end of it, he cleansed the temple, indicating the vanity, the worldliness, the shallowness, the profane nature of the Jewish nation in the 1st century. In John 3, we read of Nicodemus who is mentioned again in chapter 7 and in chapter 19. Jesus made an impact upon this ruler of the Jews who came to Jesus by night. Jesus said to him, "You must be born again to enter the kingdom. Born of water and the Spirit." We have the beautiful verse 16 of John 3, well known to all Bible students. But verse 17 of John 3 is even more dramatic. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." In John 4 we're introduced to the BAD Samaritan, the Samaritan woman who came to the well alone. Jesus told her all things that she had ever done. We have the famous statement in John 4:35 "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already unto harvest." In John 5 Jesus'

troubles begin as on the Sabbath Day he heals a lame man. In chapter 5, verse 28 and 29 we learn that when the Lord comes, all that are in the grave shall hear his voice and come forth. There will be one resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. (Acts 24:15). In John 6 we have the famous sermon in Christ. He is the bread of life, contrasted with the manna in the wilderness. In John Chapter 7 his brothers tried him, saying "If you're really who you claim to be, go to the feast of the Tabernacles openly and show forth your claim." But Jesus let them know that he was on the Father's time schedule, not on theirs. And yet when he did go to the feast and begin to teach, this statement is indicative of the reaction of the people: "Never a man so spake as he!" (John 7:46). One of the beauty spots of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is John 8:12. Jesus said: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And then the famous utterance of John 8:32. Christ said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." In John 9 he healed a man born blind and then went back to him to take care of his spiritual blindness. In John 10:10 we have a magnificent utterance! Christ said, "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." In John 11 at the grave side of Lazarus he said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live, he that believeth in me shall never really die." And then in the climatic statement of John 12:48, Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." But if I had to choose just one verse in the whole book, that emphasizes the importance of Christ and his message, it would be John 14:6, where Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, *but by me.*" In John chapter 15 we learn the practical nature of Christianity. In verse 8 of that chapter Jesus said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." In John 16:13 he promised that the Holy Spirit would come and guide the apostles into all truth, and in John 17:17 he identified that truth as God's Word by saying "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." To Pilate he said in John 18:36, "My kingdom is *Not* of this world." In John 19:30, suspended between heaven and earth he cried, "It is

finished!" He had finished the work God gave him to do. (John 6:38; John 17:4). And then in John Chapter 20, one of his friends exclaims at the empty tomb of Christ, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him." Today men have taken away the authority of Christ, the church of Christ, the example of Christ, the worship Christ ordained, BUT they'll pay for it in the day of judgment. They rob themselves and become bereft of the best things this life affords by removing the Lord. Of course his body had not been stolen away from the grave. By the power of God, he had arisen. The last few verses of John 20 state the purpose of this book and of the three preceding ones in the New Testament: "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." And finally in the last chapter, John 21, the haunting question asked three times of Simon Peter still yet rings in our ears as well—Christ said, "Lovest thou me?" Lovest thou me? Lovest thou me?" Surely a study of the book of John ought to cause us to say, "Yes Lord, we love thee."

Things Left Within Our Trust

VANCE HUTTON

Paul often referred to Timothy as his son in the faith. Paul first visited Lystra, Timothy's home town, in Acts 14. Was it here that the young man responded to the gospel preached by Paul? He is truly one of the great men of the Bible. Read the compliment Paul gave of him in Phil. 2:19-24. Many great charges does Paul lay down to the young man Timothy. Among those is in I Timothy 6:20. "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust." This is a valuable lesson till this day. The Lord gave a parable in Matt. 25: 14-30 that again teaches accountability of the things entrusted to his servants. Hopefully, we realize that the Lord has entrusted us with some things. The Lord has gone on His journey; one day the day of reckoning will come. Will it be triumph or tragedy for us when that day comes? Read Matt. 25:21-26. See that the difference was made in the

way the servants used that which was entrusted to them. Notice with me some of the things left within our trust.

(I) The Soul

The soul is yours to lose or save (Matt. 16:26). It is worth more than the whole world. Only you can save yours (Acts 2:40). It is left in your trust. You have an eternal spirit made in the image of God. This spirit will live forever. You have been entrusted with this greatest of possessions. Where will your soul live in eternity? The Bible speaks of the saving of the soul (HEB. 10:39) and saving the soul from death (Jam. 5:20). Friend, keep on guard for your soul. Obey the Lord's will and be faithful; there is no other way to keep the soul.

(II) Our Children

Children are an heritage from the Lord (Ps. 127:3). If you are a parent, think what has been entrusted to you. You bear the responsibility and the accountability of bringing them up in the ways of the Lord (Eph 6:4). All parents will one day be judged by the Lord as to how they cared for this valuable possession placed within their trust.

(III) The Gospel

The context of I Tim. 6:20-21 seems to point toward the fact that here Timothy was entrusted with the gospel. He was to live it faithfully and teach it faithfully. Paul spoke of having this treasure in earthen vessels (II Cor. 4:7). We must live by it (Phil. 1:27), defend it (Phil 1:17), and teach it to others (Mk. 16:15). It is a sobering thought to be entrusted with the gospel.

(IV) Our Talents

The parable of the talents surely could represent our abilities, privileges, opportunities, monetary capabilities and so on. Think of all the things in this area committed to our trust. The parable of the talents teaches us that we are responsible for what we could be doing. We are called upon to do our best (I Cor. 15:58). Are you using your abilities and possessions for the Lord? We are stewards of them (I Cor. 4:2). Are we taking advantage of doors opened by the Lord (Rev. 3:8).

Friends, guard that which is committed to your trust. Won't it be grand to hear the Lord say, "Well done"!!



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