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# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL

### ***What Does The Bible Teach?***

**“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us”**

We all have only one heavenly Father, who is God. Some people erroneously call some religious leaders as “Father”. Christ taught, “Do not call anyone on earth your Father; for one is your Father, He who is in heaven.” (Matthew 23:9). This heavenly Father, the apostle John said, has revealed, or has conveyed as a gift, His marvelous love for us, which we all need to behold. John wrote: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us.” We, who have sinned; who live in sin every day! We, who have separated ourselves from our heavenly Father, God, because of our sins and iniquities (Isaiah 59:1, 2; Romans 3:23), and thus became spiritually dead and destined to go to hell and live there all eternity! We,, who have turned our backs on God; and decided to conduct ourselves in ways and manners for which God has not created us! We, who have through our conduct and evil ways brought shame on the blessed and most holy name of our heavenly Father. Behold, this Father, has shown His wonderful love for us, by allowing His Almighty Word to become flesh and to be born as a man on this earth. In Christ Jesus He lived amongst sinful men and women

for almost thirty three years long; teaching them to repent and become worthy of acceptance of God. Then, and, then this heavenly Father allowed, or influenced sinful men to become His enemies, so much so, that they would take Him to the authorities and would ask for his execution. The Word, God's Son, on earth, did not resist; because He knew God's plan for saving us humans from the wages of sin. He did not open His mouth, and said nothing in his defence. Pilate, the governor asked Him: "Are you not speaking to me? Do you not know that I have power to crucify you, and power to release you?" But, Jesus said to him: "You could have no power at all against me unless it had been given you from above." (John 19:10, 11). God did it! He allowed His Son to be crucified. He was smitten by God Himself; he was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, as Isaiah, the prophet has said (Isaiah 53:4, 5). Paul, the apostle, later wrote, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Reader, friend, we need to behold, think, look, observe, ponder, consider, yes, contemplate on the fact: *what manner of love God has bestowed on us!* that we should be called the children of God, said John, next in that passage we had read from 1 John 3:1. Isn't it a wonderful thing to think about, that we all have the equal right or opportunity to accept the love of God and become His children; because His gift of love in Jesus Christ has been given for all. When one believes, in Christ, and repents of sin, and confesses Him to be the Son of God and is buried with Him in baptism; God accepts that individual as His son or daughter. (Galatians 3:26, 27; Acts 2:38). The love of God teaches us to love Him with our whole being, and love our fellow being as we love ourselves. God is love; and being His children we must also be like God. Do not let this thought pass by: Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us! Think!!

# ***What Is 'Conversion' ?***

**J.C. CHOATE**

According to Webster's Dictionary, 'convert' means "to turn around, to transform, to change from one belief to another." Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words defines 'convert' as "to turn about; the word implies repentance, a turning from and a turning to, as in turning away from a life of sin and turning to God."

There are three phases of conversion: a change of heart, a change of life, and a change of state.

We are talking, of course, about conversion to Christ, what it means to become a believer in Him, submitting to Him, changing to conform to His teaching, turning from sin and wrong to live the kind of life Christ wants us to live.

We are not talking about being bribed to pretend to be following Christ, or taking money and other material things so that one can be counted in a list as being a "Christian". Neither are we talking about "converting" so that our children can attend some superior school, or that we might receive other rewards.

Actually, if one is willing to wear the name "Christian" or to pretend to obey Christ because of such gifts or rewards that might be offered, he is not converting to Christianity, but he is simply going through a routine or pretending to become a Christian. Such things do not actually make one a Christian in the sight of God. They are an insult to Him and to all who wear that precious name.

There is not enough money in the world to buy a single soul for Christ! If one is willing to sell his soul for material gain, he deceives himself and mocks God.

To their own terrible shame, there are some who falsely call themselves "Christian" who would stoop to offer material things or advantages in order to influence people to 'convert' to Christ. Their behaviour is contrary to everything Christ and His disciples taught, contrary to everything written in the new Testament. True Christians do not take or give bribes. We can safely mark it down that if a person would offer a bribe, trying to buy converts to Christ, he is not a representative of Christ but of Satan.

2 Corinthians 11:14, 15 describes such a person: "And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works."

Christ said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

To be converted to Christ one must hear the word of God (Romans 10:17), believe in God and in Christ as the Son of God (Hebrews 11:6), believe the facts of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), be willing to repent or turn from the old life of sin (Luke 13:3, Acts 17:30), confess with his mouth before others that he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Matthew 10:32, 33), and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 2:38).

On the day of Pentecost when the Lord's church had its beginning, after the people had been taught of Christ and had become believers in Him, they wanted to know what they must do in order to be saved. Peter and the apostles answered, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

A few days later, as the apostles were speaking to another group of people, they said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). In this passage, "baptism" of Acts 2:38 is replaced with the word "converted", and "the gift of the Holy Spirit" is said to be "the times of refreshing". But in both of these verses, conversion is the subject being discussed.

Eleven cases of conversion are recorded in the book of Acts. In every case, the gospel—the good news that Christ had come to save man from his sin—was preached, the people heard and became believers, they repented—turned away from sin and turned to God—,they confessed their faith in Christ as the Son of God, and they were baptized in water for the remission of their sins. This was true conversion.

In being converted, **they changed their minds** from not believing in Christ to believing that He is the Son of God; **they changed their lives** from living in sin to following the goodness

and purity of Christ; **they changed their state** from being lost in Satan's kingdom of darkness, to being saved in Christ's kingdom of light. This change of state was accomplished as they were born again spiritually (John 3:3, 5) through baptism (Mark 16:16). In doing this, they entered Christ, being baptized into His death and raised to walk that new life with Him (Romans 6:3, 4). This birth through baptism put them into Christ's Family, His church, so that they could live the remainder of their lives as the children of God (Revelation 2:10).

This is true conversion to Christ. It is done sincerely, from the heart, and it is a lifetime commitment to worship and serve the Lord daily, according to all that he instructed in the New Testament.

This is true conversion to Christ. It is done sincerely, from the heart, and it is a lifetime commitment to worship and serve the Lord daily, according to all that He instructed in the New Testament.

Have you been converted to Christ?

*Especially For Women*

## *Jesus—The Christ* *Part 4*

**BETTY BURTON CHOATE**

Andrew and Rachel continued to study the Scriptures, looking particularly for verses dealing with Christ and His relationship, both in the Godhead and with man, following His ascension to Heaven. They were surprised to realize how much they had missed in their previous readings. "It just shows why we need to study and study and study!" exclaimed Andrew. "When you asked that we look at some verses about Christ, I thought we understood at least the basic truths about Him, but *how much we've learned!*"

"I've hardly been able to wait for you to come home from work, so we could do more exploring together!" Rachel laughed.

"But the continuing changes in the relationship between God and the Word, as we were reading last night, are truly staggering thoughts."

"There's another verse in Philippians that sheds light on this question. In 3:20, 21 it says that we are waiting for the coming of our Savior, 'the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed **to His glorious body**. . .'. Do the Scriptures ever say that our immortal bodies will be *like God*?"

"Not that I can remember," Rachel answered slowly, "but there's another verse something like the one in Philippians, a verse that has always been special to me, but I never really thought of what it's promising! In 1 John 3:1 and 2, John wrote, '*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! . . . it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like him.*'"

"There's another verse," Andrew said, turning pages quickly. "In Romans 8:11 Paul wrote that '*. . . if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies, through the Spirit who dwells in you.*' And look at this verse! (16, 17) '*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*'"

Andrew sat back in his chair, a look of stunned amazement slowly crossing his face. "Rachel, are all of these Scriptures really saying what I think they're saying? That when the Word emptied Himself and took the form of man, it wasn't sacrifice of 33 years, but a commitment for eternity? Does His love, even now, make Him subject to the Father and the brother of man?"

"What else could it mean when it says that we will be **joint heirs with Christ**?" Rachel responded. "He was the *One for Whom* and *by Whom* all things were created, according to Colossians 1:16, so from the beginning He was in position to *give an inheritance*. To change His entire relationship in the Godhead so that He **becomes their heir of God, along with His brothers**, is a sacrifice I never even considered!"

"Did our salvation really cost *that much*?" Andrew asked, shaking his head and wiping the tears that were coming to his



eyes. "How could God—how could Christ—love sinners that much?"

Rachel's lips were trembling as she answered, "So, whatever love we give in return, whatever we do in this life for God, it's nothing in comparison to what He's done and is doing for us. Oh, Andrew, how could we ever doubt that He hears our prayers and is ready to give us anything we ask that's for our good, when **this tremendous outpouring of love has already been made?**"

"You're right. How much this knowledge has increased my faith!"

With the passing of the weeks, as both Andrew and Rachel continued to study, they were amazed at how many Scriptures they now noticed which confirmed their new understanding of the cost of Salvation. "Listen to this," Andrew said one night. "These verses in 1 Corinthians 15:24 and onwards are talking about the return of Christ. *'Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. . . Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.'*

"This picture further fills in what was said in Romans 8 about us being joint heirs with Christ. He is reigning **now** as the King over His kingdom, the church, but after *'the end'* He will turn the kingdom over to God and will be subject to Him in some deeper way than He is now. Whatever that may mean, it certainly shows that the change in His relationship in the Godhead is **eternal!** It means that in order for us to be the children of God eternally, He remains our firstborn Brother, being the bridge that binds us with God!"

"Isn't there a verse in Galatians—" Rachel began, turning pages quickly. "Oh, Andrew, do you remember what a strange 'new' thing the Bible seemed only a few months ago? We didn't know even the names of most of the books, and had no idea of anything in these pages except maybe *'... God so loved the world...'* We *thought* we knew about His love, and yet we understood *nothing* of what those words really mean! I'm so thankful we've made Him the center of our lives!"

"Me too," agreed Andrew.

"Yes, here it is—Galatians 4:4-7. It's talking about Christ coming into the world in the fulness of time, '*...that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*' Isn't this saying that it's because of the Spirit of God's Son in us that our own spirits realize and acknowledge that God is our Father?"

"And if He were not the *continuing Son*, how could we have that relationship with God as sons?" asked Andrew. "the end of the verse says the same thing: that it is only as that relationship continues **through Christ** that we can be **heirs of God!** And these verses tie in also with Romans 8:17! Isn't it exciting to see how all of these passages are fitting together, and are explaining each other? That's what's so wonderful about growing in a knowledge of the Scriptures! The light one verse sheds on another just makes the whole message shine brighter every time we study!"

## ***Flee, Fight and Follow***

FRANCIS DAVID

We live in a world which is going through some very difficult times. We are surrounded by all kinds of evils and temptations. What do we read everyday in newspapers and watch on T.V.? There are murders, rapes, all sorts of crimes, terrorism, hijacking, kidnappings immorality, divorces and remarriages, corruption and the list goes on. The bad things projected by media on TV are projected as living styles. Sometimes evil is considered as a good thing. It reminds us the words of prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament When he says: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and sweet for bitter."(Isaiah 5:20). We need to protect our young generation from these evil forces. It is sad that some parents do not take their responsibility seriously in rearing their children. Sometime, we see children are just left to do what they wish. The

Bible tells us in Ephesians Chapter five and verse fifteen: "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, and the sixteen verse says: "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Our young people are facing a difficult situation. There was a young man in the Bible who was a preacher and an associate of apostle Paul. This young man Timothy was a good person but still apostle Paul had to give him some advise. In I Timothy chapter six beginning from verse three, he tells him: "If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds. . .and further he goes on to say: "But you, O man of God, FLEE these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. FIGHT the good fight of faith. . . There are so many attractions all around us, there are temptations, but the thing is how to deal with these situations? The Bible tells us that we must Flee these things. We need to abstain from every form of evil. (I Thess. 5:22). This verse is very small but it has a great meaning in it. If we sincerely follow this verse whether young or old, we will be really benefitted.

In first Corinthians 6:18, Paul says: Flee sexual immorality. . ." There is so much smut and rubbish is being shown on the T.V. Parents, do you check, what your children are watching on the T.V? We see, many times the kids are just left alone without any instructions to feed themselves on T.V. to watch all kinds of immorality. In the Old Testament, we see the Israelites will teach their children constantly. We live in a age where parents seldom find time to teach and admonish their kids. In Deuteronomy chapter 6 we read God gave instructions to the parents that "They shall teach their children diligently and when they sit down, or walk by the way, when lie down, and when they rise up. . .they were commanded to teach their children constantly. We need to teach our boys and girls to flee and fight.

There are some questionable places that we should not allow our children to go and participate. Do we keep a check on our children where they go, and what kind or people they associate with? The Bible says:"Do not be deceived: "Evil

company corrupts good habits.” (I Cor. 15:33). Try to abstain your selves from all kinds or forms of evil. I believe this is pretty good advise that we get from Scriptures. There may be evil in our talk, please check your talk, Bible says: “Let no corrupt communication or words come out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification. . .” (Eph, 4:29). You need to check your dress young men and women? Is your dress modest? How is your public appearance? Is it modest or immodest? Our dress should be proper and modest, particularly the parents must keep a check on the dress of their daughters. Do not try to copy the latest fashion, which is not proper. Abstain yourselves from all kinds of improper clothing. We must fight and resist the devil. James, one of the writers of the Bible writes: “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Do you have enough courage to resist the devil? If not, ask God’s help. He would help you to resist the devil. Devil is trying to find and trap people. His trap is strong and he is not slack, he constantly works on people. He tries to work on those who are living the good and righteous life. Peter one of the apostles writes: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith. . .(I Pet. 5:8-9). Many people are not able to resist and that is why they are trapped in the Satan’s web.

Next thing that we want to see now, is to follow. Fellow who? We must follow Jesus with the right mind. Jesus was one of the finest and unique example that we must follow. Jesus said: “Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and FOLLOW me.” (Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). Jesus is the captain of our salvation. With Jesus help we can fight the battle. To fight this battle we need whole armour of God. Paul says: “Put on whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:10-13). If you are a Christian, then you must daily walk with HIM and never hesitate to flee from temptations, and

fight the good fight of faith and live a good Christian life. My friend, If you are not a Christian you can also become a follower of Jesus. You must believe in Jesus, confess him as the Son of God, repent of your old sinful life and be baptised. After you are baptised you will be a Christian. When you become a Christian, then it would be required of you to flee, fight and follow. Let us walk according to the instructions given in the Bible.

We must respect the word of God which gives us moral code of conduct for our lives.

## ***True Worship***

**NORMAN FIELDS**

God has always given man instructions for his conduct. He has never left man to wonder what was expected of him but has always set a clear path to be followed. From the very beginning God has given man instructions to govern his conduct and worship. For example, we can see that Cain and Abel were expected to conduct themselves in a prescribed manner, a pattern, that had been set down by God. In Genesis 4:3 we read of Cain and Abel's worship. We find there that God accepted Abel and his worship but He did not accept Cain or his worship. Why was Abel accepted and Cain not? We find the answer in Hebrews 11:4; the Hebrews writer tells us that Abel's worship was accepted because it was offered "by faith." the implication toward Cain is that his worship was not offered by faith. What does this have to do with a pattern of conduct and worship being given by God? The apostle Paul tells us that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," (Rom. 10:17). Therefore for Abel's worship to have been offered "by faith" it had to have been offered according to instructions from God, words from God. Likewise, Cain's worship having been rejected shows that Cain did not make his offering according to the instructions that God had given, either by his lifestyle or his manner of offering.

The fact that God has always given man a pattern, a set of instructions, to follow can be further shown by the great detail

given to Israel's prescribed conduct and worship. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are almost entirely given to instructing Israel in its conduct and worship. They were given instructions for how they were to eat, how they were to treat and deal with one another and foreigners, how they were to govern the nation and numerous other points of conduct that God expected them to follow. They were instructed in great detail about how they were to worship, where they were to worship and when they were to worship. The priests were instructed in how to conduct the people's worship. Everything concerning their expected conduct and worship was given in excruciating detail.

Isn't it remarkable that today people say that God doesn't have a pattern for our worship and that all God really cares about in our worship is our sincerity. When did God stop caring whether people followed His instructions or not? How unfair it was for Cain to be rejected for not following God's instructions for his conduct and worship (Gen. 4:5). How unfair it was for God to destroy Nadab and Abihu for not following the instructions He had given for their priestly duties (Lev. 10:1-2). How unfair it was for God to strike Uzzah dead for not following His instructions concerning the handling of the Ark of the Covenant (2 Sam. 6:6-7; Num. 4:15). What a terrible injustice to have punished these people if God doesn't really care about following His instructions anyway! But, of course, the fact is that God does care whether or not His instructions are followed. God did not give instructions to the Patriarchs and to Israel only to leave us to our own devices for determining our conduct and worship today (Jer. 10:23; Acts 2:42; Col. 1:23). The fact is that God has given us instructions for our conduct and worship today. We, just like Abel, must walk and worship "by faith" if we would be accepted by God. We walk and worship "by faith" when we live and worship according to the New Testament.

In this series of articles we will be considering the pattern that God has given for worshipping Him in Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). As we consider the worship that God expects of us today we find one statement made by Jesus that gives us a summary of that pattern. In John 4:24 Jesus is talking with the woman at the well. It is when the woman of Samaria turns to the topic of worship that Jesus makes the statement that gives us the

pattern God expects to be worshipped by today. Jesus had told the woman that the "hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father." Of course, that hour would be when the church of Christ would be established and men would begin to worship according to apostles doctrine (Acts 2:42); rather than the pattern for worship given to the Patriarchs or the children of Israel. Jesus says that in that hour "the true worshipers will worship in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him." then in verse 24 He gives us the pattern for New Testament worship, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Jesus leaves no doubt as to the importance for us to follow this pattern, for He says, "those who worship Him **MUST** worship" Him in this way. Sense this pattern being followed is essential for our worship it is of utmost importance for us to have a perfect understanding of the details.

There are three essential elements to this pattern for true worship. First, it must be directed toward the proper object—God. Second, it must be conducted in the proper attitude—spirit. And third, it must be conducted according to the proper standard-truth. In the coming articles we want to look at these three elements in detail so that we can know whether or not we are following God's instruction for our worship today and thus to see if we and our worship is accepted or rejected.

## ***Will All Good People Be Saved?***

**ROD RUTHERFORD**

Many times we have heard people say, "God will save all good people." This implies that there are good people in all churches who will be saved. It also implies that there may even be good people who have never been members of any church who will also be saved. Will all good people be saved? What does the Bible say?

The Bible teaches that one can never be good enough to be saved by his own goodness. If people could be saved by their

good deeds, then it would not have been necessary for Christ to die for our sins. The Apostle Paul wrote: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Paul also wrote: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8).

Even the very best people, who have lived long enough to know the difference between right and wrong, have sinned: The Bible says: "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. . .for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:9, 10,23).

In chapter 10 of the book of Acts, we read about a man named Cornelius. Cornelius was a very good man. He was also a very religious man, but he was not saved. Please notice the Bible's description of this good man: "There was a certain man in Caesarea called cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:1,2). Please observe that Cornelius was a worshiper of the true God and had taught his family also to fear God too, Cornelius was a man of prayer. He was also kind-hearted and generous for "he gave much alms to the people." In spite of his faith and good deeds, Cornelius was not saved. He was told by an angel of God to "Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:13, 14).

Will all good people be saved? The answer is "no," for even the best people have sinned and just one sin can keep a person out of heaven. John wrote, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27). The only way to remove sin is by the blood of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:5). This is done in our obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We read in Acts 22:16, "and now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash



away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

All good people will not be saved. Neither will all religious people be saved. It is not enough to be religious, but one must be right religiously. Jesus said: “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matthew 15:13). He also said: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

Not all good people will be saved. Those who will be saved are those who humbly submit to our Lord Jesus Christ in obedience to His gospel and who ever after live for Him doing His will. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:8,9).

Dear reader, have you obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ? If you have not, you are lost! Please obey Christ today, “Arise, an be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

## ***Shining Forth As Lights In Love***

**B.J. CLARKE**

In the midst of this crooked and perverse generation the children of God must shine forth as lights in the world (Phillipians 2:15). We must let our lights so shine before men in order that they may see our good works and glorify the Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). Satan, the god of this world, has blinded the minds of unbelievers lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them (II Corinthis 4:4). But God has commanded the light to shine out of darkness and has shined in our hearts to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (II Corinthis 4:6). Though we were once darkness, we are now light in the Lord and thus must conduct ourselves as children of light (Ephesians 5:8). As children of light we must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,

for light and darkness can have no communion together (Ephesians 5:11; II Corinthians 6:14). We have been translated out of the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and as a result, the Father has made us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Colossians 1:12, 13).

There are several ways in which we can let our lights shine forth in this dark world of sin. Perhaps there is no more powerful way to shine our lights than to demonstrate the quality of love. The critical importance of love is clearly seen in a conversation Jesus had with a certain lawyer who, in an effort to test Jesus, asked the Lord what the greatest commandment was in the law. Jesus said unto him, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

*This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"* (Matthew 22:37-40). With this text before us, let us notice how we can shine forth as lights in love.

### **SHINING FORTH AS LIGHTS IN OUR LOVE FOR GOD**

It is interesting that in specifying the greatest commandment, Jesus did not cite one of the ten commandments as being the greatest. Instead, he quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. We are behooved to ask the following question: Why did Jesus point to Deuteronomy 6:5 as being the first and greatest commandment? It is because he knew that if one dedicated himself to love God with all of his heart, soul, strength and mind, that obedience to all other divine commandments would surely follow. Jesus stressed the connection between love and obedience when he said, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15). The apostle of love later penned similar words when he wrote, *"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments"* (I John 5:3; II John 6).

The Pharisees emphasized obedience without giving consideration as to whether this obedience was motivated by a heart given over to God in love.

They were more concerned with external actions than they were with the inner attitude of the heart. The reaction of the

scribe to Jesus' response demonstrates that he correctly perceived that Jesus was stressing more than mere performance of obedience. Mark's account of the incident records that the scribe said unto Jesus, *"Well, Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God; and there is none other but he; And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices"* (Mark 12:32, 33).

The latter portion of the scribe's reply is reminiscent of Psalm 40:6-8, *"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."* This passage appears puzzling at first because it seems to deny that God ever required his people to bring sacrifices and offerings to him. Even a casual reading of the books of Exodus and Leviticus shows that God did indeed desire and require offerings and sacrifices. Does Psalm 40 contradict Exodus and Leviticus? The solution to this apparent problem is to recognize the use of the hermeneutical device known as an ellipsis. An ellipsis is the omission of one or more words that are obviously understood but that must be supplied. Keeping this in mind, the passage could read, *"Thou did'st not desire sacrifice and offering alone."* In other words, God never desired or required that his people merely go through the motions of bringing their offerings to him. Two key words in the passage are the words "delight" and "heart." God wanted more than mere offerings and sacrifices. He wanted those who brought these offerings and sacrifices to do so with delight and love in their hearts.

Two passages from the prophets serve as perfect illustrations of God's demand for more than just the mere act of performance in obeying him. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of the goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me . . . (Isaiah 1:10ff).

To this Micah adds, *"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offering, with calves of a year old? Will the lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"* (Micah 6:6-8). Our God desires that we worship him with hearts full of love. Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees for drawing nigh unto him with their mouth and honoring him with their lips while their hearts were far from him. We must recognize that God never has and never will accept external actions without internal devotion.

But how does this relate to the concept of our theme? How does loving God in this way lead men out of darkness into the light? When we serve Christ only out of a sense of legalistic duty, we torment our consciences. But when we serve him out of a *"faith that worketh by love"* (Galatians 5:6), we enjoy the service and our obedience becomes a blessing rather than a burden. Remember that phrase in I John 5:3 which says that when we love God his commandments are not burdensome? A song from a few years ago entitled *"He Ain't Heavy; He's My Brother,"* comes near to expressing the thought. I've got to carry my fallen brother, but it doesn't seem like such a burden because of the relationship that we have. If I were given the choice of carrying around a 10 pound sack of potatoes or my 45 pound son through an amusement park for six hours, I would surely choose my son. Although he is heavier and demands more care and attention, he seems lighter because of my love and affection for him. Likewise, when we serve the Lord out of love, his yoke is easy and his burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

If the world perceives our Christianity to be a burden rather than a blessing, they will want to have nothing to do with it. On the other hand, if we display to the world the great love in our hearts for God and the joy that serving him brings, this will serve as a beacon to lead men out of their darkness and despair into the marvelous kingdom of light.

# **“Lovest Thou Me?”**

**ROBERT R. TAYLOR**

In John 21:15-17 we read, “So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, feed my sheep.”

This is one of the post-resurrection appearances of our Lord of which there were nearly a dozen. This one occurred on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Though others were present, some six, it concerned initially the Lord and Simon Peter. By implication it concerned the other six and all of us today. In this interesting conversation Jesus asked a question three times. It consists of three words—“Lovest thou me?” Its very repetition underscores its tremendous importance. Together, let us meditate, in this and some four installments to follow, on some of the characteristics of this vital and fundamental query. Some twelve to fifteen will be given in all. They will be numbered consecutively and noted with some brevity.

## **(1) IT IS A DISTINGUISHING QUESTION**

It touches love. Love has always been the distinguishing badge or token of discipleship to the Lord. During the final week the Lord gave three laws or directives relative to love. In Matthew 22:36-40 He listed supremacy of love for God as the chiefest of all commands. The second of all commandments is like unto it which demands that one love his neighbor as he does himself. In the Upper Room discourse on Thursday prior to His crucifixion Jesus gave His disciples the new commandment of love (John 13:34, 35). It called for them to love one another as Christ loved His own disciples. This was the highest dimension of love the world has ever known. Minus love all else is void of profit (I

Corinthians 13:1-3). In the great love chapter we have the character, conduct and continuation of love exhibited so eloquently and so excellently (I Corinthians 13:1-13). Love is greater than faith and hope and abides forever (I Corinthians 13:13). Love is the bond of perfectness (Colossians 3:14). Fervent love covers a multitude of sins (I Peter 4:8). Love never fails (I Corinthians 13:8). Love is the climax of the Christian graces (II Peter 1:5-7). God is love as the apostle of love attractively affirms in the twin declarations of I John 4:8, 16. When we truly love we exhibit our kinship to God. Love distinguishes between the believer and the non-believer; between the fervent Christian and the lukewarm church member; between the one who loves God loyally and the one who is spasmodic in his service. Truly love is the distinguishing badge or token of real discipleship in the Lord's service.

## (2) IT IS A REMARKABLE QUESTION

It is remarkable from the standpoint of the one who asked it—the Lord of glory. It is remarkable from the standpoint of the one to whom it was directed—one of the foremost apostles. It is remarkable due to its great brevity. It is remarkable because it goes to the very heart of what discipleship to Jesus really consists. It is remarkable because of the time it was asked—subsequent to the Lord's resurrection, after Peter's denial of the Lord thrice and just prior to the time He returned to the palace of the universe on holy high. It is remarkable in that John, of the four gospel biographers of our Lord's life, is the only one of the quartet to include it. It is remarkable because of its preservation and that we can have ardent access to it today.

## *Psalm 119*

MEL FUTRELL

Many Christians, no doubt, have received considerable comfort, enjoyment, and instruction from reading the 150 psalms we have as the book of Psalms. Psalms 1, 6, 19, 23, 90, 117, 119, and 148 have been special favorites of mine now for many

years. I expect that you also have some favourites of your own. Our Lord recognized the Psalms as one part of the three-fold division of the Old Testament with this statement, "...all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the PSALMS, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). Also in Paul's time the psalms had apparently already been divided into chapters as is indicated in Acts 13:3, "...as it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee."

The longest of the Psalms and the real focus of this article is Psalm 119. This psalm of 176 verses is rather unique. It is composed of, "22 eight-verse sections. Each section begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each verse within the section begins with the same letter" (Eerdmans' Concise Bible Handbook, Poetry and Wisdom Literature, 1980, p. 178).

With such a de-emphasis today on the written word, in and out of the church, it is refreshing to re-read and study again the 119th Psalm. A recent advertisement from our local paper by a denominational group illustrates this well. It was said, "We reject the idea that a book or institution is superior to the conscience of a morally responsible human being. Thomas Jefferson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Florence Nightingale endorsed our principles. Why don't you give us a try?" Brethren, these people reject the inspiration and thus absolute authority of the Scriptures, yet they appeal to mere men as a drawing card to have others visit their group. Get this. The title of this brief recruitment plea is, "Are you Looking For A Church That Doesn't Tell You What To Think?" My point is this brethren, the 119 Psalm places great emphasis on the Word. This is David's psalm in praise to God for his Word. In fact, only five of the 176 verses don't mention God's Word in any form; only five. (see verses 84, 90, 121, 122, 132) This emphasis on the Word of God is demonstrated by the use of ten different English words of phrases in the KJV to describe God's revelation (Note: law, testimonies, ways, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, word, ordinances, word of truth). Surely, this evidences to all the great importance attached to God's revelation of his will to man.

Throughout the psalm we are impressed with the contrast

between those who are righteous and those who are wicked in relationship to God's word. The examples of such are too numerous to include all here but perhaps a sampling will suffice. The righteous walk in it, keep it, respect it, learn it, desire to be taught by it, meditate upon it, love it, observe it, long for it, are not ashamed of it, will not forget it, are comforted by it, delight in it. They are strengthened by it, are directed by it, pray they will not wander from it, speak it, take heed to it, are cleansed by it, stick to it, understand it, etc. The wicked err from it, forsake it, fail to keep it, have forgotten it, are far from it, don't seek it, and by implication, the wicked do the very opposite of what is listed that the righteous do.

Psalm 119 is truly poetry with deep insight. Unlike much of the world we do not reject the Book, the Word of God. But rather we accept it for what it is, God-breathed Scripture. We cling to it realizing that the hope laid up for us in Heaven can only be found in the Word of Truth, the Gospel (Colossians 1:5).

## ***Things Which Happen Gradually***

**GLENN COLLEY**

While it is true that life is "a vapor" (James 4:14), meaning that it passes quickly, it is also true that a great number of matters happen so gradually in our lives that they go unnoticed.

Our Children grow so fast. But you only notice that rapid growth when you stop and ponder how they looked a year or two ago, or look at an old photo, or you return from a long trip having not seen them for several weeks. At those times you are shocked at how they've changed. I am glad that most of the time their growth is so gradual that I am able to push aside the thoughts of that not-so-far-away graduation or marriage. God made their growth gradual.

The aging of our parents, in a similar way, is gradual. If we live near them and see them often we are seldom surprised by the new wrinkles or furrows in their brow. The changes come so gradually that we hardly notice them—until we look at an old



photo. Those who live long distances from their aging parents face a somewhat unhappy reality every time they make the trip to see their folks. Those weeks or months between visits have all made their mark in the aging process.

I am glad it happens gradually. Some things in life would be so painful if they happened all at once.

There are other considerations in life regarding gradual change. Spiritual changes, whether good or bad, often happen so gradually as to go unnoticed too. Stop and think. What is your relation to God and to His word now as compared with 5 or 10 years ago?

The ideal of spiritual and physical change is found in Paul's writing:

"For which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (II Corinthians 4:16, 17).

That's how we should be. How do you respond to the gradual but certain changes in your body as you age? Is there a fountain of youth to make this process less a tragedy? Is there a secret in life that will melt away the unhappiness of growing old? YES! The secret is simply that while you gradually decline and become older physically, as a Christian you continually study to grow spiritually. While one is decreasing, the other is increasing. That's what Paul meant when he contrasted the outward man that is perishing, and the inward man that is constantly new and growing. Is that gradual? Yes, but relax. When you live this way God is in control and things will work out His way.

Obviously there are other gradual changes in some folks spiritual lives which are sad. I suppose all Christians can tell of someone near to them who has gradually drifted off the old paths of faithfulness. The Psalmist evidently pondered this idea when he penned, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1: 2).

This shows a gradual progression, or perhaps you'd say, digression. Some among us have left to follow liberal, denominational agendas. We grieve over their loss. What happened? They simply listened to the counsel of the ungodly and gradually

drifted away from the right.

Take a moment to consider where you are and where you are going spiritually. Something is gradually happening to you because you are letting or making it happen. Do you like the direction? It may be time to make serious changes to get back on the right track.

Life, you see, passes quickly and happens gradually.

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