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LET THE TRUTH PREVAIL

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18). That congregations of His one church everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the church. (1 Corinthians 1:10).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must be told to believe in Christ, to repent of wrong, to confess Christ the Son of God, and to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands of salvation are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4; 5:22).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, after His name alone, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 31

March 2001

No. 11

EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

***“Remember now your Creator in the days
of your youth”***

It is said that Titanic, the great vessel, that had left London on April 12, 1912 for New York and sank two days later on April 14th, was 270 meters long. 1500 people were perished in the sinking of Titanic. But when it had left London on its way to New York, and before people became aware that it was actually sinking, they were all busy in visiting, shopping, eating, drinking and dancing on the tune of the music. And as soon as they began to realise that the ship was sinking, their attitude had suddenly changed. They began to pray to God, others got their Bibles out to read, those who were singing and dancing and playing musical instrument began to sing “Nearer my God to thee, nearer to thee. . . .”

How true it is of all humans everywhere. When alls going fine, they hardly even think of God. There is no time for prayer, for Bible reading, for Bible study and for worship of God. But the same people, when run into some problem, when sickness come, or something tragic happen, seek for God's help. Thats the time when they would want to read or hear from the Bible, or would like for someone to pray with them or for them. Young people, especially have no time for God, for Bible reading, for

prayer, for worship. But in old age, they think now its time to remember God. Its like sending a loved one dried and withered flowers instead of sending fresh flowers! Solomon, the wise man, however, instructs, at Ecclesiastes 12:1, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth." And, in the following verses of the same chapter he gives the reason as to why one should now remember the Creator.

He says, "Before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, I have no pleasure in them. While the sun and the light, the moon and the stars, are not darkened, and the clouds do not return after the rain."

That is, before one gets old, and everything seems gloomy and not enjoyable, and diseases one after another come back. "In the days when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow down," said Solomon, the wise man, further, "when the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows grow dim; When the doors are shut in the street, and the sound of grinding is low, when one rises up at the sound of a bird, and the daughters of music are brought low. Also when they are afraid of height, and of terrors in the way when the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper is a burden and desire fails." In the verses above Solomon describes how the youth turns into the old age and man becomes feeble with legs and back becoming weak, loss of teeth and eyes sight, vigour and vitality, and doesn't even enjoy good sleep, climbing up and coming down is not as easy as it used to be; even a little burden seems heavy; and, of course, almond tree blossoms, is a reference to the white head. Solomon, the wise, says that that is the time when man could go to his eternal home any time. Therefore, says he, in verses 6 & 7 of Ecclesiastes 12: "Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the well. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it." Further, drawing to a conclusion, the seer said that every person should "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil."

Where is God's place in your life? Do you fear Him? Do you keep His commandments? When this life is over, this is all that is going to matter in the end.

Will The Untaught Be Saved?

J.C. CHOATE

The argument is made that the ignorant, the unlearned, or the untaught will be saved. If people do not know of God, if they have never heard of Jesus Christ, if the gospel has never been preached to them, some raise the question "How would they know of their lost condition, of their need to believe in Christ, or of their need for salvation?" Not knowing any of these things, the conclusion is reached by some that surely the Lord would not condemn them and send them to hell.

But in the midst of this sympathetic reasoning, we must remember that all are sinners (Romans 3:23), and that it is not **God** who condemns us but **the unforgiven sin** in our lives! Left to ourselves, not one human who reaches maturity, realizing right from wrong, would escape hell, because all are guilty of sin.

A simple parallel and illustration of this condition would be the horror of some deadly disease sweeping through the world, infecting every human, with no vaccine available for protection, and no cure. All would inevitably get the disease, and all would die.

Realizing that just such a hopeless spiritual condition gripped the world, the second thing we must remember is that Christ came and died on the cross to provide the way for man to be saved from his hopeless state (John 3:16). The vaccine has been provided! The cure has been poured out! All can be saved from the deadly plague of sin!

But how can the remedy of Christ's blood save us from the disease of sin? Jesus Himself told us when He said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:15,16).

It is therefore the responsibility of Christians to take the

gospel the good news of salvation, to those who are lost in sin. When hearers happily accept the message and obey God in the waters of baptism, they are forgiven of their sins, just as Jesus promised. The deadly disease has been cured and they can live!

But suppose we take that message of salvation to those who have not heard it, and they refuse to believe in the Lord and obey His commands. We would logically conclude that they would be lost, because they refused the one means of salvation.

Having considered these various points, let's return to the argument that the Lord, in His great mercy, will surely save the untaught. If such a thing should be true, then when we preached to that lost group—the ones who heard the gospel but refused to obey it—we were actually bringing the message of condemnation to them, not the gospel of salvation!

You might ask, "How so?" Because, according to that false human logic, all of those who had not been taught would have been saved; but when they heard the gospel and refused it, then they were condemned in their disbelief! If such logic were true, God should have simply kept the world in ignorance from the beginning. There would have been no need for Christ to have come and died; in fact, according to such reasoning, He died in vain, because all sinners could be saved by ignorance while only a few, in comparison, will humbly submit in obedience to the will of God!

Does this mean that God is unfair to condemn the untaught sinner, or that He is being merciless? No, it simply means that it is not ignorance which has the power to cleanse our souls of the blight of sin, but the atoning blood of the Son of God.

Returning to our illustration of a fatal disease sweeping through the population, will ignorance of the cure save even one sick person? If he has never heard of the cure, if no one has told him about it, will he get well simply because he does not know anything about the remedy? No, in all of his ignorance, he will die!

Ignorance will not save a soul from sin. Neither will unbelief, disobedience, or unfaithfulness. Even in this secular world there are many laws. When we break them we are required to pay the consequences even though we are ignorant of them. The law enforcement officials would tell us that it was our responsibility to

know the law and to obey it. God says, "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

Thank God we do have a Lord who loves us and has provided salvation for us. Let us read and study His word, seek to know His will, and let us obey Him so that our sins may be forgiven. And then let us busy ourselves with the task of taking the gospel of salvation to the rest of the world, as Jesus commanded us to do when He said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. . . ." (Mark 16:15).

Especially For Women

Search For Truth The Coming and Power of the Holy Spirit

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

In his visits among neighbourhood families, Andrew had met a man who had shown interest in studying the Scriptures. He arranged a study on a weekly basis in his home. "I am a member of the independent group meeting near here, called 'House of Faith'," Mr. Seville explained the first night. "We are a new group. We've been meeting only three or four years."

"We have been meeting less than two years, ourselves," Andrew answered. "We have followed only what we've been reading in the New Testament, so we are part of the body or church of Christ."

"Well, actually, we are that original church, too! So we are the same! Then you must be experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit!" exclaimed Mr. Seville.

"In what way?" asked Andrew. "On the day the church was started, Peter told the people that when they were baptized they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. As we've studied, we've understood that we were dead in sin, but when we were baptized God's Spirit came within us to make us alive to God, spiritually, according to the promise in 2 Corinthians 3:6 and John 6:63: 'it is

the Spirit who gives life . . .' So we know that God's Spirit dwells within us and helps us in our spiritual life. Even Romans 8 says that He *'helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered.'* And Ephesians 3:16 promises that we are *'to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man'.*"

"But didn't you read about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, promised by John the Baptist when he said that Jesus would baptize us with the Holy Ghost and with fire? haven't you experienced speaking in tongues and healing the sick, as preachers in our movement have done?"

"No, we haven't. Since both of us think we're part of that original church, and we should be the same in belief, let's take a careful look at what the Bible teaches about the coming and power of the Holy Spirit," suggested Andrew.

"That's a good plan," agreed Mr. Seville.

"First, it seems important to realize that not **everything** written in the Scriptures was spoken to **every one**. For instance, when Paul told Elymas, the sorcerer, *' . . . the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time . . .'* (Acts 13:11), he was not speaking to everyone, but that promise was made only to Elymas. In the same way, we need to consider to whom the promises were being made concerning the baptism or the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

"In John 14:26 and 16:13, Jesus made the promise to send the Comforter to guide the apostles into all truth and to bring to their remembrance all that He had taught them; we can turn back to John 13:5 and see that this setting was when Jesus was teaching a very select group about the Memorial Supper. The promise was not made to *all the general public and crowds of people*. Later, when the promise was made in Mark 16 that they would be able to do miracles, again, Jesus was speaking to the apostles, and the explanation was given as to why the miracles were necessary: *'And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word through the accompanying signs'* (Verse 20).

"Even concerning the miracles of Jesus, John explained in John 20:30,31: *'And truly Jesus did many other signs in the*

presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name'. so there was a purpose behind the performance of miracles—not just to make a sick body well or to raise some dead person. If God's purpose was only to give health to people, He could easily banish sickness from the entire world with a single word, but He hasn't done that. The real purpose in all of Jesus' miracles, and also those of the apostles, was to **convince people beyond any doubt that they spoke the message of God.**"

"But on the day of Pentecost the people were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and He manifested Himself through making them speak in heavenly tongues, just as He does today!" Mr. Seville explained.

"What kind of 'heavenly tongues'?" Andrew responded.

"Unless there is someone to 'interpret no one knows what is being said. It's a 'heavenly language', and only God understands," answered Mr. Seville.

"How does the Spirit come in this miraculous way?" asked Andrew.

"We pray for the baptism, and we know He's been poured out on us when we speak in tongues and do other things."

"It's true that when the Spirit came upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2:4, that they began to speak in other languages by the power of the Spirit. But verses 6 and 8 show that the '*tongues*' were **real languages!** The people in the crowd asked, '*How is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?*' People were there from about seventeen nations, representing many languages, yet all the people were able to hear the message of the gospel in the language of their birth!"

"But we speak in *unknown tongues* today, by the power of the Spirit," Mr. Seville insisted. "Even our preachers do this, and this is the same power the apostles had. That's why some of our churches are called Pentecostal, and some are Apostolic! Our names and practices are from the Bible!"

"But give close attention to what you're saying, Mr. Seville.

The word '*apostle*' is in the New Testament, as well as the word '*Pentecost*', but these were never used as **names for the Lord's church!** And the '*tongues*' the Christians used in those days were simply languages they hadn't studied. The Spirit empowered them to know and speak other languages so that they could more quickly spread the message of the gospel. Is that how your preachers use the 'languages' today? When someone comes here from a foreign country, is he able to speak directly to the people in their own language, even though he's never studied it?"

"Oh, no, of course not! For such public speaking he uses a translator. But sometimes in his message he begins to speak in that heavenly language."

"But that isn't what we read about the languages in the New Testament at all!" exclaimed Andrew. "In fact, when you look closely in the Scriptures, you will see that even though according to Acts 5:32, the Holy Spirit was given to all who obeyed God, it was only through the apostles that **miracles** were done, as we read in verse 12 of that chapter: '*And through the hands of the **apostles** many signs and wonders were done among the people.*'"

"What you're saying is not what we practice in our church," Mr. Seville insisted. "We'll talk more about these matters next week."

"Yes," agreed Andrew, "for as you said at the first, we *should* be united in what we believe and practice, since we're both convinced we're following what the New Testament teaches."

"But I'm afraid you're denying the present power of the Holy Spirit in this age." Mr. Seville said as he was leaving.

Come Back Home

FRANCIS DAVID

One of the remarkable parables that we read in the Bible is about the prodigal son. We read this story in Luke chapter fifteen

and here Jesus gives a picture of a Father and his two sons. The younger son in this story was a careless young man and he wanted that his father should give him his portion of property or money. His father must have explained to him that what he is going to do is wrong but we see this boy was insisting and the father had to divide his livelihood. The younger son decided to leave his father's place and go to some far country, where he could be a free bird or he can do what he wishes. He left the comfortable place of his father. We read in the story that he wasted all his money and possessions.

What happened then? He began to discover that now the hard days are ahead for him because there was a great famine in the land where he dwelled. There was no job for him there. One man was kind to him but the only job that he could offer him was to feed the swines and he ate the same food which the swine ate. His condition was most pathetic now. He was realizing that his father has so many servants and so much food but he was suffering here. He came to realize and decided to go back home. He said: "I will arise and go to my father, and will ask for forgiveness" and tell my father to keep me in your house as one of the servants."

Now what was the father's reaction to all this? The Bible tells us his father was waiting for him, he had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. He was welcome home with great joy and happiness. We learn from this story that Our God heavenly Father loves us and even if we have gone astray he expects us to come back home.

There is a beautiful story that we can see in connection with this lesson. The story is about a fifteen years old girl who ran away from home. She was with a boy of about eighteen years. They went here and there and after sometime the boy left her. She was in miserable condition and then she came to realize that what she had done is wrong. She was remembering her parents. She was very attached to her Papa. Her Papa was a very good gentle man and very caring. His health was bad now because he was much worried about his daughter. Papa was making a search for her everywhere but of no use. One day her Papa got a letter in the mail and it was his daughter's letter. He was so happy to get her letter and he wrote back to the daughter

"I am sending you money and you must come back immediately." Just imagine, the love of a father. He said: "Daughter, you are forgiven, we have nothing against you." What a great love! Our heavenly father does the same thing, when He forgives He forgets. In Hebrews 8:12 God says: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

Today, we learn from this that our heavenly father is calling us back, no matter what we have done. Come home, and ask for forgiveness and he has promised us that he will forgive us. In Isaiah 1:18, the prophet says: "Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. God is willing to forgive us, provided we hear him and repent of our old ways and follow the right path. If you are not a faithful Christian, then you must come back and mend your ways. Are you faithful to the church? Are you regular in all the services of the church? If not then come back and ask for forgiveness.

Are you a good husband? Do you love your wife and take care of her? If you are unfaithful to your wife and neglecting her then you are displeasing your heavenly Father. You must correct your self and be a good husband and come back home. What about you as a wife? Are you a good wife? A faithful wife? Can your husband depend on you? Are you a good mother who takes care of her children? If you are neglecting your responsibilities towards your husband and children, then it is a time to come back home. If you are thinking that you cannot live together or trying to get a divorce, then please think again, Your Father is not happy with this. He wants you to be united. The Bible says: "By ye kind one to another, tender hearted forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgive you. (Eph. 4:32).

Dear friends, are you a Christian? Are you a member of the church which Jesus built, if not, then God is calling you. You must believe in Jesus, confess Jesus as the Son of God, repent of your past sinful life and be baptised for the remission of sins. Jesus said: "Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you are unfaithful and left the church of Christ, then God is calling you back home. There is

love, mercy and kindness for us. We sing a song which says: "Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling, calling for you and for me, See on the portals He is waiting and watching, watching for you and for me. O for the wonderful love He has promised, Promised for you and for me, though we have sinned, He has mercy and pardon, pardon for you and for me." Come home, Come home . . . Ye who are weary come home. . . . Are you willing to come back?

Reconciliation To God

J.K. GOSSETT

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God IN HIM" (II Corinthians 5:18-21).

To RECONCILE means to make friends again. God and sinful men are "alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Colossians 1:21). Evil, not an innate sinful nature, separates one from God (Isaiah 59:1-8). In the process of reconciliation man and God become friends again.

THE MEDIATOR between God and man is Jesus Christ. God reconciled us to himself "by Jesus Christ." The passage says: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5).

To the apostle Paul and other ambassadors, was committed the "WORD OF RECONCILIATION," i.e., the gospel, God's power to save (Romans 1:16). The apostle wrote earlier:

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, WE PERSUADE MEN" (II Corinthians 5:11). Agrippa said to Paul upon hearing the gospel: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Agrippa understood better than some preachers what Paul was doing.

WHERE does reconciliation between God and men take place? Clearly it is in Christ which is the same as in the church (Ephesians 1:3; 2:15-16).

When does reconciliation to God occur? The gospel is clear on this point. The sinner and God are made friends again WHEN ONE IS BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4).

The DIRECTION of reconciliation is man to God. The creeds say, "God to man." The creeds are wrong; the Bible is right!

Only man needs to be persuaded to be reconciled to God. God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (II Peter 3:9).

Let The Bible Answer

ROBERT MEREDITH

What is the "one hope" of Ephesians 4:4? The apostle Paul wrote the book of Ephesians to the saints who were at Ephesus. He was showing them how they might have the unity that the Spirit desires. To this end, Paul proclaims that there is one hope, showing unity of aspiration. As long as one remains hopeful, he will endure to the end. But if one loses sight of that one hope, he will drift from faithfulness and will no longer be united with God. The one hope Paul refers to is eternal life.

Many people hope for numerous things. Some go through life desiring worldly gain, other political power, still others notoriety. People hope for as many things as are under the sun, but the Christian hopes for eternal life. He should be like Abraham in that he looked for a heavenly city (Heb. 11:10,16).

Hope has been described as desire plus expectation. The child of God should keep his priorities in order and never lose sight of the goal (Phil. 3:14; 1 Pet. 1:3-5). He desires heaven more than any other thing and knows that one day it will be his because God has promised it (John 14:1-3; 1 Pet. 1:3-4; Col. 1:5).

In Ephesians 4, the great apostle to the Gentiles wrote, ". . . even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." Paul tells us that people are called by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14), and that the hope of the gospel is eternal life in heaven with our Lord and Savior (Tit. 3:7; 1 Thess. 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:1; Acts 23:6; John 14:1-3). All of this is made possible by the wonderful grace of God (1 Pet. 1:3).

This hope saves us (Rom. 8:24). If one maintains heaven as his goal, he will not be led away from the hope of heaven, for hope anchors the soul (Heb. 6:19). This life offers many fleeting treasures (Mt. 6:19-21), but heaven is incorruptible and undefiled and fadeth not away (1 Pet. 1:4). God desires that we should long for heaven. It is the inheritance, the prize, and the crown for which the church strives. The apostle Paul encourages us to maintain this help because God will save only the faithful (Rev. 2:10; 2 Pet. 2:20-22). In Romans 8:24, one reads, "*For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?*"

Christians have the hope of eternal life (Tit. 1:2; 3:7). We desire it and expect it, but it has not been realized yet because we still hope for it. God has promised a home in heaven in the next life to those who are faithful. We have it in promise (and God does not lie; Heb. 6:18), and it will be realized on Judgment day (1 John 2:25; Mk. 10:28-30). Remember, Paul said a person does not hope for what he has, and we hope for eternal life. Furthermore, Jesus said if you are faithful, you will have eternal life in the world to come (Mk. 10:30). The Christian hope is eternal life, and this hope is sometimes spoken of as already having taken place because it is so sure to happen. If the Christian maintains this hope, he will have fellowship with God and the faithful for eternity.

The Gentle and Humble King!

THOMAS R. DOHLING

“... I am Gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls...” (Matt. 11:29)

How blessed we are as Christians, to have One who is approachable, who sympathizes with our weaknesses, who has revealed Himself to us in the flesh and bridged the gap that separated us from Him. When the debt became too great for us to repay, *Jesus paid it all*. When the burden became unbearable, Jesus lifted it. He said something that comes to mind. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30) Did you catch it? First, he says, “Come to me.” *The invitation*. Then he says something *startling*, but very reassuring. Something that touches the truly weary and burdened soul, and causes such a one to put his trust in the One uttering these words. It is not about the yoke or the burden. Let us catch another glimpse of Jesus. Notice what He says about Himself in verse 29, “. . . for I am GENTLE and HUMBLE in heart, and you will find REST FOR YOUR SOULS . . .” My King, Lord, Master and Saviour (in fact He is my ALL in all) has gentle and humble heart **because of which**, my soul finds rest and is at peace in the assurance that He hears me when I cry to Him. He makes haste to help me. He eases my burden and lightens my load along life's highway as I submit to his yoke, which is easy, and his burden, which is light. Indeed, His teachings and instructions are never cumbersome when we abide in Him.

Jusus—He is gentle and humble in heart. Remember that the next time you are rejected, scorned, humiliated, lost, in despair, and everything seems bleak. His love will lift you up. He will comfort you. Leaving His glory behind, He came to seek and save the lost. May you be blessed in the knowledge that you do have a “high priest” who is able “to sympathize with our weaknesses,” (Heb. 4:15), a Judge who is not only “gentle and humble,” but is also your Saviour and Lord. Praise be to God for His wisdom which is beyond our understanding!

The Sin of Sodom

JOHN GRUBB

The Gentiles in the first century were very wicked and sinful. They refused to believe in God. They made idols and worshiped them. "Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves" (Romans 1:20-24). They sank so low that they practiced the perversion known as "homosexuality." "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust toward one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due" (Romans 1:26, 27).

Some today are telling us that homosexuality is normal and right. Our Lord tells us what is normal and right in sexual relationships: "And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate'" (Matthew 19:4-6).

Many religious leaders defend the practice of people having sexual relations with those of the same sex. The United Methodist Church in the USA recommended that their members regard homosexuals as "persons of sacred worth" and accept them into fellowship. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Netherlands says that homosexuals can become "ordained ministers" in their denomination. Other denominations have also fully accepted homosexuals without requiring them to repent of their sin.

There is much confusion today about the difference between right and wrong. This was also true in the days of Isaiah, the prophet. Isaiah wrote, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah

5:20). Just because some people say homosexuality is right does not make it so!

Some say that we should not discuss homosexuality because it is a political issue. However, it was a moral issue long before it became a political issue. The Bible teaches that homosexuality is a sin. If a person does not repent of it, he will be lost eternally.

The first example of homosexuality was found in the city of Sodom. The wickedness of this city is described in Genesis 19:4-7. Men, both young and old, wanted to have sexual relations with Lot's male visitors. The New Testament mentions this shameful event and confirms it is a true account (Matthew 11:23,24; Jude 7; 2 Peter 2:6-8). God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because of this vile perversion. The sins of these two cities serve as the standard to which other sins are compared (Isaiah 3:9; 13:19; Jeremiah 23:14; Matthew 11:23,24).

The Law which God gave to Israel at Mt. Sinai condemned the practice of homosexuality. "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. . . . Do not defile yourselves in any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you" (Leviticus 18:22,24). "if a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them" (Leviticus 20:13). "There shall be no ritual harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel. You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the LORD your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination of the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 23:17-18). The word "dog" here is a name the people of ancient Israel used to describe a homosexual prostitute. "Dogs" will not be in Heaven (Revelation 22:14,15).

The New Testament also makes it very clear that homosexuals will not go to Heaven unless they repent of their sin. The apostle Paul wrote: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And

such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Read also 1 Timothy 1:8-10). The word "sodomite" is sometimes used to describe homosexuals.

Can homosexuals be saved? God loves all people (John 3:16). He wants everyone to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Homosexuals can be saved in the same way that other sinners are saved. They must hear and believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:17; John 8:24). They must repent of all their sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30,31). This means that they will stop their evil practice of homosexuality. They must confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:10). Then they must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3,4). Notice what Paul said about homosexuals and other evil-doers at Corinth who had obeyed the Gospel: "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). When they became Christians, they stopped their sinful practices. This shows people can change.

Great pressure is placed upon Christians by society to ignore sin. It is not popular to take a stand against sin today. Neither was it popular for the prophets in the Old Testament to stand against sin, but they did it anyway! It was not easy for the Christians in the first century to preach the Gospel to the heathen world, but they did it! It will not be easy today, but we must obey God (Acts 5:29).

Is Doctrine Really All That Important?

JASON R. ROBERTS

A popular cry from some today is, "why don't you quit preaching so much doctrine and start preaching more about Jesus." Statements such as this not only hurt the message that faithful gospel preachers are trying to preach, but they reflect on

the very message our Lord preached. Clearly, some people have a misunderstanding as to the biblical meaning of doctrine? For some, "doctrine" may be any sermon that falls outside the realm of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. In other words sermons on marriage and divorce, the role of women, and New Testament worship, would be categorized under the title of "doctrinal sermons." This distinction that some make is harmful for two reasons: First, it causes one to shuffle the message of our Lord into "personal preference preaching," failing to see that the entire message of Christ should be our preference. Second, it blinds one to the fact that the gospel and doctrine are one and the same (Romans 1:15; cf. 6:17). Is doctrine really all that important? Why are some having difficulty in understanding the biblical meaning of doctrine? I believe that a careful examination of the Lord's sermon on the mount will answer these questions.

Is doctrine really all that important? At the conclusion of His sermon there are two simple, yet often overlooked passages with four key words that inseparably attach biblical doctrine with Christ, "*and it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*" (Matt. 7:28-29). Observe first of all the word "**sayings**." This is quite simple the message that he spoke. The word "**sayings**" (logos) means a discourse, doctrine the moral precepts given by God. Then the text reveals that after his sermon the people were astonished at his **doctrine**. Question: were the sayings of Jesus considered to be doctrine? The word "**doctrine**" (didache) means teaching, the act of teaching or instruction. The Jews had no problem understanding that the message delivered to them was doctrine. Matthew, writing by inspiration, stated that "they were astonished at his doctrine." How sad, that a group of unbelieving, rebellious, stubborn-headed Jews had no problem equating the message of Christ as being doctrine, yet, today, some who are Christians fail to see the same relationship.

I have read this great sermon and have arrived at twenty-six different themes that our Lord taught. These themes from the entire hub of Christian living! When a person broadly suggests that we need to quit preaching so much doctrine and start preaching more about Jesus, notice what he does to the Sermon

on the Mount. He eliminates preaching on: (1) those who are spiritually destitute as result from being outside the Christ (5:3), (2) sin and Godly sorrow (5:4), (3) humility (5:5), (4) thirsting and hungering after righteousness (5:6), and since all of his commandments are righteousness (Psalm 119:172), and righteousness is found only in the gospel (Romans 1:17), this eliminates **all preaching!**, (5) attitudes toward others, forgiveness (5:7), (6) morality (5:8), (7) living with our fellow-man (5:9), (8) persecutions (5:10), (9) our influence in the world (5:13-16), (10) the Old Testament (law of Moses) (5:17-20), (11) hatred and murder (5:21-22), (12) worshiping correctly (5:23-26), (13) lust in the heart, adultery (5:27-32), (14) pure speech (5:33-37), (15) retaliation (5:38-40), (16) doing more than one's duty (5:41-42), (17) true love (5:43-48), (18) true religion (6:1-18), (19) worldliness (6:19-24), (20) the church (6:33), (21) prayer (7:7-11), (22) the golden rule (7:12), (23) heaven and hell (7:13-14), (24) false teachers (7:15), (25) obedience (7:21-23), (26) improper and proper foundations of building (7:24-27). Is doctrine important? Dear friend, one of the greatest sermons, containing the supreme virtues of Christian living is eliminated from the Bible if doctrine is meaningless. Our Lord thought, the Holy Spirit thought, and the Jews thought that doctrine was not incidental, rather they thought it was fundamental. What about us today? Do we view the teachings of God's Holy Word as doctrinal or to we pick and choose what we consider to be doctrine? When someone diminishes the vale of doctrine by attempting to elevate Christ above it, he fails to see that when one preaches Christ he is preaching doctrine.

Why are some having difficulty understanding the biblical meaning of doctrine? I believe it is found in two words from the last verse of our study from the sermon on the Mount. "For he **taught** them as one having **authority**, and not as the scribes (7:29). Jesus' teaching was authoritative and the Jews recognized his message as being such. His message was unlike the message from the scribes of their day. On one occasion they said, "*never man spake like this man*" (John 7:46). The problem that so many have with doctrine is the fact that it is restrictive. The word of God is powerful (Hebrews 4:12), it comes from the mouth of Almighty God (2 Timothy 3:16a), and it is authoritative (Matthew 24:35). We live in a age when people do not want to be

restricted when it comes to religious matters. Most people have adopted this devilish philosophy of, "You can't legislate morality, you can't tell me what to do. I'll do my thing and you do yours." Yet, God has legislated morality and he can and has told people what to do, and therefore his word is restrictive. Why? Because he does not want anyone to get hurt. His commandments are for our protection. When God says, "Thou shalt not . . .," he is doing this for our protection and benefit. So the Christian should be thankful that the doctrine of Christ is restrictive. This thought is clearly seen when the apostle Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:19-21). Paul lists a series of prohibitions from sin, because these commands not only will keep one from going to heaven but they also will hurt us if we engage in them, and so his doctrine is restrictive. When he lists the fruit of the Spirit, Paul states, "*against such there is no law*" (Galatians 5:23b). Who would want to have a restriction placed upon the amount of love they should manifest in their life? There are no restrictions when it comes to things pertaining to the fruit of the Spirit, but those things that are harmful to us, God, by His divine authority, and for our eternal well-being, has placed restrictions on what we can and cannot do.

Perhaps some are having difficulty in the area of understanding what doctrine is because they had equated it with something the church of Christ began teaching. Friends, doctrine began the moment scripture was recorded (Gen. 1:1). The word simply means instruction or teaching. People must see that a sermon on the subject of the role of women in worship and a sermon on the crucifixion of Jesus Christ are both doctrinal sermons! In fact, it is rather interesting to study how the terms doctrine, gospel, faith and word are all used interchangeably in the scriptures. The entire message of the Bible is the doctrine of God, and it is also the gospel. Paul stated to the Ephesian elders, "*For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*" (Acts 20:27) Paul did not categorize his sermons as being either doctrinally oriented or Jesus oriented, he simply preached the word (2 Timothy 4:2).

When people suggest that we need to preach less doctrine and more about Jesus, they fail to see the true meaning of the word doctrine and they mishandle the very message that is able

to save their souls. Is doctrine really all that important? Let's ask the apostle Paul if he thought so. "*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee*" (I Timothy 4:16). Important indeed!

Living In The Path Behind The Penknife

NEAL POLLARD

With amazement, we follow the path of the figurative penknife guided by the hand of sin. Most are familiar with Jehoiakim's scabbard (cf. Jeremiah 36:23). With it, he cut out the sections of the word of God which met with his disapproval. He audaciously discarded the comments of God out of tune with his feelings. He wanted only self-government (cf. proverbs 16:25). This has a familiar ring to it as some are repeating his mistake even today.

When one pauses to view some traits of our culture and, at times, the Lord's Kingdom, one is left with the impression that we are living in the path behind the penknife of unhealthy change. Consider some of God's commands so often swashed through with the invisible blade of unbelief.

Turn not to the Right Hand nor to the Left (Proverbs 4:27).

Has there ever been an age, both secularly and religiously, where division has been more dominant than at present? The volley of action and reaction is constantly fired. Too many, failing to heed the above passage, bind where God permits not while countless others loose where God forbids such loosing (cf. Revelation 22:17-18). Shielding ourselves behind the violent arm of radicalism, we see the result of "the penknife." Strewn along the road behind are assassinated characters and wounded influences. How tragic!

No Man can Serve Two Masters (Matthew 6:24).

Oh no? Many would get up from bowing before the alter of money just long enough to debate our Lord. There are those who feverishly attempt constant accumulation of *things* to the neglect of service and worship to God, but who still deny they are not putting Christ first. This time, the unfortunate victims behind the penknife are spiritually and emotionally neglected children, marriages and souls in the world who will never get to hear the gospel because materialistic Christians are stingy givers of their time, talent, and resources. The penknife here reaches for similar verses like Luke 12:15.

Other Foundation can no Man Lay than that is Laid, which is Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 3:11).

Atheist, humanists, and denominationalists do not like this passage. Practically speaking, all of them have gone about to remove this verse from the hearing of the world. As such an idea does not conform to their thoughts (cf. Isaiah 55:8-9), they bare their razors and seek to remove it from the record of truth. Determined, that steadily pour the faulty foundations of evolution, human creeds, communism, and the like beneath their vanity (cf. Matthew 7:26)!

Have no Fellowship with the Unfruitful Works of Darkness (Ephesians 5:11).

The swish of the penknife is heard when one says, "we are all going the same way but on different roads." Removing the dagger from their sides, some try to clear the path for ecumenism and syncretism. Though the loving Father forbids compromising the worship and doctrine of Christ (cf. John 4:24; 2 John 9), opponents of truth seek to remove the ancient landmarks of the gospel (Galatians 1:6-9). How sad!

Children Obey your Parents (Ephesians 6:1).

How careful we must be not to be hypocritical of the home. Parents successfully raise godly children with difficulty. Often, parents are left to questions the hard decisions they must make. Yet, it is apparent that some parents and children are playing with knives. Have you ever come across a young person who

seemed to be the chief of the teepee? It happens. There are children who tell their parents what to do. It should not be this way. In **eight** different places, God reminds His precious little ones to "honour thy father and mother"!

Flee also Youthful Lusts (2 Timothy 2:22).

So many soldiers of modern music, movies, television, magazines, cyberporn, and advertisement have replicas of Jehoiakim's penknife as standard issue with the rest of their gear designed to combat godliness. In the path behind the penknife stagger confused, ruined, and hardened little hearts, bodies and souls.

Be . . . Keepers at Home (Titus 2:5).

The question most asked by some little ones is, "Where's mommy?" Eternal and impressionable souls are victimized by the penknife. Some children's needs are denied in the name of career, success, and comfort. Easiness in Zion cannot be that worthwhile, can it (cf. Amos 6:1)? There are quite a few who selfishly think so.

Faith, if it Hath not Works, is Dead, being Alone (James 2:17).

Many "scholars" and commentators have their fingerprints on Jehoiakim's penknife, believing faith alone is sufficient. Despite the admonition of James and the clear, precise biblical teaching on the necessity of performing the works of repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10), confession (1 John 4:15), baptism (1 Peter 3:21), and continued faithfulness as a child of God (James 1:12) in order to accept the grace of heaven and be saved, so many of the world's religious "experts" have carved away everything from around their core doctrine of *faith alone*. In the fallout behind the path of the penknife lay the souls of millions of adherents who have blindly accepted this false teaching.

Love the Brotherhood (1 Peter 2:17).

There are those who have come to this passage with the framed penknife in hand who then paste words and phrases like "be suspicious of", "slam", "defame", "write up", "change", and "divide" where the word love belongs. In the path behind the penknife lay many with their faith shaken, some asking "what's the use?", and others "quitting the church" altogether. Yes, there are a multitude of problems therein which need fixing. But, they cannot be fixed with Jehoiakim's penknife!

The rest of this story in Jeremiah is vitally important to our concluding thoughts. Notice God's message for the bearer of the penknife.

Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them: but they harkened not (Jeremiah 36:28-31).

What a high price to pay for disobedience! A face value acceptance of the inspired scriptures is a must for offering ourselves as acceptance sacrifices to God (cf. Romans 12:2). May we pray that the guilty will cease their fascination with the deadly penknife of rebellion. It has no place in the life of any child of God whose aim is to please Him.

Form IV
(See Rule 8)

1. Place of Publication : New Delhi
2. Periodicity of its Publication : Monthly
3. Printer's Name : Sunny David
B-201, Sarita Vihar
New Delhi-110044
4. Publisher's Name : Sunny David
B-201, Sarita Vihar
New Delhi-110044
5. Editor's Name : Sunny David
B-201, Sarita Vihar
New Delhi-110044
6. Name and address of individuals who owns the newspaper : Church of Christ
E-10/B, Defence Colony
New Delhi-110024

I Sunny David, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and behalf.

Sunny David

Publisher

Dated March 2001

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Posted at New Delhi PSO on 10/11 March 2001

Delhi Postal Regn. No. DL-11262/2001

Regd. No. 26921/71

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