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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men"

The word "grace" means unmerited or undeserved favour. The grace of God about which the apostle Paul was writing to Titus, (Titus 2:10), was the fact that God so loved the world that He gave for the world His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him may not perish in hell but may have eternal life in heaven. He said, the grace of God has appeared to all men. Whether one accepts the grace of God or not, the truth is that His grace has appeared for all! "In this is love," says, John the apostle, "not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10). "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die." Said Paul, the apostle, at Romans 5:7, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us," said he in the next verse, "in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The Bible calls it the gospel. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). It is the good news of God for man. To rescue us from hell and to make us worthy of heaven, God came down on earth from heaven and gave His own self for us! Because he loves us!!

Does this, however, means that all the world will be saved since Christ died for the sins of the world? Or does man has to

do something to appropriate the grace of God?

Grace is God's part. He let His grace appear for all men on the cross through the sacrifice of Christ. He has demonstrated His love and has revealed to the world that he wants all to be saved from sin and become worthy to live with Him in heaven. But unless man receives the grace of God by faith, man is going to continue to live in the unsaved state in which he is.

Does this, however, mean that if one believes in heart that Christ has died on the cross and receive Him in heart as personal Saviour, one is going to be saved from sin? That's not true. Faith only or belief only cannot save one, according to the Bible. Because James 2:24 & 26 says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Now, what does this mean? Is it saying that one can earn his own salvation by doing good works? If that be the case, then God's grace is not grace at all.

Let's see an example. Suppose a company advertised that if you buy a certain product and you might find a coupon in it that would qualify you to win a car. And you do buy that product, and receive the coupon in it also. Have you got the car yet? You might keep that coupon with you till your last day on earth. But you are not going to get that promised car. Yes, it's there. You can get it. But not until you present that coupon to the company and do or show whatever the company requires from you. Now, suppose you have complied to all whatever the company required of you. And you got the car. Is it not a gift? You haven't earned it. You haven't paid the price for it. The company had paid for it. But you got the car. A free gift. Yet you did something to obtain it!

The same is true when it comes to the grace of God. The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared for all. And we must believe that God has made it possible through His Son Jesus Christ whom He gave for the world as the propitiation for the sins of the world (1 John 4:10). Pointing to Christ, the Bible says: "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."

In other words to receive salvation by the grace of God through Jesus Christ His Son one must obey certain commands

of Christ to be saved. Are there such? Sure! What are they? Lets read: "He who believes and is baptised will be saved." (Mark 16:16). "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3). So, one must believe in Christ, one must repent of sins; and one must be baptised, to be saved. Peter, the apostle of Christ, was therefore absolutely correct when he told his audience who had asked, what must they do to be saved, in stating: "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38). And it says, "Then those who gladly received his words were baptized, and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." (verse 41). They were baptized! The believers who had repented, about three thousands of them, and they were added to them, or to the number of the apostles.

They had heard about the grace of God. They had believed and had obeyed the commands to receive salvation or forgiveness of sins. Thus, they were saved by the grace of God. The Bible teaches no other way to be saved. God has not changed His conditions for man's salvation.

Will God Punish The Wicked?

J.C. CHOATE

There is so much wickedness in the world. There is every kind of sin and evil that is imaginable. Many do not even believe in God. Some who do try to reason that surely a loving God would not punish them for their bad deeds.

All who die leave for their "heavenly abode", so we read in the newspapers: Preachers are famous for their never losing a case when it comes to conducting funerals, regardless of what kind of life a person lived.

Will God in the end overlook one's sins? Will all end up being saved and going to heaven regardless of how they lived in this world? Will the bad as well as the good go to heaven?

A good indicator as to how God will deal with us at the judgment day would be to look back and see how he dealt with man from the beginning. We are told that God created Adam and

Eve and placed them in a beautiful garden called Eden where they had the Tree of Life and everything they could have ever wanted. But God told them that there was one fruit in the midst of the garden that they should not partake of and that the day they did that they would surely die. Of course the old serpent, Satan, came along and convinced them that they would not die and they were tempted and did eat. They died spiritually on that day because of that sin, and the sin was going against God's will. Not only so, but they were driven out of that garden, away from the Tree of Life, where they had to make their living, suffer child-birth, and to eventually die physically. Now, was God a loving God? Yes, but he still punished them for their sin. Read the whole story in Genesis 2 and 3.

Another major story is that of the flood that was brought upon mankind because of his wickedness. The record says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." (Genesis 6:5-12).

What was the solution then? God commanded Noah to build an Ark and gave him all of the specifications for building it. A flood would be sent to destroy all of the wicked and only Noah, his wife, their 3 sons and their wives, along with two, male and female, of every living thing would be saved in the Ark. Of course Noah preached to the people for 120 years while preparing the Ark that they might enter in and be saved, but they did not listen. So the day came when it began to rain and the springs of the deep broke up and with 40 days and nights of this, the flood covered the earth and all of the wicked and everything not in the Ark were destroyed. Now would a loving God do this? He did. He

was loving to the extent that he offered them a way of escape but they did not accept it and as a consequence they were destroyed in the flood.

As you read on through the Old Testament you will come across many incidents where the wicked were punished. Then come on to the New Testament and you will read about Ananias and Sapphira being struck dead because they lied to the Holy Spirit. (Acts. 5). Of course Christ came into this world to live among men and to die on the cross for the sins of the world that men might be saved from this sin and have the hope of eternal life. But like the world of the day of the flood, when man will not accept God's way of escape through the salvation that he has offered through Christ, then God has prepared a place called hell, described as a lake of fire, where all the wicked will eventually go to spend eternity. Read the story of the Rich Man in Luke 15 and of those in Matthew 25: 31-46 of what will happen to those who do not measure up to the Lord's standard and of the blessings that the righteous will receive.

Christ says that the majority are on the broad way that lead to destruction and that the few are on the narrow way that leads to life. (Matthew 7:13,14).

But you may ask, how could a loving God cast any one into a devil's hell to be punished and to suffer for all eternity? God does love all mankind, and has made provisions for all to be saved in giving his Son to die on the cross for the sins of the world, but when one rejects that sacrifice and continues in his sin then he is sending his own soul to hell. The Hebrew writer says, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy: who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, and unholy thing, and hath done despite upto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompence, saith the Lord. And again the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:26-21).

Yes, the judgment day is coming in which all of us will have to answer for what we have done in this life. If we have obeyed God and been faithful to him, all will be well with our souls. But if we have refused to submit to his will, or if we have obeyed him only to become unfaithful, then we will be cast into hell where we shall be punished forever and ever. That may sound harsh, but considering all that God has done that you might be saved, and then to reject that, no one will be to blame but those who end up there.

If you will believe in God, repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of your sins, the Lord will save you and give you the hope of eternal life., Read Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38; Revelation 2:10; and Revelation 22:14.

Especially For Women

Growth and Outreach of the Church

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

With the passing months, as Andrew and Rachel studied, they eagerly shared what they learned with anyone who would listen. As a result, the church had long outgrown their sitting room. For their meetings they had rented a hall in the center of the city, and there was discussion of some more permanent arrangement. They didn't want their primary emphasis to be a physical building, but they were convinced that it would be useful tool for further growth.

After John's baptism, his brother and his wife and daughter had obeyed the gospel. John's bride-to-be was baptized shortly before their marriage.

Elizabeth expressed continual thanks for what Christianity had done for her family since she and James had become Christians. James' interest in their home life had deepened, and a new closeness had developed between him and their two teenage sons.

Mary, too, was now a Christian, though her husband seemed as irreligious as ever. "Don't be discouraged," Rachel consoled her. "As Peter wrote in ' Peter 3:1, by your life—putting God first, and showing the good changes the Gospel has made in you—you can teach him. Your faithfulness is actually his only hope, you know."

One by one, other friends and family members were won, so that now the number assembling for worship on Sundays was almost 100. Rachel and Andrew were happy beyond anything they could have imagined.

The men met regularly to talk at length about questions that had developed through their studies at home. They also discussed and planned what they should do to spread the Gospel. Frequently Andrew reminded, "We don't want anyone in this city to die and meet God without having had an opportunity to obey him. When we remember what our salvation cost God and our Lord, we just can't fail to do our part in teaching."

As many as possible gathered each Saturday and went out to make calls; more mature Christians pairing up with newer converts, so that the younger ones could learn how to be effective in talking with people and explaining the Scriptures. Andrew and John usually saw people who had visited the worship assembly. Besides encouraging them to allow someone to come to their home for a weekly study, they urged them to attend the meetings regularly. In addition, they offered a Bible study course by mail. Realizing the need for materials people could study on their own, Andrew had written a series of lessons and the men had taken money from the treasury for the printing and postage.

Already numerous ones had enrolled in the correspondence studies. Mary volunteered to help Rachel correct the lessons. "Isn't it amazing how much we've learned as we've done these corrections?" she laughed, as they worked busily one afternoon.

"Yes," agreed Rachel. "Maybe that's why God gave Christians the responsibility of teaching others! Angels could have done a better job, you know! But my best learning has come through studying for others."

"Mine, too. As I'm reading, I think, 'Oh, this will answer Sarah's question', or 'I need to show this verse to Ruth!' She's

very close to the truth, Rachel. I think she'll be baptized soon."

The men had drawn lines on a city map, dividing it into sections. Systematically those who could spare time on Saturdays were covering the blocked-off areas. They had printed leaflets, explaining basic points about the Gospel and the church, and giving the times of the assemblies of the church. They had also prepared a sheet for a small survey form, giving space for the name, address, children and their ages, religious preference, and interest in home study or a study through the post. At the end of the sheet a notation could be made if some member of the family was chronically ill, if the people were elderly, or if there was evidence of need of some type of help the church might be able to give. The sheets were kept in a growing file, separated into blocks as the city map had been divided. Elizabeth had offered to put colour-coded tabs at the top of each sheet, indicating at a glance those who showed interest or were in potential need of help.

On week-nights several home studies were always in progress, sometimes as neighbours and friends came to the homes of Christians, and sometimes as various ones in the church set up studies in the homes of people who visited the assemblies or had completed the correspondence course and wanted to study further. Frequently, calls were made late at night to spread the word that a baptism was about to take place. John had built a small concrete-block baptistery in the corner of his garden, and a happy group would gather around to witness the solemn moment of the birth of a new soul. The meaningful tradition developed of asking the new male Christian to lead the group in prayer immediately after his baptism, and then all would join hands in a circle and sing. A favourite with everyone was "O happy day that fixed my choice on Thee, my Savior and my God! Well may this glowing heart rejoice, and tell its raptures all aboard!" The "telling"—passing the news of the Gospel on to the friends and loved ones of the new Christian—was so much the emphasis of all members of the church that it automatically became the central aim of each one who was baptized.

There Is Power In God's Command

FRANCIS DAVID

Our God created the whole universe. He is almighty God. In the book of Genesis, we read about the history of creation. This particular book tells us how God with His command and power created the universe. We must know that this universe is not self-originated but it is the handi work of a great power. The first verse of Genesis says: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. In this book we read again and again that God said something or commanded and it was done or it happened right there. Without any doubt we can say there is power in God's command.

In the inspired book we read about many characters and there are many things that we can learn from these characters. There is a very famous character in the Bible and about this we read in the book of second Kings, chapter five. This man whose name was Naaman was an Army commander or chief. He had a very prominent position and was well respected by his people. But the sad thing we read about him was that he was a leper. He was willing to pay any price to get rid of this terrible disease. There was a little captive girl in Naaman's house who was from Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. This girl said to her mistress "If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy." (Verse 2) When Naaman heard this he was agreed to go to meet the prophet. And as he reached there with all his servants, and sent a message to Elisha, God's prophet. As he was standing at the door of the prophet, he sent a message through messenger to tell Naaman "GO and WASH in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clear". "The Scriptures tell us when Naaman heard this he got furious. He thought that the man of God will come to him and pray for him and touch him and he would be cured. He said "there are many better rivers than Jordan in my country, why should I dip in Jordan only?" He forgot that there was power in the command which came through the Prophet! He got mad and went away in

the rage. His servants told him "why don't you do that master, its not a hard thing to do. He simply told you to *dip seven times* in the Jordan". Naaman said, "ok, I will do it." We read and it says: "SO he went down and *dipped seven times* in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like to flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

What a remarkable story! Yes, there was no power in the water or in the Jordan but instead there was power in the command of God which came thru the prophet. Suppose if he had dipped himself four or six times, nothing would have happened but as soon as he dipped the seven times his leprosy was gone. My friend, today the God's word tell you to do certain things and if you really believe in the Bible and the power of God, I know you would not hesitate to obey those things.

Today we learn from this story that whatever God asked us to do we must do it. If you really believe and trust in God, you will obey him without any doubts. God said in his word that one must be baptised for the remission of sins, In Mark 16:16, we read and it says: "He who believes and is baptised will be saved. . ." Now we ask who will be saved? One who believes plus baptised. How many times we have heard this and how many times we have read this verse but still like Naaman we get mad and say "there is no need of baptism, just believe in Jesus and you will be saved." Some say baptism is just an outward sign, but I tell you when God has put this in His word it has some significance. There is power in His command. There is no power in the water but no doubt there is power in God's command. Do you believe this? There is no need of argument and vain talk. When God said it, I do it and it settles the matter.

Have you been baptised? Have you obeyed the one true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for you, was buried and was risen on the third day to be the author and finisher of our salvation. (I Cor. 15:14; Heb. 12.2). Today, you can believe in Jesus; confess Him as the son of God, repent of your sins and then be baptised, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38; 8:36; Rom. 10:10; 6:3-4; I Pet. 3:21; Gal. 3:27). When you do this, Lord will add you to His one true church (Acts 2:47).

Who Then Can Be Saved?

ALLEN WEBSTER

If you are a Christian, have you ever considered how blessed you are to have been one of the few in the world's history to be saved? Jesus said that there will be only a few who will get into heaven (Mt. 7:13, 14). Who will qualify? When lists are made of those to attend president's banquets or king's feasts, few are considered worthy of invitation. Who is bidden to the marriage feast of the Lamb? The disciples once marveled when Jesus said how hard it was for a rich man to go to heaven. They asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus said it would be impossible for any to be saved by man, but with God all things are possible (Mt. 19:23-26).

Let us look at those converted in the Bible and find out what kind of people were saved. What kind of person needs conversion? Acts of Apostles is the book of conversions. What does it teach about the background of those who were saved?

THOSE DEVOUT IN FALSE RELIGION CAN BE CONVERTED (2:1-47)

Those gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Pentecost were devout men from every nation under heaven (2:5). Many had traveled a great distance and sacrificed a great deal to be there for this religious event. These were *religious* people. Surely they would not be in need of conversion. When Peter and the other apostles stood to preach, it was made clear that those in attendance were lost. They needed to do something in order to be saved (2:22, 37, 38). Three thousand were convinced that they needed to change and be baptized (2:41). They were saved and added to the church (2:47). Many people today think that devout, religious people do not need conversion. The Lord does look for dedication in His followers, but He also looks at whether what they believe and practice is *right* or *wrong*. Those who are devoted to false religion will not be saved (Gal. 1:6-9; Rm 9:2,3; 10:1-3).

THOSE DECEIVED BY "MIRACLES" CAN BE CONVERTED (8:4-12)

Simon the sorcerer deceived many into believing that he

worked greater miracles. He had for "a long time bewitched them" (8:11). But they saw the true power of God and heard the preaching of Philip, they were converted to Christ (8:12). These gullible people are not unlike many today. There are charlatans today who claim to be "some great one" who works miracles, heals the sick, predicts the future, and tells the secrets of God. They go to school and learn how to move an audience and carefully stage their productions. They have learned psychology and closely screen their applicants, and many people are fooled by their sorcery. These people need conversion. They have not obeyed God's truth and no "miracle working prophet" is going to save them in the end. Miracles have ceased (I Cor. 13:8-10), but Jesus has not ceased working. He still saves those who come to Him (Mt. 11:28-30) and adds them to His church (Acts 2:47). Further, these people can be converted. They need to see that God wants us to follow His Word and not our feelings. The standard that will judge us is the Bible (Jn. 12:48).

THOSE WHO ARE SINCERE, BUT IN ERROR, CAN BE CONVERTED (10:1-48)

In comparison to Saul (Acts 9), Cornelius was on the other end of the scale. He was a good man, God-fearing, generous, and religious (10:2). If any man would *not* need converting it would appear that Cornelius was the man. But the Lord sent him a vision and he sent for Peter to learn what God wanted him to do. Peter came and Cornelius was converted along with his house (10:48). There are many today who do not think they need to be converted because they possess good morals, give generously to good causes, obey the laws of the land, and, perhaps attend services regularly. But Cornelius says, "You are not ready to meet God. You need to be converted."

THOSE COMPLETELY IGNORANT OF GOD NEED TO BE CONVERTED (16:30-34)

The jailor who was charged with keeping Paul and Silas was not a Jew. He had not been prepared for the coming of Christ by learning and keeping the Old Law. This man was ignorant of any Bible teaching, though he was possessed with plenty of mental ability. He lacked exposure and instruction. When circumstances permitted, Paul and Silas soon taught him that he needed to believe on Christ to be saved. They informed him of what that

entailed, and he and his household were soon baptized, he is then said to be a believer. The jailor says to us that those ignorant of any Bible instruction are candidates for conversion. There are those who oppose foreign evangelism because, they reason, these may not even be Bible-believers. But the jailor says, "Please do not ignore us. We need the truth. We can learn and will obey."

THE IMMORAL CAN BE CONVERTED (18:8)

There was no Las Vegas or San Francisco in the Roman Empire, but there was Corinth. Evangelism in this city struck fear into the heart of the seasoned, veteran Apostle Paul (Acts 18:9, 10; 1 Cor. 2:3). These people were known for their gross immorality. "Surely," Paul must have thought, "I am wasting my time here." But the Lord knew what Paul did not. There were many in such a place who would obey when they heard. And these were not just those who possessed morals living amid decadence. Those who would compose the membership of the Corinth Church of Christ could have been featured in a gossip column or on police roles (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Yes, the gospel is powerful enough to reach the immoral and the "out-and-out sinner." It can tear the bottle from the drunk, the cigarettes from the smoker, and the needle from the addict. It can take from one's heart the love for sexual perversion and the unlicensed fulfillment of the lust of the flesh. We should never judge one a being unfit for Gospel instruction. Jesus worked among the sinners and publicans. He changed them. The Gospel can do that today. Further, those who have been involved in such behaviour should not judge themselves unworthy of conversion or think that they cannot change. They can. It may not be easy, but with the strength of Christ (Phil. 4:13), it can be done.

THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY BEEN BAPTIZED SOMETIMES NEED TO BE CONVERTED (19:1-6)

Paul came across some in Ephesus who had been taught about baptism and had submitted to this ordinance. Upon questioning, Paul determined that they had not been taught correctly about baptism. He taught them the truth about it, whereupon they were baptized again. There are many today who have been baptized who need to be converted. They may have

been taught they were saved before baptism. They may have not been baptized in the correct manner (immersion is the only acceptable form, Rm. 6:4). Others have been baptized without repenting and thus never changed their lifestyle. They need to be converted and baptized correctly.

As one can readily determine, *everyone* can be saved. These examples are comprehensive and show that anyone who is willing to obey God, can be saved. These also teach Christians about the nature of soul-winning. We are to have confidence in the gospel's power to reach every type of person. May God help our efforts to save the souls of those living at our time in history.

If you are not a Christian, but have learned what to do to be converted, we encourage you to immediately obey God and appropriate His grace for your spiritual welfare. *You* can be saved!

The Bible Alone Has Salvation

ELWOOD HOLT

Everyone needs salvation. All accountable persons share this need. Through the transgression of Adam the devil was successful in thrusting sin and death into the world which God had made for man. Every person is born into a world where sin is. Accountable persons, by transgressing God's will, become sinners: All accountable persons become involved in sin. Hence, Paul declares . . . for all have sinned, and fall short of the Glory of God (Rom. 3:23). John says, "If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (John 1:10). Yes, man needs salvation.

There are many erroneous views about man's salvation. Some hold that salvation is wholly a matter of God's grace, and the individual can do nothing. Others say salvation requires a miracle—that faith is the result of a direct operation of the Holy Spirit in the human heart. Thousands say: "It doesn't make any difference what you believe." The devil will never make Heaven, and he believes. Many hold to the view that all that God requires is sincerity and a good moral life. (How wrong they are according to God's word.) Numerous "plans of salvation" are preached by

religious leaders. It is little wonder the world is confused. We must go "back to the Bible" for its message of salvation.

The Bible plan of salvation is plainly set forth in the great commission. In Matthew 28:19, the Lord said, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . ." In Mark 16:15,16 we have, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned."

In Luke 24:45-47, we read: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead again the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

A summary of this commission would be as follows: The Lord commanded the gospel to be preached to every creature, and promised that the person who was brought to believe that gospel, repent of his sins, and be baptized would have his sins remitted. The Lord stresses this plan would be preached first in Jerusalem.

According to the terms of the great commission the Bible teaches (1) that men must hear the gospel message or story (Romans 10:17), (2) Believe on the Christ (Acts 16:31), (3) repent of their sins (Acts 2:38, 17:30), confess their faith in Christ (Matthew 10:32, Romans 10:10), (5) be baptized for remission of sins (Acts 2:38, 22:16), (6) and thus by baptism enter Christ (Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:27), (7) where salvation is (2 Timothy 2:10).

This is God's plan—The Bible plan—for man's salvation from alien sins. May God help us to respect it, to be in harmony with it, and to proclaim it. God has never offered any other plan of salvation in His Holy Word. There will never be another plan by God. God's great plan for man's salvation cost Him the life of His only begotten Son. All this for man's salvation. How could anyone ask God for more? Jesus was obedient to His father in Heaven. It is time that all accountable persons become obedient to the Saviour of all.

“We Will Be Glad And Rejoice In His Salvation”

NEAL POLLARD

The prophet Isaiah, having foreseen the judgment and general resurrection (Isaiah 24), begins an anthem of praise to God in Isaiah 25. He begins by remembering the past and God's faithful and true “counsels of old” (25:1), His wonderful works (25:1), and His divine benevolence (25:4). In the present, Isaiah sees man's responsibility to his gracious God, to glorify and fear Him (25:3). Isaiah's praise then centers largely on the future reward (25:5-12). In verse nine, Isaiah refers to the judgment day and prophecies,

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

In verse eight Isaiah details the joy of the salvation to be realized when time ceases. Three things will have happened. He is sure of them, for the “Lord hath spoken it.”

He will swallow up death in victory

Old Testament saints also longed for the realization of the hope that God would “redeem them from death” (Hosea 13:14). Yet, the possibility is more fully felt in New Testament times after Christ's resurrecting triumph (cf. Acts 3:13-15). Paul wrote in the great resurrection chapter,

“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory (I Corinthians 15:54).”

Paul is quoting Isaiah. John confidently speaks of that victory in Revelation 20:14. The Hebrews writer goes further in describing this victory by pointing out the adversary, “the devil,” who will have been defeated (Hebrews 2:14).

And the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces

Isaiah does not include everyone in his “all”. Obviously, he does not mean “all willful sinners” (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:10) or “all hypocrites” (cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-2). He must be referring to “all faithful saints.” Centuries later, John basks happily in that

understanding and confidently promises that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17; 21:4).

And the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth

While persecution was an oppressing problem for the early church (cf. Acts 8:1, 3-4; 1 Peter 1:1-7), and while persecution comes to the godly today (2 Timothy 3:12), Christians can bear up under such adversity and patiently await the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls (cf. 1 Peter 1:8-9). Thus, Christians can cling to a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3), trusting the power of the resurrected Christ to "take away . . . "the rebuke of his people" (Isaiah 25:8). Isaiah, in this verse, trusts his God to make it so.

Are we as confident as Isaiah? Are we hopeful of death succumbing to eternal victory? Are we encouraged that sorrow will yield to eternal joy? Do we believe that rebuke will fall to eternal reward? If we are faithful Christians, we can (cf. 1 John 5:13).

Job and Christian Suffering

GLENN COLLEY

Although we all as Christians must taste of suffering during some time in our life, and perhaps, often, there are moments when we consider it somewhat inconsistent with the blessings we enjoy as God's children. There may be moments in which we reason, "If I am God's child, and He is all powerful, why does He let me suffer so? Why doesn't he do something to help me?" It isn't that we wish to criticize the Almighty, or to bring His wisdom into question, but simply that we don't always understand His purposes.

The book of Hebrews is helpful. Putting the question on a level which even a child can understand, chapter 12:6 says, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye illegitimate, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them

reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"

The book of Job also offers much strength to the suffering Christian. It will help us to understand the purpose of suffering, and God's wonderful power and blessing when we retain our faithfulness through the fires of trial.

In his book entitled, *Explore the Book*, (Zondervan, 1970, volume, three, pp, 26), J. Sidlow Baxter introduces the book of Job in this way: "In a general sense the design of this book is to justify the ways of God to man, by correcting certain misconceptions which arise from men's imperfect knowledge: but the special object is to show that there is a benevolent Divine purpose running through the sufferings of the godly, and that life's bitterest enigmas are reconcilable with this benevolent Divine purpose, did we but know all the facts. Could Job but have seen into the counsels of heaven just before his trial came, as we are permitted to glimpse into them, in the prologue to the poem; and could Job but have foreknown the outcome of his ordeal, as God for knew it, and as we now see it in the epilogue to the poem, how differently would he have reacted to it all!

But then that is just the point which gives the whole book its meaning for us. Job did not know; and, simple as this point may seem, it is through failing to appreciate its significance that most readers miss the message of the book. Get the picture. Between the prologue, which shows how Job's trial originated in the counsels of heaven, and the epilogue, which sows how Job's trial eventuated in enrichment and blessing, we have a group of patriarchal wiseacres theorizing and dogmatizing from incomplete premises and deficient data. They knew nothing about the counsels of heaven which had preceded Job's trial; and they knew nothing about the coming epilogue of compensation. They were philosophizing in the dark. It is in this that the book has its message to us. We are meant to see that there was an explanation, even though Job and his friends did not know it. So that when baffling affliction comes to ourselves we may believe that the same holds good in our own case—that there is, indeed, a purpose for it in the counsels of heaven, and a foreknown outcome of blessings."

Do not foolishly assume that when you suffer it is because God doesn't care for you. He does, he loves you, and knows

what is best. As James wrote, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various temptations; knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1:2-4).

Is The Purpose for Baptism to "Obey God"?

DENNIS GULLEDGE

There is much debate these days over the question, "How much a person understand in order for their baptism to be acceptable to God?" Must one understand that baptism is "for the remission of sins," i.e., that an alien's sins are forgiven when he is baptized into Christ? (Galatians 3:17). Or, is it sufficient for one to know that the Bible emphasizes baptism and that in order to 'obey God' one should be baptized regardless of his idea of his sins being forgiven before and without baptism?

The popular writer F. LaGard Smith, wrote "In our choosing to be baptized, the important factor is the purpose for which we do it. And the purpose of every faith motivated baptism is to obey Christ" (Baptism The Believers Wedding Ceremony, p. 94). That statement sounds good and it is correct if obeying Christ is properly defined. If "obey Christ" means submitting to the physical act of baptism because Christ taught it, regardless of one's reason for doing so, that does not mean obedience has taken place. If one feels saved at the point of faith only (or, by grace alone as some brethren insist) and submits to baptism in order to "obey Christ," has he really obeyed Christ? Some brethren would say, "yes." The Bible would say, "no." Does one "obey God" who ignorantly, or otherwise, substitutes human reasons for divine ones in his response to Bible commands? One does not obey Christ in the matter of baptism who does not understand Jesus' words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk 16:16). Jesus taught belief + baptism = salvation. To view it otherwise is not to obey him.

On the other hand, if "obey Christ" means doing what the

Lord said to do, in the way the Lord said to do it and for the reason or reasons the Lord said to do it, then, obedience has taken place. One does not obey Christ in that matter of baptism who is not baptized "for (in order to obtain) the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Yet, because of the urgency that some have in broadening the horizons of fellowship in the sectarian world and eroding the distinctiveness of the New Testament church, I am confident that this is not what is meant by «obey God» in many contexts. With some the idea of obedience takes on some vague significance of doing what the Lord said to do, and even in the way the Lord said to do it, but not necessarily for the reason or reason the Lord said to do it.

No one will argue that one must know all there is to know about baptism in order to be baptized, else there would be no room for growth. Yet, if one does not understand baptism to be for the remission of sins he does not understand baptism at all.

Some Recommendations For The Aged

W.A. HOLLEY

"Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth" (Psalm 71:9.18) "Yea, even when I am old and grey headed, O God, forsake me not, until I have declared thy strength unto the next generation, thy might to every one that is to come." Now you should read Psalm 90:10.

We have heard it said that "life begins at forty," but why not at 70, or 80, or 90 ? Old age does not mean that he/she is any less human. In fact, age should be regarded as an asset. One's knowledge, experience and practical observations should count for something. With vision it is impossible for one to die young at 95 or 100. It is not a sin to grow old. Think of Adam, Noah, Methuselah, Abraham, Moses, et al.

It is better for elder citizens to provide for themselves a place to live. Jesus ask John to provide for his mother (John 19:25-27). Try to remain as independent as possible. Health problems may intervene at some point making, it necessary to accept help from others (Acts 6:1-6; Titus 2:2-5; I Timothy 5:10).

Old people are creatures of God. You were created in his image (Genesis 1:26-27). There is a spark of divinity in each of

us. It is the soul that never shall die. See Matthew 10:28.

Although you are old in years make yourself useful. Find a service that needs to be rendered and stay busy. What can an old man or woman do? Well, give the less fortunate a pat on the back. Speak words of encouragement to those whom you meet. Be a good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Make telephone calls, write notes to the sick and the bereaved. Work, never retire . . . simply change jobs. Never expect to receive much personal attention but bring showers of love to young and old alike. You cannot do all things, but you can do some things. Whatever your circumstances, never feel sorry for yourself. A person who is extremely un-happy or abjectly despondent because of want, grief, oppression, affliction, anxiety or the like, is in no mood to encourage others. Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Again, "For as he thinketh in his heart so is he. . . . (Proverbs 23:7).

It will be a great blessing to understand that life is both good and bad. Into each life dark shadows must fall. David one of the greatest men of the Old Testament. suffered much because of his and others departure from God's will and way (II Samuel 12:10). Psalm 51 shows David in anguish and pain when he remembers his sin with Bethsheba. But the sun shines, still. We live in the real world, not the ideal world. Smiles, tears, and pain are common to us all.

Exercise is all important. (Acts 24:16; Hebrews 5:14). Physical and spiritual exercise is a must, if one wishes to control anxiety, nervousness and worry. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto thee" (Matthew 6:33). Never borrow tomorrow's problems for today.

Be mature. Although one may have grown old in years, one may still be a "cry-baby." Be strong spiritually. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity" (I Corinthians 16:13-14). Wear a warm and friendly smile; do not turn people off by the expression on your face. Remember, it is not so much what you say, but how you say it.

Older people must take pride in themselves. Be presentable in dress so as to make the finest impressions on those whom you chance to meet along the way. It is said, "A beautiful girl is

an accident of nature, but a beautiful older woman is a work of art." Be as attractive as possible; turn on your charm. You can win friends and influence people.

Watch your words; they can get you into all kinds of trouble. Gossip is Satan's most powerful tool. It is easy to pass on evil reports with such phrases as, "Have you heard?" "They tell me," "Keep this to yourself, but —" "I don't believe it's true, but I heard so and so say." "They say." Aaron Burr advised a friend to never use that expression. He said, "It has broken more hearts than any other."

Be aware of the unholy use of the telephone. One can sit in one's home, with the doors all shut and use his/her telephone to spread rumors and gossip and tales all over town.

We shall listen to the apostle Paul. "Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak the truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one with another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need. Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but as is good for edifying is the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear: And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:25-32, ASV).

Old people should never sour on the world, the church, or their family. A grouchy disposition will surely turn others off. Constant complaining, together with faultfinding will soon cause many to abandoned you. One is a hypocrite who tries to remove a mote (a speck) from his brother's eye, when a beam (a crosstie) is in his own eye (Matthew 7:1-5). Fault finding is one of our great faults.

Have your will drafted by an attorney. Hang on to your possessions until you are dead. Do not decide to give your possessions away. You are *somebody* (in the mind of others) as long as you have your estate.

Older people are approaching the end of life. "For I am

already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. . ." (I Timothy 4:6-7, ASV).

Spend your remaining days in reading the Holy Bible (II Timothy 2:15). It's message will be a source of comfort until your last breath. Pray frequently (I Thessalonians 5:17). Through the night meditate on what your Bible teaches (I Timothy 4:15).

Note : If you are not a child of God obey the Lord's gospel today (II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2: 36-47).

If you have been a faithful Christian in times past, but now you have fallen away, you must repent of and confess your faults in order to be restored to God's saving grace (Acts 8:22; James 5:16; I John 1:6-10). Do it today.

Learning Right Things

VANCE HUTTON

Christianity is a taught religion (Matt. 28:19). Christians are to be a learning people always (Rom. 12:2). We ought to be learning the things that are of the very greatest in value. True wisdom is ours when we learn the things God would have us to learn. We should learn from our experiences in this present world, that we should learn more and more knowledge of the Bible, and that we should learn contentment. Let us notice three areas where learning ought to most certainly occur.

I. LET US LEARN CHRIST AND GOD

Jesus said to come unto Him and learn of Him (Matt. 11:29). Paul told the Ephesians some things not learned from Christ but embedded in the message is that they needed to learn Christ (Eph. 4:20). Jesus spoke of hearing and learning of the Father (Jn. 6:45). In a prayer, Christ said life eternal had roots in knowing God and the Son (Jn. 17:3). We must so learn Christ and allow Him to live in us (Gal. 2:20). Such has bearing upon the very hope of glory (Col. 1:27). We wear the name of Christ (Acts 11:26) and we must follow in His steps (I Pet. 2:21), His walk (I Jn. 2:6), His mind (Phil 2:5), His image (Rom. 8:29) and so on. There is a God-likeness that we must develop (Tit. 2:11-

12). This should prompt us all to continue in the Lord's word (Jn. 8:31) and truly be learners of God and Christ. Such will develop within us love and respect for God. This will in turn mould our lives to the kind of people we should be.

II. LET US LEARN OBEDIENCE

Our perfect example, Jesus Christ, was divine but also man (Jn. 1:1, 14). The man Jesus Christ (I Tim. 2:5) learned from his sufferings the duty and necessity of obedience (Heb. 5:8). His will was to do the Father's will (Jn. 6:38; Matt. 26:39-42). His meat was to do such (Jn. 4:34). His coming to earth was to obey his Father's desires (Jn. 6:38). He did always the things that pleased God (Jn. 8:29) and finished what he was sent to do (Jn. 17:4, 19:30). We must learn also to ever be obedient. The obedient will be the beneficiaries of the grace of God (Matt. 7:21). The obedience will have right to Heaven (Rev. 22:14). May we all learn to obey God rather than any man (Acts. 5:29). We will gain a jewel when we learn obedience.

III. LET US LEARN TO DO GOOD

Titus 3:14 is a challenge and a command for us all to learn to maintain good works. Isaiah 1:17 said learn to do well. I Timothy 5:4 challenges us to learn to care for our families. We have been blessed well and likewise charged (I Tim. 6:18). The Bible equips us to the good that we should do (II Tim. 3:16-17). Jesus went about doing good (Acts 10:38) and so must we. Let us learn to take advantage of every such opportunity (Gal. 6:10). Are you filled with Zeal for doing good (Tit. 2:14)? Learn to do good and not evil.

We will be wiser in heart and life when we learn more and more about God, Christ, obedience, and doing good.



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