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# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL

### *What Does The Bible Teach?*

***"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name"***

John, who wrote these words by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was one of the apostles of Christ. In his book, the gospel according to John, he introduces Christ as, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1). And this Word, John said, in verse 14, "became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Thus he reveals Christ as God, identifying Him as the Word, who was with God and was God. That is to say, God was with God; meaning more than one equal Personalities in the Godhead. Yet, one of the Personalities in the God-head volunteered to come down on earth to make man's salvation from sin possible.

Christ Himself said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." And John said, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12).

Are these Scriptures teaching that all one has to do to be

saved from sin is to believe in Christ, or as some people teach "receive Christ as your personal Saviour in your heart to be saved"? If this could be true, then what about Mark 16:16, where Christ Himself taught, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved . . ."? And what about Acts 2:38, where Peter, an apostle of Christ, exhorted people to "Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . ."?

According to Christ and His apostle Peter, one must believe in Christ, must repent of sins, and must be baptized for the remission of sins to be saved; and Christ further added at Revelation 2:10, that after taking these steps to salvation, one must remain faithful to him all his life to actually receive the crown of life. That is, to believe in Christ and repent of sins and to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins is not all that one has to do to receive the eternal life in heaven; but one must, after taking these first steps into salvation, live faithful life to Christ daily by following in His step. (1 Peter 2:21; Luke 9:23).

What did John mean then when he said "But as many as received Him to them He gave the right to become children of God?" John is saying that when one believes in Christ, after hearing about Him and His gospel, that when one receives Christ by faith, one gets the right to become a child of God. If you get a cheque for one million rupees. You haven't gotten one million rupees yet. Have you? There could be several things that may come up and you may never see the face of them rupees! Yes, you got the cheque; you have the right or the authority to receive that money. But unless you take that cheque to the bank, and write and fulfill all the requirements by stated that bank, and deposit the cheque properly, you do not become the owner of the amount. So just to get the right or the authority does not make one the possessor of the promise. One must use or exercise the right or the authority to receive the benefit that lies in it. Simply stated, when one hears about Christ and believes in Him, then one must do everything that Christ commands or requires to have the eternal life with Him in heaven. Of course, if one does not really believes in Him, that person is not going to do what He says.

# *Negatives And Positives*

J.C. CHOATE

Life is generally what you make of it. It can be good or bad. One can be happy or unhappy. One can wear a smile or a frown. One can be negative or positive.

You have seen people that are always down on everything and everybody. They are always suspicious. They are always expecting the worst to happen. They never see any good in anything. Such people must be miserable.

It is true that bad things happen sometimes. Things don't always work out as we thought they would. We don't always get good news. We can get sick. We may lose our job. Our best friend may disappoint us. But still, we can't just dwell on those things. We have to go on living. It would be better to look for the bright side of life. A lot of this is a mental attitude. If we allow the negative side to control our life, it can destroy us. Besides, who wants to be around someone like that?

I have seen the times when something went wrong, and things didn't turn out like I thought they would. Not only that, but it seemed that one thing after another was going wrong. I remember telling my wife that we were going to have to get out of the negatives and get into the positives. And once that was done then everything was fine again.

A lot of negatives and positives are based on mental attitudes, how you look at things, how you let things effect you. One must look for the good, not the bad. Try to see the opportunities that are in every situation. Turn bad things into good things. You'll be amazed at how things turn out when you are looking for the positive side of things.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offered these words of wisdom: "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold, the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which

of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:25-34).

Paul wrote, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter, Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. Nor height, nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:28-39).

These, and many other scriptures, affirm the Christian's

position. As God's people we have been saved from our sins, we are members of the Lord's family, the church, we are children of God, we serve a resurrected Lord, and we have the hope of eternal life. What more could we want? Why would we ever think of ourselves as losers or failures? Instead we have every right and every reason to be happy, to be confident, and to be optimistic about life and about the future.

So the next time you get to feeling despondent, depressed, and discouraged, remember who you are. Remember who your Father is and who your Lord is. Remember you have brothers and sisters in Christ here at home and all over the world. Remember the great work the Lord has given you to do. Think of all of the material blessings and spiritual blessings you have, and above all, the hope that you have in this world and in the world to come. With all of that, that should get you out of the negatives and into the positives, and keep you there where you belong.

## *Jesus As Your Personal Saviour*

FRANCIS DAVID

How many times you have heard the statement "Accept Jesus as your personal saviour, and you will be saved." This thing is being preached by thousands of preachers today. We hear it on radio, TV, and even read in the Christian magazines and periodicals. I tried to search in my Bible such statement but I was not able to find it. No preacher in the new testament ever uttered to people such statement while preaching to them. However, Our Bible tells us that Jesus is the saviour of all. He died for all. He did not die for some certain class of people. He did not give his life for some particular group or sect. He is the saviour of the world (1 John 2:2).

Jesus our Lord will save anyone who believes in him and obey his commandments. Just accepting him or believing in him wouldn't do any good. Jesus say: "If you love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15). What are his commands for us? If we search our Bibles we will find what He says what one must

do to be saved.

Jesus will save you when you believe in him and also when you confess him before men that He is the Son of God. Jesus himself said in Matthew 10:32-33, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven. "But whoever denies Me before Men him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." If one wanted to be saved he or she must repent of his/her sins. Repentance means to change your wrong ways and come to the right path. Without repentance there is no salvation. In Acts chapter two we see Peter was preaching to a great crowd. We read here that Peter preached to them about Jesus and nothing else. His message was Jesus. When people heard the message they were cut to their hearts and they asked Peter and rest of the apostles: "Men and brethren, WHAT SHALL WE DO? Now we read here that Peter did not tell these people "Accept Jesus as your personal saviour and you will be saved." But rather he commanded them that they must repent of their sins and then be baptised. The record says that the same day about three thousand souls were baptised and were added to the church. This is another important point that we need to know. One has to be in the body or the church. Some says there is no need of church. I have accepted him personally so I will be on my own and there is no need that I need to be in the church. No, when you are baptised you will be added to the body of Christians and you will be a part of that and then it would be required of you to be faithful to Christ till your death (Rev. 2:10). So, we see that a person needs to repent if he wants to be saved. Paul says: "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent. (Acts 17:30).

The next thing that we see here is that if you consider Jesus as your saviour then you need to obey his command of baptism. Jesus Himself said in Mark 16:16, "He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." If you accept him as your personal saviour then why do you reject his command of baptism? Without baptism you cannot put on Jesus. We read the words of apostle Paul when he says: "For you are all sons of God thru faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on



Christ. (Gal. 3:27).

As we come to the conclusion, we see that just accepting him as your personal saviour wouldn't do any good. You need to believe in him, confess him as the Son of God, repent of your past sinful life, and then be baptised for the remission of sins. Wouldn't you do it today?

Let us do it and act now because today is the day of salvation. (II Corinthian 6:2).

## *Let The Bible Answer*

ROBERT MEREDITH

What does it mean to be born again? A certain ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus came to Jesus one night and our Lord told him, "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3). Now, our Lord said this, man did not. Jesus said that one *must* be born again. If a person is not born again he cannot be saved! Being born again is God's plan of salvation, but some deny that God has a plan. One should find this ironic because the same ones that teach such go on to say that a person is saved by "faith only". My friends, a person is not saved by "faith only," but if he were then "faith only" would be God's plan of salvation. Jesus did not say a person was saved by "faith only", but by being "born again". Let us examine what the scriptures say about this topic.

Jesus explained what he meant by being "born again" in John 3:5, where He said, "*Verily verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*" The first thing Jesus mentions in explaining what is involved in being born again is water. The scriptures show that this is the water of baptism. (See Titus 3:5; Eph. 5:26; Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5; Heb. 10:22; and I Cor. 6:11) Some will tell you that you must be born again, but then leave out one of the things Jesus said was involved in the re-birth. By leaving out water, or baptism, they perform a spiritual abortion.

The second element Jesus said is involved in being "born

again" is the Spirit. Once again the Bible tells us how the Spirit is involved in the new birth. The Apostle Peter informs us that "*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth (see John 17:17) through the spirit . . . Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever*" (I Pet. 1:22-23). Here Peter tells us the Spirit works through the word. James tells us the same thing in James 1:18 and 1:21, as does Jesus in John 15:3. Notice Acts 7:51-52 for a divine commentary on this matter. Stephen, to the group to whom he spoke, said, "*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.*" Stephen then tells them how their fathers resisted the Holy Spirit, by resisting the Spirit's message (v. 52). Now if one resists the Spirit by resisting His message, one receives the Spirit by receiving the Spirit's message. Therefore to be born of the Spirit is to obey what the Spirit, through the New Testament, tells you to do.

One must do as Jesus said. Jesus said one must be born again. He did not say one must be conceived again. Often times spiritual miscarriages, or spiritual abortions take place (See Lk. 8:5,12). When one believes, he has the power to become a son of God (John 1:12), but he is not a son yet because he has not done all that the Spirit tells him to do. The Spirit also informs us in the word that one must repent (Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Pt. 3:9); confess that Jesus is the Christ (Mt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10); and yes, be baptized (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; and a host of other passages). Is one saved by faith only? No! Repentance only? No! Confession only? No! Baptism only? No! But when one does all these things, he has been born of water and the Spirit, and Jesus said he then enters the kingdom of God.

## *The Road To Heaven*

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Everyone talking about heaven will not make it to those mansions in the sky. Millions talk a better game than they play. We often sing a stronger religion that we live—yes, even in the

church of the Lord. How we thrill to such hymns as In The Land Of Fadeless Day and When The Roll Is Called Up Yonder. However, the way that leads home to God passes by the old rugged cross, the valley of sorrow and the mountain of surrender and some folk always take a detour through the sinking sands of Easy Street. The road to heaven is not congested. Traffic on that highway is rather sparse. Only the truly dedicated, committed and determined see the journey through. Pilgrims seeking a far better country (Hebrews 11:10-13) are willing to forego mundane pleasures and the Devil's dainties for a surer grasp on an everlasting home with the redeemed. Christ has invited all men to walk with Him in righteousness but multitudes with one consent, begin to make excuses (Luke 14:18). There is room for everyone in the narrow path (Matthew 7:14) but it is easier to wander aimlessly about in the broad way that foment into perdition. The challenge attached to the heavenly route costs more than myriad's of earth are willing to pay. Having counted the cost of obedience such folk immediately admit their spiritual bankruptcy and manifest no further effort toward the beautiful home of the soul. Bereft of spiritual depth, motivated by carnal interests, beset by worldly associates and led by temporal emphasis, these poor misguided human beings pitch their tent toward hell and wait for the darkness of the ages.

But saints their watch are keeping; they cry:

"How Long, How Long?

And soon the night of weeping  
shall be the morn of song."

## WHAT IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO HEAVEN?

### The road of surrender

In Luke 9:23 and 14:23 Jesus implores us to deny ourselves, give up our devotion to worldly cares and follow Him completely. There is no other way to become a part of His system. Those who "halt between two opinions" are "unstable in all their ways" (1 Kings 18:21; James 1:8) and thus miss the resplendent blessings of Christianity. Paul admitted that he only lived when Christ lived in him. The path that bends toward heaven is the road where self is slain and Jesus is enthroned in our hearts.

### **The road of service**

The Master came not to be served but to give His life a ransom for all (Mark 10:45). We have been saved to serve! There will be no home in heaven for those too proud to humble themselves in loyal service in the kingdom. Our easy, catered living does not naturally lend itself to sacrificial endeavour. But, the Christian, with peace passing understanding (Philippians 4:7), does the unnatural—he gladly goes to work in God's vineyard. With devoted energy he "bears much fruit" (John 15:8) as he continues in the word of the Lord (John 8:31) as a faithful disciple. He does not need to be told to stay busy in the work of Jesus—he just naturally is busily engaged in the greatest work on earth. He is a servant of Christ!

### **The road of satisfaction**

As strange as it may seem to our libertine generation the only way to really be happy is to completely lose ourselves in a cause much greater than self. To submerge our identity into the religion of the Son of God brings joy unspeakable and full of glory. There is tremendous contentment in the Saviour. No other way of life can be so productive, thrilling and satisfying. And, then, at the end of life's journey an added blessing—a golden street, the tree of life and the presence of the redeemed of all ages. Truly the road that leads home to God is the only one worth considering. May we press on!

## *You Can See Christ*

GLENN COLLEY

That some would find it hard to follow a Savior they couldn't see is shown in Peter's book, 1 Peter 1:8 "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." he leads and governs us with the New Testament which he left for us to follow, (Heb. 9:1-17).

It should be noted, however, that there is a sense in which we can see Christ today.

In Acts 9:4, when Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, He asked, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" How could Saul possibly persecute the Christ? Jesus had died and been resurrected and ascended to His Father in Heaven in Acts 1, and yet Jesus asks Saul why he is persecuting Him. The answer to this is simply found in Acts 8:3 where we read, "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison." The fact is, when Saul, or anyone else for that matter, hurts the people who wear Christ's name, they are hurting Christ.

There is such great security in knowing we serve a Lord who loves us this much. Even from heaven itself Jesus watches us and knows us and cares. Consider Stephen as a case-in-point. We know that Jesus went to heaven, and took his honoured place sitting on the right hand of God. Colossians 3:1 says "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." But in Acts 7, as Stephen's courageous character fueled his heart with a passionate sermon about the Saviour, the people gnashed on him with their teeth and began picking up rocks. They were going to stone this man. Quick—look at Jesus. Notice His posture. Stephen said, "behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God," (Acts 7:56). Standing. Jesus was standing instead of sitting. He came to His feet in heaven as His servant Stephen prepared to give the ultimate sacrifice for his Lord.

We can also see Jesus when we care for and love Christians. The concept will be expressed in the judgement: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say

unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," (Matthew 25:34-40). The teaching is too clear to miss. To see the face of our Lord we must only look as far as our brother or sister sitting next to us. Whatever kindness we show to them is being received by Christ. When we see their face, the face of our brethren in need, there is a sense in which we are seeing the lovely face of Jesus.

It's no wonder that the church is called the body of Christ, (Eph. 1:22-23). We are not just His friends, we are His body; And we can see Him today. As the old song says, "Does Jesus care? . . . I know He cares."

## ***Overcoming A Troubled Heart***

**NEAL POLLARD**

Someone once said, "when in trouble, always hold your chin up—if it does nothing else, it will keep your mouth shut." God obviously anticipated that this life would often trouble us, for He often tells us not to be troubled. And, he often prescribes help for our troubled hearts. Through Paul, He says to all Christians, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort where-with we ourselves are comforted of God, for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

Obviously, all our troubles are not the same size and of the same magnitude. A scratch is far less upsetting than a large, gaping wound. An automobile breakdown is far less troubling than a nervous breakdown. Folks who have problems generally want to talk about them. And the truth is, some have relatively small problems while there are people whose troubles are so great it is hard to imagine how they can carry such burdens.

Through the course of our lives as Christians, we are going to be troubled. When loved ones die, we will be troubled. Jesus was (John 11:33). When we are betrayed, we will be troubled.

Jesus was (John 13:21). When frightening things occur, we will be troubled. The disciples were (Mark 6:50). When Christians fall into error, we will be troubled. The early church was (Acts 15:24).

At least three types of troubles common to all Christians are discussed on the pages of the New Testament. In these verses, God tells us how to overcome each type of them.

### **When Agitated by "Little Troubles" (*Tarasso*), Trust the Promises of Christ**

The first, most common "trouble" dealt with in the New Testament is the kind we can classify as "irritations" and "agitations." These are the earthly concerns and the emotional scrapes. Yet, they can still be spiritually harmful. Such things can still roll the heart and muddy up our spiritual judgement. Notice what God says about these agitators with which we are confronted.

In John 14:1-4, Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Life at that point was confusing for the apostles; they did not have or understand all the answers. That troubled them. But as they faced the uncertainty, Jesus says, "trust me."

Just so, life can confuse and baffle us. We know heaven awaits us if we are faithful, but the promise of that place seems so distant and future at times. From the Book of Hope, Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled." He says (as it were), "trust me!"

In John 14:27, He continues, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Back in the Sermon on the mount, Jesus upbraids the chronic worrier. He teaches us the necessity of trusting God. He does likewise in John 14. Jesus promises to help us with the power of His Word (26) and with the peace that comes in being right with Him (27).

Whatever worries us can be conquered by faith and the Bible. When we read of increased crime, immorality, and pressures with which our families, our children, our mates must

cope, we can get troubled. But, these are passing problems. Jesus offers lasting peace. If we equip our minds and souls, no harm to the body will trouble us (Matthew 10:28).

In 1 Pet. 3:14-15, Peter encourages persecuted Christians with these words: "but and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you, a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Here, Peter tells us how to cope with the adversity we face in being a Christian. Peter says that by godliness we will avoid a lot of hurt that comes to the world (13). But, if we have to sacrifice for the Savior, we still do not have to be troubled.

A young person may get teased for missing a ball game on Sunday or Wednesday night. A grown person may lose a few rupees per hour for not taking the overtime shifts that fall during the times of worship. You may get laughed at or scorned for not attending that dance, for not gambling with the guys at the water cooler, for avoiding the office and neighbourhood gossip, or for not taking that drink, but console yourself with this as you live the gospel: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (18). He who bore the greatest troubles tells us not to worry about the little troubles. Don't we trust His promises?

### **When Afflicted By "Middle-Sized Troubles (*Thlibo*) Keep Your Focus**

The nineteenth century poet, Ella Wilcox, wrote:

"I will not doubt, though all my ships at sea come drifting  
home with  
broken masts and sails; From seeming evil worketh good to  
me. And, though  
I weep because those sails are battered, still will I cry, while  
my best hopes lie  
shattered, "I trust in thee"

We've considered that our lives will be filled with troubles which irritate and nick our hearts. But, we also realize that sometimes the cut is more serious and the bleeding is a bit more



significant. Some trials we face may cause us to lose sight of why we are here. 2 Corinthians 4:7-10 says, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

The word translated "troubled" in 2 Crointhians 4:8 is different than the word used in John 14 and 1 Peter 3. Here, Paul is speaking of hurts and problems of little greater than mere irritations. This kind of trouble is akin to doubts, persecution, and deep discouragement. This kind of trouble may come from a prolonged personal struggle, a troublesome person who despises everything you and the Lord stand for, or a haunting temptation that you must fight everyday.

But look at the exhortation of Paul. He tells us not to lose sight of why we are here. We are here to hold up the crucified Lord to a lost and dying world. We should say with Him, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17).

Our careers are just a means to an end. Our possessions are just perishable things borrowed from the Lord. Our problems are just obstacles between us and heaven. But it is not always quite that easy, is it? Our problems can seem so big to us that they eclipse our spiritual sight, blinding us to our purpose for being here. Our main purpose in life is not to solve all the problems on the job, in the school, in the government and in the community. If we keep our focus on lost souls, these other things will improve. When troubled by the middle-sized afflictions of life, let us boldly say, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

### **When Afraid because Of Life's Big Troubles (Threo), Don't Let Go!**

Someone says, "The Bible's words about trouble sound good for the minor problems or middle-sized hurts. But, my troubles have about caused me to let go of my faith. I'm not sure being faithful is worth it. What am I supposed to do to defeat the big problems?"

Let us ask Paul. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 he writes, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." Paul here is addressing, not emotional scrapes or spiritual gashes. The word translated "troubled" in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 speaks of huge, gaping, spiritual and emotional wounds. He is referencing serious hurts, the kind that will cause death—the death of faith, the spiritual death of the soul. The Thessalonians, he warns, would face very cunning deception (3). They would be in battle with the forces of Satan (8-9). They would see good brethren believe and obey the lies of the devil (10-11), and consequently be lost (12).

Don't we face that today? How does it affect us? When looking at the moral breakdown of society, how often are we tempted to ask, "What's the use in trying to do right? Where does it get me? Look where doing wrong gets people in the world who could care less about Jesus." When it seems that the devil is winning the battle with our loved ones and neighbours, how discouraging is that? When brethren we trust and respect disappoint us, what can it do to *our* faith?

There are certain situations that try our faith and cause us to ask, "Can I hang on?" Job teaches us that there are times when all we have left to hold on to is our faith in God. Yet, we must. And, if we do, it will have more than been worth it all!

How do we treat the gaping wounds? Back in 2 Thessalonians, Paul encourages the brethren with three reminders which also aid us today. In 2:13, he says to know that God had a special purpose for you from eternity (cf. Ephesians 3:11; 1 Peter 2:5-9). In 2:14, he says to know that He would have shown you the way to Him, even if you were the only person on earth. Finally, in 2:15-17, he says we should realize that God is rooting for you to endure and has left you everything you need to hang on unto the end. When the day comes and your faith is tested, don't let go!

The Bible is magnificent, for it rebukes the haughty and lifts up the broken-spirited. It chastises the sinful, but comforts the saintly. When we are confronted with trouble of any size, we

know that God has already told us how to overcome it (cf. 1 John 5:4)!

## ***An Impossible Proposition***

**GUS NICHOLS**

Some propositions cannot be proved true. One of these is the proposition affirmed by the Atheist, he affirms, "There is no God" (Psalms 14:1-; 53:1). Even if there were no evidence that there is a God, the Atheist could not prove his proposition that, "There is no God." If the Atheist were right, he could not prove it. There is no known evidence proving there is no God.

The atheistic proposition that, "There is no God" is unreasonable and impossible of proof. It is implied in the affirmation that the one testifying and bearing witness knows all things, and this is not possible. There is a limit to human knowledge, and the one thing the Atheist may not know is that there is a God, and he has not learned that fact. No man, nor all men together, can know all things—all facts and truth existing in all the universe of God. We do not know what electricity is, and no man has ever seen it. No man has ever seen an atom, and there are great mysteries concerning their composition and power, yet they are known to exist. We have never seen gravity and it has its mysteries, yet we all believe it does exist. Electricity and light travel at the mysterious speed of 186,000 miles per second, and we believe it, notwithstanding their mysteries.

"Great is the mystery of Godliness" (I Tim. 3:16). Man is not capable of understanding all the truth and facts in the infinity and great ocean of God's wisdom and knowledge. If the Atheist claims to know all things, he is, as God labeled him, a "fool" (Psa. 14:1; 53:1). And if he does not claim to know all things, he is not qualified to testify in proof of his negative proposition, that "There is no God." Because of their ignorance, men have lived who would have affirmed that there was no such thing as gravity, and no such thing as atoms from which we could make bombs with which to win the last world war.

There is a world of difference in affirming an affirmative

proposition and in affirming a negative one. We can reasonably affirm only in the realm of human knowledge, and use as proof of our proposition such evidence as is known as knowledgeable. The evidence that God is, is in this realm. God has made himself known unto man. This is a fact demonstrated both in revelation and in nature. From one side of the Bible unto the other, God has revealed Himself-especially in the person of Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, who was crucified and whom God raised from the dead (Jn 1:20; Rom. 1:1-4).

Before the Athiest could qualify to testify in proof of his negative proposition, he would not only have to know all that is true in the material world, in which we live, but he would have to delve into the spiritual realm and learn all that is true in that realm. If he says there is no such realm, he obligates himself to prove first of all that he knows all things, and has visited all realms, and knows there is no realm of the spiritual, where God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and angels dwell.

The Russian astronaut upon returning from orbiting our earth, said "There was no God up there, I did not see any." The facts are that he did not see all that was up there. He did not see any gravity or electricity, up there. And if God had stood before him in his natural form he would not have been able to see him, "For God is a Spirit" and not a physical and material Being (Jn. 4:23-24). Furthermore, if the Atheist were able to go into the spiritual realm he would not be able to know there is no God unless he had visited all places in the Spirit world and been able to see spiritual things, and able to conquer all mysteries in that world, as well as the mysteries of this world.

Therefore, a man is a "fool" who assumes to possess all knowledge in all the universe of God, and to know all that is true in all the infinity of universal knowledge.

## ***Salvation***

**BOBBY KEY**

It was late at night in the Macedonian town of Philippi when a jailer asked Paul and Silas the greatest question one could ask

another, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Until honest men cease to inhabit the earth, they will be stirred to cry aloud, "What must I do to be saved?" Many answers have been given in response to this all important question. No man should be satisfied with the answer unless it comes from God.

The question impresses our mind to accept the fact that there is a condition to salvation. Something must be done. We must learn the answer to the question. Life is too short, eternity too long, heaven too precious, and hell too awful to regard lightly the question of salvation.

We must admit that we have sinned, and sin will cause us to be lost. There is a debt that we cannot pay; we must turn to him who is willing to pay the debt he does not own. There is only one with power to save. We "glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Galatians 6:14)." Only through Calvary may the sins of wayward man be blotted out. Whatever the plan may be, it is worthless if it leaves out the cross and the blood shed on the cross.

Whatever God, by His Son, requires of us is sacred because its Author is sacred. Salvation is of God, its spokesman is Christ, and its price is the blood of Jesus. Every sinner must open his heart to the wonderful story of God's love, and words of hope through Christ. It is not possible to come to God without first hearing what God has said. "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God: (Romans 10:17). When heaven speaks to us, we must believe. There is a God in heaven; Christ Jesus is the Son of God; this sinless One suffered and died that I can be saved. It is not possible to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:1-6). Since we have sinned we must repent (Acts 2:38). We are then happy to confess that we believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Romans 10:9-17). At this point we follow the Lord's own instruction—to be baptized. "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

The jailer of our text was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). Notice Paul spoke unto him the word of the Lord—faith comes by hearing. The same hour of the night the jailer washed the stripes

of the men who had been beaten—this shows his sorrow and repentance, he then was baptized as the Lord had instructed. After his baptism, he fed the prisoners, he rejoiced, and the Holy Spirit informs us that he believed in God with all his house.

You now have the Lord's answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

## *Laying Aside Weights*

W.A. HOLLEY

"Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience (steadfastness) the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2, ASV).

We do not know who wrote the book of Hebrews, but, if we believe the Scriptures, we know that Paul did not write it (II Thessalonians 3:17).

The Book of Hebrews was written to forestal the Hebrews Christians from giving up Christ and the church, and returning to the Old Testament Law.

The Hebrews writer seeks to encourage his Hebrew brethren to greater achievements of faith by calling their attention to a host of ancient heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews. These are the "great cloud of witnesses" by which they were "encompassed." The witnesses are represented as spectators looking down upon Christians as they run the race of faith. To win, the Christian must lay aside all hindrances, burdens, weights, which tend to prevent him/her from gaining victory. Here we suggest that I Corinthians 9:24-27, be read.

The athlete, in training, uses heavy weights, but when he is ready to enter the contest, he always lays aside all that which would encumber him. Paul is a fine example of what we now

describe (I Corinthians 9:27). "The sin which doth so easily beset us" must be the sin of unbelief (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 10:17; John 8:24; Mark 16:16).

### **Things To Lay Aside**

(1) The Hebrews Christians should have realized that the Old Testament had been abolished (Ephesians 2:13-22). The Old Covenant had been "nailed to the cross" (Colossians 2:14-17). When Jesus Christ became High Priest, "there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Hebrews 7:12-14; 9:15-17; II Corinthians 3:13-18). Those who reject the New Testament, but try to follow Old Testament commands, have their minds veiled and their hearts hardened even to this day.

Christians are not required to offer animal sacrifices, keep the sabbath day, observe the Jewish feast days, and the like.

(2) We should lay aside all acts of disobedience to God, all covetousness, anger, wrath, railing, shameful speaking, and the like (Colossians 3:5-11). It is possible for one to live in these sins.

(3) We should strip away all uncleanness, foolish talking, fornication, adultery, and all other works of the flesh (Ephesians 5:3-14; Galatians 5:19-21).

(4) Let us take a stand against all "rioting and drunkenness . . . chambering and wantonness . . . strife and envying" (Romans 13:13-14). Here we have three couplets of vices. These show the progression of sin which leads the sinner onward till his conscience becomes so seared he will justify almost anything (proverbs 30:20; James 1:13-15; Romans 6:23).

(5) "Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation" (I Peter 2:1-2, ASV).

(6) Christians should lay aside all excuses, all worry and anxiety, and then put their faith and trust in Him who cares for us all (Luke 12:22-34; Matthew 6:25-34; I Peter 5:7).

(7) We should lay aside all long-felt grief and unassuaged sorrow, as much as is possible. Life must go on; it is unfruitful to try to live in the past. There are some things which we must not allow to dominate our minds. David the King is a wonderful

example for us. When his son died, he changed his perspective, and tried to return to his normal way of living (II Samuel 12:23).

Why dwell upon words which cannot be recalled? (Psalm 64:1-10). Why should we punish ourselves acts which cannot be undone? If you are a Christian, repent of your transgression, confess it to God and to others who may be involved, and then trust God to do what He has promised (Hebrews 8:10-13; I John 1:6-10; 2:1-5). Why should we torment ourselves with the sad refrain of "What Might Have Been?"

If past mistakes can be undone, then, by all means, let us do so; but if we cannot, it is time for us to readjust our thinking processes. Into the most sheltered life, storms and disappointments, sickness and death, are destined to come; but instead of permitting such to wreck our lives, we can use them as stepping stones toward success (I Peter 1:4-7; Romans 8:28). We should remember, that the same flame that melts the wax will also harden the clay.

## *What is Grace?*

DENNIS LOYD

When God completed the six days of creation in which He made the earth with everything in and on it, he pronounced His work as "very good" (Genesis 1:31). The physical world was complete and ready to be enjoyed by the man and woman put there. But the plan of redemption with its spiritual benefits was yet to be unfolded. A selection process was begun as God first granted direction for spiritual matters to be overseen by heads of households. The patriarchs, the fathers, served as prophets and priests in that interval. In time God chose a nation and developed for Israel a much more elaborate process for honouring and serving Him.

God mapped out for Israel an elaborate system of laws given by His own decree to Moses. In those laws all aspects of life were outlined as to how men were to live with themselves (matters of health), with one another (social and family matters),



and with God (ceremonial and ritual details).

"When the fullness of the time had come" (Galatians 4:4) is the expression Paul uses to announce that God's Son, born to a woman under that law, had come to redeem mankind. God was moving toward the completion of all spiritual benefits for His creation. His full purpose became reality when Jesus, on the cross, cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Earlier in His prayer in the Garden, Jesus had said, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4).

Any consideration of the power of God—His benevolence, His providence, and all other manifestations of His greatness—must ultimately cause us to reflect on how much better off we are under the law of Christ than the people who lived under the Law of Moses were. The writer of Hebrews spends much of his book explaining that fact as he repeatedly uses the word "better" to describe the promises and provisions found in Christ.

Perhaps no clearer expression of that reality can be seen than in the comparison between what the Jews could anticipate in their worship and what Christians can know in our devotion. When Moses passed on God's plans for the tabernacle, one of the major elements to be found within the Most Holy Place was a mercy seat (Exodus 37:6-9), located on top of the ark of the covenant. On the annual Day of Atonement, when the high priest went behind the veil to enter that most sacred place to appeal to God for all the people, the best he could hope for was mercy. The blood was offered to beg God to be merciful. There was no efficacy in the blood nor was there any act to be performed by the people who enable them to anticipate more than God's pity and mercy.

In contrast, the Christian is assured that his High Priest has passed through a true veil—the heavens—to abide for eternity. Because Jesus now intercedes for us, we are encouraged, even urged to "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

The Israelites were offered a mercy seat where all they could hope for was mercy, a word suggesting pity. On the other hand the Christian enjoys mercy and even more, for he can approach the throne of grace. Mercy came after the fact, after

the sin was committed, but grace was granted at the death of Jesus—a grace that looked forward to all those times when it would be needed. Through the blood of Jesus, God granted salvation through grace, a salvation Paul calls “the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

On the purely human level, we understand why we enjoy the giving of gifts; we give because we love those to whom we give and desire to make their lives better. God, through His grace, gives salvation because of His love for His creation, especially for His recreation. The words of John 3:16 continue to remind us that “God so loved the world that He gave.”

When James says that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17 NKJV), he forces us to think outside the box of our usual list of blessings. In the midst of and rising above material, physical, social and personal gifts, there is the supreme gift of salvation. Even with a minimal understanding of grace, a sensitive soul would readily acknowledge how underserving each person is of that gift. At the same time, the acknowledgement must also note the ineptness of each of us to perform enough acts of service to earn such a gift. But God in His goodness and His kindness still expects from each one the act of obedience. Eden was a gift to Adam and Eve, but God demanded obedience. Disobedience deprived that wonderfully blessed pair of all the wonder of God's benevolence. So it is with us. Grace is God's gift. Salvation is God's gift. But Jesus tells us we must hear the words and obey them to gain eternal life. Obedience precedes salvation.

The definition so often given for grace that calls it “unmerited favour” certainly contains much truth, but those words put most of the emphasis on the ones receiving the grace and on their lack of merit. No one can dispute that truth. However, we need to place the emphasis on God more often, for He is the one granting the favour, the grace. He loved, He gave, and He saves. What a God we serve! With the plan of redemption fully unfolded and the offering of grace a reality, we now affirm with God's own words that when we as His children have received is indeed “very good.”



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