

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 32

March 2002

No. 11

EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved”

The apostle Paul made the above statement in Romans 10:9, concerning the nation of Israel who had rejected Christ, and had asked for His death on the cross from the Romans. Paul himself was a Jew, an Israelite, he himself was against Christ and His followers, even to the extent that he persecuted Christians (Acts 9:1&2; Philippians 3:4-11). But when he himself heard the saving gospel of Christ, and believed in Him and obeyed His commands to be saved, and became himself a follower of Christ, he wrote at 1 Timothy 1:13: “Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” And, now, he was concerned about all the other Israelites. He wanted them too to be saved from sin, as he was. So he said, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” But is that all one has to do to be saved, according to the Bible, that is, confess with mouth The Lord Jesus and believe in Him? What about repentance and baptism? Didn't Christ say, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16)? And Peter

said, to the enquiring audience, "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins." (Acts 2:38). Notice, too, that Christ didn't mention repentance and confession in Mark 16:16 and Peter didn't mention belief and confession in Acts 2:38, as necessary ingredients for salvation.

Suppose, someone says, I need air ticket to go to the United Kingdom. Is he wrong in saying that? No. Suppose, he says, I need Passport and visa to go to the U.K. Is he not telling the truth? The fact is, he needs all the necessary items, the air ticket, and passport, and visa, to go to the U.K.

Sometimes people make mistake by drawing conclusion from reading a particular verse of the Scripture on a given subject while ignoring other related passages of the Scripture on the same subject. According to the Bible, one must believe in Christ, and repent of sin, and confess Christ to be the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of sins to be saved from sin. Not anyone thing, but all are necessary. (Acts 8:35-39; 22:1-16). One is saved by faith (John 3:16), but not by faith only (James 2:24). Likewise, one is saved by baptism (1 Peter 3:21) but, as Peter said at Acts 2:38, one must also repent before being baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Let the Bible, God's Word, be the standard of authority, especially more so, when it concerns the eternal salvation of the soul. After all, we have only one life to live on earth!

Don't Be Ashamed

J.C. CHOATE

Many are ashamed of the gospel of Christ. They are ashamed to let others know that they believe in God, and that they are followers of Christ. They are ashamed of the church and are ashamed to proclaim that it is the only church that was bought and cleansed by the blood of our Lord. They are reluctant to speak out against things that are wrong and to stand up for the truth.

Why do people remain quiet? Because they love the world

and want to be with the majority in the secular world and also in the religious world. They want to be popular and accepted. They don't want to be considered narrow-minded and associated with the minority. Rather than speak out for Christ, they quietly try to blend with their friends and neighbours, with their family members who are not Christians, so that no one will have hard feelings toward them. Their attitude is opposite that of early Christians who were willing to die rather than deny their Lord. They rejoiced *"that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name"* (Acts 5:41).

The Apostle Paul said, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith"* (Romans 1:16,17).

We read, *"As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed"* (Roman 9:33). Again, *"For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed"* (Romans 10:11).

Paul declared, *"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death"* (Philippians 1:20).

Paul continues, *"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:*

"Wherefore I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:81-12).

Again, Paul said, "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Timothy 2:15). The Hebrew writer, in speaking of God and His children, said, "*For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee*" (Hebrews 2:10-12). Continuing, he says, "*But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city*" (Hebrews 11:16).

Peter wrote, "*Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that ye might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit*" (1 Peter 3:16-18). He goes on to say, "*But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief; or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf*" (1 Peter 4:15-16).

Christ said, "*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever therefore shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 10:32,33). He also said, "*Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels*" (Mark 8:38).

My friend, where do you stand before the Lord?

- Do you believe in Him (Hebrews 11:6; John 14:1), or do you reject Him?
- Will you believe and be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16), or have you accepted the teachings of men?
- Are you a member of the Lord's church (Matthew

16:18), or do you belong to a denominational church that began with man?

- Do you wear the name of Christ (Acts 4:12), or do you wear a man-made name?

Remember that in the last day we will be judged by the word of the Lord itself (John 12:48).

Please do not reject Christ and His will. Do not be ashamed of Him. Believe in Him, obey Him, and live for Him, and one day He will acknowledge you as His own and give you an eternal home in heaven.

Should I Be Re-Baptized?

FRANCIS DAVID

The command of baptism is always under attack by the religious groups. A lot of people are confused about it and the reason is that they do not go to the Scriptures to find the facts. The Word of God plainly tells us that there is one baptism. Writing to the church at Ephesus apostle Paul says: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, ONE BAPTISM; one God and Father of all . . ." (Eph. 4:4-6). When a person hears the gospel of Christ and he wants to obey it, we take him to the watery grave so that he could be baptised in order to be added to the one church or body of Christ. (Acts 2:47).

Maybe you must have studied the Bible carefully and you are pretty close to the truth and the facts of the gospel. Now you know about the one true church and the plan of salvation, but you may be hesitant to be baptised. You are hesitating to go to the water, because you think that you have been baptised already. But you need to understand that when earlier you were baptised or maybe sprinkled, you were ignorant about the church and therefore you were not added to that one true church. Someone might have taught you that you believe in Jesus and later you could be baptised according to your own convenience, but this is not right according to Scriptures. The man from Ethiopia was baptised immediately as soon as he believed on

Jesus (Acts 8:29-38), and there are many other examples that we can read in the book of Acts. When people understood the truth they were baptised immediately. Did you know that baptism is a burial and when a person is baptised, he is baptised into Christ's death? If you did not have this knowledge before your baptism, your baptism was invalid before God. (Rom. 6:4-6).

Jesus said: "He that believes and is baptised shall be saved." (Mark 16:16). Apostle Peter told the crowd on the day of Pentecost that they must repent of their sins and be baptised (Acts 2:38). There is no doubt, some of the people in that crowd who were already baptised by John the Baptist, but these people did not make an excuse that we are already baptised by John. But when they heard the truth they were willing to be baptised and they did and the record says that there were about three thousand souls that day added to the church. (Acts 2:47).

In Acts chapter 19 one to five verses, we read about some people, who were baptised by John the baptist but when Paul taught them, they were baptised right there. These people did not argue with Paul and they did not say: no we don't want to be baptised but instead they were willing to obey the truth in a right manner.

What about you today? Do you think you were baptised rightly, according to the Scriptures? May be you were baptised to get admission in a denomination or to join a denomination or may be sprinkled as a baby. I urge you to think about it seriously and do the right thing. Jesus has only one church and that is His body. He is the Saviour and Master of His church. The salvation is only in His church. The church is His bride (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:22-32). According to the Scriptures, if we want to obey the Lord we must believe in Him, confess Jesus as the Son of God, need to repent of our old sinful life and be baptised for the remission of Sins. Wouldn't you do it today?

The Christian Life—Practical?

STEVE WILLIAMS

Is it possible to live the Christian life as outlined in the

teachings of Jesus Christ, or is it meant only for an elite few? Jesus warned, "The gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Mt. 7:14). Upon telling the rich, young ruler to sell all his possessions, Jesus remarked, "It will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 19:24). The disciples were troubled with the practicality of the Christian life and wondered, "Who then can be saved?" (Mt. 19:25).

It is usually the *negative* sayings of Jesus that cause us to wonder if the Christian ethic is practical, but the *positive* demands of the gospel ought to cause us to wonder just as much. Not only does Jesus demand complete self-denial, but also absolute love of God. The only reason why the requirement for loving God with all our being does not bother us as much as the hard, negative sayings, of Jesus is that our concept of love is defective. We think of love in terms of our affection for our family. As George Thomas put it, "A man cannot even *imagine* what it would be like to love God with his *whole self* or his neighbour *as himself*. Man's . . . complacent illusion that he can fulfill the demands of the law of love is dispelled when he realizes that love of neighbour includes any and every neighbour, even his enemy, and that it requires him to serve all his neighbour's needs and to forgive him over and over again" (*Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, p. 519).

Is the Christian life practical? We might answer with Jesus, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Mt. 19:26). From one standpoint, the Christian life seems like an impossible goal or standard; however, history has demonstrated that by the grace of God, multitude of ordinary people have lived transformed, and sanctified lives. Reinhold Niebuhr called Jesus' ethic the "impossible possibility." It appears impossible, but if we will attempt by the grace of God to live the Christian life, much of the impossible can be realized.

The Holy Spirit and the Word

DILLARD THURMAN

It is often difficult to lead people to see the close relationship sustained by the Holy Spirit to the Word of God in the salvation of sinful man. Many times people are led to believe that the Holy Spirit operates separate and apart from God's word to save man, and even excludes the power of the word in saving man from sin. The work of the Holy Spirit should never be minimized nor discounted, but we should learn where and how the power of the Spirit is exerted. Then we shall also more fully evaluate the power of God's word, for they unite in our salvation.

Whereas the apostle Paul referred to the word of God as *"the gospel of your salvation"* (Eph. 1:13), he by no means downgraded the work of the Holy Spirit. For it is shown that the Spirit has revealed and confirmed the gospel. Paul also wrote, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation"* (Rom. 1:16). But Paul also realized that the Spirit gave the gospel its power.

That we may have greater clarity in this matter, we have presented in this lesson the things which the Holy Spirit and the word of God both do, or accomplish, in the God's plan for man's salvation. A careful and diligent study will disclose that the Spirit works through the word. They are not rivals and competitors, but collaborate in our reconciliation to God. The Holy Spirit presented the gospel which discloses the terms of salvation. By the joint power, a man may be saved from sin. In Eph. 6:17, we read, *"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* So, the sword of the Spirit is God's word. God's word is the weapon which the Holy Spirit uses in waging His spiritual warfare.

THE SPIRIT BEARS WITNESS

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16). From this we find that the Holy Spirit bears witness. But Jesus said, *"ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me"* (John 5:39). The Scriptures (the

word of God) bear witness, even as does the Spirit. As we look further, we find that the Spirit also testifies: *"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning"* (John 15:26-27). Thus, it is made clear that the Holy Spirit testifies through the word of God. Aside from that word, given by the Spirit, there is no testimony.

THE HOLY SPIRIT INSTRUCTS

The Spirit has been employed to instruct man in God's will. *"Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands"* (Neah. 9:30). But instruction is also imparted by the Scriptures: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim. 3:16-17). So, we find that both the Spirit and the word instruct. For the Spirit uses the word to impart God's instructions. They do not work independently or separately.

THE SPIRIT CONVICTS THE SINNER

Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, *"And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"* (John 16:8). Then, in Titus 1:9, it is written, *"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers"* (Titus 1:9). From these two passages, we learn that both the Spirit and the word of God convict (or, convince) the world. But a careful investigation discloses that the Holy Spirit reproves through the word which He has delivered and confirmed.

THE HOLY SPIRIT BEGETS

There can be no spiritual life without the Holy Spirit, for *"The Spirit giveth life"* (2 Cor. 3:6). And James wrote, *"Of his own will*

begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). The apostle Paul wrote of the Corinthians, *"For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel"* (1 Cor. 4:15). The Holy Spirit gives life when one is begotten by the gospel which the Spirit has given.

BORN OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus 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"* (John 3:5). So, one must be born of the Spirit. The spiritual birth is explained more fully in 1 Pet. 1:22-23, *"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."* So, one is born by the word of God, which is the *"seed of the kingdom"* (Luke 8:11). The Spirit operates through the word of God to produce a new creature in God's spiritual family.

THE SPIRIT SAVES MEN FROM SIN

The apostle Paul wrote, *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit"* (Titus 3:5). But joined with this is the admonition from James 1:21, *"Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."* The Spirit saves us, and so does the word of God (Rom. 1:16). Thus, the Holy Spirit uses His word to save us.

THE HOLY SPIRIT SANCTIFIES

After showing the base state of the unsaved, Paul wrote, *"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God"* (1 Cor. 6:11). This power to sanctify (or "set apart") which is here credited to the Holy Spirit, is also exerted through the word of God, for Jesus prayed, *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"* (John 17:17). People who respond to the influence of the Holy Spirit to be set apart, or sanctified, are responding to the word which the Spirit gave.

THE HOLY SPIRIT CLEANSSES

The cleansing power of the Spirit is also exerted through the word of God, for the Lord Jesus said: *"Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you"* (John 15:3). This cleansing is shown again in Eph. 5:25-26, *"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word"* (Eph. 5:25-26). This cleansing is accomplished by a washing in water which is taught in the word by the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLS IN THE CHRISTIAN

The apostle Paul wrote, *"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his . . . But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you"* (Rom. 8:9-11). So, the Holy Spirit dwells in Christians. But Paul also write, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom"* (Col. 3:16). The Holy Spirit and the word of God both dwell in the Christian. And the Spirit dwells in us in correlation to the word which we imbibe!

THE HOLY SPIRIT STRENGTHENS

Another joint participation of the Spirit and the word of God is in imparting strength to the Christian. *"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man"* (Eph. 3:16). But the apostle also said, *"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified"* (Acts 20:32). The Spirit strengthens, and the word of God builds us up. Surely we can see that the Spirit builds us up and strengthens us through the word of God.

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In Rom. 15:13, Paul speaks of *"the power of the Holy Spirit."* It was by His power that light came into the world (Gen. 1:2-3). And the power in the creation is revealed in Heb. 1:3, as we read of God and *the word of his power."* So, again we find the parallel.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE RESURRECTION

Also, in Rom. 8:11, the resurrection is said to be by the Spirit. And Jesus said in John 5:28-29 that it is by the word of God. Still there is no rivalry. This is not competitive action, but the Spirit of God moving and working through the word of God.

Many people are standing apart from salvation which the Spirit offers through God's word because they have been led to believe that the Spirit will work some miracle of faith within them. But God declares, "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). The first gospel sermon was presented by the apostles "*as the Spirit gave them utterance*" (Acts 2:4). But notice the result: "*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls*" (Acts 2:41). The Spirit gave the word of God, but that word had to be accepted in "*obedience of faith*" (Rom. 1:5) in order for them to be saved.

The Heart Of A Christian

WALTER SWAIN

We may often sing the song, "Is Thy Heart Right With God?" This is a question each of us needs to ask of ourselves. The Christian faith is above all a religion of the heart. Though outward doctrine, acts, and ways of worship are important, all of these are but the expression of the heart. Jesus said of the Jews, "This people honoreth Me with the lips, But their heart is far from Me" (Matthew 15:8).

We often speak of those who have the "heart of an athlete," or the "heart of a fighter." But, in the following Jesus, we must have the heart of a Christian, if we are to be "right with God." Paul encourages us to be transformed in our hearts (Romans 12:2). This is to be accomplished by renewing our minds spiritually. Two basic things are necessary to do this. We must know what the "heart" is as used in the New Testament, and we must know how to develop the heart of a Christian.

The Greek word for heart is "kardia." But, as used in the New Testament it generally applies to the inner man, rather than

the physical heart that pumps blood through our bodies. The Bible heart is composed of our parts. It involves the intellectual capacity of man, or his ability to know, reason, figure logically, remember, Adam was created with full mental capacity, and was even able to name all the animals. This part of the heart is important to our faith. Emotions are another part of the heart. We have feelings such as love, hate, joy, sadness. Emotions play an important part in having the heart of a Christian. God also made us with a will. Not only can we make everyday decisions in life, but we can also make moral decisions. This makes us responsible for our own thoughts and actions and becomes the basis of eventual judgment by God. The last part of the heart is the conscience. The sole function of the conscience is to tell us if we have done right or wrong, according to what we have been taught is right and wrong.

These four parts of the heart are all to be effected by our Christian faith. To have the heart of a Christian, each part of the heart must be trained, and is to reflect Christ's teaching and influence.

We must, first of all, have an *informed mind*. Paul encourages all Christians to study the Scriptures with diligence, that we may be able to "handle aright the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). Each Christian is responsible for his/her own growth intellectually. Personal study on a daily basis, attending Bible classes, and teaching others will help us to have an informed mind. We are to fill our minds with the right things (Philippians 4:8-9), and to think about the things above (Colossians 3:1,2). The Christian faith is based on doctrine, and to know that doctrine is of utmost importance.

Secondly, we need to have a *sincere mind* (Philippians 1:9,10). The emotions must be true and sincere, and not superficial. We must not be "double-minded" (James 1:8;4:8). Our emotions should truly express the feelings of our heart, and our words should express the true sentiment of the heart.

We must also have a humble mind. We are to have the same mind as Christ Who humbled Himself to become a man and to die on the cross (Philippians 2:5-8). We are never to consider ourselves better than others (Romans 12:8). Humility must characterize all our relationships with others.

Our conscience must also be properly taught and obeyed

Jeremiah said that the heart is "deceitful" (Jeremiah 17:9). Therefore, we must have an honest heart. To violate our conscience is to be dishonest. In the parable of the sower, in Luke 8:15, Jesus declared, "And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience." James said, "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). The heart of a Christian is above all an honest heart.

Is thy heart right with God? We cannot play mind games with God. He knows our hearts. We need the heart of a Christian if we are to live godly lives on this earth and reach the home in heaven.

Grow Or Die!!

ROD RUTHERFORD

An unchanging law of nature is "grow or die." A newborn baby must begin to grow as soon as he is born. It is against nature for him to refuse the milk provided for him. A newborn Christian must also grow, or else he will die spiritually. The apostle Peter commanded: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby" (I Peter 2:2).

It is also true that a church must grow or eventually it will die. Real growth can occur only when God's Word, the seed of the kingdom, is sown in good and honest hearts and bears fruit (Luke 8:5-15). While it is true that God gives the increase, growth cannot come unless first the seed is planted (I Corinthians 3:6-9).

You and I, as members of God's kingdom, the church, are sowers of the seed (Matthew 28:19-20; II Timothy 2:2). We have the awesome responsibility and wonderful privilege of bringing the message of hope, the Gospel of Christ, to lost and dying men and women. If we do our part, God will do His.

We will see the church grow in proportion to the amount of seed sown: "He which soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly" (II Corinthians 9:6). The first century church at

Jerusalem still amazes Christians today with its tremendous and very rapid growth. The secret of that growth was very simple: "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42). The result of all this teaching was that souls were daily added to the church (Acts 2:47).

Do we want the church to grow or die? Whether it grows or dies is in our hands. If we want it to grow, we must be willing to make the sacrifice of time, energy, and effort to teach the Gospel to others.

Taking A Stand

TOM KELTON

God calls us to declare publicly on which side we are.

Beginning with our first parents, the alternatives are clearly spelled out: obedience or disobedience; life or death; loyalty or disloyalty. Take your choice. But, you must choose.

"And the Lord God commanded man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" (God to Adam and Eve, Genesis 2:16-17).

"I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore, choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice, and cleaving to Him." (Moses to the people of Israel, Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua to the people of Israel, Joshua 24:15).

"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him but if Baal, then follow him." (Elijah at Mt. Carmel, I Kings 18:21).

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one and despise

the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Jesus, Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:24).

"No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Jesus, to a would-be follower, Luke 9:62).

"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth." (The Holy Spirit to the church, Revelation 3:16).

From Genesis to Revelation, the challenge is the same: choose your side! Be committed! Declare yourself! Take a stand!

Despite all the incentives to straddle, limp, vacillate, and hesitate, there are some compelling reasons for taking a stand. I'd like to suggest three.

Integrity compels us to declare ourselves. Jesus was right. No one can be loyal to two masters at the same time.

Obedience compels us to declare ourselves. One is obedient from the heart to the doctrine of Christ and is made free from sin when one is baptized. We pledge ourselves to stand with Christ all the rest of our days. To do this, we must contend for the faith that once for all has been delivered to the saints.

Love compels us to declare ourselves. "For the love of Christ constrains us" (II Corinthians 5:14). We must give ourselves wholly to a defense of the Gospel. Although one can give without loving one cannot love without giving. God loved us so much that He gave. When we truly love Him in return, we also will give: of our lives, our commitment, our ambitions, our money, our time, our talents, our all.

When we do that, we will know, and God will know, and the world will know on whose side we really are.

Harden Not Your Heart

KEITH HINDS

A prevalent problem in the church today is the individual who possesses a hardened heart. In addition to the many non-Christians with hardened hearts, there are many Christians whose hearts have become hardened because of a failure to

totally commit their lives to God, with the possibility of being completely unaware of their hardened condition.

Pharaoh's heart was hardened (Exodus 4:21; 8:15) because of his resistance to the demands made upon him by God. The word "hard," when used in reference to the heart or will of man means: stubborn, stout resistance, obstinate, blind, gradual loss of spiritual perception, insensibility, and want of conviction. In the manner of Pharaoh, many have become hardened by their continual stubbornness, insensibility, and sin. The writer to the Hebrews insists that we ". . . exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). The warning against being hardened is so vital that the writer repeats the words, "harden not your hearts," three times in the context (Hebrews 3:8,15; 4:7). The importance of the subject suggests that we understand the different ways of being hardened, the causes of it, and the preventive and cures for the hardened heart.

EXAMPLES OF THE HARDENED HEART

1. The person who refuses to obey the Gospel becomes hardened. There are many people who hear the Gospel preached over and over again, yet never obey. We can not understand why, and may begin to wonder if they are even listening. They have refused to obey so often that they have become insensitive to the message, and it soon means nothing to them at all.

2. Some Christians become involved immorally and soon become hardened. Such Christians may be attending the public worship, yet secretly be involved in fornication, drugs, drunkenness, and such like. There have been known cases of an individual involved in fornication or adultery for a long time who seemed to be an active and devout Christian. When the sin is discovered, we are amazed. Such ones have become as those of whom Paul spoke in II Timothy 3:5: "holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof . . ." These have become so hardened in heart that they no longer feel guilty about the sin they have committed.

3. There are some who become hardened in their sins of

omission. Such sins would include forsaking the assembling, failing to give properly, unwillingness to study the Bible and neglecting to do good works. Such sins are as harmful as the so-called sins of immorality. James says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves" (James 1:22).

CAUSE OF THE HARDENED HEART

The Bible states quite simply what makes one's heart become hardened. The inspired writer declares in Hebrews 3:13: ". . . lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Paul says in Ephesians 4:22: "that ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit." Sin is deceitful because it makes promises it can not fulfill. It offers pleasure which quickly fades away. It takes us further than we ever imagined when we first participated in it. Sin is camouflaged by pleasure and is constantly searching for excuses and justification. The person who first indulges in a particular sin attempts to comfort himself by saying, "It's not really so bad;" "there's nothing wrong with it;" "it won't hurt anyone;" "no one will ever find out or deceive himself by saying, "I just can't do any better;" or "I've always made it okay before, so no need to change now;" or "I'm not doing any less than any one else." After a long period of deception, the sinner becomes entirely hardened, characterized with stubbornness and insensitivity, concerning his sin and the condition of his soul.

PREVENTIVES AND CURES

1. Exhort One Another

This is the solution offered in Hebrews 3:13 to prevent one from becoming hardened. We are encouraged elsewhere in the New Testament to be responsible for the spiritual welfare of our brother: Hebrews 10:24: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works;" Galatians 6:1: "Ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness" (cf. I Thessalonians 5:11; James 5:19,20). In spite of the many Scriptures which teach us to exhort one another, a prevalent attitude among brethren is: "I don't want to stir up any trouble;" or "If he wants to endanger his soul, that's his own business." There

must be more concern for one another in the church.

2. Listen To Exhortation

When someone shows concern for our spiritual welfare, we need to be grateful to them and not say, "I wish you would mind your own business," or "he has no right to interfere with my life." Be willing to correct an error when a brother points it out.

3. Look At Sin In Its True Sense

If a person could look ahead to the ugly, horrible consequences of sins such as fornication and drunkenness, it might help that person to abstain from the sin, or stop before becoming hardened. The deceitfulness of sin makes that a difficult task. However, a look to the future would cause many to see the fate of sin and lead them to a change in direction.

Examine Self

A daily examination of one's spiritual life would prevent many Christians from becoming hardened in their unfaithfulness. Paul advises in II Corinthians 13:5, "Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves."

5. Plan To Stop Sinning Now—Today

Too many of us plan to work more, give more, study more, attend more, or stop sinning, sometime in the future. The word "today," as used by the writer to the Hebrews, proclaims the urgency of repentance and salvation. Now is the time, and today is the day to change. Harden not your heart!

The Kind of Preaching Needed Today

H. LEO BOLES

The kind of preaching that we need today is just the kind that Jesus and the apostles gave to the world. The churches of Christ were established and guided in their work and worship in the first century by the preaching that we have recorded in the New Testament Scriptures. Churches were established by that kind of preaching in cities, villages, and countries. They were developed and fulfilled their mission under the guidance of the

instruction given us in the New Testament. They were successful then under such preaching and can be today under such preaching. In fact, no church can fulfill its mission on earth and glorify God, except it follow the instruction given to the early churches. Just what is needed for churches today may be found in what was needed for the churches then. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles and evangelists in giving to the churches then what was needed.

The public preaching today and the public teaching today must be plain, positive, direct, and Scriptural. All public preaching and teaching of the Gospel should be done in humility and reverence for God's truth, and should be given in kindness and in earnestness. No hypocrite can preach the truth of God with the power and persuasion that should ever accompany the preaching of the Gospel. Mere generalities and negative preaching will not meet the requirements of this age or any other age. The history of all successful Gospel preachers bears witness that they were in earnest and clothed in humility in proclaiming the Gospel to the lost and in edifying the saints of God. This age needs, and the churches of Christ should demand, that the simple truths and principles of the New Testament be preached. Neither the world nor the church needs rhetorical sentimentalities nor oratorical sermonettes. The preaching should be direct and should meet the needs of the hearers. There should be no rehash or slavish repetition of the sermons of some famous evangelist or preacher of worldly renown. The preacher should be "hidden behind the cross," and his sermons should come from his heart and life as he has drawn them from the New Testament teaching. The churches do not need sanctified dullness, nor every learned dissertations, nor scientific smatterings, nor elocutionary artifices. No church can thrive spiritually upon such food, and truly no sinner can be converted to Christ by such preaching.

Not only should the preaching be simple and direct and positive, but it should instruct, reprove, rebuke, and exhort. The preacher should "preach the Word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching" (II Timothy 4:2). The preacher should adjust his own life with the truth of God, and then his reproofs and exhortations will have greater force. No one need think that he can preach the

Gospel as it was done in the first century without rebuking sin. The preacher who is afraid to rebuke sin in the spirit of Christ is unworthy to be called a "preacher of the Gospel." The preacher who is too cowardly to rebuke sin as God's Book does is unworthy to be classed as preacher of the Gospel. *The public preacher and the teacher of the Gospel must rebuke sin.* This should be done in love and gentleness, but it should be done with firmness and positiveness. The world needs such bold and heroic preaching as will rebuke sin even in high places, and all who are guilty of public and popular sins. Much preaching today is done in such generalities and is so pointless and timid that it has lost its power. Nothing will stir the churches and shake the world but *positive preaching*. When preaching is not antagonistic to sin and is popular with the world, we may know that it will accomplish but little good. There should be no timid apology offered for the rebuking of sin in the world or in the church. The power and majesty and holiness of the truth of God demand that it be preached in such a way as to rebuke elders, preachers, the wealthy, the poor, and every class that may be guilty of sin. No preacher can preach the Gospel as it should be preached unless he preaches because his heart is in the work, and not "for filthy lucre's sake, but of a ready mind."

There is need at the present time for preaching that will correct all the evils in the church and point sinners "to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." The preaching needed today should encourage the cultivation of personal holiness and consecration of God. It should encourage all church members to be earnest, prayerful students of the Bible and willing to sacrifice and serve in the name of Christ as opportunity is offered them. The preaching that is needed today should stimulate liberal giving and freewill offering to support the work of the church. No preacher of the Gospel should hold back the stern and stubborn truths of the Gospel which teach God's people to be liberal with their means and to "honour Jehovah with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase" (Proverbs 3:9). The preaching needed today should teach God's people to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God and to keep themselves unspotted from the world. If such preaching is done, there will be a revival of church activities and a large increase in additions to the church.

You Can Be Just A Christian

Dear Friend:

Did you know that you can be a Christian—just a Christian only—a member of the church you read about in the New Testament; have your sins forgiven, enjoy the promise of eternal life—and never join any religious denomination? You can be a Christian only and never bow to any human rules in religion or be bound down by any human creeds.

All over the world today, thousands of people are reading the New Testament of Christ our Lord, and learning the way of salvation (**Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me. John 14:6**). As these people read the words of the New Testament of Christ, they find that the Word of God is the seed of the kingdom of God, which is the church of Christ our Master (**Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Luke 8:11**) (**And I also say unto Thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Matthew 16:18,19**). That seed of the kingdom, which was preached by the early evangelists in New Testament days, produced after its kind, and brought forth Christians, members of the church of Christ. Since that precious seed has not lost its power and since it has not changed, for the words of Christ shall not pass away, it will produce the same kind of religious people—Christians only—today (**Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. Mark 13:31**). These people as they continue to study the New Testament are learning that the Word, the seed, far from producing competing religious denominations, produces in this century just what it produced in that first century—Christians only, members of Christ's church.

Back in the New Testament days, when people who heard the gospel of Christ believed it, they were told to repent and to be baptized for the remission of their sins (**And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the**

name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38). Then, in that obedience, the Lord added them to the church **(And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved. Acts 2:47b).** This is plainly taught in the second chapter of Acts which describes the beginning of the Lord's church on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. The apostles preached Christ crucified, buried, and resurrected from the dead. Some of those who heard this preaching believed it; they were baptized into Christ **(For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. Galatians 3:27).** In this gospel obedience they were added to the church that Jesus built.

What denomination did they join? The answer is: None. They became Christians—just Christians only—and they were added to the Lord's church. They did not join any denomination, because the same obedience to the Lord that made them Christian also made them members of the church of Christ. Following this gospel obedience, they worked and worshipped God, guided by the further teachings of Jesus Christ. **(And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42).**

Since these people did not become members of any denomination, but Christians only by obeying the Word of the Lord, the seed of the kingdom, then it follows that all people, in any century of time until the world ends, will also become Christians only, because the Word of the Lord does not pass away. The seed produced Christians—just Christians—then, and it does the same thing today. You can be a Christian only, and never join any denomination.

Today, you can hear the same gospel; you can believe the same gospel from the New Testament. You can believe, repent, confess Christ, and be baptized for the remission of your sins **(And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38.** Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of

the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with *him* in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection. Romans 6:3-5). The Lord, Who is no respecter of persons, will add you to the church, just as He added people in the first century. (And Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of person: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him. Acts 10:34,35).

Why not obey the Lord's Word, and become a Christian only?

If you need more information, write to us.

Why not be a Christian only and never join any denomination? Remember, Christ built the Church, but men built denominations.

FORM IV

(See Rule 8)

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

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

Sunny David

Dated March 2002

Publisher