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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”

Prior to bringing to their attention the fact that they had been saved by grace through faith, the apostle had told them that before that they were dead in trespasses and sins, as all are. (Ephesians 2:1-8). Because of sin, they were separated from God. (Isaiah 59:1,2; Romans 3:23). Sin was the cause of their separation from God. And sin is the cause even today that separates man from God. But the Bible teaches that “the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” (Titus 2:11). This means then that all people everywhere can be saved today by the grace of God. Every man and woman, and every boy and girl, who is accountable before God for his or her sin, can have this assurance from God Himself that everyone, who wishes to, can be saved from sin by the grace of God. Since the Bible declares that God is not a respecter of person, He shows no partiality, but in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted to Him. (Acts 10:34,35).

The word Grace is derived from the Latin word “gratia” and it means favour, goodwill, or kindness. It means the unmerited and freely given redeeming action of God through Christ by which sins of everyone are forgiven, according to the teaching of the New Testament of the Bible. Just as Christ Himself declared

at John 3:16, saying, "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." Before God we are all sinners. We have nothing that we can offer or give for our salvation from sin. God doesn't need money, flowers, fruits, animals, candles, or anything else. He himself is the creator of everything and everything belongs to Him. (Acts 17:24,25&29). God is not human, but He is Spirit (John 4:24). He knows that we have nothing that we can offer Him to have the forgiveness of our sins. And He knows that as long as we have sin in us we cannot return to Him with our sins. In His love, therefore, He Himself came down to save man from sin. Christ on earth was God manifested. (John 1:1,14). And when the appointed time came, He by his own knowledge and will gave Himself to be betrayed, and falsely accused, and to be crucified on a cross like a criminal. (Acts 2:23). Not man, but God did it, as the Scripture says, "that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone." (Hebrews 2:9).

When Christ charged His disciples to go to preach His Gospel to every creature, after His death and burial and resurrection; He was telling them that His gospel of grace was for everyone on earth. And He told them too, that "he who believes and is baptized will be saved." (Mark 16:16). The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared for all; all can appropriate the salvation of God by His grace. Trust and obey, because there is no other way.

Religious Error must be Condemned

J.C. CHOATE

With the many religions in the world today, there are those who would say that all of them simply represent different ways to reach heaven. If that were true, wouldn't it be nice? We could say, then, that all religious people will be saved. But, in all honesty, we can't say that. Why? Because there is **one God** in heaven, and **one saviour** who died for us that we might be saved. That one is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and **one true religion which He brought into the world.**

But wait! Even in Christianity there are many different

groups or churches that claim to be following the Lord. Some people would point out all of the good things that these groups are doing, based on their sincerity, sacrificial service, and their desire to go to heaven. But we need to go back to the days of Christ and see how He dealt with religious division, conflicting doctrines, and hypocrisy among the people in His audiences. Did he fellowship *all religious people* of His time, commend them, and encourage them in their religious activities? You know that He didn't. Rather, He openly pointed out their errors and condemned their teachings. Read through Matthew 23 if you are not convinced. Jesus said, *"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."* (Matthew 23:13-15). Again, Christ said, *"For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."* (Matthew 24:5). And if that is not enough, listen to these words by our Lord: *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* (Matthew 7:21-23). Now why did the Lord say these things about these people? Weren't they religious and sincere? Didn't they want to do God's will? Yes, but they were wrong, and they were deceiving their listeners, and leading them astray. The Lord could not accept this. He therefore condemned them.

How did Paul deal with the false teachers of his day? Did he agree with them, accept them, justify their teachings, or what? Paul said to the Galatians, *"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you*

than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:7-9). To the Corinthian Christians, he pleaded, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (1 Corinthians 1:10). He wrote to the Roman Christians, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."* (Romans 16:17,18).

Now did Christ and Paul, and the other Apostles and faithful Christians of their day enjoy finding fault and condemning those in error? Did they have a *"holier than thou"* attitude? Were they simply looking for someone to correct and criticize? No, they loved the souls of men. Christ died for the sins of the world and Paul died as a martyr for Christ, so their love was great—but, at the same time, they knew that man could not be saved in sin, in error, in teaching false doctrines. Following error would not save them and it would not save those who were deceived or misled by them.

Likewise today, there are many religious people in the world, many who even claim to be following Christ. No doubt, they are good people; they give their lives to the Lord; they are hard workers; but they believe and practice many things that are nowhere found in God's word: such as, they can be saved by faith only, that one church is as good as another, that wearing the name of Christ isn't important, that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are honest and sincere, etc., etc., etc. They forget that **God** is the authority in all religious matters—and that man's only choice is to *obey*. So, shall we overlook their disobedience, their presumption in making their own rules and establishing their own churches? Shall we accept them as God's people, and work with them? Can we do that? I know we get tired of pointing out false teaching, and of being condemned ourselves by the accusation that we are those religious bigots who think we are the only ones going to heaven. But we cannot betray our Lord by refusing to echo the truth He laid down in His

word. He Himself suffered and even died because He would not compromise that truth. The apostles taught that **the way is narrow**, and they, too, died for their stand for the truth. All other faithful Christians in succeeding centuries have been persecuted and condemned for speaking the truth, but the solution cannot be to join the enemy. That will not save us or them. The only way any of us be saved—and that, by the grace of God—is to obey the Lord and to be faithful to Him in all that we say and do.

Especially For Women

The Trust Committed To Us

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1).

“O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and vain babblings (empty chatter) and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it, some have strayed concerning the faith” (1 Timothy 6:20).

“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13).

“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).

“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

“But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of; knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation

through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Preachers and classroom teachers would do well to listen closely to James' warning: *"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment"* (James 3:1). When Christians take on the responsibility of teaching the children and young people entrusted to their care, they must remember that one day they will answer to God for what they taught or failed to teach. No teacher can guarantee that continued faithfulness of all the children under his instruction, but every teacher owes it to himself to: (1) Study to know God's word well; (2) Be sure that the distinctive truths of God's word are the core of lessons taught, not 'pretty', 'fun' materials and denominational concepts.

Concerning the pulpit, every man who presumes to stand as a preacher before the Lord's church takes on himself an awesome responsibility. Each one should realize that assuredly God knows how much his preaching has strengthened or weakened the understanding of truth among his hearers. Men will answer in judgment for every congregation and every soul led into apostasy. Let no one think that the blood of the lost will not be required to him in the judgment, if his refusal to preach the whole truth was responsible.

None of us can do more and be more than what we *know*. If we know only a water-down denominationally acceptable social religion, instead of the Gospel, we will be no more than the denominational people around us. And in the Judgment, the Lord will count us as apostate, fallen souls.

Paul spoke with concern and urgency on this very subject when he wrote to Timothy. His words apply to every preacher today. *"O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and vain babblings (empty chatter) and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it, some have strayed concerning the faith"* (1 Timothy 6:20).

We cannot improve on the Holy Spirit's selection of words in these passages of stark warning. How clearly He stated that 'empty chatter' will not fill the soul's need! Instead, He showed that the message from the mind of God—not the pretty words of

men—is exactly right for “reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,” completely furnishing every need of the Christian.

The message even warns of the ever-present danger: the people with itching ears who “will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires . . . will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:1).

No preacher's story—or teacher's story—ends here in this world, though much of the fruit will be apparent as churches with which he works become stronger and radiate life, or grow weaker and eventually die. But the last chapter will be revealed at the judgment seat of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 Paul described what will happen then. First, he declared that Jesus Christ is the one and only true foundation. Then he talked of how teachers build on that foundation. We read his description of the 'building' as being “gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,” and we generally think this has reference to the spiritual qualities of the people being converted. But if we step back a little further, we may conclude that, often, the quality of the teaching—its spirituality and purity—determines the quality of the convert.

So, the question becomes, “What is the man teaching? The pure gold of God's word, or the hay and stubble of a 'social gospel'?” If he builds with the gold of truth, his work will endure the test of fire. If his teaching is the wood, hay, or straw of the doctrines of men—of 'empty chatter'—the souls won through his worldly teaching will not be able to stand.

If I presume to teach, I owe it to myself to ask, “What will the judgment reveal about my work? And about me?”

Don't Worry

FRANCIS DAVID

While Jesus was talking to the people at a mountain side, He taught them many things which are full of great treasure. He said: “Do not worry.” “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” Look at the birds of the air, for they

neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly FATHER feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry . . ." (Matt. 6:25-31). In these verses, Our Lord is trying to teach us that we should not worry for material things or put our trust on them. Sometime we are always busy thinking about physical things and we forget that there is a God in heaven who cares for us. We must put our trust in God and must seek his kingdom and righteousness and He has promised that all these things will be added unto you (Mt. 6:33). God has made us and He will provide the ways and means to sustain us but we must remember that anxiety will only make things worse for us.

The Bible tells us that we should rejoice in the Lord. Paul writes to the Christians at Phillippi: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." (Phil. 4:4). The problem with us is that we sometime always think about the bad side and not the good side. We think and are worried about trials, sorrows and unhappiness. We think about our lacking and forget to think about our blessings which we are enjoying right now. Some are just killing themselves emotionally, because they are worried about many things. Some even get sick, because of too much anxiety. It should be avoided and you can do it by realizing that you have one heavenly Father and He cares for you.

If we really want to be happy, then come to God and ask his help. Meditate on things which are spiritual and eternal and those things are "true, noble, just, pure, lovely, things are of good report, and he says, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy meditate on these things." (Phil. 4:8). We see verse 6 and there Paul says: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God." Rejoice and be glad, and if you worry then it will only hinder your spiritual growth.

Are you worried? Are you anxious about many things? I would suggest to you, to leave worrying and cast your burden on the Lord and this is what Peter says: " Casting all your cares

upon HIM, for He cares for you." (1 Pet. 5:7).

We sing a song which tells us that Jesus is our true friend. Take His help. "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear, what a privilege to carry, every thing to God in Prayer." "have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discourage, take it to the Lord in Prayer." If you are not a friend of Jesus, you can become today, by believing in Him, confessing Him as the Son of God, repenting of your sinful life and then be baptised, as you do this, you will be added to the church of Jesus by the Lord Himself and then it would be a blessing to you to rejoice in the Lord always. Wouldn't you do it today?

Partakers of the Divine Nature

THOMAS R. DOHLING

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these *you may be partakers of the divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1:3,4).

Peter asserts in the above passage that God's power has bestowed on Christians all things necessary for life and godliness. He goes on to speak of God having granted on Christians His precious and most magnificent promises viz., to become partakers of the divine nature. This is possible for all Christians those who have given up the corruption that is prevalent in the world and is produced through evil desire. The divine nature that Peter speaks of is the Christ-like nature that every Christian is instructed to wear (Romans 13:14).

Christians, now having the Christ-like nature after having exercised their faith in obedience to Christ's command to be baptized (immersed) (Mark 16:16) and having identified with Him in the watery grave of baptism (Romans 6:3 and following), are now exhorted by Peter to add virtue to their faith, knowledge to their virtue, temperance to knowledge, patience to temperance, godliness to patience, brotherly kindness to godliness and cover

these virtues with love. These are characteristics of the divine nature. We should do well to note that if these things are really ours and are continually increasing, they would keep us from becoming ineffective and unproductive in our pursuit of knowing our Lord Jesus Christ more intimately. The more intimately we know our Lord the more effective and productive for Him we will be.

There is a warning for those who have put on Christ but lack the characteristics of the divine nature. Peter says that such persons are nearsighted. Therefore, he goes on to exhort Christians to make every effort to be sure of their calling and election for by so doing they will never stumble into sin and an entrance into the eternal kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ would be richly provided to them. When Christians remain clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ, a permanent entrance into His kingdom is guaranteed.

Paul, talking about the Gentiles in Ephesians 4 (and we can apply their lifestyle to those without Christ) says that they live in the futility of their own thinking. Their understanding is darkened; they are not enlightened about the superior, spiritual life that the Lord Jesus Christ imparts because they are living apart from God and refuse to accept Him. Then in verse 20, he reminds them that they did not learn about Christ like this: Christ's nature is not like those living in and for the gratification and glorification of the flesh (carnal life). We learn that the Christians at Ephesus were taught to lay aside the old man who is being corrupted in accordance with its deceitful desires and to be "*renewed in the spirit of your mind and to put on the new man who has been created in God's image—in righteousness and holiness that comes from truth*" (verses 22-24).

Instructions regarding the new Christ-like life is given in verses 25-32 where Paul (under the direction of the Holy Spirit of God) lists out the following characteristics of the fleshly (carnal) nature that need to be wrenched out of the new man in Christ to be replaced by new characteristics of the divine nature:—

- Lay aside falsehood; *speak the truth.*
- Be angry; do not sin, *let your anger be temporary.*
- Do not give the devil an opportunity; *by being always clothed with Christ.*
- Do not steal; *rather labour, doing good with his own hands so as to share with the one who has need.*
- Do not use unwholesome words (no crude jokes or curse

words); *but only what is good and beneficial for edifying, that it may give grace unto the hearers.* In other words, be pleasant in your speech.

- ***Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.***
- Put away every kind of bitterness, anger, wrath, quarrelling, and evil, slanderous talk; instead *be kind to one another, compassionate, forgive one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.*

(To be continued . . .)

Let the Bible Answer

ROBERT MEREDITH

What happens after death? This is a subject in which most everyone is interested. There are many questions that God does not answer concerning the after life, but He tells us all we need to know. We know death will come, and afterwards we are going to be judged according to the deeds done in our body (Heb. 9:27; II Cor. 5:10). In Luke 16:19-31 Jesus reveals for us the account of the Rich man and Lazarus. This account teaches us much concerning what happens after death. There is a minor dispute concerning whether it is a true account or a parable. It really does not matter because a parable teaches truth. If this is a parable, it is still teaching the lessons that we will notice. Very likely this is a true account of an event which took place in the hadean realm.

Jesus reveals for us that the righteous are comforted and the wicked tormented (Lk. 16:22-23). For faithful Christians there is great comfort in this account; the Righteous do not die alone. Our Lord revealed, *"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."* Angels are there to accompany the righteous to Paradise. Jesus also informs us that the wicked will be punished. Furthermore, one can learn from this account that our memories go with us to the after life. Abraham, Lazarus and the Rich man knew who they were, could communicate, remembered their lives on earth, and their families.

Another lesson one needs to consider is that one's personality remains the same. While on earth the Rich man *"was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day."* No doubt he was used to people serving him and receiving

special treatment. He still wanted the same treatment! Not only did he want Lazarus to come serve him, but he also wanted special treatment for his family. He said, *"I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment."* Abraham told him that the word of God was sufficient to save them and that if they would not believe it, they would not obey even if one rose from the dead to tell them. Sadly many are just like the Rich man in that they are not satisfy with the power of the Word of God (Heb. 4:12).

Jesus also reveals to us that death seals our eternal destiny. In this account one can read, *"And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."* The Bible knows nothing of the doctrine of purgatory. It is impossible to pass from one compartment to another.

At death the spirit leaves the body (James 2:26) and returns to God via the hadean realm (Ecc. 12:7; Lk. 16:19-31). The body begins to decay and will be raised again at the Last Great Day (Ecc. 12:7; John 5:28-29; I Cor. 15:35-55). For the faithful child of God, death is a great reward (Phil. 1:23; Rev. 14:13), and therefore nothing to fear. Remember, a Christian does not die alone (Lk. 15:22A).

Contrast of the Two Covenants

CLEM THURMAN

All of us recognize that when a government changes, there is also a change in the laws that govern the people. For instance, Texas was for years under the rule of Mexico. But, fighting valiantly at the Alamo, Texans finally won their freedom at the battle of San Jacinto. They were then no longer under Mexican rule. Existing as an independent nation, they were no longer amendable to the laws of Mexico. The government being changed, there was also a change of laws.

Good and honest people can readily see the above principle, and understand it. But when it comes to the spiritual laws of God, many are yet blinded to this truth. The Bible speaks clearly of the Law of Moses being *"nailed to the cross"*

(Col. 2:14). The Law of Moses, including its laws of the Sabbath, laws of clean and unclean meats, laws of the priesthood, etc., was "taken away" at the cross of Christ (Heb. 7:18-19; Col. 2:14; etc.) As we read, "*For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law*" (Heb. 7:12). The "*first testament*" was taken away in order that the testament of Christ could be established (Heb. 9:15-17; 10:9-10).

The Bible shows, in Rom. 7:1-4, that the wife is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives. Then, "*If, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband die, she is free from the law . . . Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God*" (Rom. 7:3-4). Thus, when the Law of Moses was done away at the cross of Calvary, we were made free to be joined with Christ! Let us notice in this lesson some of the contrasts between the Law of Moses and the gospel of Christ.

THE GIVERS OF THE TWO COVENANTS

Keep in mind, that the first covenant was given by Moses: "*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*" (John 1:17). The prophet of old reminded Israel of this, "*Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel*" (Mal. 4:4). Although the idea may be distasteful to some folk, God declared that He gave the "*Law of Moses*" to Moses at Horeb (Mt. Sinai). And this included all of the law, of which the Ten Commandments formed a part. That law, in its entirety, was nailed to the cross, including the Sabbath and rules about feast days and meat and drink (Col. 2:14-17).

The new covenant "*came by Jesus Christ*" (John 1:17). The gospel of Christ had a different ring to it: "*He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes . . . All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth*" (Matt. 7:29; 28:18). Jesus died in order that the new covenant could be established: "*And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant that a death having taken place . . . For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it*" (Heb. 9:15-16). As God gave the first covenant through Moses, He gave the new covenant through Jesus Christ.

RECIPIENTS OF THE TWO COVENANTS

Contrary to what many seem to believe, the Law of Moses was not designed for all people. Notice again Mal. 4:4, the Law of Moses was *"for all Israel."* It was never given to other nations. This is stated emphatically by Moses, himself: *"Jehovah our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. Jehovah made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day"* (Deut. 5:2-3). And in the verses that follow, Moses lists the Ten Commandments! That law was given only to Israel.

The gospel of Christ, the new covenant, was designed for all people. As Jesus said, *"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . . And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned"* (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:15-16). When Jesus died on the cross, it was so that *"whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). This new covenant was not limited to one nation of people, but was designed for all people.

ON WHAT THE COVENANTS WERE WRITTEN

To further show the difference in the two covenants, the apostle Paul wrote of Christians, *"Ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh"* (2 Cor. 3:3). He then adds, *"God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face; which glory was passing away: how shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory?"* (2 Cor. 3:5-8). Note that it is clearly stated that the first covenant, given by Moses and written on tables of stone, was a *"ministration of death."*

The new covenant is not written on stone, but on the hearts of men. When God promised a new covenant, He said, *"For this is the covenant that I will make . . . I will put my laws into their mind, And on their heart also will I write them: And I will be to*

them a God, And they shall be to me a people" (Heb. 8:10). Under the new covenant God rules from within the hearts of men—not in outward ordinances and rituals God seeks *"obedience from the heart"* (Rom. 6:17). What a contrast from the old covenant!

CONTRAST OF COVENANT SACRIFICES

The blood of animals served as the required offering for sin under the old covenant (Heb. 9:8-9; 9:18-20). But with limitations: *"But in those sacrifice there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins"* (Heb. 10:3-4). Thus we see that weakness of the old covenant: *"For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness"* (Heb. 7:18).

The new covenant also has to have a blood offering, *"And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission"* (Heb. 9:22). But under the new covenant, we have a much better sacrifice: *"Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ . . . Nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption"* (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Heb. 9:12). The blood of Jesus offers cleansing which the blood of animals never could.

QUALITY OF THE TWO COVENANTS

Even the most ardent advocate of the Law of Moses must recognize the imperfections of that law. *"For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, That I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah"* (Heb. 8:7-8). God had warned that the Law of Moses would be removed because of its weaknesses. As the Scriptures says of Jesus, *"But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises"* (Heb. 8:6).

The old covenant had only *"a shadow of things to come"*

(Heb. 10:1-4; Col. 2:14-17). But Christ offers the substance. The temple, the sacrifices, even the Sabbath, were all just "shadows" or "types" of what the new covenant would offer (Heb. 8:12; 9:9-10; 9:28; etc.). In the "true tabernacle" (the church), we offer up better sacrifices: "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). As Christians, we are "the house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15), the "temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16) and are "a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God" (Eph. 2:22).

PURIFYING THE FLESH OR THE SOUL?

Under the Law of Moses, there were various washings and rituals for purifying the flesh after touching a dead body or a leper, for diseases, etc. These rites of purification had to be followed in minute detail. "For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer . . . sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works?" (Heb. 9:13-14). The rites and sacrifices of the Law of Moses could not cleanse the soul!

Notice the contrast with the new covenant: "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church" (Eph. 5:25-26). The cleansing of the New Covenant is by the blood of Christ, "In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins" (Col. 1:14). Also, as Scripture states, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth" (1 Pet. 1:22).

ENDURANCE OF EACH COVENANT

The old covenant was designed for Israel, and its purpose was not to be permanent. That is why God promised a new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13). The Levitical priesthood of that law could not compare with the priesthood of Jesus Christ: "Hath an unchangeable priesthood . . . Thou art a priest forever . . . He ever liveth to make intercession" (Heb. 7:21-25). Our High Priest continues, and ever appears before God for us!

With regard to His covenant Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt.

24:35). When we stand before God in the judgment, we will not be judged by the old covenant, but by the word of Christ (John 12:48). With the apostle Paul, we exclaim, "*For if that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is in glory*" (2 Cor. 3:11). The hope of the Covenant of Christ also is an enduring hope: "*Unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*" (1 Pet. 1:4). As Jesus promised, "*In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you*" (John 14:2). The apostle Paul echoed this, "*We know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens*" (2 Cor. 5:1).

Why would anyone want to go back under the carnal ordinance of a "repealed" law? Why try to observe rituals and ordinances which were not even given to us for today?! The clincher is found in these words from Scriptures: "*Ye are severed from Christ, ye would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace*" (Gal. 5:4). Don't make the mistake of forsaking Christ by going back to the law God gave by Moses.

"I Am Ruined!"

JOHNNY RAMSEY

As he showed me his cotton crop that had been scattered to the wind by a tornado two days before my visit, the old farmer said to me, "Preacher, I am ruined." When I was in the fifth grade, those same words fell from my mother's lips when her cake fell flat in the oven because I had slammed the back door in returning home from school: "I am ruined, because that cake was for the PTA meeting tonight. Why didn't you come in the front door quietly as you were supposed to?"

Ten minutes later I joined the chorus of sad tunes with, "I am ruined . . ." In my childhood many more spankings followed that one. Mother made dozens more cakes. The farmer became quite wealthy with wonderful cotton yields after that one bad year. Actually, in spite of what we may think at the moment of seeming disaster, no one will truly be ruined until we are lost at the Judgment Day! Someone has wisely stated, "Things turn out for the best for those who make the best of the way things turn out."

When we put the very best slant on the problems of life, we

can even see the value of adversity. An unknown, but wise, poet blesses us with these challenging words:

*I never knew a night so black
Light failed to follow on its track.
I never knew a storm so gray
It failed to have its clearing day.
I never knew an hour so drear
Love could not fill it full of cheer.*

Many times we view things externally and temporarily rather than on a spiritual and eternal scale. In the last paragraph of 2 Cor. 4, the apostle Paul showed that genuine values focus not on finite concerns, but upon values that never die: "*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal*" (2 Cor. 4:18). A powerful and practical passage of Scripture demonstrates this maxim: "*Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings, Like an eagle that flieth toward heaven*" (Prov. 23:5).

Billions of dollars were lost in 1929 in the crash of the stock market. Wall Street was flooded with suicides and shattered lives of those who trust in the "*uncertainty of riches*" (1 Tim. 6:17). Loss of prestige and prominence meant more to the wizards of finance than the loss of their spiritual future. Notice the reaction of Job when trouble came his way: "*But he knoweth the way that I take; When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*" (Job 23:10). When we try to "make a name for ourselves," our tower of Babel will also fall (Gen. 11).

To be ruined by sin is the greatest calamity and tragedy in all the world. Loss of houses, lands, money and even loved ones cannot equal the sadness of dying in the bondage of iniquity. If we die in our sins, Jesus plainly stated that we cannot be with Him in eternity (John 8:21). Thankfully, God sent the Saviour to ransom us from Satan's vile scheme. P.P. Bliss wrote masterful words in an old hymn which is seldom sung:

*O if there is only one song I can sing
When in His beauty I see the great King,
This shall my song in eternity be:
O what a wonder that Jesus loves me!*

So many people living in grand and eloquent palaces have

no hope of mansions above (John 14:1-3). With fine food on earth, they never partake of Christ, "the bread of life" (John 6). They may believe that they are giants in the material circles of earthly prowess, but they are paupers in the world that is yet to come (2 Cor. 5:1). To be ruined in the realm of final Judgment is just too horrible to contemplate. May we live so as to be prepared for that beautiful home of the soul!

Some People Who Touched Paul's Life

ALLEN WEBSTER

There are at least 100 different men and women named in Acts and Paul's letters, as a part of his circle of friends and fellow laborers. Paul could not do the job by himself. A number of these are listed in Paul's last book, actually in his last chapter (2 Tim. 4:11-13). He is sitting in a prison cell, knowing that death is near, and he muses about those who have touched his life. Here are some of those he names and a lesson we can learn from each.

LUKE (4:11), THE LOYAL LABOURER

He was the "beloved physician" (Col. 4:14) who had constantly traveled with Paul since the stay at Troas on the second missionary journey (Acts 16:8-11; cf. to Phillip, Acts 16:10-12; to Jerusalem on the third missionary journey, Acts 20:5-21:17; to Rome, Acts 27; during first imprisonment, Col. 4:14; Phile. 24). Being a doctor, he was probably a great help to Paul as he faced numerous injuries in his labours. Paul may have even dictated this letter (2 Timothy) to Luke (being a doctor, Luke must have appreciated Paul's reference to gangrene, 2 Tim. 2:17, Luke may have stayed to testify in Paul's behalf. All others had either forsook Paul or been sent on errands, "only Luke is with me." From Luke we learn that being dependable is one of the chief characteristics of a good servant of God. Ability is good, availability is better.

CRESCENS (4:10), THE ANONYMOUS CO-LABOURER

He was likely sent by Paul to Galatia. We know nothing else of him, but gain encouragement that he was there to help Paul in the hour of need. The RV margin gives Gaul as an alternative reading here; and, if that is correct, Crescens' going there may

have indicated that Paul on the trip to Spain (which he very probably made between the first and second imprisonments), might have established congregations in Gaul (France). From Crescens we learn that we do not have to be noticed to be helpful to the Lord's cause. Let God have the glory and we care not who gets the credit.

TITUS (4:10), THE TRUSTED "TROUBLESHOOTER"

Paul's close associate who was first taken, probably as a recent Gentile convert, to the Jerusalem Council as a "test case" regarding circumcision (Gal. 2:3). He had been involved in helping straighten out the problems in the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 2:12,13; 7:6,13-16; 8:16-24). Paul, during the first Roman imprisonment, had left Titus in Crete to straighten out the problems in the churches there (Tit. 1:5). Titus had each of the men mentioned to this point (except Luke) and that they were sent to an area that Paul had personally evangelized. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that Paul wanted to send a last message to each of these regions and also to have his companions to explain the situation to them. Also, Paul had been left alone in Rome (with Luke), and this may have been his own devising. Perhaps he was fearful of the imprisonment and execution of his friends.

CARPUS (4:13), WHO SHARED WHAT HE HAD WITH GOD'S SERVANT

Carpus lived at Troas and showed Paul much hospitality. Paul must have departed in a hurry (perhaps being sought for arrest) because he left his cloak and books behind (or perhaps the weather was warm and he did not want to carry the cloak or need the books). Carpus was a faithful brother; he would guard them until somebody picked them up to take to Paul. Even such so-called menial tasks are ministries for the Lord. As Timothy hurried to Rome, he could stop in Troas and get the cloak. He also wanted him to bring the books, and parchments, which may have been with Timothy all along (the grammatical structure seems to indicate this, 4:13). Paul probably left them there in haste to depart. (Some have speculated that he was arrested there and not given time to get all things.)

The *Cloak* (*phailones*, only here in the New Testament) was a course, circular cape which fell down below the knees, with an opening for the head in the center. It had no sleeves and somewhat resembled the pancho popular in south Texas and

Mexico. The cold of the Roman nights, even in summer, is well known; and Paul's prospect of possibly spending the winter in a dungeon without heating or proper clothing was not a welcome thought. We are not surprised that a scholar such as Paul wanted material for study and writing. Paul was a student until the very end of life. The first word books (*biblia*) probably refers to papyrus rolls or scrolls which likely contained Old Testament Scriptures. (Our word *Bible* comes from this.) The second word *Parchments* (membranes, only here in the New Testament) literally means "skins" and refers to scrolls made of animal skins. It is not known for certain if the parchments had materials written on them (like New Testament books) or if he needed them to write letters to friends and churches. It may have ever been something he needed for his legal defense.

MARK, THE "COME BACK" KID (4:11)

He was a cousin of Barnabus, Paul's first partner in missionary service (Acts 13:1-3). His mother was a noted Christian in Jerusalem (Acts 12:5,12) and he was chosen to travel with Paul on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). He was an "assistant" (*hupereten*, a keeper of documents in the synagogue, cf. Lk. 4:20). Unfortunately, John Mark failed on that journey (Acts 13:13). Paul refused to take Mark on the second trip, and this led to falling out between Paul and Barnabus (Acts 15:36-41). However, Paul would not close his portion of the Bible without a full "reinstatement" of Mark. Paul had twelve years earlier mentioned him as a worker during the first imprisonment (Col. 4:10; Phile. 24). Mark was also involved during this time with Peter in Rome (1 Pet. 5:13). He now admitted that John Mark was a valuable ("profitable," *euchrestos*, 2 Tim. 2:21; Phile. 11) worker, ("ministry" is *diakonian*), and he wanted Mark with him in Rome. How Mark must have rejoiced to finally hear words of commendation from Paul! The one who had no use for him now said that he was useful! How good is it to know that one failure in Christian service need not make one's whole life a failure. Tradition says that Mark was a pioneer in Egyptian mission work (Alexandria). From Mark we learn that one mistake, even a serious one, does not keep from being of valuable service in the kingdom.

TYCHICUS (4:12), THE "RELIEF PITCHER"

Tychicus was a believer from the province of Asia (Acts

20:4) who willingly accompanied Paul and probably ministered as a personal servant to the apostle. He was one of the messengers (*apostoloi*) who carried the contribution to the poor saints in Jerusalem (Acts 20:4; 2 Cor. 8:23). Since he was from Asia, Paul sent him, along with Onesimus, with letters to Ephesus (6:21-22) and Colossae (4:7) during his first imprisonment. Paul may have sent Tychicus to Crete to relieve Titus (Titus 3:12). Now he was sending him to Ephesus to relieve Timothy. A relief pitcher may not get much the glory, but he wins a lot of games! From Tychicus we learn that someone needs to be there to continue a good work after it has been going for a while. There are some who are good at starting, but we need "finishes" as well.

Tychicus met Paul at Nicopolis during the period between Paul's arrests (Tit. 3:12). Now Paul had summoned him to Rome and sent him to Dalmatia, across the Adriatic Sea from Southern Italy (modern Yugoslavia). From Titus we learn that we can help the Lord's cause by smoothing out problems that develop between brethren (cf. Mt. 5:9). None of these men became as famous as Paul, but they all laboured in the cause for which he died. He could not have done what he did with the assistance of others. Thanks be to God for co-workers.

The Parable of the Wedding Feast Matthew 22:1-14

STEPHEN B. PAYNE

According to Matthew, one of our Lord's last parables told of a king who invited many guests to his son's wedding feast. The invitees, who should have been honoured by the invitation, refused to come. The king again requested their presence, only to be spurned again and indeed to have his servants spitefully treated and even some killed.

In Matthew 22:8 the king concluded that those who were bidden were not worthy. In verse 9 the king ordered his servants to go out into the highway and bid as many as they could find, both good and bad, to come; and the wedding was furnished with guests.

In verse 11, the king came in and saw a man who had on no wedding garment. The king kindly gave the man an

opportunity to explain his serious breach of manners and—receiving no explanation—ordered his removal.

Perhaps many applications can be made from the parable, but we call your attention to three powerful lessons to be drawn from the story.

1. God's Chosen People Today Are Those Of Every Nation Who Fear God And Work Righteousness. (Acts 10:35)

The primary point of this parable was Jesus' attempt to show his Jewish opponents that their national lineage alone was not enough to assure their salvation.

With premillennial doctrine pervasive about us in the religious world, one often hears someone say that God has a uniquely vital interest in the modern nation of Israel. They often speak words to the effect that the Israelis will prevail because "they are God's chosen people." Friends, God's chosen people today are not Jews nor people of any particular nation. The people of God are those who believe in and obey Jesus Christ. (Compare Romans 2:28-29; Romans 9:6-9; Galatians 3:7,26-29).

God may well be concerned providentially, with the nation called Israel today; but not more so than he is with America, Japan, Canada, or any other country. To believe that God, today, looks with more favour upon people who deny Christ than He does upon those who confess faith in His Son is to have a very fundamental misunderstanding of the Bible!

There is a growing trend in our "politically correct" society to equate the idea that Jewish people are religiously in error, with anti-Semitism. Such is a very disturbing conclusion. The New Testament is very clear that salvation is in Christ and that all the world must be evangelized. We believe many of various religions are in error. To say this with respect and civility and to attempt to lovingly teach them the gospel is far removed from prejudice and hatred.

2. Seeking The Lost Is The Greatest Work In The World

Matthew 22:9 suggests a second great lesson to be gleaned from this passage. There the king ordered his servants to go into the roads and public gathering places to invite men and women to the banquet. The church is the fulfillment of Jesus' parable in sharing the invitation to come to the spiritual feast. (Mark 16:15-16.) Our Lord placed great value on the human soul. (Matthew 16:26.) We must never overlook that preaching

the gospel is the great work of the church. We should strive to be like Andrew, who after finding his own brother, brought him to Jesus. (John 1:42.)

Churches of Christ need to be encouraged to expend time, money, prayer, and effort in evangelizing. This work needs to be done locally and in far countries. (Matthew 9:37.)

3. We Must Come To God On His Terms

The third lesson we draw from this parable is based on the reaction of the king to the man without proper attire for the occasion. The point here is not a question of a poor man who could not afford adequate raiment. It was the custom for the host to provide suitable garments. This rude guest refused to clean up and dress in a respectful manner. He essentially met the king with an attitude that said, "I will come to the event on my own terms."

The Bible is filled with similar cases of human pride. The ancients at Babel thought they could reach God by their own contrivance. (Genesis 11:1-9.) At Sinai the Israelites made the golden calf (perhaps, imitating the Egyptians' bull deity) even before Moses could return from the mountain. (Exodus 32.) Today many seek, to no avail, to come to God by routes other than Christ. (John 14:6.) They worship in vain, teaching their own error rather than accepting God's plan. (Matthew 15:9.)

The philosophy of existentialism—which denies that there is an absolute or knowable truth—and its corollary, humanism, have produced a mind set in our modern culture that disdains all authority and rules. Many believe that each person finds his own truth. Like the wedding guest, they will come dressed as they please. Such an attitude is contrary to all that the Bible teaches.

Whether in primary obedience to the gospel, the way we express our worship, or our manner of life—we do not please God on our terms, but on His!

Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, we are taught again and again that we must humbly accept God's authority and be obedient to Him in scripturally appointed ways. To fail to do this will result in our being rejected as was the willful guest in one of our Lord's last parables.

Our Saviour taught many things by parables. We would do well to listen and reflect on his sayings. ● ● ●