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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

“That they all may be one, as You Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that you sent Me.”

What is commonly called the “Lord’s prayer,” in Matthew 6:9-13, is in fact, the prayer of example; it was a model prayer, or a pattern for prayer. This model or pattern for prayer was taught by Christ to His disciples, when they had asked him, “Lord teach us to pray.” (Luke 11:1-2). The prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ, however, is found in the seventeenth chapter of the book of John. This prayer the Lord Jesus Christ had prayed just a few hours before His betrayal and His death on the cross. This was a very important prayer for the Lord; a prayer for His disciples and for those who would become His followers after hearing and believing their preaching. This was a prayer for the unity of all His followers. Just imagine this, Christ praying in the shadow of His own death, for the unity of all His followers. In verse 20th, He said to the Father in heaven, “I do not pray for these alone, (the disciples who were with Him at this time), but also for those who will believe in Me through their word.” And what was His request to the Father for them? He said, in the next verse number 21, “That they all may be one, as You Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe

that you sent Me.”

Christ desires for all His followers to be one; one in faith, one in doctrine, one in name, and in one church, just as there is but only one Bible and one Christ and one God. Is such a unity possible today? Yes, it is. Or else, Christ prayed for an impossibility! At 1 Cor. 14:33 the apostle said, “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace.” When people look at Christianity today, they get confused, because while all who believe in Christ claim to follow the same Bible, but they are in different churches; are called by different names; worship in different ways; and follow different doctrines. Not God, but man is responsible for this confusion. Is it possible today for all those who believe in Christ to become one in Him? It sure is, if we want to follow what the Bible says. The Bible teaches in 1 Cor. 1:10: “That you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” In Eph. 4:4-6 the Bible teaches: “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace. There is one body (or the church—Eph. 1:22,23), and one Spirit (The Holy Spirit), just as you were called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

We shall never have unity if every person has his own agenda and rejects the sound principles of the Book of God. We shall never have unity if the multiplication of religious names, doctrines, and churches continue to exist. According to the Bible there is only one way to be saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38); there is only one church to which the Lord adds all the saved ones (Acts 2:47; Matt. 16:18); and there is only one doctrine (2 John 9-11). It is time to go back to the basics.

Denominationalism Is Nothing New

J.C. CHOATE

When Christ came into this world he promised to build His church. (Matthew 16:18,19). That promise was kept through the preaching of the Apostles as recorded in Acts 2. Only one church

was established. It was made up of those who became believers in Christ, repented of their sins, confessed Christ as the Son of God, and were baptized for the remission of their sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 10:10; Romans 6:3,4). When the Lord saved them, He added to his church. (Acts 2:47). Read all of the scriptures in the New Testament and you will have to conclude that there was but **one church** then, and **there has been but one church recognized by God since that time**. That church is distinguished by the fact that Christ died for it (Acts 20:28), that He is the head of it (Colossians 1:18), that He is the saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23), that Christ is its foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), that it wears the name of Christ (Acts 4:12), and that He is coming back for it. (1 Thessalonians 4:13,14) to deliver it up to God. (1 Corinthians 15:24). There is but one true church today, according to the Bible, and any beyond that are not approved and accepted by the Lord.

Yet, in reality, there are many hundreds of different denominational churches in the world. What about them? How does God view them? As we think of the many churches, we may conclude that this is something peculiar to our day, that only during the past few hundred years have we had all of these denominations. But we would be wrong in our thinking. Even in Paul's day he warned that there would be a falling away of the Lord's church. He said, *"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God"* (2 Thessalonians 2:3,4). Again, he said, *"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron . . ."* (1 Timothy 4:1,2). With the passing of time, a large percentage of members of the church did fall into error; **not all of them**, but enough that the Lord's cause was greatly hurt. By the 600's those who fell away became known as the Catholic Church. Those who remained faithful continued on as the body of Christ, the church of Christ.

Even in the early days of the church there was division from

time to time. In the book of First Corinthians, we read that the Christians at Corinth were divided. Paul said that some were saying they were of Paul, some were following Apollos, others were following Cephas or Peter, and others were following Christ. This did not please the Lord, and Paul reasoned with them, showing that those they were following were mere men, but that they should be following Christ, the One who had died for them. Paul reasoned with them, *"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). To the Romans, Paul said that they should mark those who caused divisions among them. (Romans 16:17,18). We also read where Christ prayed that His people would all be one, and that there would be no divisions among them (John 17:20-23).

In spite of these pleas for unity, man was man, and for various reasons divisions came about. There were those who were deceived and followed the false teachings of men, even in the days of Christ and the Apostles. Then, following the falling away of many of the Lord's people and the development of the Catholic church, eventually those people divided into the Roman and Greek churches. In the 1500's Martin Luther took the lead in the "Reformation Movement" which eventually brought about the "Protestant Movement" with its many denominational churches.

If we made a study of the Biblical period and the secular period that followed, we would find that there have always been divisions, with individuals teaching false doctrines and leading others astray. Men are wrong in doing this and those who join them are wrong. They make themselves the enemies of God, even though they think that they are religious. When these things happens, we who love the Lord and want to do His will must oppose the false teaching and the divisions of men, just as the Lord and the Apostles did. We get tired of constantly having to do battle with God's enemies and of being accused to thinking that we are the only ones going to heaven. We need to remember that standing for the truth, and against division and error, was not easy for the Lord. In spite of His sinless life and all of His good teachings, He was crucified. Also the Apostles and multitudes of the Lord's people were persecuted and martyred in

the early days of the church. Was it because they were evil? No, it was because they did not compromise with false teaching.

Today, we must obey the Lord and be faithful always as His followers and members of His church, regardless of what we have to face in this world. In the end, the Lord will reward His people, His church, by giving them a home in heaven. There is no hope for those who have chosen to follow man instead of the Lord, those who honour division by being members of man-made churches instead of Christ's church. Jesus said that He is the only way to God, and that no man can come to the Father but by Him. (John 14:6). Do you believe it? One day you will know it.

Especially For Women

Be Ye Thankful

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

No human appreciates an ingrate. The scriptures indicate that God, too, wants us to be thankful people. In fact, He commands us to express our gratitude to Him for all He has done for us. Let's read some verses:

"For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 4:15).

"For the administration of this service not only supplies that needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings of God" (2 Corinthians 9:12).

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6).

2 Corinthians 4:15 says that it is through the thanksgiving of many that God's abundant grace rebounds to His glory. How is thankfulness coupled with the abundance of God's grace?

2 Corinthians 9:12 says that it was by the thanksgivings unto God that there was an abundance of help to supply the want of the saints.

Philippians 4:6 sandwiches thankfulness between our

supplications and requests to God.

Why does God so pointedly encourage thankfulness, and how does that attitude affect the abundance of the grace He shows to us?

Granted, we cannot please God if our hearts are continually asking like spoiled children, yet never being appreciative of what He has already done. But I think God is working to develop more than a "thank you." I think His purpose in making this command is rooted in His desire to help us gain the abundance. He longs to pour out on us.

How often have we asked for something, received it—and then were so busy asking for something else that we forget to notice that the first prayer had been answered? Have you ever begun a trip with prayer for safety on the road and then failed to even think about the fact that you had arrived safely when you reached your destination? Too often we move from one request to the next, not stopping to count the answered prayers in between—and maybe as we continually ask and ask and ask, we find ourselves with growing doubts about God ever hearing our prayers.

What wonderful therapy it would be in the strengthening of our faith if we would stop and look at the specific requests we have made, count the specific answers we have received, and then preface future petitions with verbal thankfulness for each answer of the past! Wouldn't we have greater faith in God protecting us, greater confidence that He would supply the guidance needed, greater assurance of His parental love, if we would list in thankfulness each of the evidences of that help and care in the past?

And so we would pray in greater faith, with more assurance that the God who loved and heard us yesterday will also love and hear us today. We would feel as John expressed in 1 John 5:14,15: *"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of him."* John's confidence was so great that when he prayed it was as though he had the answer already in hand: *"we know that we have . . ."* Thankfulness for past answers would enable us to pray with that confidence, too.

Sadly, many good prayers uttered by Christians receive a "no" as an answer. The answer was the one supplied by themselves because they never gave God an opportunity to make reply. How was that? James 1:5-7 says, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord."*

Doubt that God will hear has killed many a prayer. One weapon we have for combating doubt is looking back over our lives and seeing God's past care and answers to prayers. As we stop and look and then put into words our conviction that those events in our lives really were the work of God (not just coincidence or happen-so), and as we pay tribute to His active care by thanking Him for it, the action itself strengthens our faith He is still listening and that He will move to help us.

So, being thankful enables us to have the needed faith that, in turn, allows God the freedom to work for our good in our lives. How beautifully His commands tie together our longing for His help and His own desires to help us, making it all possible.

Take time For Jesus

FRANCIS DAVID

There is a beautiful song that we sing and its title is "Take time for Jesus" The writer of the song gives some reasons as to why we should take Jesus's name. There are a number of things that we can mention in this regard.

The name of Jesus is wonderful, (Isa. 9:6). This is the sweetest name that we can talk about. Jesus our Lord came into this world to die for us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8). Jesus took the time to die on the cross for you. He was crucified for you and me. Paul while writing to Christians says: "For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God, For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you. Examine yourselves as to

whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you are disqualified." (2 Cor. 13:4-5).

He died so that the souls of men could be saved from eternal death. Do you have time to hear about Him? Take some time to hear about Jesus. He died for you, was buried in the tomb but by the power of God was resurrected to give us eternal life. He wants to come into your life, if you open your heart for Him. Jesus said: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20). What a wonderful invitation Jesus gives to everyone. If you take time to hear about Him, you will be blessed.

There are times when we forget about Jesus, we forget that He is our Saviour, Lord and Master. We must examine ourselves and must ask, am I giving first place to Him in my life. When there are services of the church, do I give priority to Jesus? Or do I just ignore? When we are faced with temptations, do we remember Him? Jesus is willing to help us, provided we come to Him and talk to him. Sometimes we are in hurry and have so many things to do, and we don't even pay attention to Jesus but remember that He did not forget about you. We must know that we have a blessed assurance from Jesus and promise for eternal life.

What about Sunday worship? Many people want to celebrate His birthday on 25th December and like to worship Him on that particular day. The Bible does not mention any date of His birth and neither we read in the Scriptures that anyone ever celebrated His birthday. The people who profess to be His followers forget to assemble on Sunday to worship Him. They miss the Sunday worship by making many excuses. The Bible says that we must not forsake assembling ourselves together. (Heb. 10:25). We must come together on the first day of the week (Sunday), to praise Him, because He is worthy of our praise. While Jesus was on earth, He asked and commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach His good message. (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15). We must take time to take his good message to the people. There might be people who have not heard the name Jesus, therefore we must go and tell them. We must use ways and means to reach to these

unreached people. As true followers of Jesus, let us take time to take His message to the people who are lost in sin.

Take time for Jesus, to obey Him. He said: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." Come to Him, believe in Him and be baptised. Just remember what Jesus has done for you. Are you willing to take time for Jesus?

Partakers of the Divine Nature - 2

THOMAS R. DOHLING

To the Christians at Colosse, Paul says: "If you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **Keep thinking about things above, not things on the earth, for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God**" [Colossians 3:1-3 (emphasis is mine, TRD); compare with Romans 6:3-11]. This is an instruction for all those who have identified themselves with, and put on, the Lord Jesus Christ. Such, being Christ-like in nature, are already partaking in the divine nature! These have put to death the desires of the flesh (carnal nature, without Christ) viz., sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed (greed is a form of idolatry). They are further urged to put off anger, rage, malice, slander, abusive language, and lying (see Col. 3:5-9).

Such holy ones who are truly saints (sanctified, set apart) in God's sight, have been clothed with the new man (their nature is now Christ-like) and they are now being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the One Who created them. They are partaking of the divine nature! Among such there is no division or distinction. To them, "Christ is all and in all." The Lord Jesus Christ is everything to them. "When Christ (who is your life) appears, then you too will be revealed in glory with him!"

Further characteristics of the divine nature (Christ-like nature) are (Col. 3:12-14):

- A merciful heart
- Kindness
- Humility

- Gentleness
- Patience
- Forbearance
- Forgiveness

Above all these virtues, God's children are exhorted to add love to their nature, which is the perfect bond. The peace of Christ is to control their hearts and they are to be thankful. The word of Christ is to dwell in them richly and whatever they do in word or deed, they are to do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. As we have seen in the first part of this discourse, doing anything in the name of the Lord Jesus means doing it in accordance with the mind and Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Since Christians are called to a new, spiritual life, they are not wrestling against flesh and blood, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). They are fighting a spiritual warfare. While they know what is happening, the world without Christ does not.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10; read through to verse 18).

What a marvelous and awesome God we serve; Who has dealt graciously with us. He has taken us out of the mud and mire of the sin-filled life, washed us in the precious blood of Jesus and called us to be partakers of and participants in the divine nature! To Him be praise and honour, glory and thanks always! Amen.

Let the Bible Answer

ROBERT MEREDITH

Must one be a member of the church to be saved? Some today try to minimize the church and teach that it is an irrelevancy. You may have heard statements to the effect: "give me the Man but not the plan;" "Jesus, yes, the church no;" or "find a church that teaches salvation by grace through faith." (This

implies that there are many from which to choose.) All of these statements imply that the church is not important. However, my friends, the Bible teaches just the opposite. The Apostle Paul informs us that Christ "gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). As Paul spoke to the Ephesian Elders, he said that Christ purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Christ's blood is precious, and he did not shed it for something that does not matter. The church matters because it is the body of the saved. A person is not saved, then later added to the church by baptism.

Must one be a member of the church to be saved? Let the Bible answer! Colossians 1:18 informs us that the body and the church are the same thing. In Ephesians 5:23, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, revealed, "And He (Jesus) is the saviour of the body." Now if Jesus is the saviour of the body, then He is the saviour of the church. One must be in the church to be saved. Notice from the scriptures how one is added by the Lord to the church. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:5 tells us that there is only one baptism). Baptism puts one into the one body, and also puts one into Christ (Gal. 3:27). To be in Christ is to be in His body, the church. Therefore if one is saved before baptism, he is saved without Christ. Some are indeed thieves and robbers, trying to enter by another door other than Christ (John 10:8-10). One must be in Christ to be saved. The Apostle Paul reveals that all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Ephesians 1:7 tells us that one of these spiritual blessings is the forgiveness of sins, through His blood. Now, if all spiritual blessings are in Christ, and one is baptized *into* Christ, then one must be baptized into Christ and His church to access all spiritual blessings. Since being in Christ means being in His body, the church (I Cor. 12:13), one is not saved before being in or without the church. From Acts 2:41 and 47, one can see that when one obeys the gospel, the Lord adds him to His church.

The idea that some teach that one is saved first, then later baptized into a denomination is foreign to clear biblical teachings. But let us look at this idea further. If one is saved without baptism, and then later baptized into a certain denomination, then it is harder to get into that denomination than it is to get into heaven. Also, if one is saved without affiliation with that particular denomination, then why does one need to be

associated with it at all?

When one lets the Bible answer, he sees that our Lord shed His precious blood for the sins of the world. God's grace is available for all people, but on His terms. Jesus desires that you come to Him and allow Him to wash away your sins in His blood (Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16) by baptism, thus being added to His one church and calling on His name (Acts 22:16).

The Untouchables

DAVID THURMAN

Elliot Ness was the renowned untouchable. The label was given to him because he was unwilling to take a bribe as a law enforcement officer. In an era when many law enforcement officials at all levels were taking money from criminals, Ness and his men were untouchable.

Long before there was a crime fighting unit, there was another group of people who were literally untouchable. They could not just enter into a community. Where ever they went they had to cry out in warning to others. They were the lepers of ancient times.

These unfortunate victims were defined as unclean under the law of Moses. There were strict guidelines to follow to determine if a person was unclean due to the problems of leprosy. *"As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be uncovered, and he shall cover his mustache and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!' He shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection; he is unclean, he shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp"* (Lev. 13:45-46). If the disease was present, the victim was sent to live outside the camp, away from all other people.

These lepers were literally untouchables, and were to cry "unclean" anywhere they went, so that healthy people would not come in contact with them and come down with the disease. They could not have a normal home life, they could not worship with other believers. Anyone who came in contact with a leper was considered unclean as well. So, they were social, spiritual and

physical outcasts. They were condemned to a life of isolation and ostracism by all of the healthy members of the community.

Mark tells us a powerful story about one such untouchable. Word had already spread about Jesus' power to heal. One leper decided to go and have a little talk with Jesus. *"And a leper came to Him, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying to Him, If You are willing, You can make me clean. And moved with compassion, he stretched out His hand, and touched him, and said to him, I am willing; be cleansed. And immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, and He said to him, See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them. But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news about, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere"* (Mark 1:40-45). This encounter between Jesus and an untouchable can teach us many lessons.

ALL SIN IS UGLY

God chose skin diseases such as leprosy to stand as a symbol for sin. God probably had many reasons for doing this. Such diseases are often contagious, so the Lord wanted people to be protected from contamination by coming in contact with lepers. But God also wanted people to see how He views sin. He did this by choosing a disease that was ugly in all its forms. God wanted mankind to see how ugly sin looks to Him.

Leprosy was horrible in all its consequences. Physically, the sufferer could lose fingers, toes, ears and more as the disease progressed. If the disease continued, it would lead to death. Moreover, the victim could not associate with anyone who was not diseased. That meant no family contacts, no hugging the kids or grandkids. That meant the leper could not go to worship God with other believers. Worst of all, the victim was often treated as a sinner, somehow deserving this cursed fate.

All sin looks this way to God. *"Behold the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you,*

so that He does not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). God wants to save man, wants to be near man—but God keeps man at a distance because of sin. You might think your "little" sin is no big deal. But to God all sin is ugly. To God, sin in any form is disgusting.

Sadly, all of us have come down with the disease called sin. *"There is none righteous, not even one . . . all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:10, 23). Every one of us looks ugly before God, just as ugly as any leper would look to us. We cannot look down on those whose ugliness is different than ours. We cannot pretend our particular disease is better than someone else's. We are all sinners, and we all look ugly to God.

COMPASSION MOVES GOD

The leper chose to come to Jesus. Jesus had already begun His public ministry and word of His power to heal had spread. The leper probably thought he had nothing to lose and everything to gain, so he obediently approached Jesus. We know he trusted Jesus to do something for him, he had faith. We know he was obedient as he would not approach Jesus too closely so as to cause Him to become unclean.

Jesus was filled with compassion. He cared for this poor man who had suffered from this disease. Jesus looked beyond the ugliness that was there and saw the human being underneath. Jesus could not stand by and let leprosy win this battle. Jesus acted out of compassion.

That is the nature of God. God reaches out to sinners like us because He loves us, ugliness and all. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). The nature of God moves Him to reach out to us, just as Jesus reached out to the leper. God does this, in spite of how ugly our sin looks to Him. *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:8). Never doubt how much God loves you. He is willing to reach out to sinners like you and me and save us, in spite of our failures, our mistakes, our sins.

GOD GIVES MORE THAN WE ASK

Jesus does an interesting thing with this leper. *"And moved with compassion, He stretched out His hand, and touched him, and said to him, I am willing; be cleansed"* (Mark 1:41). Jesus

healed the man, but first the Master touched the man. How long had it been since anyone had touched him? How long had he gone without any human contact of any kind? Whatever the status of his disease, the leper felt the touch of a human hand for the first time in a long time.

Jesus runs a risk in touching the man. According to the law He would be unclean if He touched a leper. But Jesus looked beyond the man's obvious physical need for healing. The Lord saw the man's need for human contact, for acceptance, for love. So, before He healed the man, Jesus touched Him. Jesus knew the man's need better than the man himself.

So it is with us. Jesus knows we need to be forgiven. But He knows much more than that. He knows we need to get along. He knows we need love and acceptance. So the Lord reaches out to us as well, even while we are unclean. He loves us Himself, and places us in a body of believers who will also love us. *"Beloved let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another"* (1 John 4:7-11).

God looks beyond the surface requests we make of Him and gives us more than we can imagine. *"Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever"* (Eph. 3:20-21). How that leper must have felt to have a human hand on him. You and I can only imagine how good it will be when God reaches out to us and gives us more than we can ask or think.

THE CLEAN CRY OUT

Jesus tells the leper to follow the law of Moses, to go and show himself to a priest who will examine him to see if he is clean. Then the former leper would be admitted back into society, back into his home and family, back into the congregation of believers. Jesus also tells the man to keep this

private, to tell no one.

But the man had experienced too much blessing to be quiet. he spread the news. What a story he must have told, how Jesus not only healed him, but this new teacher reached out to him and touched as he was healed. Jesus may have wanted the man to keep it private, but the man had been given too much. He spread the news around.

That is what happens when people meet Jesus. They cannot keep quiet. When we realize the ugliness is gone, we want to tell others. When we feel the touch of God and the blessings he gives beyond what we expect, we want to tell others. As God reclaims sinners, it is a natural process that they will want to tell others the story of their cleansing. *"Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary"* (Psalm 107:1-2).

BE CLEANSED AND CRY OUT

We invite you to come to Jesus for cleansing today. Put your faith in Him, recognizing that only He has the power to cleanse you. Turn from the ugliness of your sin, and then let Jesus cleanse you with His blood as you are baptized into His death and rise to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4). Then, with other believers, you can begin to tell the story of the day Jesus touched you.

Strong Character

JOHNNY RAMSEY

So many people today fail to emphasize the power and importance of genuine character. It is unpopular, even politically incorrect, to have strong convictions and dedicated commitment. However, the weak, insipid and spineless folk of this world never contribute any worthwhile endeavour to our society. Only those with strong character and strong convictions make a difference. To fail to press on when adversity looms before us is the mark of a coward rather than a hero. A great passage of Scripture reminds us of the value of perseverance: *"Fight the good fight of*

the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6:12).

How desperately do we need today the valiant dedication of men like Joshua, Samuel and Jeremiah to stem the shallowness of elders and preachers in the Lord's church who have put down the sword long ago and yielded to popular appeal! As someone has said, "Faith does not demand that we win; it does demand that we keep trying." The importance of discipline in our daily conduct is a Bible principle most overlooked. The pertinent message of Job 5:17 rings out loud and clear: *"Behold happy is the man whom God correcteth: Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty."*

When we recall the boldness of Nathan rebuking David, King of Israel (2 Samuel 12), or the rich courage of Isaiah in confronting another king, Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1), then we are encouraged to strengthen our resolve to stand up for Jesus daily. A brilliant reminder of proper mind-set follows: "Nothing splendid has ever been achieved, except by those who dared to believe that something inside them was superior to outward circumstance." The prophet Micaiah was determined to tell earthly kings of impending doom that would soon follow their flagrant disobedience, in spite of the dungeon that would follow his courageous utterance. A chapter which all gospel preachers should meditate upon often is 1 Kings 22. Micaiah prophesied the truth even at great cost to himself. But he spoke. "We are all faced with a series of great opportunities which are brilliantly disguised as impossible situations."

Strong character is forged upon the anvil of God's sacred word (Isa. 55:11). We cannot have the loyalty to truth we need while we remain ignorant of the Scriptures. It is even possible to know academically the Bible message and still be a coward. However, to study with resolution and devotion is combination that worries Satan. Psalm 27:4 is a masterpiece: *"One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after; That I may dwell in the House of Jehovah all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of Jehovah, And to inquire in his temple."*

When we are willing to die for the cause of Jesus Christ, like Stephen (Acts 7) or Paul (Acts 21:13), we will possess strength of character, also! E.E. Hewitt wrote a great song to challenge us:

*In the strength of the Lord
Let me labour and pray,
Let me watch as a winner of souls,
That bright stars may be mine
In the glorious day,
When His praise like the sea billows roll.*

Soldiers of Christ, press on to victory!

Reconciliation

FRED DILLON

"And all things are of God Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:18).

The word reconcile means to "make friendly again or to settle a quarrel." It makes us extremely happy to know that husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters and even nations have become reconciled to one another.

Those of us above sixty years of age can well remember when the United States, Britain, France and our other Allies were engaged in mortal combat with Germany, Italy, and Japan. Cities and towns were destroyed, millions of people slaughtered as bombs fell on the European nations and later the deadly atomic bombs on Japan.

Not many years later, the United States spent millions of dollars rebuilding the German and Japanese economies and they now have become our closest trading friends.

Reconciliation is a wonderful thing, but have you been "reconciled" to God, through Christ?

Reconciliation is surely a wonderful achievement at any level, but when it is between man and God Almighty through Christ, then it has its greatest work.

The greatest need for man has always been to be reconciled to God. It was true for Adam, for Moses, for the psalmist David as he touched our hearts with the spirit of repentance in Psalm 51.

Sin has separated man from his Maker (Romans 3:23). And

since, "all have sinned" and all continue to sin, the task of reconciliation will continue as long as human kind exist on this planet.

In Romans 6:23, we are told the tragic consequences for man unless reconciliation has been accomplished in our lives.

Sins of commission (I John 3:4) and sins of omission (James 4:17) both place man in a hopeless situation, separated from Almighty God and minus the blessings we may have in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Man, therefore, is doomed to eternal destruction without reconciliation (II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

God provided reconciliation to Himself for all men through His wonderful grace made possible through the suffering and death (the shed blood) of Christ (Hebrews 2:9). "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Christ became God's Lamb to take away the sins of the world and His atoning blood was shed for all of our transgressions. Jesus became and remains our Mediator, Saviour Redeemer, Advocate, and Intercessor with God Himself.

In addition, He gave us the "Word of reconciliation," (II Corinthians 5:19), and with it, with "ministry of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:18). Now, we have the duty to reconcile men back to God with the everlasting Gospel, His Word of reconciliation.

Through Christ, we are to call all we possibly can back to friendship with God, reconciled by the blood of Christ in accordance with the Word of reconciliation which is true, all sufficient and able to save the souls of anyone who will receive it (James 1:21-25).

This "Word of reconciliation" of which Paul spoke in his epistle to Corinth must be taught and preached by Christians (Matthew 28:18-20).

This Word must be believed in order for a soul to be saved (Romans 1:16).

And, it must be obeyed in repentance, confession, and baptism for anyone to have reconciliation with the Almighty (Matthew 7:21; Revelation 22:14).

God's people have been assigned the task of teaching and preaching the Word of reconciliation. All nations, comprised of those who are God's highest creatures must submit in obedience to the Gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15-16).

The One Who "knew no sin" has become sin for us in order that we might be reconciled to God.

The ministry of reconciliation is ours today, just as it belonged to the obedient Christians in Acts 8, as they (though persecuted even unto death) went "everywhere preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4).

You and I must be involved in this ministry of reconciliation using the engrafted Word as the Word of reconciliation that souls around us may be "reconciled to God."

"You Can't Understand It"

JERRI MANASCO

How many times have you heard someone say, "You just can't understand the Bible"? There is a Scripture that is abused in order to prove the inability to understand the Bible. Peter has written that in some of Paul's epistles are "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Peter 3:16).

It is not only Paul's writings that are twisted but "other Scriptures" as well. This passage does not say that Paul's writings cannot be understood; it is implied that thorough study of what he has written is in order. The result of a failure to do this will be destruction. Several things are in order for us to note.

Note that it is the "unlearned and unstable" who twist Paul's writings! Note also that if Paul's writings, as well as the "other Scriptures" can be "wrested," then there is something in them that God intends us to comprehend as being absolutely true. How can one pervert something that has no definite meaning? How can one twist a Scripture if it has no innate meaning that can be comprehended? Furthermore, Peter emphatically declares that those who "wrest" these Scriptures do so to their own destruction. How can that be so if these Scriptures have no understandable meaning? Peter precisely shows that there are Scriptures that not only can be but must be understood as God wants them to be; we must get out of them what God has put

into them! It is indeed a pity if God does not have the ability to give us a Book that we can read with profit. It is indeed a remarkable concept of God's righteousness to contend that He will permit men to face their own destruction over some writing that they cannot understand!

Why do people say that one can't understand the Bible? There are several reasons why this would be so. For one thing, many have been told by their preachers and religious leaders that they must have the expert touch of the "clergy" before the Bible can be understood. Quite frankly, in all honesty without attempting to be offensive about this, I would have to observe that in all too many of these situations it is the fear of some "clergy" that their "parishioners" will learn the truth and forsake the traditional church doctrines they hold so dear (cf., John 12:19; Acts 5:28).

Some resort to the statement, "Too many smart people disagree on the Bible. That shows you can't understand it!" This sort of reasoning is not reasoning at all but failure to realize the true nature of the Bible. The fact that a lot of smart people disagree proves only that a lot of smart people disagree. It does not prove that they are right in disagreeing (see I Corinthians 1:10). God is not the author of confusion (I Corinthians 14:33); His Word must not be blamed for the confused state of religion today.

Others have been told that they need the special instruction of a "Spirit-led, Spirit-inspired" preacher or that they must have the miraculous enlightenment of the Spirit before they can get the message in the Bible. However, it was Paul (the one whose writings were said to have in them things "hard to be understood") who wrote, "How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:3-4). He was not addressing this to expert theologians or "clergy" but to the church in Ephesus. The key to understanding is **READING** the Bible. This suggests another reason some don't understand the Bible; they don't take the time to read and study it.

Consider thoughtfully some valid questions relative to the understanding of the Bible cannot be understood, then:

1. How could Paul's writings be the model for all other teaching (I Corinthians 14:37)?

2. How could the Bible provide the benefits listed in Psalm 19:7-11?
3. How could the Bible make wise unto salvation, be profitable, and make the man of God perfect (II Timothy 3:15-17)?
4. How could the Bible give understanding (Psalm 119:104)?
5. How could the Bible be a light and a lamp (Psalm 119:105)?
6. How could one take heed to the Bible as a guard against sin (Psalm 119:9-11)?
7. If the Bible cannot be understood, then why did God give it to us in the first place? Why did He guide men into the writing of it if the Bible is not an understandable book? There are too many dangerous conclusions to be reached if the Bible cannot be understood.

The Promise Of The Messiah

W.A. HOLLEY

In a simple manner we shall discuss a subject which, perhaps is the most important topic in the whole Bible We shall allow the Holly Scriptures to speak for themselves.

We shall begin with Genesis 3:15, which gives the first faint promise of the coming Messiah: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." In the early morning of time, to the serpent these words were spoken by Almighty God.

Later, this promise was renewed to Abraham. God said, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3; Cf. 22:18; Acts 3:25; Galatians 3:8).

All of these passages were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

We have another statement of a prophetic nature by Jacob: "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee." . . . "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." (Please read

the entire context: Genesis 49:8-10). Here the reader should read Hebrews 7:12-14; 8:4.

As the years pass by, we come to Numbers 24:15-17, which should be read. We shall quote verse 10: "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there cometh a Star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel . . ." God allows Balaam, a disloyal prophet, to foretell the coming of "a Star," and "a sceptre," which was eventually fulfilled through David in the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1; Psalm 132:11; Isaiah 11:1).

In the book of Deuteronomy we have another wonderful prophecy of the great "Prophet" who was to come. Moses told Israel, "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee, a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." . . . "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him" (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19). This passage was interpreted by Jesus and the apostles as foreshadowing the coming of the Messiah (Acts 3:22-23; John 5:43; 12: 48-49; Matthew 17:7). Thus, the "seed of woman," "Shiloh," the "Star," the "Prophet," the "Son of David," the "Servant of the Lord," all blend into one person—the Messiah.

Again, the prophet Isaiah wrote: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). What does this verse mean? Does it refer to a young woman? Or to a virgin? Well, the answer is clear! An inspired commentary is found in Matthew 1:18-25 and in Luke 1:30-35, which states that the prophet had in mind Mary, a "virgin," the mother of Jesus Christ.

In another place Isaiah said, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, the Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7). Clearly, the "Son" of this passage is

to sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, Solomon "sat upon the throne of David his father" (I Kings 2:12), yet at the same time Solomon "sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father . . ." (I Chronicles 29:23). Solomon also sat upon "his" (own) throne (I Kings 1:37, 47). Actually, there was but one throne: the throne of the Lord (Jehovah), the throne of David, and the throne of Solomon. The only reasonable conclusion rational minds can reach is that the subject of prophecy was raised up to sit on "David's throne" (Acts 2:29-38; Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 4:12-16).

Another interesting and (in some ways) an astonishing prophecy is found in Jeremiah 22:29-30. The subject is Coniah and his future. We quote: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (Jeremiah 22:29-30). Coniah, Jeconiah and Jehoiachin, are three names which belong to the same man (I Chronicles 3:17-18; Matthew 1:11-12). The lesson is: Coniah could have no son "sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." This scripture reference forever lays to rest the false doctrine that Jesus will sit upon the literal throne of David on earth and reign in Judah for a 1,000 years—in the literal city of Jerusalem!!—If he did so reign on earth, God said he "shall not prosper!"

Again, "And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God: Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abuse him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezekiel 21:25-27)

The rule of earthly Jewish kings is to cease! Sin and iniquity had been in charge long enough! The ONE to whom the prophet looked was the great Messiah—the Priest and King who now rules over his spiritual kingdom unto the end of the world (Zechariah 6:12-13; Genesis 49:10; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:32; John 1:49; I Timothy 6:14-16).

We sincerely urge our readers to believe and obey the truth before it is too late (I Peter 4:17 with II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

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