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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

***"The fool has said in his heart,
"There is no God." "***

There are numerous forts and palaces and other such historical buildings in our country where people from all over the world go to see them. But nothing compares to Taj-Mahal. It is one of the great and wonderful buildings in the world. Of course, none of us have seen the individual who had first thought of building it; and the ones who built it. But we all believe that emperor Shah-Jahan was the one who got it built, and he had employed thousands of workers to build it. Why do we believe it? Because we read it in the history. But what would we think of the individual who might say that no one ever built Taj-Mahal and that it had just appeared from nowhere! Only a fool will say something like that. This is exactly what the writer of Psalm 14:1 had said about the one who says: "There is no God."

We don't have to see God with our eyes to believe in Him. Everything else that we see in the world, including ourselves, points to the fact that there is a builder, a creator and a designer. The opening words of the Bible read: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1). Nothing comes out from nothing. Since there is a creation in existence there must also of necessity be a creator and the creator, the

Bible says, is God. "The heavens declare the glory of God;" we read in Psalm 19:1, "And the firmament shows His handiwork."

Further the Psalmist wrote: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him . . ." (Psalm 8:3,4). Not only did God create the sun and the moon and the earth, but He has also placed them at a right distance from one another. Hundreds of thousands varieties of plants; animals both on earth and in the waters; all kinds of birds and other creatures are the manifestation of a creator. Romans 1:20 in the Bible says, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." Indeed, the fool has said in His heart, "There is no God."

"I Never Knew You"

J.C. CHOATE

When one complies with God's will by obeying Him (Mark 16:16), the Lord saves that person and adds him to His church. (Acts 2:47). Christ knows whether or not a person has obeyed Him so He knows whom to save and whom not to save.

Our Lord has but one church (Matthew 16:18), one family and it is only when a person has sincerely complied with His teaching that He recognizes that soul as being saved and, as a result, adds him to that church. Sadly, there are many imitation churches but the Lord established only one, in Jerusalem immediately after His resurrection. He can still identify that church which wears His name and follows His doctrine in the world today, even in the midst of all the denominations which have been begun by men. He therefore responds to a person's obedience by saving him and adding him to His church. When Jesus saves a soul, He doesn't put one in one denominational church, and then save another and put him in another church with another doctrine. The Lord died for *one* church, and every person who is saved is added to that church. That is true in the

case of one, a dozen, a thousand, or a million.

My friend, if you are worshiping with a denominational church that was not originally begun by Jesus Christ and that does not wear His name, then that means that you are not a member of the Lord's church—the Lord's family— and therefore you are not saved. Christ is the saviour of *the church*, which is His body—not of **all denominations** or of **individual people** who are not a part of any organized church (Ephesians 5:23).

Of course you might say, "Who are you to say that your church is the only church that Christ recognizes?" Let me explain to you that **I don't have a church**; it is not mine. I am a member of the *Lord's church*, the only one that belongs to Him, the only one that we read about in the Bible. I repeat, **it is the only church that you can read about in the Bible**. I ask you to read and study God's word and do what it teaches. When you do that, you will be a member of the same church that I am a member of, the one that the Lord is coming back for one day. If we are members of the same church, then we are members of Christ's church, we are brothers and sisters in Him.

During the personal ministry of Christ, he said, "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of the 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 I will profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity*" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Did you hear what the Lord said? He was picturing the judgment, when all will be gathered before him to be judged. He pointed out that not all that call him Lord will enter into the kingdom of heaven, or will go to heaven. He explained that the ones who are going to heaven are those who have done His will, and those who have done His will have lived and died as members of His church. Most of those standing before Him will have died as followers of other religions or as members of denominations, doing the things taught in those churches that were established and organized by men. Sadly, those poor deceived souls will think they have obeyed Him because they believed their teachers, and they will argue their case. They will call Jesus "Lord" and they will insist that they have prophesied in

His name, or have taught His word in His name, that they have cast out devils in His name. This would include those who believe in doing miracles today but who are deceiving people in order to dupe them out of their money. Those who have been deceived by them will say that they have done many good and wonderful works in Jesus' name. As they would reason, surely this ought to be enough to assure them a home in heaven, but it will not be enough. Christ will then profess or explain to them, "*I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*" What sad words to have to hear! All of their debating with the Lord will not be enough to save them.

But what does Christ mean He says, "I never knew you." It means just that: the Lord never did know them, they never belonged to Him. Yes, they might have sincerely thought that they were saved, that they would be able to go to heaven and live with Him forevermore. But they were mistaken. They did not check their beliefs and practices with the Scripture, to be sure that they were following the teachings of God and not of men. In reality, they had obeyed the doctrines of men, and not the teachings of the Lord: they had never been saved by Him, they had never been added to His family. Rather, on the day of judgment, they were strangers to Him, in spite of all of the things they listed to prove that they should be able to go to heaven. Tragically, **they were lost, unprepared to meet the Lord, and He had no choice but to reject them** by saying, "*Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*"

You might challenge that statement, that the Lord **had no choice but to reject them**. But when Jesus said that the word that He spoke would be the word that will judge us in the last day (John 12:48), He was being bound by His law, just as we are bound. That law is here for us to read, understand and obey, in the inspired record called the "New Testament." Revelation 20:12 says, "*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*" We can **choose** to learn what that book says and to follow its directions in this life. If we do that, the Lord is **bound by His own promises to save us**. However, if we follow the teachings of men instead, and if we die outside of the church of

Christ, never having been washed clean by baptism into His death, then **He is bound by His own promises to say the awful words, "Depart from Me; I never knew you."** He does not lie, He does not break His promises, He does not change His word. In the day of judgment it will stand as our judge, even as it stands as our guide today.

Wouldn't it be the worst of tragedies to hear such words on that day, to have thought that one was saved and to have spent one's life supposedly in the service of the Lord, but then to be cast out, to be lost for all eternity? My friends, it is urgent that we read and study God's word and that we make sure that we are doing only that which the Lord would have us to do. It is so easy to be misled, to be deceived. I beg of you to make certain that you are doing only what the Lord wants you to do.

Believe in God, and in Jesus His Son, repent of your sins, confess your faith in Christ, and be baptized that you might be saved and have your sins washed away, and the Lord will save you and add you to His church. (Mark 16:16; Matthew. 10:32,33; Acts 2:38; Acts 2:47). And then be faithful to the Lord so that one day you can hear Him say, *"Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joys of thy Lord"* (Matthew 25:23).

Especially For Women

The Bride Beloved

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

As Christians, even though we are not *of* the world, we are *in* the world, and sometimes it is difficult not to see things through the eyes of the world. Especially are we prone to see the church as the world sees it.

THROUGH THE EYES OF THE WORLD

To the world, the church is a small insignificant group whose very size discounts its claim of being special to God. We can see why the world would reason in this way, because out there "might makes right" all too often; but it is sad when we in the church develop an inferiority complex because we have

listened to the world's evaluation.

God knew all along that His church would never be popular or large. Jesus said plainly in Matthew 7:13,14 that few would find the way. If we know much about His word it should not come as a surprise to us that the church is small compared to other religious groups. God has told us well in advance that we would be in the minority.

Sometimes Christians, especially those in mission fields where there may be only a handful and where there is a continual struggle just to exist, may feel that they are at a terrible disadvantage. They may think that they would be so much better off in some congregation where the church numbers hundreds and where the best of preachers, teachers, and facilities can be had. But this may not be true. The percentage of members actively involved in teaching and personal work may be larger where the church is small! Repeatedly it has been true that men who moved to a small congregation, having never led singing and taught classes before, learned to develop abilities and strengths they likely would not have developed if they had stayed on in a large congregation.

And as small and struggling as a group may be, at least there is that representation. There are thousands of cities—even large cities—over the world in which there is not a single Christian. To have even a small group that can worship together and draw strength from fellowshiping each other is a wonderful thing! So we should not look at ourselves in pity but in happiness: thank God we have each other! We should see ourselves with determination: my continuation as a Christian is not dependent on others; even if there is only myself in a city, at least there is *one*, and I can worship God and be faithful to Him. If there are others, wonderful! We can draw together and gain strength from each other; but regardless of the number, people who know the enlightenment of truth should never allow themselves to be discouraged.

To the world the church is narrow-minded, intolerant of the preferences of others. And sometimes we are brainwashed by that view and begin to feel guilty because people are alienated by the scriptures we must teach. But God knew that the plan He was making would not be inclusive of the majority of people. Jesus said that **the way would be narrow and straitened,**

difficult for people to walk in. Why should we feel surprised or dismayed that it happens just as Jesus said it would? To be truthful, He doesn't want *everybody*—He wants only those who are willing to walk submissively as He directs, and the percentage of people with that mind is small.

The world often sees Christians as despicable people, second-rate citizens to be looked down on. Again, this should come as no surprise. Jesus said that His people would be meek (Matthew 5:5) and that those who see themselves as important and socially superior are, in reality, haughty and high-minded, far removed from submission to Him (1 Corinthians 2:26).

Again, the world often rates Christians as unsuccessful and not overly intelligent because they generally do not accumulate a great deal of wealth. But the rule for success demands that a person choose a goal and work toward it to the exclusion of all others. That goal must be first in importance in his life. Monetary gain can be the ultimate aim for people of the world, but the Christian's goal is seeking God first. All that is *needed* of this world's goods will be his, and he may even be blessed with riches because of his ability to handle them, but money itself is neither his goal nor his god, so it should come as no shock that the majority of Christians are not wealthy.

John said that we are not to love the world (1 John 2:15,16). That love is made up of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. When the love of money and of the indulgent life of riches is forbidden in God's word, we should expect to find Christians placing their emphasis elsewhere. It is no reflection on their ability to succeed or their intelligence when they choose spiritual riches over carnal ones.

THROUGH THE EYES OF HISTORY

Historically, the world's opinion of the church has never been good. Acts 8:2 records that Saul and the other leaders in Judaism were convinced that those of "*this way*" should justifiably be killed. In 2 Peter 2:2 we read that "*the way*" was "*evil spoken of.*" Bad things were said about the church, derogatory feelings expressed. Times have not changed.

James said in James 2:7 that God's description of the name we wear is that it is a worthy one; but the people of that day *blasphemed* it. 1 Peter 4:13-16 gives the admonition to

Christians not to be ashamed when they have to suffer because of the name they wear.

So the story from the world's lips has ever been the same: that Christians are a narrow, despicable, down-trodden minority and that the Way is one of shame.

But we are not of the world, so the world's opinion of the church should not be ours. We are to be partakers of divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), which means that we must learn to see the church—ourselves—as God sees us. What is God's view?

Stand Straight, Walk Straight and Talk Straight

FRANCIS DAVID

Jesus Christ, our role model always did the right thing. The Bible tells us that Jesus began both to do and teach. (Acts 1:1). He always talked to the people straight. He never did try to manipulate the things in His teachings. He always stood for the right cause. He expects His people to stand straight and talk about the things which concern the souls of men. There should be soundness in our teaching. We must stand for the right teaching and right life. We as Christians preach and teach people through our lives. The Lord in the sermon on the mount tells his people that they are to shine as light in this world and must have the quality of salt. There is no doubt that only through our straight lives we can attract people to Jesus and His teachings.

We must walk straight as children of God. The Bible says: "But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Christ Jesus His son cleanses us from all sin. (1 Jn. 1:7). If we are walking straight, that means we are walking according to God's will. If our lives are good and presentable before others, it means we are straight. Sometime there are things in the world which hinder us to walk straight. We are too much attached to the world and the things therein. Apostle John writes to God's children by saying: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the

love of the Father is not Him. (I Jn. 2:15). We are not walking straight when we have the sins of fornication, and all uncleanness or covetousness, in us. May be we are guilty of filthiness, foolish talking, coarse jesting, and we are not walking as God wants us to walk. (Eph. 5:2-3). Apostle Paul says: "You are the light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.). For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. (Eph. 5:8-12). Dear friend and brother, let us be straight in our walk. We just cannot serve two masters and this what Jesus said in Matt. 6:24 "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other."

The next thing we want to see is that we must talk straight. We must be convinced that we belonged to Jesus. Sometimes our talk is corrupted and therefore our speaking and talking is not straight. Apostle Paul through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit tells us: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearer. We must know how to handle our tongue. The inspired word through James says that the tongue is an untamable thing. He says: "Indeed, we put bits in horse's mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: they are on large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. "For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

When we talk to our fellowmen, how do we speak. Is it right talk or unkind? A lot of times we talk to people rashly and we forget who we are and what we are. We sometimes make statements which we are not supposed to make. Statements are made without thinking. We must be very cautious while making statements. This what James is trying to say, that we need to know how to handle our tongue. Many a times harsh words are hastily and quickly spoken, without any thought and the result is

that it puts dirt on our relationship with our fellowmen. I remember once Defence Secretary of United States quoted this statement and I do agree with him. He said: "We are not mature enough in passing statements or how to pass statements. He further said: "wrong statements can do much damage." Let us talk straight and rightly. As preachers and Bible teachers, we must be straight in our teaching and preaching. The Bible says we must preach the truth. "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching. (2 Tim. 4:2).

When we stand straight, walk straight and talk straight, then we may have opposition from some people. Some don't like it. But we know when Jesus did the right thing, he was humiliated and even crucified on the cruel cross. If you want to live and walk right, some may not like it, but do not be discouraged. Yes, you must know that all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Tim. 3:12). Apostle Peter says: "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busy body in other's people matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him glorify God in this matter. (1 Pet. 14-16). Dear Christian friend, lets stand straight, walk straight and talk straight. Paul tells the Christians at Corinth: "Watch, stand fast, in the faith, be brave, be strong. (1 Cor. 16:31).

Why Worship God?

THOMAS R. DOHLING

"O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions—this great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great. . . . These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good. You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their

breath, they die and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth" (Ps. 104:24-30).

After making a habitation fit for living creatures, the Sovereign Lord proceeded to make living creatures.

"So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. . . . And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good."—Genesis 1:21,25.

On the fifth and sixth days of creation, God made all the living creatures, including fish, birds, reptiles, insects, and mammals. When we speak of the animal kingdom, we marvel at the vast diversity of God's creation. Just the sheer number of species is astounding enough. The species we know are but a fraction of all species. Today, about 800,000 species have been identified, and some scientists believe that the number could well reach over 10 million if all were identified. These living creatures vary widely in size, colour, shape, and behaviour. It had taken centuries for humans just to arrive at the present classification of all animals.

Then on the sixth day He displayed the crowning glory of His Creative Genius—He made man in His own image (gods) (Gen. 1:27; 2:7). However, unlike the animals, man was given several unique characteristics—a mind, a soul, a conscience and a will of his own by which he can reason, choose, worship, and keep himself in tune with his Creator.

We shall look at a few reasons in the light of His revelation (Scripture) why we should worship our Creator:

Respect due to Him—Jeremiah 13:15-16

Trustworthy—Jeremiah 17:7,8

Everlasting love, mercies, faithfulness—Jeremiah 31:3;
Lamentations 3:22-24.

He is holy, right, wants people to be happy, doesn't want anyone to be an orphan or alone, promotes justice—Isaiah 1:1-20.

He is compassionate—Isa. 14:1

He is merciful, compassionate & just—Isa. 30:18.
He is Sovereign—Isa. 41:1-4, 66:1,2.
Cares, concerned—Isaiah 44:1-7
Carries His people—46:3,4
Forgives His people—51:20
Covenant & devotion are irrevocable—Isa. 54:10.

Reasons Why We Should Be At Every Service Of The Church

ERNEST R. BURNETTE

There are members of the church who are not regular in their attendance at Bible Study and worship on Sunday morning, and there are some who come on Sunday morning but do not return on Sunday evening or on Wednesday night. This is discouraging to others. We wonder why those bought with the blood of Christ would take so lightly such a serious responsibility. This is not to say that attendance at all the services of the church is all God requires; far from it, but at least it lets God and others know whose side we are on.

There are those who can be counted on to be present at every service, day after day, month after month, and year after year. Your faithfulness to God is greatly appreciated. When you are absent from the assembly, everyone knows something is wrong or you would be there. To those who do not attend faithfully, there is no urgency to check to see if you are sick or have some kind of problem in your life, since it is your custom or habit to be absent frequently. Perhaps you feel your children need sleep or that they need to do their homework. Perhaps you are tired or fell asleep. Maybe company came. Maybe you just do not want to come. Some would not dare miss a day from work but would think nothing of missing worship services. Some are too sick to be at Sunday night or Wednesday night services but would not think of missing work the next day. Brethren, these are just excuses. We do what we really want to do.

Some reasons why we should attend the assemblies are:

1. Christ and His kingdom must come first in our lives. In

Matthew 6:33, Jesus says we are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. This is a commandment of God! If we seek Him first, He promises that we shall receive the material things necessary to sustain our lives. This promise is very comforting. Is God able to deliver on this promise? Listen to what Paul wrote in Romans 4:21: *"And being fully persuaded that, what He has promised, he is able to perform."* God never breaks a promise, but He expects us to put Him first in our lives.

2. We love God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. In Luke 10:25-28, a lawyer answers Jesus' question about inheriting eternal life by saying, ". . . *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.*" So our love for God is to be total. It means we always seek to please Him. Jesus said: *"If you love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15). If we say we love God and refuse to obey Him, we deceive ourselves.

3. We love the church. How valuable is the church? In Ephesians 5, Paul wrote: ". . . *as Christ so loved the church, and gave Himself for it.*" To the elders of this same congregation he said: *"Christ purchased the church with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). So, the church is just as important as the blood of Christ. Are we showing love for Christ's church when we miss the assemblies? We are actually saying it is not important. You know, if we can indifferently miss one service, why not two? If two, why not three? If three, why not all of them? If you can, why can't everyone? The church would then cease to exist. Is that what you want? I think not.

4. We love the brethren. It seems clear that in Matthew 18, "little children" are Christians. Jesus pronounces a woe on those who would cause a Christian to stumble, to sin. He said it would be better for a millstone to be hanged around his neck and be drowned in the sea. That is better? Jesus is concerned that His children remain faithful. In the matter of eating meat in 1 Corinthians 8, Paul said he would eat no meat while the world stands lest he make his brother stumble. What do our new brethren or weak brethren think when we miss the assembly? What do the strong brethren think when we miss? How can we possibly afford to set an example before our brethren that will lead them into sin! Besides, the bad example we set is sinful.

5. We love our neighbours. In Luke 10:29, we learn who our

neighbours are. In this illustration the neighbour was a despised Samaritan. Thus all people are our neighbours. We have a responsibility to our neighbours. Paul said we are epistles that people know and read (II Corinthians 3:2). To our neighbours we may be the only contact they have with the true church! We should all want our neighbours to be saved. How important will the church be to our neighbours if they see us not attending the assemblies? Not very important!

6. We are the light of the world. Jesus said Christians are to be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16), and we know light dispels darkness. If our light goes out, how can others see the way to salvation? If it is dim, the way is made dangerous. If it is flickering, it stands an uncertain signal. As Christians we are to let our lights shine that others may see our good works and glorify our heavenly Father. Brethren, we simply must set the best possible example.

7. When we do not attend, we "vote" against worship and Bible study. We vote for the church to stop meeting. We vote for the preacher to stop preaching; we vote that the children in our Bible classes no longer be taught the great truths of God's word; we vote against raising our voices to God in song, etc. We do not do these things with intent to harm but out of indifference.

8. Assembling together gives us opportunity to grow in Christ. Peter wrote in II Peter 3:18, "*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ . . .*" We remember that Peter also wrote concerning those who had become Christians and gone back into the world; that they were worse off than one who had never known the truth. He likened them to the hog that goes back to the mire and the dog that turns and eats its vomit. If we do not grow, we die. Surely we grow by studying the Bible in our classes at the building as well as in our homes.

9. We show disregard for the men who lead us. If the church has elders, they will help to feed us spiritually. The elders establish the times and manner of the public worship. If we choose not to come, we show a lack of respect for their leadership. We also show disregard for God's word. We do not simply disobey the elders, but we disobey God. If we disregard the authority of the elders in the matter of attendance, we must answer to God. If elders must feed the flock, and they must,

doesn't it follow that the flock must eat the food?

10. We disobey a direct command of God. Our Bibles still read: *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."* Some are concerned about what "the day" means. But whether it means the Lord's day, the destruction of Jerusalem, or the judgment day, the impact of this verse does not change. I suggest you read seriously Hebrews 10:23-31.

Having begun the Christian life, there should be nothing more important than being faithful to God. In Hebrews 10:23, we are admonished to *"hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering."* Hold fast means to have as a secure possession. We must continue to "confess" Christ each day by the way we live. We are to consider one another to provoke unto love and good works (verse 24). We do that by meeting together with the saints, as well as in other ways. It is discouraging when Christians do not assemble together simply because they prefer to do other things. How can this possibly be putting God first? By being together we exhort one another to faithfulness and good works. This sin of forsaking the assembly requires repentance, confession, and prayer to God for forgiveness. Without forgiveness there is only certain fearful looking forward to judgment.

Faithful Christians attend every service unless it is impossible to come. Some may say, "Does God really care?" We should always please God and not just ourselves. How then can we simply disobey a command of God to not forsake the assembly? Which assembly? Every assembly established by the local congregation through its elders who have been authorized to direct the affairs of the local congregation. The elders have accepted a great responsibility in answering to God for each member of the church of Christ. May they be able to do it with joy and not with grief!

What's Wrong With Me?

DAVID THURMAN

I suppose most of us have those days in which everything seems to go wrong. Those are the kinds of days that make us wonder if we have any common sense, or make us doubt that we know what we are doing. If those days are filled with mistakes, we get frustrated or maybe angry. If those days are filled with failures and sin, we get discouraged.

When Jesus started preaching, he started with the gospel of God, or the "good news" (Mark 1:14). Jesus brought hope to those who had given up on themselves. Jesus brought cheer to those who were frustrated or angry. Jesus came to a world full of failures who often doubted themselves and, perhaps, even doubted God. To that world of doubters, Jesus brought good news. Jesus did this even in the face of serious sin.

THE UGLINESS OF SIN

"And they came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. And when He had come out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. And constantly night and day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and gashing himself with stones" (Mark 5:1-5). Jesus was going about His usual business when a serious problem confronted Him. This man was viewed as out of control by his culture. All of the efforts made to deal with him had failed. He was bound by Satan and Satan's power to the degree that he could not be around "normal" people.

Sin is like that in all its forms. It is ugly and the worse it is the uglier it gets. Sin can take a strong young man and turn him into an addict. It can take a beautiful young woman and turn her into a prostitute. Sin, once it gets its grip on a person, can ruin that person to the degree that "normal" people avoid that person.

Sadly, some sinners are like this man. They have given up

on being normal and live their lives without regard for God, or good, or what is healthy. They live corrupt lives, having given up on themselves. They see and feel the ugliness of their sin, and so give up on being good.

SINNERS STILL SEEK GOD

"And seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him" (Mark 5:6). This man was absolutely bizarre in his behaviour. He was out of control. He probably had given up on a normal life. Yet, when he saw Jesus, he ran (not strolled) up to Jesus and bowed down before the Lord.

The man was still caught in Satan's snare. He was still acting in a crazed manner. But deep down he wanted something better. He was not happy with his bizarre lifestyle. He wanted to be normal again. He knew that he had been unable to make that happen on his own. But he also knew about Jesus. He probably knew that Jesus brought good news. And so, the crazy sinner runs, not away from God, but toward Him.

Sinners today still seek God. Whatever sinful lifestyle you have been caught up in, deep down you want to feel good about yourself and you want your life to be normal. All sinners still have a hunger to know God and turn to Him. Unfortunately, many feel hopeless, trapped by Satan and unable to escape their addictions or their sinful choices. But, when Jesus shows up, they still hunger to know Him.

This means that we should never dismiss any sinner as beyond God's power to save. Even the sinners who look so ugly and so lost to us want to live better. They want to serve God. And God wants to reclaim them.

JESUS IS UNAFRAID TO YOUR SIN

"And crying out with a loud voice, he said, What do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me! For He had been saying to him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit! And He was asking him, What is your name? And he said to Him, My name is legion; for we are many. And he began to entreat Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now there was a big herd of swine feeding there on the mountain. And the demons entreated Him, saying, Send us into the swine so that we may enter them. And He gave

them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea" (Mark 5:7-13). This is an amazing scene. A crazed man filled with Satan's demons, begs God to be kind! And Jesus, without seeming to blink an eye, speaks calmly and confidently to the man. Jesus even rescues the man from his horrible condition.

I hope you can see that Jesus is not afraid of your sin. No matter what horrible things you might have done, no matter how far you have wandered from God's path, Jesus stands ready to help you. The Lord will not cringe at your sin. The Lord will not turn away from you when you run to Him just because your particular sin is ugly. Jesus is not afraid of your sin.

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all" (1 Tim. 1:15). When the apostle Paul wrote these words he was recalling his life before being a Christian. He was a blasphemer, a persecutor of the church, a violent man (1 Tim. 1:13). Yet Paul says Jesus' mission was to come and save people like him. Jesus came to this earth to save you. No matter how bad your sin is or how ugly it looks, Jesus is unafraid and stands calmly, ready to save you.

ONLY JESUS CAN CLEAN YOU UP

"And their herdsman ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country. And the people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the 'Legion'; and they became frightened. And those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine." (Mark 5:14-16). When the locals saw this man cleaned up and clothed, they got worried. They had seen how bad his life had been. Probably they had all given up on him ever being different. Now they see him being calm, decent and "normal" again. That is when they got nervous. Maybe the power to change this man seemed too much for them.

The fact is, that power is awesome. Too many sinners try to get out of their ugly situations on their own. The reality is that you will never be made clean on your own power. Satan will always win that battle, because you cannot live well enough to stay out

of sin's grasp. If you have fallen deeply into Satan's power, then you will never be able to break the bondage until someone with the power to change you intervenes. That someone is Jesus.

Paul understood this principle. He had tried to stay out of sin and still sinned. He had tried to do what was right, and failed. *"For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* (Rom. 7:22-25). Paul admits that the only solution to his sin problem was Jesus Christ.

Don't wait until you have the ugliness of sin removed from your life in order to run to Jesus. Jesus knows how ugly your sin is and he calmly waits for you to come to Him and He will deal with your sin in a powerful and permanent way. Only Jesus can free you from your sin. Only Jesus can clean you up so that you can be seen as healthy by the people around you.

TURN TO JESUS

Too many sinners have failed to hear the good news. The good news is that Jesus has come and is willing to face your sin. It doesn't matter to the Lord what you have done or what you have failed to do. He is willing to take you back. Turn to Jesus, run toward Him and bow before Him as your Lord. Hear His words. And He said to them, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel [good news] to all creation. He who had believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned"* (Mark 16:15-16). Jesus wants you to hear the good news. He wants you to believe in Him and be baptized into His name. Jesus will take away your sin, clean you up and make your life free of the ugliness of sin. Come to Jesus. Bring your sin in all its ugliness and let the Lord deliver you with the good news of His salvation. Believe and be baptized today!

The Reality Of Sin

ALLEN ASHLOCK

Of all the words in the Bible, none is more far-reaching and more devastating than that of SIN! Of all the diseases and plagues that have befallen man, none can be compared to the power and results of SIN!

Of all the wars and earthquakes that have beset mankind, none can be compared in degree of destruction to the destructive force of SIN! Sin is terrible and ought to be preached as such!

Yet, there are many today who do not like the use of the word SIN. Many psychologists, sociologists, and psychiatrists call homosexuality just a normal desire among those of society who have different interests, instead of the SIN that it is (Romans 1:22). Many call divorce the privilege of the masses, instead of SIN. There are some who call murderers simply people who have been neglected by society; they blame society, you and me, for the murder, rape and crime of our day. Yes, some would like to drop the word SIN from the English vocabulary. The denominational world shuns speaking and condemning the sins of our day, and some in the church are doing the same. Some of the church no longer are exalting the Gospel of Christ by condemning sin wherever and on whoever they find it! Yes some are no longer preaching the Gospel of Christ, but are telling of a "social gospel." Let us abandon the terminology of the scientific world when it comes to Bible teaching: let us speak as the Bible speaks and be satisfied with it. Let us call the shots as the Bible calls them. Let us call SIN by what it is!

BASIC FACTS ABOUT SIN

Every person of an accountable age and mind has sinned at one time or another (Romans 3:23). No individual is free of sin! It is not true that a certain select few are saved by God and thus can never sin. It is possible for a child of God to sin once again, and if repentance does not follow, he will be lost (Luke 13:3).

Again, every person is what he is and is known to God (Matthew 12:33). No one can hide from God. Every person on earth is what he is and is known to God. One can tell the type of

tree by observing the fruit it produces. So, one can tell what a man or woman, is by the fruit he or she produces.

Another, basic fact about sin is that sin is the transgression of the law of God (I John 3:4). Where there is no law, there can be no transgression of the law. But, there is a law now in force over all men! The law now in force over all men is the Gospel of Christ! Man's destiny will be determined by whether he accepts or rejects that Gospel!

Where does sin come from? In Matthew 15:19, we learn that sin originates from the heart of man. Man's basic problem is a heart problem. When man puts his heart in the book of God, then man will be destroying the source of sin! Sin is the result of man's heart being far from God (Matthew 15:8). By drawing near to God, we draw farther away from sin!

But, another basic fact about sin is that sin will enslave (John 8:34). By following the desires of the flesh, one will find himself enslaved to the desires of the flesh. True freedom comes "in Christ." One who thinks he has no one to answer to but himself has been sadly deceived.

The last basic fact about sin concerns *responsibility*! Many today think others are responsible for their sinful behaviour. sometimes Christians blame the elders, deacons, and preachers for *their* lack of commitment! Instead of seeing their own lack of concern, they blame the leadership for what is really their responsibility. People today need to know that each person is guilty of sin and is responsible for his actions. The elders, deacons, preachers and parents are not the ones ultimately responsible for our sins. Each person alone will give an account for himself (James 1:14).

SIN: THE SPECIFICS

Immorality both within and without the church is sin. There are those who believe the law of Christ applies only to Christians, and thus only an immoral Christian is really immoral. Such a doctrine as this is false (Matthew 28:18-20).

Immorality is sin and mankind will answer for it (Galatians 5:19-21),

The laws of the land or one's personal feelings do not negate God's truth. This is a basic Bible principle, that God is over human government. This is true in regard to divorce,

fornication, lying, stealing, and religious false teaching. Though human government sanctions these sins, God's law does not!

The hypocrisy of Christians is sin! The lukewarm attitude of indifference toward worship, church work, and Bible responsibilities will cause one to be lost. We must put Christ first (Matthew 6:33). A failure to obey the Gospel is sin and will cause one to be lost (II Thessalonians 1:8).

THE RESULTS OF SIN

Sin brings physical heartache and sorrow. Think of the sad heart aching problems that result from the following sins: fornication, divorce, drunkenness, drug abuse, murder, stealing, suicide, hate, crime, haughtiness, worldliness and many others. It should be clear to all that a violation of the law of God can and often does bring sorrow and physical heartache on the one who commits sin, and often on innocent people.

Physical heartache and sorrow as a result of sin is indeed terrible, but not as terrible as spiritual death, which is the eventual outcome of all impenitent sins. One can not study the following passages and come to any other conclusion: Romans 6:23; Matthew 3:10; Romans 1:18; I Peter 3:12; Jude 5-7; Revelation 21:8; Proverbs 27:20. Yet, spiritual separation from God in hell forever should be motive enough to cause one to want to escape the power and effects of sin!

CONCLUSION

Sin is terrible and breeds even more terrible consequences. But, thanks be to God that mankind can escape the power and effects of sin by believing on Jesus Christ as the Son of God (John 3:16), by repenting of past sin (Acts 2:38), by confessing Christ as Lord (Romans 10:9-10), and being buried with the Lord in baptism (Matthew 28:18-20). "And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Who Are The Lost?

WALTER SWAIN

Jesus Christ gave us the marching orders for the church in

the Great Commission, as recorded primarily in Mark 16:15-16 and Matthew 28:18-19. This Commission charges us as Christians individually and as the church collectively to preach the Gospel to every living, accountable human being in the world. The specific means and ways of accomplishing this tremendous task are not given, but we are to use every Scriptural and right method we can to do so.

But, it is also important that we be motivated to proclaim the Gospel to all by an understanding of who the lost are. Of course, as Paul points out in Romans 3:23, all accountable persons are lost in sin. Jesus' understanding of this fact led Him, because of a deep love for us even as sinners, to give up the glories of heaven, empty Himself of His equality with God, and come to earth as a man (Philippians 2:5-11; Romans 5:8).

If we understand who the lost are and have a similar love for their souls, we, too, will be willing to do whatever is necessary to reach them with the Gospel. If we are going to convert people to Christ, we must believe they are lost, and that they must hear the Gospel, believe the Gospel, and obey the Gospel in order to be saved.

The Scriptures speak of three groups who are included in "all sinners" who are lost.

1. THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW GOD

Paul states in II Thessalonians 1:8 that when Jesus comes again, at His second coming, He will, "render vengeance to those who know not God . . ." There are millions in our world today who fall into this category who have never had the opportunity to learn about the true and living God. In another sense, many know about God, but do not know Him in the sense in which Jesus spoke in John 17:3.

Jesus certainly included these in His command to preach the Gospel to every person in the world. If these people are saved in their ignorance, then we only condemn them by preaching to them. Since all are lost in sin, those who do not know God are lost and need to hear, believe, and obey the Gospel.

2. GOOD MORAL PEOPLE

In Acts 10, we read about a Gentile named Cornelius. he was the first Gentile to be converted to Christ. Luke describes this man before his conversion as, "A devout man, and one that

feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:2). Yet, this man was lost. After his conversion, Peter explained to the Jews that an angel had appeared to Cornelius and told him to send men to Joppa for Peter, "Who shall tell you words whereby you and all your house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14).

Many loved ones, relatives, and friends who are good moral people are in a lost condition, just like Cornelius. This is because we are not saved by our own goodness or works, but by the blood of Jesus Christ. We are to be good because we are saved, but we must apply the blood of Jesus to our sins in obedience to His Word to be saved. These people, too, need to hear the Gospel, believe it, and obey it to be saved.

3. THE RELIGIOUS IN ERROR

Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23, "Not every one that says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven."

"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord,' have we not prophesied in your name? And in your name have cast out devils? And in your name done many wonderful works?' And then I will profess unto them, 'I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity.'"

Notice that these people called Jesus their Lord. They acted in His name, and believed they were serving Him. Yet, they were lost because they were not "doing the will of God" (verse 21). One cannot hear error, believe error, and obey error and be saved. Those in false religions are lost because they have not obeyed the Gospel in faith, repentance, confession of Christ as the Son of God, and baptism for the remission of their sins and are not doing the will of God (II Thessalonians 1:8). Those in error religiously need to hear and obey the Gospel to be saved.

Every ten seconds, 27 people are born into this world. By 2012, there will be another billion people, for a total of seven billion. Each of these persons has a soul. Where they will spend eternity will be largely determined by our attitude toward their spiritual condition. How we feel as Christians about their lostness, and what we do to reach them with the Gospel will determine their fate. The fields are white unto harvest. May we be willing to harvest the crop.