

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 34

April 2004

No. 12

EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

"For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for the second."

The word covenant means a will or a testament. The sixty-six books of the Bible are divided into two testaments. The first, comprising thirtynine books, is called The Old Testament, and second, containing remaining twentyseven books, is called The New Testament. Clearly then, there are two different covenants or will or testaments found in the Bible. But before the existence of any written will of God for man, God spoke in the time past, the Bible says at Hebrews 1:1, in various ways, to the fathers by the prophets. That is to say, that God has never left man without a will. He has always, at different times, according to the need of man, told him what He want from man.

The first, or the old covenant God had made with Moses and the Israelites who were the descendants of Jacob. In Exodus 34:27 we read: "Then the Lord said to Moses, Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." But that first covenant was temporary. And, therefore, says the writer of the book of Hebrews, in the New Testament, that "If that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for the second." (Heb. 8:7). Moreover, "In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is

ready to vanish away." (Heb. 8:13).

However, one may ask, how could it, i.e., the Old Testament have been at fault, seeing God Himself had given it? The reason, as already stated, was that it was temporary. It was given only for a specific time as the author of Galatians 3:19 says, "What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator." The Law of Moses, as the Old Covenant is called, was to last till the Seed should come. The Seed was Christ. Therefore when the Christ appeared and suffered and died and rose again and ascended back to heaven then a new or the second Covenant has superseded and replaced the first Covenant.

To understand this we look at the illustration of a building contractor. At first the builder builds a scaffolding around a building to be erected. But when the actual building is completed he removes the scaffolding. In the same way, the law or the first covenant was established by God "still the Seed should come." And when the Seed did actually come, then He removed the Old or the first covenant. Again, let us look what the Bible says in Galatians 3:22-25: "But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." Simply stated, it clearly means that today we no longer live under the Old Testament law of Moses, but we live today under the New Testament of Christ. The New Testament of Christ is God's standard of authority for us today. To be saved and to go to heaven we should fulfill those requirements which are listed in the New Testament of Christ. Whatever we do in our worship of God must be according to the commandments of God as are written in the New Testament of Christ and not as they are found written in the Old Testament law of Moses. The whole of the Bible, sixty-six books, is the written word of God. We must respect it and read it and believe it to be the truth of God. But we must also learn to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

Why Is So Much Said About The Church?

J.C. CHOATE

So much has been said about the church that many people have become very negative when the subject is brought up. It is said that in Japan many express an interest in Jesus but not in the church. There was a recent segment on The Voice of America (VOA) where "Christian Rock" was discussed and one of the comments was that the young people want to know about Christ but are turned off when it comes to the subject of the church. Why is this? Do they not see the relationship between Christ and His church? Are they not aware of the fact that it was Christ who built the church, died for it, is saviour of it, and will come back for it one day to deliver it up to God?

In the first place, in the religious world as we know it, most have gotten far away from the concept of the church as the Bible identifies it. They see the church as nothing but a group of denominations with all kinds of names, doctrines, worships, and practices. This leads to competition and tension between these groups. Then to off-set this appearance of competition, preachers tell people that the church isn't important anyway, that one can go to heaven without even being a member of any church. With this kind of message being constantly sent out, is it any wonder that the majority are tired of hearing about such a divisive, irrelevant subject?

But what does the Bible say about the church? Does it seem to be an irrelevant subject there? Do we read little about it there? In the Bible, is the church dismissed as an unnecessary thing?

Listen! When you go to the Scriptures themselves you will be surprised to see that the church is actually a central theme of its entire message. The Old Testament is filled with prophecies about its coming (Isaiah 2:2,3; Joel 2:28,29; Daniel 2:44). The church, and characteristics of its members, were the themes of almost all of Christ's lessons (Matthew 6:9-13; Matthew 6:33; Matthew 18:17). He made prophecies concerning its coming into the world (Mark 9:1; Matthew 16:18,19). He spoke many parables about the church,

the kingdom of heaven, to help us understand its work (Matthew 12, 13 and 25).

Going on to the book of Acts we have the beginning of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 2) and all of the preaching and teaching and missionary journeys that tell of the conversions, the persecution of it and its expansion throughout the world. Reading from Romans through Jude, you have all of the letters that were written to different individuals and congregations of the church, and all of the information pertaining to its foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), its purchase price (Acts 20:28), its name (Romans 16:16), its saviour (Ephesians 5:23), its headship (Colossians 1:18), its oneness (Ephesians 4:1-6), and its future—that Christ will come back for it one day to deliver it up to God (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Then finally the book of Revelation tells of the trials and tribulations of the church as a body, of its individual members, and of its final victory. As a matter of fact, if you removed from the Scriptures all that is said about the kingdom or the church (they are two words for the same body of people), you would not have much left! Isn't the Biblical perspective about the church shocking when compared to the unimportance placed on it, even in the so-called religious world?

But why does the Bible say so much about the church? Because it was a new subject, a vitally important subject, and the world didn't know anything about it. Christ had come to call together a body of people who would follow Him, and He would die to save that group, so He wanted everyone to know all about what He was doing. In order for man to understand, he had to be taught all these important truths about the church—who would bring it into existence, where it would first begin, when people would first be able to become a part of this spiritual family, what its salvation would cost, how to become a member of it, how it would worship God, how it would be organized, its work as His representative in the world, and the necessity of all people to come out of the world and to be born into this wonderful, saved spiritual family of people. That is why so much had to be said about the church in the first century—so much had to be learned!

But why must so much be said about the church today? Doesn't the Bible tell us all we know about the church? That's the point; all that is said in the Scriptures was written for our learning,

that we might know God's will concerning the church. His grace and our obedience, and everything necessary for us to be forgiven in this world and saved eternally in the world to come (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:3; Hebrews 1:1,2). If all people would just go back to the Scriptures and read and study to know God's will, then they would easily understand why the church is important. Once one comes to know the Biblical facts about the church, he is going to see that the Scriptures nowhere uphold all of the denominational groups that exist in the world. He will see that division is actually condemned, and that if one wants to please God he will obey the commands of the Gospel to be saved and to be added to His church, the one and only church one can read about in the Bible. (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38,40,47).

Again, the reason so much has to be said about the church today is because the average person never goes to the Scripture to see what the Lord has said on the subject. Instead, he listens to men who constantly tell him that the church is not important, that one can go to heaven without being a member of any church, and hundreds of other false teachings pertaining to the church. People, therefore, are so filled with all of these errors that it becomes necessary for someone to try to show them what the Bible actually says. With all of the false information that is already out there, and with all of the preaching and teaching that are constantly being done to put down the church, then it is difficult to get most people to see the truth on this subject. Some do, and are thrilled to finally be able to throw off the shackles of religious error, and to be a part of the Lord's family—but the majority turn a deaf ear. Yet we must continue to tell people what the true church is and of their need for becoming members of it to be saved in this world and in the world to come.

Does all of this mean, then, that the church is the saviour? No, it does not. The church is made up of the saved, and we as humans have no power to save anyone. At the same time, we read in Ephesians 5:23 that Christ is the saviour of the church, and in Acts 2:47 we read where the Lord adds the saved to His church. This means that if the Lord is the saviour of the church—His church, the one church of the Bible—then we must be members of it to be saved. And when we obey the Gospel, the Lord saves us and adds us to His church. Therefore His church is made up

In Mathew chapter 22:23-29, we read, that Sadducees wanted to trap Jesus by asking some questions. Pharisees also wanted to trap him and both tried their best but without any success, Jesus will always quote them from the Scriptures, and tell their errors. The Pharisees came and asked Him, "Is it Lawful to pay Taxes to Caesar? Jesus said, Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. The Sadducees asked Him, "What about Resurrection?" He replied, concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, "I am the God of Abraham,

FRANCIS DAVID

You Are Mistaken, Not Knowing The Scriptures Nor The Power Of God

of the saved! It's just that simple! What about those in the church who are not living as they should? In the end, they will be gathered out of the church and will be lost, unless they repent and return to the Lord. The Scriptures say that when one is saved and added to the church, he must be faithful unto death if he is to receive the crown of eternal life (Revelation 2:10).
 These are the reasons, then, why so much had to be said about the church in the first century, and why so much must be said about the church today. Realize that when we preach Christ, we will also preach the importance of the church, since the church is His spiritual body. (Acts 8:12). But what about all of the denominational churches? The Lord did not promise them. He did not build them. He did not die for them, they do not wear His name, and therefore He has not promised to save them. It is just that simple.
 Don't look down on the church. Don't despise it, find fault with it, and refuse to be a member of it. Christ loved the church so much that He gave himself for it, He died for it. If you oppose the church, you oppose Christ himself.
 Are you a member of the Lord's church? If not, don't waste your time and risk your soul. Study God's word and learn about the church and obey the Lord. He will save you and add you to it.

the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." We read, "when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at His teaching."

We would like to see why these people were in error religiously? The words which caught our attention are these spoken by the Lord. He said "YOU are Mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God." These people claimed that they are well acquainted with the Scriptures, and no doubt they were able to quote long verses and quotations from the law of Moses but they were ignorant about the things and teachings of the Scriptures. The cause of their religious error was that they were ignorant of the Scriptures, and they were not able to understand the Power of God. They were just sticking to their small limited ideas and opinions and therefore they thought that they are self sufficient and they do not need any teaching. Their religious leaders such as priests, scribes, rabbis and teachers were able to quote long quotations from the Law but were ignorant about the real teachings taught therein. Today, we see the same thing, When we teach and preach the pure New Testament Christianity to the people, and talk to religious leaders about the doctrines and teachings of the New Testament, they just don't want to hear about it because they are sticking to their own ideas and opinions. Jesus tells such people, that "you are mistaken not knowing the Scriptures." There are few things that I would like to mention here which my religious friends don't want to hear about, because they do not know the Scriptures and the power of God.

What about Doctrine of salvation by faith only? They say, "Just have faith in Jesus and you will be saved." The Bible says, "Faith without work is dead." (James 2:17). "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." (2:24). "Even the demons believe and tremble," (2:19). The Bible says: "He who believes and is baptised will be saved." (Mark 16:16). According to the Scriptures the baptism is essential for our salvation, Apostle Peter says: "It saves us" (1 Pet. 3:21). Apostle Paul writing to Christians says: "Therefore we are buried with Him through baptism into death." (Rom. 6). Buried with Him in Baptism, this is what we read in Colossians 2:12.

There are other number of verses which tell us that baptism is essential for our salvation, but my friends in the denominations

say that it is not essential. Sometimes, they give the example of thief on the cross who was crucified with Jesus. How can we follow that thief's example? We must know that the thief lived under the old testament and Jesus spoke to him before His death. His blood was not shed then. According to the Bible We must know that we need to be baptized in order to be saved. (Acts 2:38).

What about Practise of sprinkling instead of baptism? In the first century when Christianity began, baptism was only immersion, and it was only performed by immersion. Baptism or the greek word for baptism BAPTIZO means to dip, immerse or to plunge. Whenever people were baptized in the biblical times they went to the water and were dipped or submerged in the water. (Acts 8; Mark 1:4-5). Infants were never baptized. Infact they are not the subjects for baptism. The infants are innocent and the people those who baptise them not knowing that baptism is for sinners. Those who claim that they are baptizing babies, they are not baptizing them but are sprinkling, and they do not know that sprinkling is not baptism. The practice of sprinkling was legalised in 1311 A.D. When it was declared to be substitute for immersion by a council of Catholic church.

People say one church is as good as another, whereas the Lord said I will build my church (Matt. 16:18). Jesus our Lord the master builder built only one church, and this church belongs to Him because He is the head of this church. (Col. 1:18). There is only one body and this body is the church (Eph. 1 and 4:4). There is no human being who could be the head of the Lord's church. We need to be in the Lord's church because salvation is in His body, the Church (Acts 2:47).

Some say, there is nothing in a name. The name is not important and therefore you can call yourself religiously by any name. The Bible says, we need to be Christians. In the new testament there are three places where the name Christian is mentioned. (Acts 11:26; 26:28 and I Peter 4:16). We should be called Christians and not by any other names. Nowhere in the Bible we read, Baptist Christians, Lutherans or Methodist Christians, Presbyterians, Pentecostal or any other name. We should wear the name of Christ and must give all honour to Him. Salvation is in the name of Christ (Acts 4:12). Are you a Christian or a Christian plus?

The Scriptures is against divorce and many do not speak against it. Many religious leaders may try to justify their opinion on this matter but the Bible is against divorce. In Matt. 19, the pharisees were testing Jesus again. The pharisees wanted to know when divorce is legal. Some believed in those days it could be with any reasons, and some that it should only be on sexual sin. Our Lord believed in the permanence of marriage, and he quoted them from the Scriptures Gen. 1:27. God created man and woman to live as husband and wife till their death. They are one flesh (Gen. 2:24). Since God has joined them together so no one has the authority to separate them. Divorce breaks this bond and God hates it. In Malachi 2:16 the prophet says: "For the Lord God of Israel says that HE HATES DIVORCE." This practise of divorce is increasing at alarming rate, and it is catching up in our country too. We must speak against it. Jesus said: "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery." (Matt. 5:32).

The second thing that Jesus spoke to the Saducees that you do not know the power of God. The saducees could not believe that God can raise the dead, because they did not believe in the resurrection. Even to king Agrippa Paul said: "why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead? (Acts 26:8). There are many today who do not believe in the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ. They think how it could be possible that Jesus could be born like this? They do not believe in the Power of God. Many do not believe in His divinity, His miracles, Inspiration of the Bible, that Bible is the inspired word of God. (2 Tim. 3:16). There are others who have doubt about His resurrection from the dead. Even in biblical times the apostles faced such people. We must believe in the power of God.

Friends, it is through the power of God that we are saved from our sins. It may sound foolish how could the water save us, but it is not the water but the baptism and the command of God which saves us when we obey it. There are other number of things, may sound foolish to us, such as resurrection, heaven and hell but we must know that through the power of God all is possible. Is anything too hard for the Lord? (Gen. 18:14). Let us study the Scriptures, so that we may know the truth. The truth shall make us free (John

8:32). Let us be like the people of Berea who searched the Scriptures daily. (Acts 17:11).

Jesus—The Source of our Faith

THOMAS R. DOHLING

"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith"
(Heb.12:2)

At first glance, what does this sentence mean to you? It should mean that Jesus is (1) the author of our faith, and (2) the finisher of our faith. So, Jesus is the beginning and end of our faith; the Source and Perfector of saving faith. Jesus is the expression of God's grace towards mankind.

If we are to **grow in grace**, we must **live by faith**. "Therefore it is of **faith** that it might be according to **grace**" (Rom.4:16). If we tried to progress spiritually by the use of our natural faculties, we would be greatly frustrated. We must walk by **faith** in the **Lord** and His **word**. "We **walk by faith, not by sight**" (2 Cor.5:7). This means that we trust the Lord in being able to do what He has promised even when He is invisible to us. Yet, where do we get faith? What is the source of faith?

Jesus is the source of our faith: **Jesus, the author . . . of our faith.**" If we have saving faith in Christ, He brought it into being. Jesus authored our faith in a **revelatory** and **relational** manner. He **revealed** to us the **truth** we needed to know (through sermons, personal witnesses, tracts, audio tapes, books, Bible reading, and many other means). Then, He **invited** us into a **relationship** with **Himself** "Come to me, all you who labour and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart; and **you will find rest** for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt.11:28-30).

First, He told us the truth about our need. "For **all** have **sinned** and **fall short** of the glory of God . . . For the **wages** of **sin** is **death**" (Rom.3:23 and Rom.6:23). Then, He told us the truth about His loving work on our behalf. "But God demonstrates His own **love** toward **us**, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died

for us" (Rom.5:8). All the while, His Spirit was convicting us of the reality of these matters. "And when He [the *Holy Spirit*] has come. He will *convict* the world of *sin*, and of *righteousness*, and of *judgment*" (John16:8). Ultimately, Jesus invited us to trust in Him for the gift: of salvation. "**Come to Me**, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will **give** you **rest** . . . the **gift** of God is **eternal life** in **Christ Jesus** our **Lord**" (Mat. 11:28 and Rom. 6:23). Basically, Jesus revealed Himself to us as **one who could be trusted to save our souls**, so we placed our hope in Him. Thereby, He authored faith in us.

Where are we to go for more faith (for the developing of our faith)? Jesus is the source for this need as well: "**Jesus** . . . the . . . **finisher** of our **faith**." The one who brought faith into being in us now wants to **perfect** our faith (to bring it on into **mature** development) in the **same** manner that He began it. Initially, we had to have Jesus revealed to us to have faith authored in us. Now, we must have a **continuing revelation** of Him through His **word**, if our faith is to be **increasingly built up**. The more we **study His word**, the **clearer He will become to us** and thereby our faith in Him will develop and mature unto perfection May we all come to Jesus again and again for spiritual refreshing and development.

By Grace Am I Saved Through Obedience

F. FURMAN KEARLEY

It happened to me. For more than 20 years I have used the illustration of a person dying from a bad heart condition. He is saved by the grace of the hospitals, the doctors, the nurses, the medicines and other things that replace his worn-out heart and strengthen his heart. Truly, much grace is involved in such a situation.

However, as the heart patient begins to recover, the doctors and nurses come to him and give him a regimen of exercise, rest and diet that he must keep if he is to make the medical work effective. So it is with spiritual salvation. We are saved from sin

by the love, mercy and grace of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. However, we must also respond to the gracious instruction of the Holy Spirit by obeying the will of God.

Not too long ago, I had a heart attack. By the grace of the emergency room, the cardiologist and other professional personnel, I had open heart surgery for a triple by-pass three days later.

By the grace of the medical professionals, the hospital and its facilities, the medical community and, of course, by the grace of God, my blocked arteries were removed, new arteries were put in place, and I was given a new lease on life. I know what it is to be saved by grace physically.

Yet, in the days that followed I was visited by professionals from the rehabilitation department, the dietetic department and by the surgeon and cardiologist. All of these emphasized a general regimen and specific activities that I must follow if the surgery was to be successful. I must get a certain amount of rest. I must exercise properly. I must eat properly, and in general take care of myself.

My successful recovery will depend upon both the grace of the medical profession and the discipline and efforts that I put forward to make everything work properly. Of course, it also depends upon the grace of God. On the second day after surgery they began my regime of walking. This is continuing.

It is most difficult for me to understand why many in the religious world want to teach that one is saved by grace only through faith only. At the same time, most of these religious teachers are involved in teaching their audiences that they should live holy, righteous and godly lives in this present world, that they should be moral, kind and good, and that they should worship God faithfully. This is all certainly true, but if it is, then one is not saved by grace only nor by faith only.

God and man work together to save the physical body from disease and illness. They also work together to save the spiritual person from sin and damnation.

God's Word teaches that we must believe, repent, confess and be baptized to wash away our sins and enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 2:38; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 22:16).

We must worship and serve God according to His commandments and directions. We must live holy and pure lives.

We must worship faithfully and in spirit and in truth. We must respect and obey God's instructions in every matter pertaining to religion if we are to be saved.

I am truly grateful for God's grace and man's grace in the success of my open-heart surgery. I hope and pray that I will have the good sense to cooperate with them by following the regime of diet, exercise and rest they have set forth. Even more so I am grateful for the grace of God that has redeemed me from sin and the devil. I pray that I may have the good sense to read and study His Word and obey His instructions that I may be saved eternally.

The Seed of Woman

JOHNNY RAMSEY

In Genesis 3:15 God made a solemn promise to Satan that the seed of woman would destroy the power of evil. Sin and death had just entered the world through the deceitful ploy of the devil (Romans 5:12). Mankind would be separated from Jehovah for centuries because of iniquity introduced by Adam and Eve (Isaiah 59 1-2). Not until Christ died at Calvary would reconciliation be a reality (Ephesians 2:16). Truly, the One born of woman (Galatians 4:4) tasted of death by God's grace for every man (Hebrews 2:9).

In the Bible, elsewhere, and in the books of the world, offspring are referred to as the seed of man. But here, uniquely, Genesis 3:15 speaks of the seed of woman. In Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6 we learn that God would give this child, this Son, as a sign. Born of the Virgin (Matthew 1:21-23) in Bethlehem of Judea, as Micah 5:2 predicted, the prophecy of Genesis 3 was fulfilled. Is it any wonder that Revelation 19:10 tells us that "the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus"?

In Jeremiah 31:22 we learn that a strange thing would happen in the land. Yes, a woman would compass—or go around a man—to bring a child into the world. In that setting Jeremiah refers to "Rachel weeping for her children." The fulfillment of this weeping is mentioned in the background at the birth of Christ in Matthew 2. The mediator of the New Covenant that Jeremiah mentions in 31:31-34 would be born of woman! Careful study of these points would help us to understand the discussion in Timothy 2:9-15. Just

as woman introduced sin into the world (it was first Eve, not Adam who was deceived by the devil), so woman also brought the in-bearer, Christ, into the world!

There are many passages that enlighten us regarding Genesis 3:15. First, let it be admitted that Satan is very powerful. From the moment God had a plan for man, the devil had one to contradict it. Throughout the Bible this tumultuous struggle ensues. Though Satan has the ability to hinder or thwart heaven's plans, that Adversary shall not be ultimately successful. As Romans 16:20 affirms so we ardently proclaim: "God shall crush Satan under your feet shortly."

Christ, the seed of woman, was able to enter the domain of the devil and spoil his goods (Mark 3:27), cast out the prince of evil (John 12:31), and give us the victory (I John 5:4). In fact, that is exactly what Emmanuel came to accomplish (I John 3:8). God rules in the kingdom of men whether the world recognizes that authority or not (Daniel 4:25; Matthew 28:18; Romans 13:1; Revelation 11:16).

Even though Satan could influence evil men to plot together the death of our Lord, this covenant of death, this refuge of lies, was not successful (Isaiah 28:14-18; Romans 1:4). Through death the seed of woman crushed the power of Satan (Hebrews 2:14). Paul ties the promise God made to the devil in Genesis 3:15 to the consummation of all the power in Christ when we read the words of 2 Corinthians 2:14: "We are always led in triumph in Christ."

The gates of Hades cannot hold the Prince of Peace (Matthew 16:18). Up from the grave He arose in victory over sin, death, Hades and hell. Isaiah 53 tells us that even though the One born of a virgin ("root out of dry ground") had all the burden of the world's sin upon Him still much seed would be born unto the heavenly cause.

In Luke 2:49 Jesus acknowledged that He had to be about the Father's business. As a very young man Jesus realized Joseph was not His father. He was born of woman by the power of God (Acts 4:26-30). No wonder the demons believe and tremble (James 2:19).

Because of the awesome power contained in the promise God made to Satan in Genesis 3:15, we are more than conquerors

through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37) and not even death can separate us from God Almighty. The grave holds no victory because Christ burst asunder the bands of death and is indeed our forerunner to heaven (I Corinthians 15:57; Acts 2:24; Hebrews 6:20). Through the veil of his flesh, we are heirs of the new and living way as Hebrews 10:19-20 beautifully proclaims. If we are lost in the Day of Judgment, it will be in spite of all that the Lord has done for us. If any child of God does fall from grace, it will be in spite of Romans 4:25 and 6:23: "He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification . . . For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord."

A great gospel song tells us of the glorious victory God's promise in Genesis 3:15 provides:

Triumphant through grace I shall some day stand, With Jesus at home On that golden strand, His face in its beauty At last to see My hand in the hand That was pierced for me.

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus for the purification rites, aged Simeon took the baby in his arms and gave a marvelous speech as recorded in Luke 2:25-35. Clearly enunciated in that brilliant oration was the truth that Christ would be the hope of Israel and a light to the Gentiles also. Sadly, Simeon also warned Mary that sorrow would come to her life as well as the joy of knowing she had powerfully cooperated with the eternal purpose of Heaven. Satan was able to "bruise the heel" of the Savior but when, in the fullness of time, God sent His Son, born of a woman, it was due time for the devil to realize he had lost the battle (Galatians 4:4; Romans 5:6).

Does Death Purify the Soul?

DILLARD THURMAN

So often some wag will point to a cemetery, and remark, "The best people of our community are all in this district!" Regardless of how sinful "a woman may have been, after death she is referred to as "a dear sainted mother." And a vile, wicked man will be extolled by the remaining associates as one of "the righteous

dead!" After touring this country, a foreigner was asked: "How can we really improve the moral and religious culture of this country?" His astute reply was: "the solution is simple: raise all those in your cemeteries; and bury all those now running around loose!"

Where did anyone get the idea that the natural event of death will change the moral and spiritual value of the deceased? The sobering truth is: "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*" (2 Cor. 5:10). Every person on earth must prepare for that great judgment day: "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). Each person will be judged by the deeds which he has done—not by what friends may testify at his funeral!

IT WILL BE AN IMPARTIAL JUDGMENT!

Why do we seek to preempt the work of God's final judgment? "*Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God*" (1 Cor. 4:5). I've wondered at the impropriety of a group singing "Asleep in Jesus," as I stood at the coffin of a man who ignored Jesus all his life. I don't believe it right to sing "Safe in the Arms of Jesus" of one who, in life, rejected Jesus as Lord and Saviour! Yes, it is a comfort to sing these songs when we can sing them truthfully! Surely we agree with the Psalmist: "*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*" (Psa. 116:15). But it does not follow that one is the Lord's saint merely because of death!

God is concerned for our souls. The Psalmist sang of that concern and spiritual providence: "*He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight*" (Psa. 72:14). God's concern is shown before one departs this life; for after death his fate is sealed in judgment! Too many shallow-minded folk are like Baalam of old: they want to live for self, then switch at the end of a wicked life, crying: "*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*" (Num. 23:10). But

piteously, they who live like Baalam will end like Baalam! One cannot die in a state in which he has not lived—whether it be Arkansas, Ohio, or Jesus Christ! You can't fall asleep in Jesus if you have never been awake there! And if you have never lived in Christ, then you can't die in Christ!

WHAT WILL GOD'S JUDGMENT REVEAL?

There was no revelation given to the beloved John signifying that death was a "cure-all" for the evils of a mis-spent life! Rather, John wrote: *"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me. Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them"* (Rev. 14:13). Only those who die in the Lord are found blessed in death! There is no derived blessing in death for the close of a sinful life spent out of Jesus Christ!

The contrast of the righteous and the wicked is clearly stated: *"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day"* (2 Thes. 1:7-10). While it is certain that all who die in the Lord will be recipients of the blessings in eternity, it is just as certain that woeful punishment will fall on all who die OUT of Christ! It is a terrible thing to reject salvation and die in a lost state!

THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF THE JUDGMENT!

Paul had nothing but good news and encouragement for all who had come into Christ! *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep"* (1 Thes. 4:14-15). This is the Christian's true hope! Of course, it all hinged on Jesus Christ being raised from the tomb: *"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came*

death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:20-22).

The blessed assurance that saints have in our Saviour is that since He has been raised from the dead. He is able to save us also: "*Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming*" (v. 23). Friends, death does not purify the soul of man.

BLESSINGS OF THE TWICE-BORN CHILD!

Jesus forcefully taught Nicodemus: "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" This ruler of the Jews was puzzled, and asked: "*How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*" Jesus answered. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" (Jno. 3:3-6). The first birth is physical, of the flesh, and places us in our fleshly family. The second birth is spiritual, and places us in the spiritual family where God is our Father, and Jesus Christ is our elder brother! It is in this second relationship that we obtain spiritual blessings, even after death! (See Rev. 14:13, above).

Death does not purify, but this does: "*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*" (1 Pet. 1:22-23). It is in Jesus Christ that one is born into the family of God: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27). This brings us into our new relationship: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). We have thus been born twice, and so we will only die once! Truly we can quote: "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth!*"

SAVED FROM WRATH IN CHRIST JESUS!

Our purification became possible because of the love of God!

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:8-9). We were neither worthy nor righteous; yet God was willing to make us pure and holy through the gift of His Son! *"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life"* (Rom: 5:8-10). In the following chapter, Paul explains how this was done: *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death"* (Rom. 6:3-4).

Those who are saved, God *"hath blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"* (Eph. 1:3). Notice further what is written of them: *"But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. . . that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross. . . For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father"* (Eph. 2:13, 16,18).

One is not purified in death, but in Christ. Paul wrote, *"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"* (2 Tim. 2:10). It was not the dead, but the living that was to be purified: *"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded"* (Jas. 4:8). If you have not put on Christ (Gal. 3:27), you are not yet complete! *"And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power"* (Col. 2:10). Friend, have you put on Christ? Have you purified your soul in obeying the truth? If you live for the Lord, those who mourn your death can confidently sing: *"Asleep in Jesus!"*

"Arguments For Instrumental Music"

LARRY MURDOCK

Perry C. Cotham, in his book *Ceasefire, Ending Worship Wars Through Sound Theology and Plain Common Sense* (Orange, Calif.: New Leaf Books, 2002), lists a number of arguments that some members of the church make in favor of a cappella singing in worship. Cotham then lists several arguments that some

members of the church make for incorporating instrumental music into the worship. These arguments in favor of instrumental music in worship are worthy of review.

GOD'S COMMANDED WORSHIP

"All things good can praise God in their own appropriate way. . . . Every gift we possess is for praising and worshipping God in some way because all of life is worship" (Cotham 139). If this were true, then atheists also could not help but worship God, for they too have life! Worship is not utilizing things or life to honor God: worship is honoring God by believing and following His commands. My children do not honor me by simply living life as they please but by continuing in the path of righteousness which I have shown them. Can my child show me respect and honor by doing something spectacular when I do not respect that behavior? Because it is clear that God does not respect all "worship" behavior, how can I know what God respects?

Cain and Abel learned that God makes distinctions between worshipers. Cain learned that what was appropriate worshipful behavior for him did not receive God's respect (Genesis 4:1-5). Cain reacted poorly to God's rejection—he became "angry, and his countenance fell." God could see it written on his face. God said to Cain, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Genesis 4:7). The behavior that was "well" was the offering that God had required, no more or less.

The Holy Spirit in Hebrews 11:4 says more about this episode. "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which [the sacrifice] he obtained witness that he was righteous [that is, Abel obtained witness that he was justified in bringing what he brought], God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks."

Abel was justified in bringing those gifts because God commanded them! Abel might have been a talented musician, painter, sculptor, actor or a hundred other things, but he showed his respect and honor of God by taking God at His word and following the command. Isn't it interesting that God requires the same thing from talented sheep men and talented vegetable growers and even from those who are not so talented?

We have no assurance that we can "praise God in [our] own appropriate way ... because all of life is worship." In fact, example after example on the Spirit's pages causes us to think otherwise, and to ask humbly, "What will You have me bring. Holy Father?"

THE SILENCE OF SCRIPTURE

"The argument from silence cuts two ways. ... Rather than seeing silence of the Scriptures as prohibition, does it not make more sense to view silence as permission unless common sense tells us otherwise?" (139).

God is not silent on the subject of music among Christian worshipers. He has spoken through His Spirit. Therefore, we do not contend for singing from silence, but we contend for what He has commanded, for we know this is His pleasure. Because God has spoken to the point, good sense tells us that we should do that and no other. But when has common sense ever brought unity among believers in Christ? The only sense common to us that can bring unity is the sense that God brings to us through our common Bibles. Because some people cannot put their trust in that book, they do not think unity can be forthcoming from it.

This turns into an argument, then, that if God wanted our unity. He would have made the Word clearer! This is contrary to what God specifically says about unity.

A MODEL FOR WORSHIP

"There is much evidence that the early Christian worship was modeled after the synagogue pattern which was vocal only. The reason seems not to be theological but aesthetic and practical" (140).

I am surprised at this argument from a pattern. Those who make this argument must agree with me that the church followed a pattern. Amazing! But what evidence shows that the pattern came from the synagogue? There is no New Testament evidence that ties Christian worship with synagogue worship. If the singing commanded of Christians in worship was practiced also in Jewish synagogues, it only proves that God was also pleased with the singing in the synagogues! There is no evidence that God ever commanded acts of worship because they were aesthetically pleasing to humans. He arranged worship for His own pleasure,

worship that has always turned out to be a challenge to human faith!

THE CALL FOR SINGING

"Technically speaking, there is no command for congregational singing or any clear example of its practice in Scripture. ... We may infer that congregational singing was practiced, but it is not explicitly stated" (140).

Out of a context of public worship comes this saying of the inspired Paul: "I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with my understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding" (I Corinthians 14:15). Is this not an explicit example of Christians being instructed by Paul to worship in assembly by singing with spirit and understanding? Singing was in the worship assembly.

But the argument continues, "The passages that call for singing (in Ephesians and Colossians) seem to place singing in the context of Christians interacting with each other in everyday life" (140). The passages in Ephesians and Colossians "seem to place singing" in an everyday setting, not worship. So singing is permissible as praise to God everywhere except in worship assemblies? Read the verses: "Do not be drunk with wine [as some worshipers did in the assembly around the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:21)] ...but be filled with the Spirit [pray and sing in the assembly with the spirit (I Corinthians 14:14-15)], speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody [literally, plucking the strings] in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:18-21). A more worshipful passage could not be found! Does this "seem" like an "everyday life" thing to you? Good sense suggests that this is an assembly of Christians being taught to worship corporately.

A PATTERN FOR LIFE

"The biggest argument is hermeneutical. Should we scrutinize and pour over the New Testament as though it is a legal codebook that has some kind of detailed pattern about everything we do in church worship and organization? ... Or is the New Testament

better viewed as a collection of narratives and love letters giving counsel and encouragement to the early Christians in living the life of Christ amidst their own culture" (140).

Because Christians are commanded to be "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), it is obvious that the "collection" of letters contains the truth given by the great love of God. What should the Christians do with this "counsel and encouragement"? Should they obey its commands? Should they stand firm for its truths? Should they find their greatest encouragement from the fact that God has made His will and pattern known? Furthermore, would it demean God to suggest that His love letters are good for only one culture in one era? If the Old Testament was written and preserved for the comfort and support of later generations (including our own), why would we moderns think any less of the New Testament? "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:1-2). Are you among the "us"? If you are not, then where are you? Are you implying that God has no claims, no will or pattern for you? Whose rules of order will you follow in worship? Unto whose "liberty" have you been called? (Galatians 5:1). Have you declared your own liberty by a new hermeneutic, or will you follow the liberty the Lord grants? And is this grant of freedom, liberty to do as you please or as the Lord pleases?

The above arguments for the use of instrumental music in corporate worship assemblies cannot withstand the scrutiny outlined in this review. The human reasoning demonstrated by proponents of the instrument simply cannot stand up against the will of God, clearly stated in His Word.

Victory Over Envy

DAN FLOURNOY

Everyone has wrestled with the problem of envy. It is so insidious that even the righteous find themselves envious of the unrighteous. Asaph, the psalmist, said, "For I was envious of the boastful When I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Psalm 73:3). David warned, "Do not fret because of evil-doers. Nor be envious

of the workers of iniquity" (Psalm 37:1).

A person is taken captive by envy when a feeling of displeasure is produced because of other people's prosperity. The ancient philosopher Socrates described envy as the following:

"Envy is the daughter of pride, the author of murder and revenge, the begetter of secret sedition, the perpetual tormentor of virtue. Envy is the filthy slime of the soul, a venom, a poison, a quicksilver, which consumeth the flesh and drieth up the marrow of the bones."

When you look at what other people have and become discontented, watch out for envy.

Unless envy is overcome, it will condemn the soul. Envy is one of the works of the flesh. Paul says, "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:21). James said, "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish" (James 3:14-15).

Five principles suggest a cure for envy:

1. Love will overcome envy. Paul said, "Love does not envy" (1 Corinthians 13:4 NKJV). If you want to have victory over envy, then fill your heart with love.
2. A person must deny himself. Because envy is born from pride and selfishness, self-denial is the remedy. Jesus said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).
3. A person must learn to be content with what he has and who he is to overcome envy.
4. Prayer is a key element in overcoming any sin. Pray for God's help in order to please Him.
5. Humble yourself before God because "God resists the proud. But gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

We can overcome envy if we consider what it is and where it leads. By following Christ daily and practicing the principles He taught, a person can gain victory over envy.