

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers . . ."

Sometimes it is said that all Christians should be teaching others. But James said the opposite. (James 3:1). And the reason he cites is that they would be given stricter punishment. Why? Because many are not teaching God's word as it is written in the Bible. Christ Himself said that "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you depart from me, you who practice lawlessness." (Matthew 7:22,23). Christ was speaking of those who claimed to be doing things in His name! They thought and believed that they were doing all of those things in His name or by His authority. But they were wrong! Because they were not doing, preaching or teaching according to God's will. (Matt. 7:21).

Teaching God's word is the most important work on earth. Because when everything else will be destroyed, the word of the Lord will endure forever. (1 Peter 1:24,25). Christ's last command on earth to His disciples was to go and teach. (Matt. 28:20). But one must be careful what one teaches. One should not teach his own testimony or doctrines and commandments of men (Matt. 15:8-9). But as Paul said to Timothy, one must

"Preach the word!" (2 Tim. 4:2). Word of God, as they are written in the Bible. Thus, when God's word says: "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak . . ." (1 Cor. 14:34). And, "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silent." (1 Tim. 2:11,12). Why many are teaching today that there is nothing wrong for women to lead in prayers, and to teach and speak publicly? Is it not the violation of God's will? Again, many are teaching that the church is not important, and that one can be a Christian without being a member of the church. But this is not what the Bible teaches. Notice what the Bible says: Christ Himself built His church (Matt. 16:18). He adds all the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47). He died and shed His blood for His church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25). A denominational church built by some man may not be important. But the church built by Christ is as important as Christ Himself, because the Bible teaches that Christ's church is His body. (Eph. 1:22,23). And, what about those who teach that one is saved by believing only in Christ and that baptism is not important or that it is not necessary to be baptised to be saved? What does the Bible teach? What does the Saviour Christ say? He said: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved . . ." (Mk. 16:16).

Teaching or preaching God's word must not be taken lightly. At the end it is God's word which will judge one and all, including those who teach and preach. One must not teach man's doctrines and commandments. One must not teach what is taught in Bible Schools and Colleges, if it contradicts what the Bible teaches. Preach only what the Bible teaches. Preach God's word. Because, finally we all will be judged by His word alone. (John 12:48).

Are You Really Sure That You Are Saved?

J.C. CHOATE

The Bible tells us that all accountable beings have sinned and have come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23). That

being the case, all of us need to be saved from our sins, or have our sins washed away. Paul explains in Romans 6 that when we obey the Lord in baptism, we are buried with him by baptism that the body of sin might be destroyed. This means that we are baptized into Christ and that we become new creatures in him. (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Of course most people who believe in Christ also believe that they are saved. But how do you know that you are saved? Can you read in the scriptures what one must do to be saved and then confirm that that is what you did? Let me assure you that there are many preachers and many churches out there in the world that are peaching all kinds of ways to be saved. Some will tell you that you can be saved by just believing in the Lord. Others will have you to say the sinner's prayer to be saved. Still others teach that all one has to do to be saved is simply to live a good life. There are almost as many doctrines of salvation as there are churches, and the sad thing is that most people will, without question, accept one of these ways to be saved.

Now, in the light of these statements, what did you do to be saved? Are you **really sure** that you are saved? When you read the Scriptures, do you read of people doing exactly what you did to be saved? Do you want to face the judgment as you are?

Most of you would probably declare that some one told you that if you would believe in Jesus, or if you would say the sinner's prayer, or if you would live a good life, you would be saved. You believed what they said, and you are basing your hope of eternal life on their promises. But let me ask you: who made those requirements, and who made those promises? Did the Lord or the Apostles, in the written record of the New Testament, tell you that you could be saved in such ways? My friend, you must be very sure that what you did is based only on God's word or you will be lost instead of being saved! The scriptures warn again and again that we must not be deceived.

It is well known that, in direct conflict with plain scriptural commands, most preachers and teachers say it is not necessary to be baptized to be saved. They will also tell you that you can be saved without being a member of the Lord's church, that one church is as good as another, that the name you wear is not important and that if one is truly saved he cannot fall from grace—and all of these doctrines totally contradict New Testament commands. We are told by the Lord Himself that one

must believe and be baptized to be saved. (Mark 16:16), that one **must** be a member of the church to go to heaven, since Christ is coming back for His church (Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 15:24), and that one **must** be faithful unto death to go to heaven. (Revelation 2:10). Would mere men dare to stand in the face to the Lord Jesus Christ and refute or deny the necessity of these acts of obedience that He has commanded? **Who is the Saviour—Christ or some man? Who is the authority—some religious leader or God's word?**

When we stand before the Lord on the day of judgment, He will be the authority and His word will be opened before us as our judge. Neither your favorite preacher nor the respected religious leader to whom you were listening will be there to defend you and to save you. All of us will be judged by the Lord and His word, the same Lord and the same truth that we have right now. That word will still say the same then as it says today. Christ warned, *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day"* (John 12:48).

What Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23 will apply to most religious people when we face Him at the judgment. They will be debating their cause because they have sincerely believed they were doing the right thing, but Christ's words of warning will be their answer: *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"* (Matthew 7:21-23).

My friend, I ask you again, are you saved? *Are you really sure that you are saved?* How do you know that you are saved? Where is your proof? Have you read in God's word exactly what you have done, or are you basing your salvation on promises some man has made to you? Please don't risk your soul on the teaching of men. Go to the Scriptures and read and study until you know exactly what the Lord wants you to do, and then do that. In response to your obedience through faith, He has promised that He will save you and add you to His church. (Acts 2:38,47). Only then can you be sure that you are saved, because you can trust in Christ's promise.

The Bride Beloved—2

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Through The Eyes Of God

First, when God looks at the church, He sees the covering red film of His Son's blood.

Even in man's thinking, when one human sacrifices his life for the welfare of others, he becomes special, somewhat hallowed, perhaps, by those directly affected by his sacrifice. We can be sure that when God sees the blood of Christ, He sees it as the supremely hallowed gift that it was, and anything covered by it partakes of its holiness.

Second, seeing us through that blood, God sees not a perfect people, but a perfected people. No man, even though a Christian, can live without sin. But, in Christ, as a person walks through each day with the desire to please and obey Him, his unwitting sins are not imputed to his record (Romans 4:8), and he is continually kept cleansed and pure by the blood of his Saviour (1 John 1:7).

Too many Christians imagine the judgment as the occasion when God will gather up all of one's sins and pile them on one side of a scale, and put the good deeds on the other. Then whichever is greatest will determine whether that person is saved or lost. But this idea is foreign to the scriptures. It completely ignores the efficacy or need of Christ's blood and makes salvation entirely dependent on one's own actions.

The truth is that **not one sin can enter heaven.** The Christian has two recourses for his sins: (1) those committed unwittingly are covered by the blood of Christ and are never even marked on one's record; (2) those committed willfully and by deliberate choice are recorded and remain there until they are repented of and forgiveness is asked. A Christian dare not live or die with such sins still held against him because God's word allows no room for willful disobedience in heaven.

So the church is made up, not of perfect people, but of perfected, purified people, continually washed by the blood of the

Son. As God looks across the sin-covered population of the world, He sees with joy those Christians who are shining out with the radiance of Christ's own righteousness, bright pure lights in the darkness.

Third, God sees people who love Him. Occasionally while walking along crowded streets, all of us have unexpectedly come upon someone dear to us: a brother, a daughter, father, husband. What a thrill of happiness races through us at the sight of that special face in the sea of strangers!

When God views the world He sees among the throngs, also, the precious ones who love Him devotedly. What joy to His heart!

Fourth, God sees in the church a people of like-mindedness. Like-mindedness is a mutual treasure. When friends of this type visit us I look forward with excitement to the long hours of talking, usually late in the evening after other family members have gone to bed. Then we sit at the kitchen table, sharing thoughts until the early hours of the morning. This exchange is not possible with all acquaintances; it is only with a special few who have the same values and thoughts and ideals. The same is true with God and His relationship with men. It is only with Christians that there is like-mindedness and that the experience of a long evening of fellowship between God and man would be a satisfying pleasure to both. But to those who are like-minded, the unfolding of the mind of God in His word and the opening of the mind of man through his prayers are a precious communion.

Fifth, the church is beautiful and special to God because He sees in her a people patterned after Himself. No other life is so sure and unstained, so perfectly suited to the needs of man. And when God sees this renewal of divine nature among those who were originally created in His own image, it must be with great happiness that He acknowledges them as His people.

Sixth, the church is special in God's eyes among all the inhabitants of the earth because she is made up of His own children. Parents are always proud of their offspring; this is true to an even greater degree when the children do well. As they grow to maturity, so that their actions are their own, not just the borrowed thinking and convictions of parents, it is with ever swelling hearts that we watch their progress. Think of the pride God feels in His children—the church—when they are confronted

by the trials and challenges of the world and they stand strong and tall in their own spiritual strength! Remember His question to Satan about Job? Can't you just hear the parental pride? *"Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth . . . ?"*

Seventh, Jesus sees the church as His bride. What is a bride? She is the selected one, the perfect one that a young man chooses for his very own, to the exclusion of all others. When his eyes turn to her, they glow, not just with the warmth of love, but with *possessive* love: **she is mine!** For her he lives, for her he would even die if by his death she could be saved from harm. This is the picture of the church which Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of God, the Bridegroom, has chosen for His bride—the church, that one so maligned and scorned by the world. She it is who wears His name, who calls Him Lord in obedience of His will because of her great love for Him; and it is she whom He will present in victory to His Father! The fairy tale says that the Prince and Princess lived happily ever after. That is not always the case in real life, but God promises that it will be true for the Lord and His bride as they dwell for eternity in the presence of the Father.

CONCLUSION

Neither the world nor history see the church as she is, but we who are a part of that holy body not only know these truths for ourselves, we speak out of the well of this knowledge in introducing her to others. We would ourselves be maligning her name to speak of her in apologetic or compromising tones. Instead, our understanding of her beauty and perfection before God creates in us a burning desire to share with others the richest blessing that can come to men: the opportunity to be a part of that church, the Bride beloved of Christ.

I Will Not Preach

FRANCIS DAVID

Recently, I was talking to one of my good friends from South India, who is a good sound preacher of the gospel. He told

me that once he had to say these words: *"I will not preach"* to one of his coworker. This man was a missionary and he asked him, that the lessons I am going to give, you must only preach or teach from these. My southern friend replied him by saying that I will preach from the Bible and not necessarily your lessons. I was impressed with this because this preacher did not compromise with the truth. All faithful gospel preachers must take this stand. We must take a stand if someone compels us to preach and teach according to their thinking and ideas. The Bible says: "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering, and teaching." (2 Tim. 4:2). You may be encouraged to preach the man-made doctrine, but you must remember that God wants you to preach the word and His truth.

A lot of times, we see churches and Bible seminaries asked their students to preach their doctrines and the same might be mixed with some Bible in it, but that is not the true gospel of Jesus. What about you as a student of the Bible? If someone asks you to preach that one church is as good as another? The Bible tells us that Christ only made or built one church (called out people). (Mt. 16:18; Col. 1:18). If you know your Bible, you will say I will not preach this, since the Bible talks about only one church which Jesus built. We have the inspired word of God and this word is complete, unified and indestructible, and we must abide by this word. If someone asks me, why don't you mix these ideas and thoughts which I prepared and preached, I would tell him, I cannot do that. We have Bible the only authority and we will speak where the Bible speaks and we will be silent where the Bible is silent. Apostle Peter says: "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). We must follow and keep the word of God. If a person asks me to preach about kingdom, that it has not come yet, or Christ is going to come on the earth to establish his kingdom, then I will not preach about it because the Bible says the kingdom is the church and we Christians are the part of this kingdom. (Col. 1:13-14). We are born again to enter this kingdom. Christ and His church, His kingdom is right on this earth. (Mark 9:1). We are the citizens of this kingdom.

Many teach that salvation is by faith only and the baptism is not essential for salvation, but the Bible says, baptism is necessary for salvation. People were baptised for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), it is for washing away one's sins (Acts 22:16); Baptism saves us (I Pet. 3:21); We put on Christ through baptism (Gal. 3:27). I will not preach that salvation is by faith only. Maybe someone may ask me to preach that there is nothing wrong in using instrumental music in worship. I will tell him there is wrong in that because the Bible tells me that we must sing and make melody in the heart (mind). (Eph. 5:19). Today we see lots of women are preaching from the pulpit and they are being encouraged to preach and teach where men are sitting. This is complete violation of the word of God. God wants that women must keep silence in the services of the church (I Tim. 2:8-15; I Cor. 14:34). If someone asks me to preach in favour of this, my answer to such people will be in negative. I will not preach in support of women preaching.

There are other number of things that I will not like to preach about. There are many manmade doctrines and teachings which we look around us and sometimes good intelligent people are being encouraged to preach about it, which is very sad. We must respect the authority of Scriptures. Apostle Paul through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit tells us that we must rightly divide the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15). If a Christian properly and sincerely understands the Bible, then he will preach and teach what the Bible teaches. Dear friend, take a stand on truth. Let people know where you stand in spiritual matters. We read as Paul says: "Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (Eph. 6:11). Let us not compromise on the truth. If we are truly with Jesus, we will preach and teach what He says and asks us to do (Mt. 12:30). Yes I will not preach the things which are contrary to the word of God but rather preach the truth based on the Scriptures. I will preach the gospel because if I don't then woe is me. (I Cor. 9:16).

Created In Christ Jesus For Good Works

THOMAS R. DOHLING

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

We are saved by the grace (goodwill) of God when we trust Him (believe what He says in order that we may be saved). When we trust Him, we surrender to His will; do what He says we should do so that He may save us (cleanse us) from our sins. He has done what was necessary to take away sin (way of the cross); He laid the sin of humankind on His Son at the cross of Calvary. He blunted Satan's great tool, death, when He raised Jesus up from the dead, so that humankind may no longer be afraid of death (separation from God). So then, we are saved by God's goodwill (unmerited favour) towards humankind. Salvation is the gift of God. God does not have to save man—He is under no obligation to man. He gave man the freedom of choice and man chose to disobey God. Yet, God, being Who He is—compassionate and kind—chose to save man by His own sacrifice. God wanted a people for Himself who would be His creation in Christ Jesus who would do what Christ did; be like Christ and thereby (by their lives) glorify Him, good works that God prepared beforehand so we may do them. So, when we decide to follow Christ, we have this goal in mind i.e., to do the good works prepared by God and revealed through, and in the lives of, Christ Jesus and the Apostle. While journeying on this earth, our minds (spirits) ought to be in heaven where our Lord is. If we love Him, we will do what he says.

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to

and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Being a Christian in name only is not enough. We have to grow in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature—attaining to the measure of Christ's full stature—until we become like our Lord Jesus Christ. In such maturity there is no doubt only a quiet assurance and trust in God which compels us to do His will and be found acceptable to Him. Then, speaking the truth in love, the people of God (His church, the Body of Christ) grow up to be like Christ, the Head, in every way. Then the church grows in Christ being compact with each part supplying the needs of the body as they work effectively according to their fullest ability and thereby the body increases and builds itself up in love—love for Jesus the Head and love for one another with the interest of God uppermost in each one's mind.

What are the good works that have been prepared for Christians to do?

(Matthew 25:34-40): "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me to eat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Good News!—You're Equal

DAVID THURMAN

The world in which we live is full of hatred. Some groups look down on other groups. Some people are stereotyped due to the pigmentation of their skin or their national heritage. Meanwhile many try to climb the ladder of success by using or abusing others. These individuals treat people as if they are unimportant, objects to be used and thrown away. Worse, we all find ourselves overwhelmed by sheer numbers. Each of us is only one person among billions. It is easy to think that we don't matter. It is easy to think that others are better off than we are.

The good news is that God declares all of us equal when we are in Jesus Christ. There is no superiority among Christians. We all stand before God in the same way. God says you can be as good as anyone else in His family. Listen as Paul tells us how. *"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise"* (Gal. 3:26-29). Paul writes to people who think they will be better off before God if they start keeping the old testament rules and regulations. The apostle wants them to see that, in Christ, they are already as good as anyone else. To understand this, let's notice what you and I need.

WE NEED FAITH IN CHRIST

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). The chance to stand equal with others is found in trusting in what Jesus has done for you. Paul says our relationship to God as sons is built on our trust in Jesus. We become sons of God by putting our confidence in what Jesus did for us, not in what we did (or can do) for God.

The Galatians were being told they would be better Christians if they kept all the outward rules of the old law. The argument is they would be more righteous, more holy and therefore more acceptable to God. Paul says our relationship to

God is not built on outward trapping, but on inward trust. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast"* (Eph. 2:8-9). It is human nature to compete. It is human nature to think somehow you are better than someone else. In the Galatian churches this argument centered on how well people kept the old law. Today it may be in other religious activities. Paul sweeps such competition away by saying it is our faith that made us sons of God, not our performance.

WE NEED TO BE CLOTHED WITH CHRIST

"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Just as we need faith to become sons of God, so too we need to be clothed with Christ. Paul uses the image of clothing. The believer who is immersed in the name of Jesus is literally surrounded by the Lord, just as a suit of clothing would surround a person. Jesus becomes part of the individual.

I am always amazed that people balk at baptism. Who would want to go through life without being clothed by Jesus? Who would want to go through life without the presence and mercy being in Christ brings? You can be as good as anyone else, if you are wearing Jesus like they are. When God looks at His children what He sees is Jesus. If you have refused to be baptized, you have refused to put on Jesus!

In baptism the old man is done away, and newness comes. *"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life"* (Rom. 6:3-4). When you are baptized into Christ, you put Him on. You are able to do this because in baptism your old life of sin is washed away. In baptism you are raised to walk in newness of life. Baptism is essential to your salvation, and is essential if you are to gain equality with others before God.

WE NEED HARMONY THROUGH CHRIST

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). In the world, social and racial

distinctions abound. People are defined by colour, by nationality, by gender, by income. But in Christ all such distinctions are removed. We all become one in Christ. There is a harmony, or unity, among believers that cannot exist anywhere else.

This amazing unity is not based on people who are better than anyone else. It is based on people who have put their trust in Jesus and been baptized into Him. By being clothed with Jesus they have all become equal before God, and equal before each other. So, in Christ Jesus, there is the chance to have interpersonal peace with others, who may be quite different from you. As Paul tells the Ephesians, *"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household"* (Eph. 2:19).

God saves us all in the same way. God views us all in the same way. He calls us to live in the household of God as equals. If you want to get along with others, even those drastically different in background from you, then you need to be in Christ. Once you have recognized your needs, you can then respond to God and receive His blessing. Notice what we are in Christ.

WE ARE SONS OF GOD

Paul says we are sons of God. We become part of the household, or family of God. This new relationship is unlike any other. We are now the heirs of the Creator of the universe, the all-wise and all-loving God. We move from being under the wrath of God, to being in His grace. We move from being objects of condemnation, to become precious children.

In this family, you are just as much a child of God as anyone else in the family. *"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God"* (Gal. 4:6-7). We now have an intimacy with the Father that is similar to the closeness we had with our earthly parents. We don't see God as distant or disinterested. He is "Abba" or "Papa", a term of familiarity. We enjoy a whole new relationship to God because we are His children.

WE ARE WEARING CHRIST

Having been clothed with Christ, you now wear Him in all that you say and do. First, this means that God sees you as righteous, because of Jesus. *"He made Him who knew no sin to*

be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21.) Jesus took our sin, so we could become the righteousness of God. This is how you and I can know God is no longer angry with us. He sees Jesus, He sees Jesus' righteousness when He looks at us, because we are wearing Christ.

But, wearing Christ also means we should look like Him. That is, our lives should reflect His presence with us. *"For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps"* (1 Peter 2:21). God didn't claim us as heirs and clothe us with Christ so we would go on living like we did before. You are as good as anyone else because you are clothed with Christ. And, like all others in Christ Jesus, you have power to live the way God wants you to. God's grace isn't given to you just to save you. It is given to you to change you. *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age"* (Titus 2:11-12).

WE ARE EQUAL BEFORE GOD

In Christ you are as good as anyone else. Once people have put their trust in Christ and have been baptized into Him, then all worldly distinctions are lost. Paul wanted the Galatians to see that if they went back to the old law, they would not be closer to God. They would in fact, be recreating the very boundaries that had separated Jews and Gentiles for centuries. Equality could only be found in the grace of Jesus Christ.

The good news is so powerful in this passage. You can be a child of God. You can be clothed with Christ. You can be made an equal heir of the salvation offered at the cross. All the things the world uses to measure people will be put aside. How smart are you? In Christ it is not important. How good looking are you? In Christ it is unimportant. How rich are you? In Christ it doesn't change a thing. In Christ all are equal. Black or white, male or female, American or Indian. If a person is in Christ, all worldly distinctions are lost.

CLAIM YOUR EQUALITY

Knowing the good news will mean nothing if you do not claim it. Jesus stands ready to forgive you. God is ready to

clothe you in His Son. God is ready to make you His child and equal heir of salvation. Do you trust Jesus to save you? Have you put Him on in baptism? If not, trust and be baptized today—and rise to walk in equality with all believers.

The Precious Bible

JOHNNY RAMSEY

One of the boldest statements Jesus ever made is that found in John 10:35, *"The Scripture cannot be broken."* Our steadfast faith in the sacred text is a definite bulwark of Christianity. As the prophet wrote long ago, *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it"* (Isa. 55:11). The great German thinker, Immanuel Kant, said, "The existence of the Bible as a book for the people is the greatest benefit the human race ever experienced. Every attempt to belittle it or to do away with it entirely is a crime against humanity."

God's word is true from the beginning (Psa. 119:160) and will still enthrall us when the earth has been cast aside as an old garment (Matt. 24:25; Heb. 1:12). The psalmist makes this point so powerfully: *"For ever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven"* (Psa. 119:89). Sir Walter Scott said of it:

*Within this powerful volume lies
The mystery of mysteries,
Happiest he of human race
To whom God has given grace;
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch and learn the way
But better had he never been born
Who reads to doubt or reads to scorn.*

The Bible can transform character, change hearts and point men to heaven. Christ has *"the words of eternal life"* (John 6:68) and the entrance of God's word gives light (Psa. 119:130). The dynamic result of Scripture in our daily conduct is piercing, pungent and provoking (Heb. 4:12). We will never be the same, once we open our hearts and our minds to the revelation of

God's truth! When Paul bade farewell to the elders of the Ephesian church, these were his noble words of departure: "And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). The word of the Lord will judge us one day (John 12:48), and it cannot be bound (2 Tim. 2:9). When we live in harmony with its precepts, our lives are richer, fuller and blessed indeed. As the prophet wrote, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever" (Isa. 40:8).

As to the inspiration of the Bible, these passages stand out in clarity and richness: 2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thes. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jer. 1:9; John 16:13; 17:17; 8:31-32. In a compelling summation, these verses tell us that the Holy Spirit inspired some forty men to write sixty-six Bible books that contain the very WORDS (not just the ideas, the notions, advice or concepts) that the Almighty God wanted mankind to clearly know. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. It was truly the word of God, not the word of men. Not only so, but these passages reveal that the Bible contains ALL of the will of our Maker. The all-sufficient Scriptures rule out latter-day revelations and latter-day prophets: In a blasphemous excerpt from the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 29:6, we read that a man is a fool who says we have a Bible and need no more Bible! The foolish one is the one who goes beyond the message of the New Testament.

The Scripture cannot be broken, according to John 10:35. Through the centuries, evil men have tried to destroy the Bible, but still it stands because truth never dies. Earthly leaders have desperately tried to destroy heaven's message through means of persecution inquisition, torture and by burning volumes of the Bible by thousands of copies, but still the Book of books circles the earth and blesses millions. The great influence of the Bible upon society is still seen. At weddings, and funerals and anniversaries millions turn to it for comfort (Rom. 15:4). It is still a "light unto our path" (Psa. 119:105). The Bible is a joy (Psa. 119:97) as we meditate upon it day and night (Psa. 1:2). So precious is this Book that, during the "Dark Ages," when few copies were available villages blessed with a rare copy would chain it to the pulpit, so that each family would have access to it.

The indestructible nature of the Bible, by God's providence,

speaks of its divine origin and protection. Since *"the law of the Lord is perfect"* (Psa. 19:7), we should not be ashamed to speak of it before kings (Psa. 119:46). Preaching the oracles of God should be a delight for faithful and loyal soldiers of Christ (1 Pet. 4:11; Eph. 6:17). Jehovah has been gracious to allow us the honour to boldly tell men His marvelous message.

Someone has well stated that "the Bible is the perfect anatomy of the soul." Since our Creator is its Author (Psa. 33:9), no one knows us better. Jehovah has revealed His will and way to us in understandable tones and terms (1 Cor. 14:33). Not only is the Bible God's revelation to man, it is truly an infallible guide that maintains and sustains us as we travel through this pilgrim land on our way to glory. The psalmist spoke accurately and eloquently in Psa. 119:105 of that rich book: *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And light unto my path."* Paul reminded the Ephesian elders that the sacred Scriptures had the ability to provide an eternal inheritance for them (Acts 20:32).

The Bible, in sixty-six powerful and precious books, is a map that guides us safely and effectively through life and then on to mansions above in the presence of the redeemed (Matt. 8:11). All of these beautiful building blocks of spiritual endeavour point us to Christ, who is the heart of Scripture (Rev. 19:10). No other book has heaven's message of redemption and no other message has the guidance necessary for our fruitful sojourn on earth. Because the Bible is its own best witness. WE are on trial, not the BIBLE.

Will The Dead Be Raised?

PAUL VAUGHN

The resurrection of the dead proves Christianity is true! Paul strongly stated that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation upon which the Gospel rests. It is the centre of the preaching of the Gospel. The apostle Paul said: "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain" (1 Corinthians 15:13,14). If Christ has not been raised from the dead, there is no hope for believers in Him. If He did not arise

arise from the grave, there is no future for the soul of man.

Paul commanded: "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). How can the resurrection be proved? One must look at the evidence which confirms the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is confirmed by prophecies which have been fulfilled. One thousand years before Christ was born, David foretold His resurrection from the dead: "For You will not leave My soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10).

On Pentecost day, the apostle Peter quoted David's words and said that David was not speaking about himself. He was speaking about the Christ: "Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus has God raised up" (Acts 2:30-32). David's fulfilled prophecy not only proves that Christ was raised from the dead, but it also shows the Word of God is true.

Eyewitness' testimony is considered to be very strong in courts of law. There were many eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. One of them was Thomas who doubted that the Lord had arisen from the grave. The Lord appeared to His apostles after His resurrection, but Thomas was not present. "The other disciples therefore said to him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe' " (John 20:25). Thomas is simply saying that he will not believe that Christ has arisen from the dead unless he has evidence. Later, the Lord appeared to His apostles when Thomas was present. He said to Thomas: "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. And do not be unbelieving, but believing.' And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and My God' " (John 20:27-29).

There were others who saw the Lord after his resurrection. Mary Magdalene was one of them (John 20:16). Paul wrote that "He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve." After that he was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater

part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:5,6). The eyewitness accounts prove the resurrection of Christ.

The change in Saul provides proof for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that Saul persecuted the church of Christ: "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging men and women, committing them to prison" (Acts 8:3). In his letter to the church at Philippi, Saul (who became the apostle Paul) wrote: "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me; these I have counted loss for Christ" (Philippians 3:7-8). What can explain the change in Saul's life? He changed from a persecutor of Christ to a preacher of Christ. He was even willing to die for the Christ he once persecuted (Philippians 3:7-11; Acts 21:13). He was convinced Jesus was the Christ when he saw the resurrected Lord (Acts 9:3-9; 22:15).

The resurrection of Christ has been the center of controversy since the first century. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8). The wise men of Athens laughed at Paul's preaching the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 17:32). Doubters are still with us today. Yet, the empty tomb of Christ speaks to them all. Its testimony is powerful! The faith of Christians is not in a dead body. It is in a living Christ "who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead gives us hope for a better day. It is the most appealing part of the Gospel of Christ.

"O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:55-58).

The grave is not the final resting place of the faithful child of God. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the proof.

Great Tests of Faith

W.A. HOLLEY

God has always used tests to measure man's faith. How does faith come? Faith is not miraculously given as many claim. We will permit God's revelation of truth to answer: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). This writer believes what the Scripture says about its origin. Do you?

Hebrews 11:1-40 is a wonderful chapter which gives many examples of a working faith. A faith that does not *work* is a dead faith (James 2:24-26). Faith makes it possible for one to see and understand things that cannot be seen by physical eye sight. (Hebrews 11:1-3; II Corinthians 4:16-18).

Hebrews, chapter 11, furnishes us with a long catalogue of ancient worthies who demonstrated faith in their action. Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, et al., demonstrated their faith through their obedience to the commands of God.

For example Noah passed God's test of faith when he built the ark according to God's demands (Genesis 2:14-22; Hebrews 11:7). Abraham passed God's test of faith when he offered his son, Isaac, upon the altar (Genesis 22:1 ff; Hebrews 11:17). Moses passed God's test of faith when he led the Israelite slave out of Egyptian slavery (Hebrews 11:23-29). Read Hebrews 11:30. "By faith the walls of JERICHO fell down after (not before) they were compassed about seven days."

Why quote these Old Testament passages? Because your Bible teaches that these things were written for our learning and admonition (Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:11).

As strange as it may sound to some, we do not live under the Old Testament today (Ephesians 2:14-10; Colossians 2:14-17). It is for this reason Christians do not offer animal sacrifices, keep the sabbath day, go to the Jerusalem temple to worship, and keet the three great feasts of the Jews—Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacle.

It was necessary for God's law to be changed if Jesus were to become High Priest after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 7:11-14). Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi; rather he was of the tribe of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning

priesthood. It is sinful to require conditions of which God "spake nothing about."

The Old Testament ended when Jesus died upon the cross (Hebrews 9:14-17). When did the New Testament begin? It began on the First Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection (Acts 2:1-ff). Here was the beginning of the Lord's church, here was preached the first gospel sermon, here the first members were added to the church (Acts 2:36-47). There is no joining the church of one's choice. The Lord does the adding. In Apostolic times no denominational churches existed. For proof read any standard encyclopaedia. We do not wish to offend our readers, but the names of denominational churches are not mentioned in your Bible. Denominational churches represent departures from the teaching of the Holy Bible.

Today, are there tests of faith for alien sinners? Yes, indeed! Faith is not mere mental accent. An Obedient faith must express itself in overt acts of compliance with God's will. Many examples of Old Testament worthies show the impossibility of severing faith from works. In fact faith and works go hand in hand. Works bring faith to completion. Bare, unproductive faith cannot save anyone (James 2:18-26).

Does not the Bible demand repentance? But many do not wish to repent of their sins. They love drinking, fornicating, lasciviousness (that which excites disgust), and the like. Is your faith strong enough to withstand Satan's overtures? Satan often mixes with the sons of God (Job 1:6-12; 2:1.). Their are a plurality of evil spirits, with Satan as their head (Matthew 8:28; 9:34; 12:26). He is a murderer and the father of lies (John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:9).

Confession of Jesus' name is required of all (Matthew 10:32-33; Acts 8:37). Will your faith pass the test here? Or will you confess His name with your mouth, but deny Him with your conduct? If we confess Him, He will confess us (Romans 10:9-10). We might confess others but it would be to no avail.

Now we come to baptism, a very controversial subject. Some will say that since we are not saved by works, we are not saved by baptism. Friends, baptism is no more a work than is faith. Read closely. "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of GOD, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:28-29). Note: Man does the

believing; man does the repenting; man does the confessing, but when it comes to baptism man is passive—he puts himself in the hands of another to bury him in the water of baptism. (Romans 6:3-4; Acts 8:30-39). One is baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:26-27); one is baptized to be saved (I Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16); one is baptized for remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Baptism is a great test of faith because it shows whether men justify or reject God's counsel (Luke 7:29-30).

What about Great Tests of Faith for the Christian? There are many but we shall mention only a few:

(1) The Bible demands faithfulness of service for each Christian (Revelation 2:10). But many members find it difficult to attend the assembly regularly. Oftentimes their allegiance lies elsewhere: visiting, vacationing, ball games, or too lazy to attend services. On again, off again, gone again describes so many (Hebrews 10:25). What will you do when the Lord calls for you?

(2) Proper use of money is a great test of faith. God called the rich farmer a fool (Luke 12:16-21). His sin was not theft, drunkenness, or adultery. His selfishness is shown by his use of "I" and "my". When this man thought he was set for many years, his soul was required of God. Death scatters possessions (Psalm 39:6; Ecclesiastes 2:18-19).

(3) Any church that is unscriptural in origin, doctrine, practice and name, to use a military term—cannot pass MUSTER.

Candidates For Baptism

ANDY KIZER

It is wonderful when people are interested in obedience young, old, or in-between! However, Christianity is a taught religion, and one must know what it is he is obeying to become a Christian. Thus, the practice of what we often call "infant baptism" is performed in error. Baptism is never designed for, nor commanded to be administered to, a member of the church (i.e., one who has been saved) nor to one who is safe in the eyes of the Lord. This challenges us to consider what must be found in one who is a candidate for baptism.

The candidate for baptism is one who has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Before salvation on Pentecost, the

Jews heard Peter preach Jesus of Nazareth is "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:22-36). The Gentiles had to hear "that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:38-43). No one can be saved who does not know Jesus is the Christ, but "How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" (Romans 10:14).

The candidate for baptism is one who has believed and come to trust in Christ Jesus. Having faith is knowing of a certainty that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (cf. John 6:69; Hebrews 11:1). Without faith one cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). The Ethiopian asked, "What prevents me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36). Philip replied, "If you believe with all your heart, you may."

The candidate for baptism is one who has repented of his sins. To repent is to make a change in principle and practice. Peter preached, "Repent therefore and return that your sins may be wiped away" (Acts 3:19). This alone should tell us something about the maturity necessary for baptism.

The candidates for baptism is one who has confessed his sins and his faith in Jesus as the Lord and Master of his life. The confession must be publicly (Matthew 10:32,33; Romans 10:10). When we think of this statement of faith, we think of what Peter and the Ethiopian eunuch said: "I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (cf Matthew 16:16; Acts 8:37). To make such a statement, one must relate to the fact that Jesus was God *and* man, born of woman but begotten of God, and the Anointed One (the Christ) of God.

Therefore, the candidate for baptism is one who is of accountable age and of a certain degree of maturity in mind and spirit. Jesus, our example, was twelve when He was carried to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover (Luke 2:41-52), and He Himself was baptized at the age of thirty (Luke 3:21-23). In Matthew 18, Jesus, setting a child before the disciples, said that one must become as that child before he can enter the kingdom of heaven. All indications are that this child was "of a more advanced age" (Thayer's *Greek English Lexicon*). Why would this child need baptism?

While some may *not yet* need to be baptized because of a lack of maturity, it is nonetheless true that others need to put Christ on in baptism *now!*