

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL

### What Does the Bible Teach?

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. . ."*

In Christ one becomes a new creation; a changed person; one who has a new nature and a new heart. Old way of thinking, all bad habits and practices pass away, and the individual becomes a new man and a new woman (2 Cor. 5:17). This is called conversion. (Acts 3:19). The gospel of Christ is the power of God which brings this great change in an individual (Romans 1:16). When one learns how that God so loved the world that to save man from sin, which was leading man into the eternal destruction of hell, He took upon Himself the sins of whole humanity and was put to death on the cross by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God to be the propitiation for our sins. (John 3:16; Romans 6:23; Acts 2:23; 1 John 4:10). This causes man to believe in Christ, and to ask, what must I do? (Acts 2:37). The Bible says to "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Act 2:38). Salvation from sin is the gift of God. No one can earn salvation by performing any amount of works. One is saved by the grace of God. God loves all mankind. He want to save everyone from sin. He want to see everyone become a new creation in Christ. Anyone is invited to become a new creation in Christ. But to become a new person in Christ one must believe in Christ and repent. To repent means to change.

**"What shall we say then?" Questioned the apostle Paul the followers of Christ at Rome, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!" he said, "How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life." (Romans 6:1-4).**

**Walking in the newness of life, or as a new person in Christ, begin when the individual has believed in Christ and has repented of wrong ways and has been buried with Christ through baptism into death and raised from the watery grave of baptism. No person is a Christian, a follower of Christ, by physical birth. One must be born again of the water and of the Spirit. (John 3:3,5). Each individual must choose to be born again. Galatians 3:27 says: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." To be a new creation in Christ one must put on Christ. And to walk in Christ in the newness of life one must be willing to follow His steps. (1 Peter 2:21). This is the only sure way to know that one is saved from sin and to possess the hope of entering God's heaven. This is true happiness.**

**The peace and the joy and the love that comes into the heart of an individual by knowing the true God, Who has revealed Himself and His will for mankind through His book, the Bible, is beyond any other. Material things of this earth, events, days of celebrations, can bring good feelings for sometime. But to be at peace with God and our fellow being, each day of our life on earth we must hear what Christ taught in the Bible and practice it daily: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this:" said Jesus, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30,31). What this world need today, every man and woman, is the great transformation of the mind and being. This is what Christ came to do on earth. He makes every person in Him a new creation, as one follow in His steps daily. May we have truly a happy new year in Christ!**

# *"I Guess We Were Wrong"*

J.C. CHOATE

A few years ago a religious organization in Korea began to teach that Christ would come back to the earth on a particular date. This group had an office in New Delhi, as well as in other cities throughout the world, and their main task was to put out literature informing the masses of the Lord's date of return. Brother Sunny David, a gospel preacher in New Delhi, went to their local office to talk to them, but he found it difficult to get much information from the people there. He made a second visit a day or so before the date they had set for the return of Christ, and he found the office empty and locked. Someone in the area told him that the Koreans had returned to their country, wanting to be there when Christ came. Of course the Lord did not return on the date they had set for His coming. And, obviously, neither has He come to this date. But we read in the paper later that when the police went to the leader's home in Korea to arrest him, his comment was, "Well, I guess we were wrong."

But why did the police in Korea arrest this man? Because he had set a date for the Lord's return and had amassed great wealth from the members who had given him their money, property, and so on, since they wouldn't need those things after the Lord's return! But the question is, what need would he have had with them either? And why would those people have been so foolish as to give him all of that wealth? You would think they would have been wise enough to realize what was going on.

We have heard such stories many times. Several years ago I talked to a Jehovah's Witness preacher in Colombo, Sri Lanka and I learned that he was not sending his children to school or paying his taxes for that year. The reason given was that Jesus was coming within the year and therefore it would not be necessary for the children to go school or for him to pay his taxes; everything in this world would be coming to an end. How foolish of that man and others like him! I wonder what he did after the Lord did not come on the date that had been set for His return? For sure, his children lost a year in school and he got behind on paying his taxes!

This is not to say that the Lord will not come again, because He has said in His word that He will come one day. The only thing, it is foolish for man to set a date for His return. Though Christ Himself has promised to return (John 14:1-4), with reference to **the time** of his coming. He said, *"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only"* (Matthew 24:36). Did you notice what Christ said? that not even He knows that date, that the angels do not know, but *only the Father in heaven*. Now if the Lord's statement be true, how would it be possible for any man to know? and how could anyone be so foolish as to set the date for His return? You can mark this down in red ink: **when someone announces a date for Christ to come again, he is announcing that he, himself, is a fraud, and that his goal is to deceive and cheat the biblically uneducated people who are willing to listen to him.**

Men have been pre-occupied through the years with the idea that they can come up with a date for the Lord's return. For some reason they think that He has revealed that information in the figures of speech and numbers to be found in the Bible. It is as though God is playing a game with man, that He has hidden the date somewhere in the scriptures, and left it up to man to guess, speculate, and try to figure out the combination that would reveal the date. But that is so foolish. Why would Jesus say that only God knows the time of His return if He actually knew Himself and was going to put the date somewhere in the scriptures so that some smart man could puzzle it out? If God wanted us to know when Jesus will come again, wouldn't He plainly and simply tell us?

Peter warns, *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up"* (2 Peter 3:10). Jesus is *not* a thief but He will come *as a thief*, that is, at an **unannounced time**.

Then Paul says that the Lord is returning to take vengeance on those who believe not and obey not the gospel of Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). The idea from these texts is that we must be prepared to meet the Lord when He comes, whether it be today, tomorrow, next year, a hundred years from now, a thousand years,

or whenever. Remember that a day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day. (2 Peter 3:8).

Have you obeyed the Lord? (Mark 16:16). Are you ready to meet Him on His return?

## **Let's Go For A Walk**

FRANCIS DAVID

Whenever I am with brother Joshua gootam in Kakinada, he always asks me to go for a walk in the evening. Its good to walk with dear our ones. Some people really enjoy their walking. Some walk, because they have been told or advised by their doctors. Have you ever thought about walking with God? How wonderful it is to walk with God. Many people in the Bible walked with God, they considered it to be a great blessing. The Bible tells us that "Enoch *Walked* with God. . . . (Gen. 5:24). Abraham, Noah, Jacob and David all walked with God. Walking with God means walking in the light and this what we read in I John 1:7, as it says: "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

God expects that we must walk with Him. The man who walks with Him is blessed. The writer of Psalm one says: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night." (Ps. 1:1,2). If you walk with God you will try to avoid the seats of ungodly, sinners and the scornful. Walking with God means to walk righteously because the Lord knows the way of the righteous.

Walking with God means we need to be in agreement with Him. We will abide by His will and would do what He commands us to do. He wants us that we need to believe in Him and Have faith and trust in Him, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that HE is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Heb. 11:6). We need to confess Jesus as the Son of God, "For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation (Rom. 10:10). One must repent of his sins and

the wrong life and for this he needs a change. Repentance is not merely a sorrow but change which comes from the heart. Apostle Peter says: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3:9). The next step that God expects from us is that we must be baptized in the watery grave for the forgiveness of sins. We read as Peter says again, "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38). When a person obey these commands he is added to the Lord's church and becomes a part of the church of Christ. We have a new life in Jesus Christ. Paul says: "Therefore we are buried with HIM through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should WALK in newness of life." (Romans 6:4).

When we become Christians and members of the Lord's church then we must walk as Paul says: "in love, in light and in wisdom." What does it mean to walk in love? To walk in love means to love God and to love our fellowmen. Christ love was so great for all mankind that He gave Himself as offering. He sacrificed His life so that we could have eternal life. If we really love God and His Son Jesus, we would not indulge in sinful activities or the work of the flesh such as fornication, all uncleanness or covetousness, filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting etc. God says those who do such works, do not be partakers with them. (Eph. 5). The Bible says: "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. (1 Jn. 4:8-9). Seeing this great love of God, we must love Him," with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind."

As children of God, we must walk in light, it means walking with God is walking in Light. Apostle Paul says: "Once you were in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as the children of light. We should not take part or should not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but rather expose them. Then further he says: "Awake, you who sleep arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. (Eph. 5).

Another important thing is that we must walk in wisdom. To

walk with God is to walk in wisdom. "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. "Whatever we accept religiously or in the name of Christianity, we must wisely prove from the Scriptures and must see what is acceptable to God" Therefore "do not be unwise, but understand what the will of Lord is." Submitting to one another in the fear of God. We read in James chapter three where it says: "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. (James 3:14). If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5).

When we walk with God we partake in His divine nature, this what we read in 2 Pet 1:4. "By which have given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

Let us walk with God in everything and do His will. Let us please Him through our actions. Let us be the doers of the word and not the hearers only. The following lines of the song reminds us that how beautiful it is to walk with God.

"When we walk with the Lord, in the light of His Word"

What a glory He sheds on our way! while we do His goodwill.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

Wouldn't you like to walk with God? Let us go and walk with Him.

## *What It Means To Be A Christian*

THOMAS R. DOHLING

"So therefore whoever of you who doesn't renounce all that he has, he can't be my disciple." —**Luke 14:33.**

THREE TIMES over in this chapter, our Lord says these solemn words: "he cannot be My disciple." There are three conditions of discipleship. First, we must be prepared to put first things first; second, we must be willing to suffer daily crucifixion;

third, we must be *detached from all things*, because we're *attached to Christ*. *The conditions* seem severe, but they *must be fulfilled, if we would enter Christ's School*.

## 1. DISCIPLE STANDS FOR LEARNER

Our Lord is prepared to teach us the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; but *it is useless to enter His class unless we have resolved to do as He says*. Put first things first. When our Lord uses the word hate, He clearly means that *the love we are to have for Him is to be so much greater*, that *comparatively* our natural affection will be *as if it were hate*. No one could have loved His mother more than our Lord did. In His dying agony, His special thought and care was for her, but on three different occasions He put her aside. We are sometimes called to put aside those who are nearest and dearest, if their demands conflict with the claims of Christ. So it is that we are called upon to be. We are to learn from Jesus if we are to be his disciple [see Matt. 1 1:29 where Jesus says, "*Learn from me...*" and John 13:15 where Jesus says, "For I have given you an example, that *you also should do as I have done to you*"]. Jesus always taught by example—by doing what He wanted his disciples to do.

## 2. THE DAILY CROSS

In each of us there is the "self-principle, and for each of us there is a *perpetual necessity to deny self*. Some talk about *bearing the cross* in a glib fashion, but *its true meaning is shame, suffering, and sorrow, which no one realizes but God*, and which perhaps *strikes deeper down into the roots of our being as we grow older*. There is an *opportunity in your life, in respect to some person or circumstance*, for an *ever-deepening appreciation of union with Christ in His death*, and for which you *must be daily prepared to surrender your own way and will*. This will cause you *to appear weak* to the world, but *true strength lies in self-denial* and there are few that are able to practise it. It means letting the other person have his way even when it is in our power to have our way if by so doing, the other is rightly benefitted. Remember that our Lord Jesus had the power to save Himself [see Matt.26:53], but He yielded to God's will for that was more important to Him [Matt.26:54] because it



involved mankind's salvation! You see, self-denial means letting the other think, say, and do even when it is in our power to deny him!

### 3. RENUNCIATION

It may be necessary *to surrender* all we have for Christ. Most of us are afraid of this thought because *it causes us to feel insecure!* However, *if Christ is our trust, we need have no fear.* Conversely, He may ask us *to hold all as a steward [manager] or trustee for Himself and others.* Remember that *all that you have as His follower* is placed in your hands for His use according to His purpose. If you think that you have acquired them by yourself, for your own use, then He can have no part in it. No one can lay down the rule for another. The main point to decide is this: *"Am I willing to do what Christ wants me to do; to yield my will for Him to mould it, and my life for Him to work through it?" If so, all else will fall in place [see Matt. 6:33].*

## *Pleasing Sacrifice Unto The Lord*

KABITA GOOTAM

According to Bible records Abel and Cain were the first to render sacrifices to the Lord. The Lord accepted Abel's sacrifice and rejected Cain's. In Patriarchal age as well as mosaic age animal sacrifices were in practice. After the lamb of God sacrificed himself for the remission of sins of mankind, practice of animal sacrifice has ceased. In the Christian age we are commanded to render different kinds of sacrifice. Paul exhorts Roman Christians about kind of sacrifices The Lord wants of them, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Roman 12:1). Living a holy life is sacrifice unto the Lord. The writer of the Hebrews book mentions "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased". Forgetfulness is part of human nature. The Lord God warned Israel again and again not to forget their God's commandments and his

mercies. The Lord commanded Passover to be observed every year to remind them of their bondage in Egypt and deliverance by the mighty hand of God. The Lord commanded Christians to observe the "Lord's Supper" every first day of week to remember the sacrifice of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ.

The Lord accepted Abel's sacrifice because it was pleasing in His sight. "Abel though dead still speak's" (Heb. 11:3). Our life and sacrifice would be pleasing before the Lord, if we follow our Master. In the first sermon to the Gentiles, Peter said, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with Holy Spirit and power, who went about doing good" (Acts 10:3). The Lord God expects us to follow Jesus Christ's example in every walk of our life. On the Judgment day the king will invite the righteous to inherit the kingdom of the Lord for they had been good and kind to their fellowman. "However, the king will say to those on the left hand, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels, for I was hungry and you gave me no food: I was thirsty and you gave me no drink: I was a stranger and you did not take me in, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me. Then they will answer him saying, Lord when did we see you hungry and thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to you? Then He will answer them saying, assuredly, I say to you, in as much to you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me. And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Math 25:31-44). The Lord cited the example of good samaritan to follow him in Luke 10:25-37.

Jesus Christ and Steven as well as others prayed for those who persecuted them. The little Hebrew maid of Naman household guided her captor to the prophet Elisha to be healed of his leprosy (II King 5th Chapter). The mighty Syrian Army commander was healed of his leprosy when the little Hebrew maid showed him the way to his recovery. Paul said "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men ---- if your enemy is hungry feed him if he is thirsty, give him a drink, for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Roman 12:17-21). The Hebrew maid did exactly the same for she knew ..... "to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

We read of a woman called Dorcas about whom the Scripture says "..... was full of good work and charitable deeds". What a good report ! When she died Peter was called to pray for her ..... and all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them". Through Peter's prayer she came back to life (Acts 9:34-43). "Therefore, as we have opportunity let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

We are warned to keep away from doing evil as we are called to be blessed by the Lord. "..... not returning evil for evil or .... that you may inherit a blessing" .... turn away from evil and do good .... for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (I Peter 3:9-11).

We find people doing evil for evil. They will not receive any reward from the Lord but will be punished. Again we find some people do evil for good, and the scripture says about them that, ".... Evil will not depart from his house (Prov. 17:13). The Psalmist says, "Depart from evil and do good And dwell for evermore" (Ps 37:27). Our everlasting Father will receive us in His everlasting dwelling place, if we do not grow weary in doing good works (II Thes 3:13). Let us render our sacrifices full of good works, for with such sacrifice God is well pleased. Abel though dead still speaks. The Lord will not accept our sacrifice if they are not pleasing in His sight.

## ***Lessons From Studying The Bible***

JOHNNY RAMSEY

As one continues to read and study the sacred text, obvious truths come forth loud and clear. The challenge of Bible study is life's richest, constant blessing. The value of such soul searching exercise cannot be over-esteemed. Vital truths are gleaned and substantial blessings ensue as one travels the golden road of the Holy Scriptures. What an awe some debt we owe to the stimulating joys of walking hand in-hand with God's precious word (1 Sam. 3:1). After fifty years of my daily perusal of "*The Good Book*," here are some of the major lessons learned.

## **BITTERNESS IS A WASTE OF TIME**

The inspired writer of Hebrews warns us about allowing any "root of bitterness" to defile us (Heb. 12:15). The apostle Peter tells us 'to get rid of bitter thoughts because they hinder our spiritual growth (1 Pet. 2:1-2). Satan enjoys diverting our energies by cultivating anger and malice among soldiers of Christ. We waste weeks, months and even years as we strive to "get even" with our enemies—whether real or imagined—instead of loving those who despitefully use us (Matt. 5:44-48).

We must not allow our days to be polluted with thoughts of revenge rather than of loving-kindness. We should pity and not hate those who are spiritually immature enough to bear grudges and maintain shallow concepts and attitudes that are beneath the dignity of Christianity. Bitterness causes us to shift the blame for our ineptness to others. Remember these words:

*If you blame others for your failures,*

*Do you credit others for your successes?*

## **GENUINE LOVE IS CONTAGIOUS**

The greatest power on earth is genuine love for God, for others and for self (Matt. 22:37-40). Some folk major in minors and spend a lifetime looking for reasons not to practice brotherly love. The church today is filled with back-biting and animosity, rather than kindness, encouragement and good will. If we worked as diligently, to build up the body of Christ in love as some do to fracture it and tear it down, what a beautiful world this would be.

The Bible says, "Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8). Such true and fervent love causes us to reach out to the wayward and bring them back to the Lord (James 5:19-20). God so loved us, "while we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5:8) that He provided a way back to His favor (John 3:16). What matchless love, what infinite grace!

*The love of God is like a flame,*

*Through endless years it is the same,*

*The love of God will never*

*Fail nor lose its glory*

*Till we see Him face to face.*

## **BRETHREN SHOULD BE CHERISHED**

In this wicked world of more than seven billion people, so very few are beloved brethren in Christ: *"Narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it"* (Matt. 7:14). We need to learn to cherish and appreciate every one of them. How special is the tie that binds us together. We should learn to esteem that relationship—fellowship as brothers and sisters in Christ—as the grandest one on earth. And we should do our best to enrich and embellish its value. Anything that mars such family ties is a serious mistake.

## **KEEP OUR EYES ON JESUS**

When we fail to focus on Jesus Christ, we lose sight of the only way to heaven, for He said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). All others fade into oblivion when we see Jesus (Heb. 2:9) and are *"looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith"* (Heb. 12:2).

Looking back to sin and carnality caused Lot's wife to perish (Luke 17:32). We need to develop spiritual maturity by following the steps of the Lord, even though they may take us on a difficult but rewarding journey. Doing what we like might give us freedom, but liking what we do is happiness. And we will find more joy in the Master's cause than anywhere else in the world! *"O Lord Jehovah, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy strong hand: for what god is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy mighty acts?"* (Deut. 3:24).

## **NEVER NEGLECT BIBLE STUDY**

When we overlook or ignore the pulsating power of Scripture, we rob ourselves of brilliant life-support. In every area of spiritual advancement, we can find practical advice in the Bible. One of the first steps into apostasy is to quit studying the sacred text. When we are too busy to open the Good Book, we take a giant step back to the world. No one can learn the Bible for us, and there is nothing that can build up our integrity and steadfastness like a thorough excursion down the pathway of divine knowledge.

Sadly, some folk seem to think that what they learned years ago is enough. Thus, they do not continue to add even more texts and a deeper understanding of God's revelation. Apostasy looms just around the corner for those content with past laurels. Past experience should be a guidepost, not a hitching post. And remember that education costs far less than ignorance.

*If you think you are beaten, you are.*

*If you think you dare not, you don't.*

*If you'd like to win, but think you cant,*

*It's almost a cinch you won't.*

*If you think you'll lose, you've lost.*

*For out in the world you'll find*

*Success begins with a fellow's will,*

*It's all in the state of mind.*

### **MONEY CANNOT BUY HAPPINESS**

If the Bible teaches anything clearly, from cover to cover, it is the absolute vanity of riches. Solomon affirms that great wealth is actually "*vexation of the spirit and striving after the wind*" (Eccle. 6:9). The rich fool of Luke 12 cries out for our attention in regard to covetousness. Trusting in uncertain "mammon" is extremely unwise: "*Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*" (1 Tim. 6:17).

To spend a lifetime searching for gold is to waste precious hours that should have been spent in the treasures of spirituality that no thief could ever steal: "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*" (Matt. 6:19-20). Someone has wisely remarked, "The futility of riches is stated very plainly in two places—in the Bible and on the income tax form," Happiness does not emanate from possessions, but from a closer walk with our God. (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

### **TRIALS CAN MAKE US BETTER PEOPLE**

Paul was denied relief from his pain, but he was given more grace, greater than the problem (2 Cor. 12). James informed his

brethren that trials would result in a closer walk with God. Job was a better man due to the sorrows that drove him to a more faithful, trusting and spiritual walk with his Maker (Job 13:15). The psalmist acknowledged that being afflicted caused him to treasure the precepts of the Lord even more (Psa. 119:67-71).

The Bible tells us emphatically, in many different passages and through many of its characters, that tribulation and persecution can be blessings indeed! "Man cannot remake himself without suffering. For he is both the marble and sculptor." When Jesus molds and makes us after His will, we become what He made us unto the glory of God.

### **HEAVEN WILL SURELY BE WORTH IT ALL**

Bible study ultimately takes us to the end of the way. Guiding us daily in the divine counsel of the powerful word of God (Heb. 4:12), we bask in the sunlight of redemptive love (Psa. 73:24) and learn the beauty of comradeship with the Savior and the fellowship of the saints. But beyond the joy and the pulsating hope that enriches our lives upon the earth is a wondrous place called heaven. The foibles and heartaches that attend earthly woes fade into oblivion as we approach the city of God. What bliss awaits us as we press on toward the goal. Oliver Cooper wrote these words:

*Heaven will surely be worth it all,*

*Worth all the sorrows that here befall.*

*After this life with all its strife,*

*Heaven will surely be worth it all.*

Just before His departure from life on earth, Jesus made promise to the apostles about that place called "Heaven." "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, (there) ye may be also." (John 14:1-3).

## ***"A Man Approved of God"***

CLEM THURMAN

*"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a*

*man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: whom God raised up.*" (Acts 2:22-24)

We are pretty much conditioned to looking for some kind of assurance that what we buy is what it purports to be. There may be a stamp of approval of "Consumer's Research" or the "Good Housekeeping Seal" or some other such that, will win the respect and trust of the buyer. People of prominence and fame are paid lavish sums of money to endorse various products, for those who make the products know the value of having their "stamp of approval" on the product.

But Jesus Christ of Nazareth bears a much higher seal of approval than any item found on the shelves and bargain counters of the stores. When Jesus was baptized by John, God gave Him this stamp of approval: "*Lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*" (Matt. 3:17). Again, on the mount of Transfiguration, God spoke to Peter, James and John of Jesus: "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. Hear ye him*" (Matt. 17:5). Thus did God acclaim Jesus as His Son, and give Him the stamp of approval.

### **GOD APPROVED THE MIRACLES OF JESUS**

But God not only spoke of His approval of His Son, He gave Him power to prove it! Notice the language of Peter in our text: "*A man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you.*" The miracles which Jesus did were for the purpose of showing that He was from God. As Jesus stated, "*He that hath received his witness hath set his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for he giveth not the Spirit by measure*" (John 3:33-34). And John, near the close of his book, wrote: "*Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.*" (John 20:30-31).

To a skeptical world Jesus amply demonstrated His claim of divinity with this stamp of divine approval. He turned water into wine



(John 2), calmed the stormy sea (Mark 4), walked on the water (John 6), multiplied the fish and loaves (Matt. 14), raised the dead (Luke 7 & 8, John 11). He healed all manner of diseases— and all the people who were there to see it, knew that He could heal—they proved their faith in His power! *“And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were sick . . . And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases”* (Mark 1:32-34).

Even His enemies, seeking some means to discredit Him, could not deny his miracles. On one occasion, they watched to see if He would heal a crippled man on the Sabbath. They knew that He could, but only questioned whether or not He would do it on the Sabbath! Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Him and said, *“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him”* (John 3:2). Those seeking to find some “charge” to make against Him had to admit that He actually did miracles, and therefore, that His power was from God (John 11:47-53). The miracles He did were a verifiable “stamp of approval” from God.

### **GOD APPROVED THE TEACHING OF JESUS**

Jesus Christ also bears the seal of approval as a prophet, or as God's spokesman. God told Moses, *“I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him”* (Deut. 18:18-19). When Jesus came in fulfillment of that prophecy, He said, *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.”* (John 12:48-49).

The conclusion to this testimony from God is inevitable. *“God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds”* (Heb. 1:1-2). God has in times past spoken directly to man (Gen. 3; Num. 12), but mostly

He spoke through prophets - men such as Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, etc. But *"in these last days"* God speaks only through His Son. Thus this indictment is placed against any who would reject the words of Jesus: *"The Father that sent me hath given me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak"* (John 12:49). Again, *"He that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me"* (Luke 10:16).

### **GOD APPROVED THE PURPOSE OF JESUS**

The advent of Jesus into this world was by God's plan: *"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"* (Isa. 7:14). But unlike most people, who come into this world to live, He came to die: *"That he by the grace of God should taste of God for every man"* (Heb. 2:9). Later the writer says, *"Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"* (Heb. 2:14-15).

His birth was planned (Isa. 7:14), and His life was planned, also: *"He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not . . . All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"* (Isa. 53:3-6). His death was planned, even before He was born in Bethlehem. Note this reading: *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? . . . But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn. . . . They pierced my hands and my feet. I may count all my bones; They look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them. And upon my vesture do they cast lots"* (Psa. 22:1,6-7,16-18). Compare that prophecy, written hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, with the historical account of His death on the cross (Matt. 27). Jesus was, indeed, *"The lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world"* (Rev. 13:8).

### **GOD APPROVED THE SALVATION OF JESUS**

The angel of God announced before the birth of Jesus, *"Thou*

shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). That is why He came to earth, "To seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Jesus went to cross and shed His blood, for: "Without the shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). He stated that His blood was "poured out for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28).

God approved also the basis of the salvation Jesus offered. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Paul wrote later, "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being Justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood . . . Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 3:23-25; 5:1).

Jesus shows man's response to the grace of God, "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). He said plainly, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). And that is exactly what the apostles later preached: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins . . . And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 2:38; 22:16). That was what Jesus taught, and God approved it. He still does.

### **GOD APPROVED THE CHURCH JESUS BUILT**

Gathering the apostles together, He told them, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). We hear people say today, "The church doesn't matter, one is as good as another. Join the church of your choice." But Jesus never said that! And the Scriptures do not even hint at such a thing. The church which Jesus built, and to which He adds the saved, is His body: "God put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23).

I often hear people say, "The church doesn't save anyone." Of course not, the church IS the saved. But notice the connection between salvation and the church. "Repent ye, and be baptized

*every one of you for the remission of your sins . . . As many as received his word were baptized, and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. . . The Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved*" (Acts 2:38,41,47). You can read it again: "For the husband is the head of the wife, and Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). When people were saved, the Lord added them to His church. He still does.

Jesus was "approved of God." If we will but follow Him, God will also approve us. Let us have the attitude He showed. He was always seeking to do the will of the Father, He taught as the Father revealed to Him, He lived the life which God had purposed for Him, He became the "author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9) as He revealed what we need to do to be saved. And He built His church for all the saved. That means you, if you do His will.

## **God's Indescribable Gift The Gift Proclaimed**

MARLIN CONNELLY

When one buys gold jewelry, he searches for the pressed-in mark that tells the amount of gold in the piece. The portion of pure gold in an object is expressed in terms of "carats." Twenty-four carats represents pure gold. But because pure gold is too soft for jewelry, it is mixed with other metals to give it hardness. Such a mixture is called an "alloy." A yellow-gold ring, for example, which is stamped 14 carats, is a mixture of 14 parts gold and 10 parts copper. Yet the world's most unique alloy is found not in a gift of jewelry, but in Jesus, in whom was blended humanity and deity (Romans 1:3-4).

### **THE ESSENTIAL ALLOY**

An essential alloy appears in the New Testament Scriptures. The gift of the person must be blended with the proclaiming of that gift. In 1 Timothy 3:16, Paul incorporates what appears to be an early Christian hymn that celebrated not only that Christ was "revealed in the flesh," but that He also was "proclaimed among

the nations”.

Similarly, in Romans 10:14 Paul links the Lord on whom one must call to the necessity of the proclamation about that Savior. The apostle asks rhetorically, “How shall they hear without a preacher?” In the Greek text the word translated “preacher” is a participle that literally says “one proclaiming.” When Paul then concludes that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), he uses the word *rhema*, which means the spoken word.

### **THE CHURCH’S ROLE**

Some months ago, I received in the mail an advertisement of a mega-church in the area. The circular promised the reader that church would never expose worshipers to boring expositions of scripture. Instead, it would offer short talks on topics which people wanted to hear, such as “How to Deal With Stress” or “How to Manage Money,” with each “based on biblical principles.”

The opposite side of the brochure was more subtle. It depicted three two-child families—one from B.C. times, one from the 1950s, and the last from the current decade. The father of the first family carried two tablets of stone on which were the Ten Commandments. The second family perpetuated the myth that says 1950s families did not know how to enjoy religion. Each family member was dressed in a Sunday-best outfit. Each face wore a glum expression, as if each had been dropped from the back of a hearse. The mother was carrying a large family Bible. The final picture at the bottom of the folder showed a contemporary family. As you would expect, all were in informal dress, each wore a smile, and nobody carried a Bible.

In contrast, 1 Timothy 3:14-15 puts the church into the business of being “the pillar and support of the truth”—truth which is embodied in the common confession that follows in verse 16 of that passage. If the church is to be the prop and the support of God’s truth, it dare not for the sake of numbers shove aside heavy truth for light-hearted platitudes. Our task is not to amaze and amuse so that we may amass and amalgamate; our commission is to teach that all have gone amiss (Romans 3:23), that God has made amends, and that all can and must come into amity with God (5:1). Whenever and wherever the church forgets its mission, we will perceive our assignment as making Christianity a way to achieve self-awareness or to reconcile humans to themselves. In

an effort to make God user-friendly we shall have reduced sin to maladjustment, salvation to self-esteem, and the church to group therapy. If we allow the audience and not the message to become sovereign, we will produce assemblies and classes patterned like TV talk-shows in which self-expression is the goal, and sharing experiences is the centre of discourse. Candy for the mind does not produce pillars for the truth.

## **THE APOSTOLIC PROCLAMATION**

The book of Acts provides today's church with biblical examples of how the early church exercised its role in proclaiming the gift of God. In the opening two chapters of Acts we can examine three facets of that early preaching—its source, its substance, and its subjects.

### **THE SOURCE OF THE PROCLAMATION**

Acts 2:4 identifies the source of the apostles' preaching. They spoke as the Spirit "gave them utterance." The night before His crucifixion, Jesus ate the Passover meal with the 12 apostles (Matthew 26:20; Luke 22:14). At that time Jesus promised the apostles He would send the Spirit to teach them all things, to bring to their remembrance all that He had said to them, to guide them into all the truth, and to disclose things to come (John 14:26; 16:13).

After His resurrection Jesus returned to this theme in conversation with the apostles before His ascension. The apostles were promised the Spirit would come upon them to empower them so they could become His witnesses (Acts 1:8). A series of relative pronouns links those receiving the promise in verse 8 back to the apostles in verse 2. When those who had received the promise returned from the mount to Jerusalem, they are named. The names are those of the apostles minus Judas (Acts 1:12-13). The first proclamation of the gift of the Savior was God-guided. The early church, therefore, recognized the teaching of the apostles as the standard for future preaching and practice (Acts 2:42; 2 Peter 3:1-2; Jude 17).

### **THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROCLAMATION**

The gospel Peter proclaimed in his Acts 2 sermon was

designed to lead to a conclusion that God made Jesus “Lord and Christ” (2:22-36). The apostle sought to produce conviction about three truths—the credibility of Jesus, His crucifixion and His resurrection. He began by arguing that God had attested to Jesus by miracles—wonders openly done by God through Jesus—as signs that God was approving Him.

Concerning the crucifixion. Peter preached that it was accomplished only because God had “delivered up” Jesus in accord with God’s predetermined plan and foreknowledge. The latter of these two translates the Greek word that becomes our English word “prognosis”—foreknowledge of the outcome of something one would do. The outcome God had in mind, of course, was the resurrection. Peter proclaimed it (v. 24) and then supported his conclusion with three pieces of evidence: Psalm 16:8-11, which prophesied the resurrection of God’s Christ (Acts 2:25-31); the eyewitnesses who saw Jesus after His resurrection; and the unusual events of that day, which indicated that Jesus, in fulfillment of Psalm 110:1, had been enthroned with the Father.

### **THOSE SUBJECT TO THE PROCLAMATION**

Proclaiming the gift of a Savior never meant leaving the listener without responsibility. The Lord’s Great Commission to the apostles envisioned the obedient response of the hearers (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Paul’s solemn charge to Timothy that he “preach the word” was enlarged by the words “reprove, rebuke, exhort” (2 Timothy 4:1-3). The ministry of reconciliation Paul received as an apostle proclaimed that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,” but it also included the admonition “Be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). When Philip proclaimed Christ in Samaria, he must have called for a specific response, for those who believed his message about the kingdom of God and the person of Jesus “were being baptized, men and women alike” (Acts 8:5, 12).

Peter’s Pentecost message was not without its call to submit to the gospel. The word from God’s Spirit had worked in the hearts of those Jewish hearers, just as it would later do in others (1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 4:12). They had been convinced that God had made Jesus “Lord and Christ,” and they had been convicted of their sin of crucifying Him (Acts 2:36). Their anxious

question, "What shall we do?" was met with the apostolic answer. Peter not only told them to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, but he also kept exhorting them to be saved from a perverse generation. He explained to those first subjects that the promise inherent in the proclamation of the good news was not merely to their generation but to the next as well, and to all afar off, as many as God would call. God calls through the proclamation of the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14), and the gospel is for all.

## **Being Optimistic About the Future**

JACK HARRIMAN

As one grows older, a major struggle of life is one's outlook—optimistic or pessimistic. We all want to have a positive outlook on the future, but that is difficult for many. It gets a lot easier when we keep God in the picture.

Solomon viewed life without God and concluded, "*Vanity of vanity. All is vanity.*" Then he viewed it with God and saw a much brighter future. Life without God would have been dark indeed for the apostle John on the Isle of Patmos. This may be why John was allowed to look into heaven and see God on His throne and all the other details of that heavenly scene (Revelation 4-5). Now God is in the picture.

The future looks much brighter.

If we look at our world from a human point of view, one can see a lot of gloom and doom. And such is the only view that most of the world has. They need God in their world-view, and He must be kept in ours, as well.

God rules the world. We do not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future. And so all things are possible, and we can look for good things to occur. God is at work on the side of good in my life and your (Romans 8:28).

This I believe: The best is yet to be, and God's obedient children are on their way to heaven. These two things make for a bright and glorious future.