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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is . . ."

In becoming a follower of Christ one is raised with Christ. This is what the apostle Paul was reminding the Christians at Colosse. (Colossians 3:1). How and when they were raised with Christ is mentioned in Col. 2:12, "buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." They were raised with Christ when they were buried with Him in baptism. Baptism, according to the Bible is a burial in water. (Acts 8:35-39). This burial in water, baptism, symbolises the burial of Christ in the tomb, as repentance, which precedes baptism (Acts 2:38) portrays Christ's death for the sinners. After the death and the burial of Christ, came His resurrection (Matthew 27:62-66 & 28:1-6). Likewise, when a person is buried or immersed in water, buried with Him in baptism, and comes up out of the water, it shows the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The apostle Paul described this so beautifully in Romans 6:3-5 when he wrote: "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 newness of life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."

Before baptism, burial or immersion in water, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the Deity, (Matthew 28:19), one is out of Christ. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" says Galatians 3:27. Redemption and the forgiveness of sins is in Christ. (Col. 1:14).

With what purpose, in the beginning, did Christ send His disciples into all the world? Did He send them to go and pray for sinners? Or did He send them to pray over sinners so that they could be healed from their physical ailments? This is what we are witnessing everywhere today in public meetings and over the television. Preachers are not preaching the gospel as it is written in the Bible. Yet, Christ had sent the disciples to go and preach the gospel to every creature. And, next He said, he who believes and is baptized will be saved. (Mark 16:15 & 16).

Now, if I am going to preach the gospel, then I must preach the gospel of the Bible. Not my personal experiences are testimonies. (2 Timothy 4:2). Listen to Paul, a preacher of the gospel of Christ. He said, "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel, which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you were saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The death and the burial and the resurrection of Christ is the gospel that must be preached everywhere. It was the gospel, Paul said that they had received, in which they were standing, and by which they were saved. "But God be thanked," said the apostle in another place, "that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of the doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." (Romans 6:17,18). What had they obeyed from the heart? It was that form of the doctrine that was entrusted to them. And, of course, the doctrine was that Christ died for our sins, and that He was buried, and that He was resurrected. Through baptism into Christ one obeys that form of the doctrine, as one dies to sin and is buried into water and comes up out of the water. Baptism is not sprinkling

of water. Baptism is burial. Baptism is not a Christian sacrament or a Christian rite marked by ritual use of water for admitting the recipient to the Christian community, as a dictionary describes. Acts 22:16 says, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Which means trusting in the Lord, Who Himself has promised, as in Mark 16:16, that he who believes and is baptized will be saved.

Is There A Heavenly Language?

J.C. CHOATE

A good percentage of believers in Christ have accepted the Pentecostal teaching that God's people can speak in "tongues". They say this is proof that they have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When questioned about tongues, the purpose of them, that they are making a lot of unintelligent sounds, they will finally admit that this *is a heavenly language*, that the person is talking to God and that only God understands what is being said. Of course the Bible no where teaches such a thing.

If you have been around people who speak in what they call "the unknown tongue", you will notice that they all sound alike. Some have confessed that there was so much pressure on them to speak in "the unknown tongue" to prove that they really had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, they had faked it. They imitated the other members who claimed that they were also speaking in tongues. And their deceitful act became the means of their acceptance!

Some have tried to prove that they were speaking some foreign language, although they had never studied that language. The reason they claim that they were speaking in a foreign language was because someone present who spoke that language said that *some of the words* were in their language. But why weren't **all the words** in their language, spoken in an organized and coherent message? If we are being sensible we will keep in mind that languages are made up of a variety of sounds. Regardless of what sounds you may utter, some of them

will be the sounds of some language. Then if someone who speaks that language happens to hear those sounds, he may well "recognize" some of them and claim that the speaker is talking in his language. That is a very weak argument to try to prove that one is speaking in an "unknown tongue."

In contrast, it is a common practice today for the big-name Pentecostal-type preachers today to make world preaching tours, and to be pictured in promotional material with their "translators". How revealing! They claim to have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and to have the same power the Apostles had, yet when they want to speak to Tamils or Telugus or Indonesians, they have to have someone to translate their messages so that the local people can understand them! Mark it down in red ink: When such preachers make such claims, through the mouths of translators, they are frauds! Neither Peter nor John nor Paul had to have a local translator.

Rather, when the Apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4, the record shows that as proof that they had received such power, they began to speak in the languages of the people assembled there. We read of the Apostles, *"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?"* (Acts 2:4-8).

Now you will note that after the Apostles had been baptized with the Holy Spirit, they began to speak in the languages of those that were gathered on that occasion. Not only did they speak in other tongues or languages, but the people who heard them understood what they were saying in their own languages. This was a miracle. They were not speaking a "heavenly" language, nor sounds being made that no one understood. Rather, these were intelligent sounds, actual languages, so that those present could hear the gospel preached and could understand all that was being said.

Why would the Holy Spirit lead the Apostles to speak in

languages that would not be understood? What would have been the purpose or the benefit? If He did not do such a thing then, why would He do it now?

Do those today who claim to speak in a "heavenly" language or in an "unknown" tongue do so? No, they do not. Why would God use the power of the Holy Spirit to have people to speak in a language that only He understands? How would that benefit God? Furthermore, why would God have people to speak in an assembly of humans in a language that none of the hearers can understand? What would be the purpose? God wants people to hear His word and understand it so that they can obey Him. He has never been a party to confusion, and He would not do so today.

Enemies of the Cross

FRANCIS DAVID

In Philippians 3:18, Apostle Paul talks about those who walk disorderly, are the enemies of the Cross. He says, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. And as we read further he says, "whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their minds on earthly things. (Verse 19). The cross of Christ always had enemies and will always have enemies. The Jews were the enemies of the cross and likewise we see Pharisees and saducees were also the enemies of the cross. The religious leaders in those days were telling people to do certain things or were binding things on people which were contrary to the word of God. For example they were binding the law of circumcision on those who were baptised and became Christians. We read in Acts 15:1, "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Jesus said, "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses Seat. 'Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe , that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do, (For they bind heavy burdens , hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them

with one of their fingers." (Matt. 23:2-4). Such people were the enemies of the cross.

Writing to Christians at Galatia, Paul says that Christ has made you free and therefore you should not entangle again with a yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1-4). He said "you who attempt to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace. (Verse 4). Today we find people, who are drifting the minds of people from simple new testament Christianity. Again Paul had to admonish the Christians at Galatia because they were turning away from the true gospel to the strange gospel. He says, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from HIM who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. (Gal. 1:6-8).

The cross of Christ has enemies today as it had in the first century. Who are they? We find them all around us. There are people around us who do not believe in the divinity of Christ. They deny that He was born from Virgin Mary. They reject Him as the Son of God and do not believe that He performed many miracles. They don't believe that Christ was resurrected through the power of God from the dead. They say, that He died as a martyr. Such people are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Our Lord Prayed for the unity of His believers. He promised to build the church, which is His body. (Matt. 16:18, Col. 1:18). The church of Jesus Christ was established on the day of Pentecost as revealed in the book of Acts chapter 2. Three thousand people were added to the body of Christ. (Acts 2:47). In first century there were no denominations, but today what do we see? We see hundreds of churches by different names and doctrines. Christ destroyed the wall of division but people have erected the wall of division (Eph. 2:13-16). Christianity is divided today, and God hates this division. (Prov. 6). How can we claim that we are one people in Christ, when we are divided as the followers of Christ? Why don't we all come to one platform of unity? (Eph.4:4). By creating division, we are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Perhaps, some of these enemies accuse us of as narrow minded people or fanatics, but we say let them accuse us, because we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ (Rom.1:16).

We "speak where the Bible speaks and we are silent where the Bible is silent." We are urging people to come to the pure new testament Christianity. Are you an enemy of the cross? Just examine yourself and see how you can become a friend of the cross. Jesus our Lord is a good friend of us and let us follow him according to His will. He says, "If you love me you will keep my commandments." (John 14:15).

God's Glory Revealed In Christ Jesus

T.R. DOHLING

Consider the following conversation between God and Moses:

God : "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

Moses : "If your presence doesn't go with me, don't carry us up from here. For how would people know that I have found favour in your sight, I and your people? Isn't it in that you go with us, so that we are separated, I and your people, from all the people who are on the surface of the earth?"

God : "I will do this thing also that you have spoken; for you have found favour in my sight, and I know you by name."

Moses : "Please show me your glory."

God : "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." "You cannot see my face, for man may not see me and live." "Behold, there is a place by me, and you shall stand on the rock. It will happen, while my glory passes by, that I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you will see my back; but my face shall not be seen." [Exodus 33:14-23.]

God promises Moses that His Presence would go with him and He would give Moses and the Israelites rest. Moses asks for a sign of God's favour and boldly asks God to show him His glory.

God replies that He would make "all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you...be gracious...and show mercy on whom I will show mercy." However, God told Moses, "You cannot see my face, for man may not see me and live." God then proceeded to hide Moses "in a cleft of the rock" and covered him with His hand until He passed by. The fearful thing was seeing God's face! Moses saw God's back.

Since man could not see God's face and live, the Compassionate Sovereign Lord made it possible for man to see His face and live! Yes, looking to Jesus a man may see God's face and live. In Jesus Christ, God has made all His goodness pass before the world and whoever would look to Jesus may have life and have it more abundantly. Paul says,

"...if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." [2 Cor. 4:3-7.]

Paul also desired that the Christian's "hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For in him [Jesus] the whole fullness of Godhead [deity] dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive

together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. [Col.2:2-4, 9-14].

Our response to God's goodness as revealed in Jesus is to die to self so that we may be "buried with Him in baptism...raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God." In Jesus Christ, God revealed His goodness by canceling the record of debt that stood against us because of our trespasses. He paid the debt we owed Him, "set it aside, nailing it to the cross."

May we realize these things as set forth in God's word and continually thank and praise our gracious and merciful God as we live unto Him!

Does God Heal Through the Hands of Men Today?

ALEX BAYES

Some believe that *God* still heals, and performs other miracles, through the hands of men today. While many make this claim, there is little evidence to support it. The biblical record indicates miraculous gifts were only for a time.

The apostles were special men, with a special purpose, during a unique time. Eph 2.20 tells us that *God's* household was "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets . . ." Paul would also tell the Corinthian church that "no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid" (I Cor. 3.9-11). Now if the foundation is laid by the apostles, and it is being built upon (I Cor 3.10), then the foundation cannot be laid again. What does that mean? The age of the apostles has ended.

Miracles were unique to the apostles and those who worked close to them. The *average* Christian did not have the ability to perform miracles. Paul said in 2 Cor 12.11-12, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all *perseverance*, by signs and wonders and miracles." If the common Christian could do miracles, such as he is describing, it would not make sense for him to defend his apostleship with citing such miracles.

They were unique to apostles and those who worked closely with them, and that is why Paul is able to use them as evidence of his apostleship.

The apostles had the power to give these spiritual gifts to those who were commissioned by them. Examples of this would be Stephen and Philip in Acts 6. However, the passing of power never went any further. As John Arthur has observed, "from the day the church was born at Pentecost, no miracle ever occurred in the entire New Testament record except in the *presence* of an apostle or one directly commissioned by an apostle" (*Charismatic Chaos* 146).

Acts 8 describes the work of Philip, the evangelist. He was preaching the gospel message of Christ and performing miracles among the people. When people heard the message, they were baptized (v12), but they did not receive the Holy Spirit (v16). Peter and John heard about it and upon arriving, "they placed their hands upon them [those who had been baptized], and they *received* the Holy Spirit" (v17). The next verse is telling, "[another] Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostle's hands . . ." (v18).

The implication is simple: The apostles had the ability to do the miraculous. They even had the ability to pass it on to other people (like Philip). However, only the apostles had the ability to pass the gifts. What does this mean? There are no apostles remaining to pass on the gift, *Therefore, no man has the gift today.* If *God* chooses to heal, then He is *God* and certainly has the right to do so. As Christians, we can pray for *God* to heal, but no man has the power in today's time.

"It's For Your Own Good"

CLEM THURMAN

I always hated castor oil, but when I was a very small child, it was the accepted remedy for just about every illness. I just refused to admit I was sick, because I didn't want to take it. But Papa and Mama made it clear, when I was sick I would take the castor oil. And they always said, "It's for your own good." It got so I just didn't want ANYTHING that was for my own

good! I just knew it had to be like the castor oil.

People of the world have never overwhelmingly accepted the will of God for their lives. Most of us want to chart our own course, but God requires that we live as He directs. In fact, this is our stated purpose: *"Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man"* (Eccle. 12:13). We just don't like to be told what to do, nor do we like to be told when we're wrong. We rise up to oppose anyone who points out our mistakes. But, spiritually, the word of correction can mean our salvation. When we are spiritually sick because we've sinned, we need to look to God to provide what we need, "For our own good."

God's warnings, which He gives in His word, are for our good. He is looking out for us. *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and comfort of the scriptures, we might have hope"* (Rom. 15:4). From what other source could hope be obtained? As you read from the Bible, keep this in mind: *"Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition"* (1 Cor. 10:11). When the word of God is presented, the truth is, "It's for your own good." Don't discard the words of life just because it exposes a need in your life that requires a change.

GOD'S TRUTH IS ALWAYS FOR OUR GOOD

Many people delude themselves and seek to be pacified by half-truths and smooth words. They are offended if the forcefulness of God's word is presented to them. They find it easier to accept partial truth rather than ask for all that God has spoken on that subject. Jesus said, *"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"* (John 8:32,36). This blessing was promised to those who *"obeyed from the heart that form of teaching whereunto ye mere delivered.. then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness"* (Rom. 6:17-18). But to be free, as Christ describes, we must accept all that God has said for us. And accepting what He said means more than just believing it — we must live it. *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. . . He that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing"* (Jas. 1:22,25).

God delivered Israel out of bondage in Egypt, leading them through the Red Sea and across the wilderness. He cared for them, fed them and protected them. And He gave them a law by which to live. When Moses referred to that law, as he was taking leave of the people, he said, *"And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always"* (Deut. 6:24). That principle hasn't changed. God has created us in His own image (Gen. 1:26-27), He knows what is best for us. What He tells us is not designed to inhibit us nor prevent us from being happy. The very opposite is true. He knows what will make us happy and productive, and what God tells us is designed to accomplish that. As Jesus said, *"If ye know these things, happy are ye that do them"* (John 13:17). What God wants us to do is *"for our good always."*

KING AHAB: A GREAT NEGATIVE EXAMPLE

Ahab was king of the northern kingdom, Israel. He coveted the vineyard of Naboth, who refused to sell or trade it. But through the wicked queen, Jezebel, Naboth was killed and the property was then appropriated by King Ahab (1 Kgs. 21). Jehovah sent Elijah to pronounce a death sentence against both Ahab and Jezebel, stating that where the dogs had licked the blood of Naboth, they would lick up the blood of Ahab and would eat Jezebel.

You can be sure that Ahab didn't like the message. He hated the messenger, Elijah, who told him what God had decreed. But Ahab was forced to face the sinfulness of his deeds, and dread of punishment led him to humble himself in sackcloth (v. 27). Then God said, *"Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days, but in his son's days will I bring evil upon his house"* (1 Kgs. 21:29). What God decreed was for Ahab's good.

Another example is found in the next chapter, 1 Kgs. 22. King Ahab wanted to wage war to regain Ramoth-gilead, and sought the aid of the king of Judah. But Jehoshaphat asked Ahab to inquire of the Lord. Ahab called in 400 prophets, all of whom said, *"Go up; for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king"* (v. 6). This seemed a little too "fixed" for the king of Judah, and he insisted they ask further: *"Is there not here a prophet besides?"* Ahab replied, *"There is yet one man, Micaiah, by whom we may*

inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil" (v. 8). Ahab recognized that Micaiah spoke for God, but he didn't want to listen to him, because he wouldn't say what Ahab wanted to hear. Ahab's kin are still with us today!

MANY FOLLOW AHAB INSTEAD OF JESUS

The attitude of Ahab is reflected in the characteristics which are found in religious leaders today. They read what Jesus said, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:16), then reject it because it isn't what they wanted to hear. They hear the terms of salvation preached by the Lord through the apostle Peter, *"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, unto remission of your sins"* (Acts 2:38), then treat the message as Ahab treated Micaiah. They will argue, "We are saved by grace, there is nothing for us to do to be saved." On the one hand they are forced to admit that only those who do the will of Christ will be saved (Matt. 7:21-27; 1 Pet. 1:22). On the other hand, they reject any act of obedience as "a work" which nullifies God's grace. Instead of acting as Ahab did, why not just accept the fact that God knows best, and do what He tells us? "It's for your own good."

Jesus promised, *"I will build my church"* (Matt. 16:18). When Peter preached to those people in Jerusalem on Pentecost, he exhorted them to *"save yourselves from this crooked generation"* (Acts 2:40). Notice what they did: *"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 2:41,47). Jesus built His church, and when He saves people, He adds them to that church. That is simple, anyone can understand it unless he has help to confuse him. The Lord purchased that church *"with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). Any student of the Bible knows that the Lord built one church, purchased one church and adds the saved to one church. But, like Ahab of old, many don't want to hear what God says. They want many churches, and they will invent, design and form them - whether God likes it or not. What they fail to realize is that God still knows what we need; He knows what is best for us. When the Lord built only one church and added the saved to it, it was because that was what mankind needed. We still do. "It's for

your own good."

GOD GIVES ONLY ONE REMEDY FOR SIN

God promised that there would be a *"fountain opened for sin"* to the house of David (Zech. 13:1). Jesus, born to the house of David (Matt. 1:1) went to the cross of Calvary and shed His blood for our cleansing. God plainly said, *"Without the shedding of blood is no remission"* (Heb. 9:22), but He sent His Son to die on the cross and shed His blood for our remission. Paul said of Jesus, *"In whom we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace"* (Eph. 1:7). God set forth His Son, Jesus, to be *"a propitiation, through faith, in his blood. . . While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him"* (Rom. 3:25; 5:8-9). The only cleansing agent which God gives us to wash away our sins is the blood of Jesus Christ.

Many today claim it is "narrow" to contend that one must accept Jesus in order to be right with God. They even claim that that discriminates against others. But such an argument ignores the truth of God's word. It is God who decides how we can be made right with Him; that isn't up to us. And He said of Jesus, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him"* (Matt. 17:5). Jesus was emphatic about it when He said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). The apostles, as they talked with the Jews, said of Jesus: *"In none other is there salvation, for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). There is no "discrimination" against anyone, for, *"The same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him"* (Rom. 10:12). All are invited to come to Jesus, no one is left out. But there is no choice - Jesus is the only Savior.

When Jesus cried out against the sins of His people (Matt. 23:13-39), they considered Him an enemy and killed Him. They didn't realize that what He said was for their own good. Stephen cried out against sin in the same people, *"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 7:51). When they stoned him to death, Stephen was still praying for them, *"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"* (Acts 7:60). He did it for their own good. The apostle Paul asked, *"Am*

I become your enemy, by telling you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). Many seem willing to go to hell rather than face an unpleasant truth that calls for them to change.

Friend, don't break the mirror because your face is dirty. Don't break the scales that tell you that you are overweight. Don't smash the thermometer that reveals you have a fever. And don't get angry with the preacher who presents God's word that reveals your sins. Remember, "It's for your own good."

"Did You Hear About . . .?"

T. PIERCE BROWN

As bad as different sins can be, it is probable that gossip and talebearing have caused the most problems in the church. From the earliest times in the Bible it has been condemned. Leviticus 19:16 says, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the Lord" (KJV). Several words relate to this general theme that are slightly different in meaning but are usually closely connected. For example, "gossip" may or may not be true. It is defined as a statement, at least partly based on fact, that casts a person in a bad light. If it is not true, it is still gossip but in addition slander. Although there is a difference in intent of mere gossip and malicious gossip, they both may have the same effect and are sinful. The one who engages in malicious gossip has the intention of hurting the feelings or reputation of another, while the ordinary gossip may just enjoy hearing and telling bad things, with no definite desire to do harm to anyone.

The following Hebrew and Greek words may provide some insight into the various terms that are used in the Bible and severely condemned. *Rakiyl* is translated in the Kings James Version as slander, carry tales, talebearer. Such was condemned early in the Bible as in Leviticus 19. The term *dibbah* is translated by such words as defaming, evil report, infamy, slander, whisperer. The term *blasphemeo* means to vilify, to speak impiously. It is translated in the KJV as blaspheme, defame, rail on, revile, speak evil. The term *peri ergazomai* literally means "to work all around, i.e. bustle about (meddle), and is translated in the KJV as a

busybody. The term *phluaros* from *phluo* (to bubble) refers to a garrulous person, i.e. prater, and is translated in the KJV as a tattler as in 1 Timothy 5:13, "And withal they learn to be idle, meandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not."

Most people would be startled to realize that the word "blaspheme" describes one who would speak evil of another in the sense of making a slanderous or untrue charge against him. This is the word Paul used in Romans 3:8, "And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just." Note what Paul says about a person who makes slanderous statements about another - his damnation is just.

Nelson's Bible Dictionary defines a gossip as, "A person who spreads rumors or idle fruitless tales." Paul described some of the early believers as "not only idle, but tattlers also and busy-bodies" (1 Timothy 5:13). Jesus said, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).

Let's deal with the subject of gossip under three headings: the causes, the curses and the cure. Actually there may be several causes, but we shall mention only a few. Also there may be several curses that happen as a result of gossip. Again, we shall mention only a few. There may be more than one cure, but we know of only one that will do the job effectively.

CAUSES OF GOSSIP

What are some of the causes of gossip, talebearing or slander? One is that the person who does it may have an evil heart and therefore produces evil words and deeds. Luke 6:45 says, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." Such a person is deliberately seeking to do damage to a person's reputation or to some cause or effort and rejoices in or has pleasure in saying things that hurt. Wicked people love to do things like this: "Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness" (Psalm 52:3).

Sometimes it is a result of hatred for a person or effort. David said, "They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause" (109:3). Sometimes it may be because a person is idle and has nothing to do, or is not willing to do anything worthwhile, and just because of boredom gossips. It is similar to teenage boys and girls who stand on the street corner with nothing to do, and someone suggests they steal hubcaps, rob a store, smoke pot, or get into some other mischief.

CURSES OF GOSSIP

What is the curse or effect of such activity? As Solomon discusses one characteristic of those who engage in it, we can begin to see some of the effects. In Proverbs 10:18, he says, "He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool."

One of the most hurtful or worst effects is suggested in Proverbs 16:28: "A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends." There are many who have been friends for years but were separated because one of them believed some malicious untrue gossip they heard about the other.

Words can cut like a knife and cause wounds and scars that will never heal. Proverbs 18:8 says, "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." They cause strife and dissension. Proverbs 26:20 says, "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." When there is strife, discord and disunity among brethren, the desire and prayer of Christ cannot be realized. Proverbs 6:19 reads, "A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." So, it destroys reputations, alienates brethren, divides churches, even leads to murder, and eventually to the eternal damnation of those who engage in such things.

An idea of how God feels about gossip is found in Deuteronomy 19:18-19, "And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you." If the slander was such as would lead to a person's being jailed, the one who did it would be jailed. If it would lead to his being put to death, the slanderer would be

put to death. In Romans 1:28-30 Paul puts them in the category with the most dreadful sins that can be named and says, "They which commit such things are worthy of death" (v. 32).

CURE FOR GOSSIP

What is the cure for such ungodly practice? The cure for this sin is the same as for any other. The person who is guilty needs to recognize it, repent of it and cease doing it. God can forgive any sin of which we repent, but if we are unwilling to confess it and repent of it, then we will die spiritually, and the eternal consequences will be hell.

We are aware that there are some people who have been gossipers without meaning to do harm and may not even be aware of their sin. If you examine yourself in the light of what God's Word has said, you may be able to see yourself in the mirror as James says and realize how bad you have been. Be careful you do not look into the perfect law of liberty and then forget what manner of person you are (James 1:24).

Less of Self, More of Thee

EDDIE LEWIS

Muhammad Ali was in his prime and about to take off on an airplane flight. The flight attendant reminded him to fasten his seat belt. He came back brashly, "Superman don't need no seat belt." The attendant quickly replied, "Superman don't need no airplane, either." Ali fastened his belt. Ali had many wonderful character traits, but humility was not one of them.

JESUS OUR EXAMPLE

Jesus was invited to a meal at the home of a Pharisee (Luke 14:7-11). After noticing how the invited guests had positioned themselves to get the honored seat at the table, He told them a parable about a man who was humiliated because he had sought the honored seat. His pride caused him to think that no one was more important than himself. But in came a person of higher position, and he was forced to go to the lowest seat at the table. He was humiliated in front of all the guests.

PRIDEFUL ATTITUDE

Solomon said that God hates pride (Proverbs 8:13). The proud person sets himself up for a great fall. There are four attitudes that reveal the proud heart:

1. Self-sufficiency - I do not need anyone else for anything. I can do it myself.
2. Self-justification - I may have the same faults you have, but I have a good excuse and you do not.
3. Self-righteousness - I am better than you. I am more important than you.
4. Self-importance - If I am not involved, it will not be done right. I am needed for it to succeed.

These attitudes come from people measuring themselves by others they know are inferior to themselves. Paul tells us that is the wrong measurement (2 Corinthians 10:12-14). It will cause us to come to the wrong conclusions about ourselves.

EXAMPLES OF HUMILITY

The only cure for pride is to make correct comparisons that will help us see ourselves in a true light and realize how much we need to change with the help of God. The correct comparison is to Christ. We will gain humility when we see how little we really know and how much wisdom is found in Christ.

Paul tells us to develop a body fellowship where each one thinks of others before themselves (Romans 12:3, 10). This is the mind of Christ expressed in Philippians 2. He gave Himself for all mankind.

We must serve others in the same way, humbling ourselves to serve the needs of others. Jesus washed the disciples feet to show them His love and gave them an example of how they were to serve (John 13:1-17).

Consider the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector as they prayed in the temple (Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee was considered righteous because he kept all the rituals of the scribal law. But Jesus condemned the Pharisees over and over for building their righteousness on the idea that they earned it by their observances of the law.

The Pharisee was boastful about his accomplishments. He was not really praying to God but talking to himself and others of his righteousness. He exceeded all the fasting and tithing re-

quirements. He believed he was the best and God was lucky to have him on His side. But he was wrong.

The tax collector, on the other hand, stood far off, feeling unworthy to come near the Pharisee. He realized his sin and his need for God's mercy and forgiveness. He knew the only way he could be forgiven was by God's mercy and grace so he begged God for it.

Pride is idolatrous self-worship. It puts self in a superior light compared to others. Like this parable, it tries to elevate self by lowering others. Paul tells us that is the wrong measurement (1 Corinthians 10:12).

STEPS TO LEARN HUMILITY

What can we do to learn humility? Here are a few suggestions:

1. Realize that no matter how much we know, it is very small compared to the sum total of knowledge. Some men think if they do not continue working at a company, the company will fail. But everyone is replaceable. Life goes on. Things change. Knowledge is gained. It keeps me humble just to see all the changes that do take place.

2. Compare our lives with the perfect. On the job, the expert comes in and reveals to us the changes that need to be made to better our performance. In terms of righteousness, Jesus is the perfect example. He lived the perfect life. We have no grounds for self-righteousness because we all practice sin (Romans 3:23).

3. Realize the source of our blessings. God is the source of all blessings (Ephesians 1:3). When we humble ourselves before God, He loads our lives with many blessings. It is like a head of wheat that is so full it hangs down. The more it bows down, the more it acknowledges every grain on its head. Our blessings manifest our humility.

4. Walk humbly before God. Micah the prophet tells us there are three things God requires: "to do justly, to love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God" (6:8 NKJV). God asks us to do good deeds and be merciful to our fellow man. But He also wants us to walk in humility before Him. We must realize our lack of knowledge, our lack of righteousness and depend on Him.

5. Remember that we are debtors. All we have has been given us by the grace of God. "And what do you have that you

did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

Beauty, talents, genes, etc. are all gifts from God. We receive these things from our parents. I can take these gifts and work hard and become a success. But even success is the result of gifts. I am what I am by the grace of God and by my determination to succeed.

6. We must glory only in the cross of Jesus. As we submit ourselves to Jesus and glory in Him, we show our humility (Galatians 2:20, 6:14). If we are not Christians, we are in rebellion to God. I encourage you to humble yourself before God and receive the great blessing of your salvation.

Elders and Deacons

W.A. HOLLEY

Rather than functioning as a mob, all groups of people must have leaders, if good is to be accomplished. If a school has no principal, if a nation has no president, if an army has no commander, if the church, locally, has no leadership, nothing worthwhile can be achieved.

The New Testament clearly sets forth the qualifications of both elders and deacons. Let our readers now take time to read 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11; 1 Peter 5:1-4, if they wish to be well-informed.

In the apostolic church there was a plurality of bishops and deacons in each church: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Philippians 1:1). In New Testament usage, "elders," "presbyters," "overseers," "pastors," and "bishops" refer to the same office (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 4:14; Ephesians 4:11). Roman Catholicism and protestant denominationalism do not follow the New Testament pattern. Those often have a "bishop" over several churches, such as dioceses, synods, or associations, and the like. The church of Christ follows the New Testament order of things as therein revealed.

We shall now discuss the biblical qualifications of elders and deacons:

(1) Such men must be blameless, without reproach. Elders

ought to set such a fine example that no reproach or blame will ever rest upon them (I Timothy 3:1-2).

(2) An elder or deacon must be the husband of one wife. It is always safe to appoint men who have had one and only one wife (I Timothy 3:2).

(3) These men need to be vigilant and temperate (I Timothy 3:2). They must watch over themselves, and over the Lord's church, being constantly aware of dangers which lurk along the way.

(4) Another qualification is to be sober-minded (I Timothy 3:2, A.S.V.). Such men must not be worldly-minded. Leaders of the Lord's people must not act from impulse or passion, but from sober thought.

(5) Those selected as elders and deacons must be men of good behaviour. These would be men of modesty, well-behaved, conservative in their approach to their responsibilities.

(6) Another requirement is hospitality toward one's fellowman. These social duties require church leaders to provide for those who need their services (Hebrews 13:1-3).

(7) Elders must be "apt to teach" (I Timothy 3:2). This requires them to read and study their Bibles, that they might know well the truth, and, at the same time, be able to correct those who might be in error (Titus 1:9).

(8) Moreover, elders and deacons must not be "given to wine" (I Timothy 3:3). Church-leaders must not be contentious, quarrelsome, fussy, quick to get into scrapes with other people. Ill-gotten money, wealth, or "filthy lucre" cannot be their master. Stinginess turns others off! "Not greedy of filthy lucre" (I Timothy 3:3). Not covetous.

(9) Elders are men who are patient, gentle toward all, not brawlers, not contentious, not insulting or abusive, not quarrelsome by nature or disposition (I Timothy 3:3; Philippians 2:3-5).

(10) "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity ..." is another of the Lord's requirements (I Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6). If one has failed in his own home, he is unlikely to succeed in the church!

(11) "Not a novice," or a new convert -because such an one lacks knowledge and experience. An elder also needs to be a man of "good report" from those who are without (I Timothy 3:6-7). Also, elders and deacons must be in control of their anger (Titus 1:8),

just and fair in their relations with others, and holy in their manner of life (Titus 1:8). One who is hot-headed and high tempered is unlikely to help others.

(12) Elders cannot be self-willed: "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre" (Titus 1:7). No elder should ever seek "to lord it over" God's church (1 Peter 5:3). Hence, elders are not dictators who can boss others around. Bible elders rule through persuasion as they follow the power of truth (Hebrews 13:7,17).

(13) Elders must hold fast the word of God: "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). Hence, elders should not be compromisers. They are commanded to watch for the souls of those who are under their oversight. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).

Thus, elders are "overseers of the church," and it is their responsibility to plan the work-program for all. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:17,28).

The elders are to look after the spiritual welfare of the church. They may wisely ask the deacons to look after temporal matters (Acts 6:1-8). One further note: Acts 11:29-30, teaches that the elders have divine authority to handle the money of the church. We quote: "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea; which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

"I'd Rather Do It My Way"

EDSEL BURLESON

There seems to be an over-abundance of people who insist on having their way in everything. Most of the difficulties between children would be avoided if this attitude could be overcome. The

problems in society are often traceable to this disposition. And, with few exceptions, both parties are unwilling to "give a little" here and there.

Sometimes, the disposition to argue is the spark that ignites a forest of misunderstandings. The disagreement can be relatively minor, but the plot thickens as each endeavors to defend his position.

Ivan Demetrius and Mischa Petrovitz loved to argue. Standing on a street corner in Moscow, they watched an infantry regiment marching by.

"Do men grow upward or downward?" asked Ivan.

"Why, downward, of course," replied Mischa.

"How do you know, Mischa?" asked Ivan.

"Because," replied Mischa, "once when I outgrew my overcoat, it became too short for me at the bottom."

"No, Mischa," replied Ivan, looking on at the marching soldiers, "men grow upward."

"Why do you say that, Ivan?"

"Because," replied Ivan, "you will see that our brothers marching out there are all even at the bottom, but uneven at the top."

A simple solution to most disagreements is found in Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth. He said, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

The problem is world-wide! It has been called by someone "plain old unvarnished selfishness."

The poet explained it this way:

"I had a little party this afternoon at three:

'Twas very small - three guests in all,

Just I, MYSELF and ME.

Myself ate all the sandwiches,

while I drank up the tea.

"Twas also I that ate the pie

and passed the cake to ME." Hmmm...