

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

“For Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

All Scripture, sixty-six books in the Bible, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament, were written by the inspiration of God. And, furthermore, we are told, that they are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The Scriptures, the Bible, is the complete will of God for man. We do not need, in addition to the Bible, creed books, books of discipline and manuals and catechism. In the Bible God has revealed His mind. In the Bible God has told us: where did man come from, man’s purpose on earth and where he is going from here. In the Bible God has told us that man’s greatest need on earth is salvation from sin; and what God has done for man so that man could be saved from his sin. Also, God has told us in the Bible what all men must do to be saved from sin. In the Bible God has told us, what kind of lives we must live on earth and how we must worship Him acceptably today. There is nothing that God has not told us already in the Bible that we ought to know. God is man’s Creator, and He knows what man needs to know; and He has given us all in the Bible which makes man complete and thoroughly equip him for every good work.

The remarkable unity of all sixty-six books of the Bible is the greatest proof of the fact that the Bible has been given to man by the inspiration of God. Over a period of sixteen hundred years a group of about forty different men from all parts of the civilized world and from altogether contrasting backgrounds wrote these books. Yet, all the sixty-six books of the Bible has one story to tell. Immediately after the sin of Adam and Eve God promised that a Saviour would come of the seed of the woman and crush the head (power) of Satan. (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4). The prophets testified that this Saviour would be born of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10; Heb. 7:14). He would come from the royal line of king David (Isa. 9:7; 11:1; Matt. 1:1). He was to be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1). His mother would be a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18). He was to have a forerunner who would come in the spirit of Elijah (Mal. 3:1; 4:5; Lk. 1:17). He was to suffer in silence at the hands of His enemies (Isa. 53:7; Mk. 15:3-5). His bones were not to be broken in His death (Psm. 24:20; Jno. 20:32-33). He would rise from the dead (Psm. 16:10; Jno. 1:17; Acts 2:32). All of these facts were fulfilled when Christ the Saviour had entered the world exactly as the Bible says. This would be impossible if the Bible did not have one author. (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Not All Are Judases

J.C. CHOATE

From time to time I get a letter from some individual who tells me of all of the problems in the church in his area. He mentions the preachers who are on foreign support and are after money only. He says that they put a lot of emphasis on baptism so they can send glowing reports. He goes on and on, telling of many other similar problems.

One particular individual wrote that things were so bad that he was ashamed for people to know that he was a member of the church of Christ. He says that the church has a very bad name in his area.

Isn't that a sad story? And every word of it may very well be true. What does such a report mean? It means that there are even some bad people who claim to be members of the Lord's church.

Does that make the church wrong? No, but it does mean that those hypocrites are wrong and that they need to repent and obey God from the heart.

I would say to this particular individual who wrote about these problems that even Christ had a Judas among His Apostles! That didn't make Christ wrong, it didn't mean that He was an imposter, or a hypocrite, and it didn't make the other apostles wrong. Rather, it was Judas alone who was the hypocrite. We should not blame all for the wrong-doing of the one. Rather, we should reject the hypocrite and put emphasis on those that are good.

There are bad people, hypocrites, thieves, liars, fornicators, and all kinds of evil people in all religious groups. But no religious body should be judged and condemned because some of its members may be doing bad things. Rather, it should be judged on the basis of whether or not it is teaching God's word, and whether sincere efforts are being made to bring the lives of its members in line with the standard of righteousness laid down in that Book.

There were those who lived in the day of Paul who left the truth and returned to the world. He said that Demas had forsaken him, having loved the world, and had departed. (2 Timothy 4:10). He also wrote to the church at Corinth, listing a number of serious problems such as division, going to law against a brother, being guilty of fornication, eating meat offered to idols, turning the Lord's Supper into a common meal, and so on. Yet, he addressed the brethren there as being the church of God. (1 Corinthians 1:1,2). In his second letter to them, we can see that some progress had been made in their efforts to grow to spiritual maturity.

Christ did not give up on the Apostles because of Judas, and neither did the Apostles disband because of what he did. As a matter of fact, they went on to choose another to take the place of Judas, one who had been with them from the baptism of John through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. (Acts 1:21-26).

Neither did Paul quit the church because some of the brethren forsook him, or because of all of the sins in the church at Corinth. He continued faithful in preaching the gospel and trying to correct his brethren who had gone astray. He also had many wonderful things to say about the church, how Christ had

died for it, purchased it with His own blood, was Saviour of it, head of it, and that He would return to receive it unto Himself and then deliver it upto God. (Ephesians 5:25; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 15:24). From these statements, directed to imperfect congregations of the Lord's church, we can see the grace of God, allowing humans opportunity to grow in their life as Christians.

Neither should we give up on the Lord's way, His church, His people, and the name of the church. We should not be ashamed of the church itself because of the betrayal of some of its members in their ungodly lives. We should be ashamed *of them* and do our best to point out their errors, encouraging them to repent and return to the Lord. But we should be faithful to the Lord ourselves and do all we can to further His cause. We should be thankful for what He did to make it possible for the church to exist and for us to be faithful members of it.

It will not help matters to quit the church because of what some of its members do. We should not start our own church, or choose some other name for the Lord's church in order to get away from a perceived stigma attached to the term 'church of Christ' because of hypocrites who wear that name, and we should not join some man-made church. We must realize that as long as we are dealing with humans, there will be hypocrites and sinners in every group. If you leave the Lord's church to get away from "Judases", you will end up with the same problem in "your" church, or in somebody else's church — the only difference would be that you would no longer be counted as a faithful member of the Lord's church yourself. So you would have become a part of the problem, instead of being part of the solution!

We must recognize the fact that we will have to live with hypocrites in the church here on earth as long as we are on earth, because we are a part of the human family. May the Lord help us to obey Him and to be faithful to Him unto death, regardless of what others do. Just remember that **all are not Judases.**

For unto us a Child is born

FRANCIS DAVID

Isaiah the prophet foretold that Jesus is going to come in this world and he would be the promised Son of God. He says, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And his name will be called wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that forward; even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isa. 9:6,7). In Gal. 3:8, Apostle Paul writes, "And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham before hand, saying "In you all the nations shall be blessed." It was God's plan to bless the human race through the birth of Jesus Christ.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying; "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son and they shall call His name Immanuel," Which is translated, "God with us". (Matt. 1:18-24). We read in the book of Acts chapter 13 and verse 23 that, "From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a saviour-Jesus." Yes, God made a promise to Abraham that through Christ all the nations would be blessed. When this promise was fulfilled, Jesus was born, the salvation of God came for the people. Now we can have all the spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ our Lord. In Eph. 1:3, Paul tells us that "Blessed be the God and Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." When we come to Jesus, we are being showered with all kinds of blessings. We become the new creatures in him (2 Cor. 5:17). We are made alive in Him. (Rom. 6:3-4). We have no condemnation when we are in Christ (Rom. 8:1). We have salvation in Christ. (Acts 4:12).

Are you in Christ? If not, you are missing all the spiritual blessings which are found in Him. The Scriptures says, "All spiritual, blessings are in Christ. How can we get these blessing? We need to put on Jesus Christ and these blessings will follow. Paul says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:26,27). We need to be baptised in order to be in Christ. Where is salvation and no condemnation? It is in Jesus. Jesus was born so that we may be freed from the bondage of sin and be reconciled to God. (2 Tim 2:10; Rom. 8:1). If we die in the Lord, we are blessed, because the Scriptures says, "Blessed are the dead who die in Christ." Dear friends; you will find, hope, assurance, eternal life in Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (Jn. 14:6).

Today, you can take the benefit of these blessings by believing in Jesus, repenting of your sins, confessing him as the Son of God, and by being baptised in the watery grave. For unto us a child is born, let us come to him and accept him and follow him, since all spiritual blessings are found in Him.

Looking Upon God

T.R. DOHLING

"O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory." -Psalm 63:1,2 [A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.]

God was very personal to David as is evident from how he addresses Him, "O God, You are my God." He was very close to

God since time and again we find his soul and flesh hungering, thirsting and fainting for God.

How could he be close to God? By simply taking the time to "look upon God." Looking upon God, he beheld God's power and glory not only in creation, but in what God had done for him. He could say from experience that God's love was "steadfast" and "better than life" which caused him to praise God.

Because he drew near to God, David could count on God's love to deliver him from his present, temporary discomfort. He was satisfied in God "as with fat and rich food" which filled him with great joy and led him to outwardly express it.

From this psalm we further discover David upon his bed at night remembering God. That's how much he desired God because he had tasted and seen that "the Lord is good!" [Psalm 34:8.] God had been his help always and in the shadow of God's wings, he finds refuge and sings for joy. Therefore, his soul clings to God because God's "right hand upholds" him even though he is very uncomfortable in his current situation.

In the end he says, "the king shall rejoice in God; all who swear by him shall exult." What David says in this verse is worthy of note. He shall rejoice in God because of Who God is and he goes on to say that "all who swear by God shall rejoice."

May we also have the same hungering and thirsting for God from the depths of our beings so that we "who swear by God" may always dwell in His Presence and draw on His strength in times of need.

Good News!—A "Life" Sentence

DAVID THURMAN

Watching the news I often see people convicted of crimes and then sentenced to serve out a life sentence. Sometimes they have a chance at parole, other times they would have to live to be 200 years old to ever get out. A life sentence is a sobering thing, as it can determine the destiny of a criminal for the remainder of his or her life.

But, sometimes a life sentence is not so bad. For instance, when a man is told he has cancer and *six months* to live, to

discover a cure for his illness is a wonderful "life" sentence. Instead of being destined to die, he now finds renewal. Or, a woman who is in an airplane that is experiencing trouble may wonder if she will survive. When that plane touches down, there is a wonderful sense of relief and the joy found in being sentenced to go on living. A life sentence in that context may not be at all bad.

The good news from God is that He offers everyone just this kind of life sentence. We do not have to surrender to death or to the effects of death and sin. We can find life in Christ. Paul speaks of this when he writes to the Colossians. *"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross"* (Col. 2:8-14). Paul tells those of us who are Christians that there are some important things to look for. Notice three of these.

LOOK OUT FOR HUMAN THINKING

Paul warns believers that there are those who will try to take salvation from us. They will do this with philosophy, deception and human tradition. From the beginning, Satan has used human thinking to confuse God's people. Satan lied to Eve, using clever ideas to convince her to sin. The devil still tells the same kinds of lies to us today.

Some people leave God because they "outgrow" their childhood thinking. They go to school for advanced education, or fall into a group of "thinkers" who convince them that God is an

out-dated notion. In their rush to learn more philosophy, they give up on God. These fall for the deception that human reasoning is a substitute for God's word. There is nothing wrong with knowing philosophy, but it is wrong to trust it in place of God's revealed will.

Others leave God by falling prey to human tradition. This is happening in so many churches in our age. In those situations, people are much more loyal to their creeds or to "the way we have always done things" than they are to God or to Jesus. While religious tradition might make us feel comfortable, it may actually get in the way of knowing and serving God. So, Paul warns us to look out for those who will use the elementary principles of the world to trip us up. In place of that, we are to rely on doing things according to Christ.

LOOK FOR GOD IN CHRIST

There are many people who are uncertain about God. They are not sure of His existence, they are not sure of His nature. Paul tells us we can see the fullness of God by looking at Jesus. In Jesus all the fullness of the deity dwelt in human form. If you want to know God, look for Him in Christ.

Satan loves to confuse us. One way he does this is by selling us on many religions, on many paths that lead to the same God. But there is only one way to know God, and that is through His Son. *"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). The only path to God is found in Jesus, the Christ.

Better still, if you really want to understand God's nature, you merely need to look at Jesus. In Christ we see God's holiness, as Jesus was without sin (2 Cor. 5:21). In Christ we see God's love, proven for us. We see love in how Jesus healed the sick, tended to the hurting and saved the lost. We see love in how Jesus willingly went to the cross for us. If you want to know God, look for Him in Jesus.

LOOK AT GOD'S POWER WORKING

Paul says we are made complete in Christ. He says we were dead and are now made alive through God's power in raising

Jesus from the dead. The apostle tells us that the old law of Moses has been removed and we are alive in Christ. In seeing what God has done through Jesus, we cannot help but be impressed with the ongoing power of God to save us.

God is not weak, His plan to save man is not weak. The path to God through Jesus is the only path, but it is a powerful, life-changing path. No longer are we guilty before God, His power has removed our guilt. No longer are we under the dictates of the old law and its rules. God's power has removed it by nailing it to the cross. No longer are we dead in our transgressions, we are made alive together with Christ.

Our God was powerful in raising Jesus from the dead. Our God remains powerful in continuing to save us by the same process through the death of Jesus. When we see the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we must see God's power working. And that power is effective, even for those who are not yet Christians. If you are not a Christian, look at what Paul says you need.

YOU NEED "CIRCUMCISION"

Paul says clearly that this is not a circumcision of the flesh, that is, made by human hands. It is a circumcision of the heart. Instead of a physical sign that we belong to God, we are given a spiritual sign, the putting to death the body of flesh. When we die to our old ways of life, then God's covenant in Christ makes us part of God's family. This is not a physical cutting of the flesh, but a spiritual renewal of the heart.

Paul even tells us when this "circumcision" takes place. We die to the old body of sin when we are buried with Him in baptism and raised up with Him through faith in the working of God. When you are baptized into Christ, you are figuratively circumcised, becoming part of the covenant people of God. Just as circumcision was essential for the Jews in order to be part of God's people, so baptism is essential for you to be part of God's salvation. If you are not a Christian, you need to be baptized into Christ.

YOU NEED LIFE

We were dead in our transgressions. The hard reality is the same for each one of us. We have done and said things that have messed up our lives. No matter how hard we try to clean up the

messes we have made, we fail to make our lives better. It is true for our culture. The more we advance scientifically, the more ways we find to kill others, harm our environment and so on. It is true with us individually. The harder we try to fix our interpersonal problems the worse they seem to get. The fact is we are dead. We are stuck in our sin and our situation.

Because of this, God sent His Son, Jesus, to bring life. God can make you alive together with Christ. Paul's point is that if God could raise Jesus from the dead, He can also erase your past and give you a life worth living. This new life only comes in Jesus.

You will never find this life outside of Christ. You need God's power, the same power that raised Jesus, to give you life. At best, our world only copes with sin and violence and corruption. At worst, our world caves in to these desires and uses them to hurt and injure others. You cannot find life in the philosophies and politics of the world. Life is found only in Christ.

YOU NEED THE CROSS

We have been freed from the old law which was nailed to the cross. The law of Moses could not save anyone. All it could do was condemn us when we failed. That was the design and purpose of the law of Moses. It could not save, it could only judge.

The good news is that the old law has been nailed to the cross. God has removed the power and purpose of the law. It no longer governs us, it cannot therefore any longer condemn us. Instead, Jesus has paid the price by dying on the cross. You need the cross, for it is the place in which you were freed from the effects of the law. At the cross your condemnation was removed. While the old law judged you, the cross saves you. While the law of Moses reminded you that you were not good enough, that you were dead, the cross reminds you that you are loved and that you can find life.

TRUST IN GOD'S WORK

Our salvation grows out of our faith in the working of God. This is in contrast to the thinking of man. Man will tell you that coming to God is based on being good enough. You must dress a certain way, do certain things that look religious, and so on.

Human tradition says you will be saved by being good enough before God.

Paul says our forgiveness is not based on what we do, but on our trust in what God has done for us. The challenge for all of us is to give up on human thinking and philosophy. This is why human thinking can be so dangerous. It can lead us to try to save ourselves instead of trusting in God's work to save us. Abandon human tradition and come to God through His work at the cross.

TRUST IN GOD'S PLAN

Unfortunately, many good people balk at what God says. Some folk are uncomfortable in surrendering their human efforts to be saved. Others are unhappy to actually do what God commands. You need to trust in God, repent of your sins and be baptized (Mark 16:16; Luke 24:47). Instead of trusting in your own thinking about salvation, just trust in God's plan. It may not make complete sense to you, but God's power to save rests in His plan of salvation.

There are people who still listen to human thinking. They decide that since God saves us by grace, then man has no response to make to God. However, God says repeatedly that man must respond. Man must trust in God's power to save. Man must repent of his sins. Man must be immersed in the name of Jesus. To fail in any part of this is to trust human tradition instead of trusting God's plan.

The question for you to answer is: "What do you trust?" Do you trust in human thinking? Do you trust in what religious people have told you? Do you trust in yourself, that you are good enough to go to heaven? Or, are you willing to trust in God's power to save? If you will trust in God's work and in His plan to save you, you can find a "life" sentence in Christ Jesus. Why not respond to God today? Believe, repent, be baptized, as God commands (Acts 2:38), and see God's-power bring life.

Don't Die With Blood On Your Hand

BOBBY KEY

God said to Israel through Ezekiel more than twenty-five hundred years ago, "I appoint you as a watchman to the house of Israel; and whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall warn them from me. If I say to the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die, and you say nothing to warn the wicked man from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand."

The gospel preacher has a heavy responsibility. Few, if any, of God's preachers have been popular. They have the task of telling people what they need to hear instead of what they want to hear; and that doesn't make for popularity.

Oh, how the world today needs another Elijah! If some of our "Great Preachers," and "Great Papers" will take a stand like Elijah the threat of apostasy can be put down overnight. So-called Christendom today faces the awful responsibility of choosing between a return to faith in the Bible as being the Word of God, and as containing the revelation of His will to man, or simply abandoning any serious convictions regarding it and depending entirely upon the wisdom, desires, and impulses of man. There is no middle ground. The tendency to apostasy is omnipresent. It doesn't go away when we ignore it. We need men today like Elijah who will cry out against all innovations of man and call for a return to a "thus saith the Lord" for all we teach and practice. Elijah rose like a tower of strength in a weary land. There was never anything indefinite about him. No dictionary was needed when he preached. When he went to heaven in a blaze of glory there was no blood on his hands.

We live in a day when civilization is crumbling, the night of apostasy is deepening, lawlessness runs wild and sin abounds. Yet the church of God, for the most part, is at ease in Zion. We who claim a name above every name twiddle our thumbs while the world sweeps over the brink of disaster. Instead of crying out against sin and the world many of us have joined up with it.

Some who should know better are crying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." Others trying to fight the good fight of faith have been set on, not by the enemy, but by their own brethren! Unless we wake up and start doing our job we will die with a lot of blood on our hands. Let us love God, one another, and the world enough to tell it like it is. We do not help our religious neighbour or erring brother by pretending that he is all right when he is all wrong.

"Two Praying Men"

TED D. BURLERSON

In Luke 18, Jesus taught a parable about two men who went to the temple to pray. Imagine the entrance the Pharisee made into the temple. The people in the temple probably moved out of his way as he walked to the closest limelight area.

Pharisees usually prayed with their chins pointed upward and prayed at the temple at least three times each day. Impressing crowds usually appealed to Pharisees.

Pharisees were members of the predominant religious group of that day. They were sticklers for the letter of the law and traditions of their fathers. For example, they followed a procedure for washing their hands that became a religious rite for them.

Where would this man fit into our assemblies? He would have been a pillar of the community. He was the epitome of what others wanted to be. He prayed often. His morals were unquestionable.

Jesus spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves and considered themselves righteous. They had compared themselves to others and had concluded that they were better.

The Pharisee's first sentence reveals some things about his attitude. "God, I thank you that I am not like other men." We know of no vice he had other than pride and an ugly spirit. Regardless of all his good traits, he had an attitude problem. He felt he was better than extortioners, swindlers, the unjust and adulterers.

In the crowded temple the Pharisee said, "I am thankful that I am not as this publican. I fast twice a week."

Deuteronomy and Leviticus, the law he recognized, required fasting on the Day of Atonement, once each year. To fast twice each week was to be commended if for the right purpose with the right motive.

He said, "I give tithes of all that I possess."

Again, he is going beyond the requirements. He give, according to Levitical law, ten percent of his farm income.

Let's look at the other man who went up to the temple to pray. This was a tax collector. To the Jews, this man had sold out to the Romans. He would take tax, perhaps even exploit the people, and send it to the Romans. He probably didn't come to the temple often. He wouldn't dare look up to heaven to pray. He bowed his head and beat his breast.

"God, be merciful to me, a sinner," were the seven words the publican spoken.

In some Greek manuscripts, *sinner* has a definite article before it meaning, "God, be merciful to me, *the* sinner." Was he saying that he was what Paul would later claim to be, the chief of sinners? What had he done to consider himself the worst sinner? He might have been everything the Pharisee said he was not. Whatever he had done, it had caused him to feel very separated from God. He knew on whom he depended.

Of the publican, Jesus said, "I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be abased and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Remember the audience who heard Jesus relate this parable. They were Pharisees (trace the conversation back to Luke 17:20). They probably would have been very proud of the Pharisee in the parable. Imagine the experience they had when Jesus declared that the hated publican left the temple justified rather than the respected Pharisee.

The Pharisee trusted in himself and his own self-righteousness. The publican knew that only God could help him with his unrighteousness.

Let us be very careful about comparing ourselves to others. It is depressing to compare ourselves with those who have

accomplished things we probably will never accomplish. To avoid this, some compare themselves only to those who probably can never accomplish what they have accomplished.

We don't know what the publican did after this. He may have responded as Zacchaeus did and repaid every wrong. He might have preached the gospel from this point on as another tax collector, Matthew, did. What we do know is that on that day, at that moment, his heart was right. Jesus said he went away justified.

Is your heart right with God? Make sure you are serving from a pure heart with the right motives. Be a child of God by obeying, in trusting faith, the gospel. The change of heart and forgiveness of sins is possible by the sacrifice of Jesus. If you conclude that you are like the Pharisee, repent and confess your faults before God.

Solomon's Choice

T. PIERCE BROWN

The inspired and inspiring story of the choice of Solomon as recorded in I Kings 3:1-16 is worthy of our intensive study. He had had a long and solemn time of sacrificing offerings to God, with a great sense of gratitude and an awareness of his weakness and unworthiness. He exemplifies Jesus' statement, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3). The importance of making the right choices at the right time is beyond comprehension.

Every new opportunity or circumstance that confronts us demands a choice, or usually, many choices. Even on a somewhat insignificant event, many choices are involved. Suppose a friend says, "Let us go out and eat." You have to choose first whether you go. Then you choose the time to go, the place to go, what to eat, and many other things.

Every choice, no matter how little it may be, involves your character. The things you choose, and the basis on which you choose them depends upon and suggests the kind of character you have and will have. Often a seemingly small choice will determine the direction of your whole life. I am told that there is a

place in Europe where a person might stand and throw a piece of wood in one of three directions. If it falls in one stream at that point, it will flow north into one sea. If it falls into another stream nearby it will flow south into another sea. If it falls into another stream within reach it will flow west into another sea. Each destination is thousands of miles from the other, but at the beginning they were very close together. Whether or not that is true, it illustrates the reality about our choices. To make it more realistic to you, think of standing on a spot and facing in one direction from which you may start walking. With just a slight turn, you are facing in another direction. If you start walking in that direction, you will end your journey several thousand miles from where you would be at the first point.

The greatest choices we can make are things that relate to serving humanity wisely under God's direction. The most fundamental choice we can make is the one Joshua suggested in Joshua 24:15, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve — but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Keep in mind the principle involved here. Make the big choice right and most of the little choices are automatically made without difficulty. My choices of what drinks to serve at meals and whom I take out to dinner were largely determined by one previous choice.

When I was a boy I read of Aladdin lamp with the genie that would grant wishes. God had a better offer to Solomon. "Ask what I shall give thee" (v. 5). There are some principles behind making any worthwhile choice. First, we need to cultivate the proper desire. Second, we need to make that choice consciously and deliberately. Third, verbalize that choice. Let us note an important difference between having a desire, and choosing that which will cause us to gain that desire. A person may want to be healthy. Choosing to exercise, eat properly and exercise self control are different matters. A person may wish he had the knowledge or ability to be an artist, pilot, swimmer, golfer or personal evangelist. To do the studying and practice that would give that is another thing.

I am persuaded the same kind of situation confronts us. God has made promises to us that may surpass that offered to Solomon, but few of us take him at his word, or accept them on his terms. II Peter 1:3, 4 says, "According as his divine power hath

given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises." Note some of them, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). Even such a promise as the one found in II Corinthians 9:8-11 is not accepted by most of us. Do you have all sufficiency in all things? If not, perhaps the reason is that you have not accepted God's promise on his terms. I am convinced that most of us do not really believe and accept Ephesians 3:20, "Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Our faith and vision are both too small, or we would be doing far greater things for the Lord.

Solomon made a very wise choice. He said in verse 9, "Give thy servant an understanding heart." Before he made that choice, he looked backward to God's goodness and power, outward to the needs around him, inward to his inability to do his work by his own power, and upward to the source of the power he needed.

It is not enough to have the opportunity of choosing. One must decide what course to pursue, or what goals are worth working for. In Solomon's case it was to discern what was good and bad and be able to do that which was best for all concerned. This should be our attitude. Then there was a statement of his desire. James 4:2 says, "Ye have not because ye ask not." Could that also be a part of the reason for our not receiving more blessings? We do not really have our hearts set on worthwhile goals to the extent that we can specify those goals clearly. Often, we simply say, "Lord bless us." Imagine a son who wants a bicycle, but only says to his father, "Bless me." There are good reasons for God wanting us to specify. One of them is that unless we know what we want enough to define it clearly, probably if we received it we would not use it properly.

His choice pleased God because it indicated an attitude of humility. It was not for his selfish advantage. James 4:3 says, "Ye ask and receive not because ye ask to consume it on your own lusts." It was both for the honour and good of his people, and for the glory of God. If our goals and aspirations always included

those things, there is little doubt that we would receive far more things we want and need.

Because it was such a wise choice, he not only got what he asked for, but far more than he thought (vss. 12-13). When Jesus says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33), and when he said "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7), he was expressing the thoughts I want to emphasize in this article. When he said, "Ask what ye will" we must remember that our will must be to do his will. That is, the promises of God for granting our prayers involve the attitude of loving obedience. These promises are for every faithful child of God.

Conviction

R.W. GRAY

Paul had conscious knowledge of the God in whom he had placed his trust. He was fully convinced that the trust he had committed would be kept by the God he knew (II Timothy 1:12). Such conviction drove this Christ saturated, Christ motivated, man to fight a good fight, to finish his course, and to keep the faith (II Timothy 4:1-6).

Back sliding, turning back, apostasy, are words and terms often read and heard in religious circles. Vascillation seems to be the "in thing" in these changing times. One writes a well researched volume to warn his brethren that liberalism is a real threat to their faith. He documents well his expose of the attitudes and threats one may expect from those caught up in the trap of liberalistic thinking. He warns that they will seek to win over truth by a facade of piety and/or by intimidation. Within the scope of a few years the one who issued the warnings is heard all over the land parroting the very phrases he warned others to watch for as a sign of apostasy.

When the depth of our profession of faith is shallow we can drown near the shore. And when we permit ourselves to be tossed to and fro with every wind that blows we are certain to end up in

a cyclone of error. If we are perplexed with these things it provides us some idea of God's patience. From Adam to Moses, and from Moses to the baptizer, man demonstrated his fickle nature. "All the day long," Jehovah reveals, "have I stretched forth my hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Romans 10:21).

Joshua was reflecting the "impatience" of the Lord when he called upon Israel to take a stand. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve ..." (Joshua 24:15). "Take a stand!" "Set your course and pursue it!" Throughout the Bible we are encouraged to faithfulness and warned of our propensity to drift away from our moorings. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12).

We must grieve, not gloat, over the slipping into error's path by any brother or sister. Our love for them must not wane. The "illness" of a loved one will not drive us from them but draw us to their side in their time of need. Yet we must exercise care that while attending to their need we do not carelessly expose ourselves to the sickness (Galatians 6:1).

In any warfare the troops must be convinced of the justice of their cause and believe in the ultimate victory that awaits the right if the fight is to be won. It is wise to evaluate one's position all along the way, testing every proposal before it is embraced; before the soldiers advance. If there are hidden doubts they will surface and let us down when the battle is raging. But once tested and proven sound, the position must be held. Our spiritual metal is put to the test when the cause we serve is under siege. The defection of just one fellow soldier can cause us to become faint hearted, cast doubt upon the course we follow, and spread discouragement among the troops. Our Commander is looking for a few good men who will hold the fort when the enemy is at the gate.

In a time when apostasy has become somewhat of a "fad" our convictions are once more placed under the gun. Where we ultimately stand depends upon our knowledge of and love for the God we serve. It was in a context of dismay regarding those who had "turned away" from him and from the Lord that Paul wrote, "Nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Timothy 1:12-18).

"Soldiers of Christ, arise . . . And put your armour on;
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Thro' his beloved Son.
Stand then in his great might, With all his strength endued;
But take to arm ye for the fight, The panoply of God."

Jesus And The Church

WINFRED CLARK

When you think of some people, there are some other things you think about. When you think of Noah, you think of the ark. When you think of Christ you must also think of the church. There is no doubt that it filled his mind. He spoke of it (Matthew 16:16-19).

Have you stopped to ask yourself what it meant to him? We should be able to see something of his concern for the church. This can be done when we look at passages that show his relationship to the church.

I. LOOK AT THE PRICE HE PAID

We can usually tell what people think of a thing by the price they are willing to pay. If they consider such to be of great value, they will spare no expense. They will go all out to purchase that which they consider to be valuable. They will sacrifice in order to obtain that which means a great deal to them.

This will tell you something about the value our Lord placed on the church. Listen to what Paul would have to say, "husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). He would later say to the Ephesian elders, "... which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Surely one does not pay that kind of a price for that which is considered to be worthless or merely an afterthought. Jesus had a mighty large investment in the church. It cost him all that he had.

We can have no doubt about the Lord's sense of worth concerning the church. He saw it as being worth his blood and

life. He would make the supreme sacrifice for it. We are thus compelled to see it as something of great worth. It is to be respected as such. We dare not think of it otherwise.

II. LISTEN TO HIS PRAYER FOR IT

If you will take the time to read that great prayer, found in John 17, you will see something of the Lord's feelings for, and concept of the church. Those disciples were uppermost in his thoughts. Take the time to look at all the references to them and you will see.

He would pray for their *purity*. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). Jesus knew these were to be the salt of the earth. They were to keep themselves pure and clean. They were to live lives that were separate and sanctified.

He would pray for their *unity*. Time and again you will find the Lord praying "that they may be one" (John 17:11, 21). He knew the awful tragedy brought on by division. He knew that the cost of division would be an unbelieving world. That is too much to pay for division. It isn't worth it.

Remember also, Jesus would not only pray for the church himself, but he also taught us to do the same (Matthew 6: 9-13).

III. LOOK AT PLANS HE HAD FOR IT

There was no doubt that Jesus had plans for the church when he came. It was not an afterthought. It was not something that came into being because the Jews rejected him as the Messiah. Not at all. This can be seen in all the work that he did from the beginning of his public ministry. He let it be known that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matthew 4:17). He was not talking about something other than the church at that time. He did not have another institution in mind. "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29-30). This is, without a doubt, the Lord's supper. None of us would doubt that the Lord's table is in the church (I Corinthians 11:23-26). But Jesus said it

would be in the kingdom. This being the case, we speak of the same institution, or body of people. Thus when he spoke of the kingdom, he would be speaking to the church. That is the reason you will find those terms together in such places as (Matthew 16:16-19). When he spoke of building his church and giving to them the keys of the kingdom, these are one and the same. He had plans for building the church.

IV. LOOK AT ITS POPULATION

When you stop to think of those people who make up the church, you then get an idea of the Lord's concept of the church. Luke described the kind of people who are in the church "and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). The best people on earth are the ones who compose the church, those that have turned from Satan to serve the Living God. They are the ones who have turned from darkness to light.

Let no man think that the church is to be less than pure. He would have it sanctified and cleansed (Ephesians 5:26). He would have it purified (1 Peter 1:22-23). It is not to have spot, wrinkle or blemish. Jesus wants it to be clean.

Just any kind of people are not in the church. One has to be a certain kind. One has to be saved. One has to be willing to follow the demands and dictates of the Lord.

V. LOOK AT THE PLACE PREPARED FOR IT

Didn't Jesus speak of going to prepare a place for those disciples (John 14:1-3)? He would prepare for them a place in heaven. It is that place that Paul had in mind when he was ready to depart and be with the Lord (Philippians 1:21-23). He knew what the Lord had in mind for the church. He would have a home waiting for the redeemed of the ages. Nothing else would satisfy.

Yes, we know what he thought of the church and so should we.

Is Honesty The Best Policy?

DAVID WADE

We often hear the statement, "Honesty is the best policy." As noble as this statement may sound, it falls short of giving proper guidance for the Christian in matters of honesty. For the Christian, honesty must be more than policy, it is to be his very nature, his guiding principle, a way of life. Policies may change with different situations, but divine principles are unchanging and eternal. So it is with the divine principle of honesty. Paul urges us to "Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Romans 12:17). "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (II Corinthians 8:21). "That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing" (I Thessalonians 4:12).

Covetousness is at the very heart of dishonesty. Covetousness is a form of idolatry (Colossians 3:5). The writer of Hebrews commands, "Let your conversation (manner of life) be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (13:5).

Recently I read a short article published in a religious paper entitled "Practice what you Preach" which drives home the point:

"One Monday morning a minister boarded a city bus and gave the driver a one-dollar bill. As he was finding a seat, he counted the change and noticed that the driver had given him too much money in change. He sat down and contemplated what would have seemed good fortune to some people. Finally, he went to the driver and said, 'Sir, you gave me too much money back when I boarded the bus.' Without even looking at him, the driver said, 'I know, I was at your church last night and heard your sermon against stealing and I just wanted to see if you practiced what you preach'."

In all avenues of life we need to be honest. Be honest with your spouse. Be honest in all your business dealings. Be honest with your friends, your enemies, and with the stranger. In short, honest, period! Everyone is looking, including God.