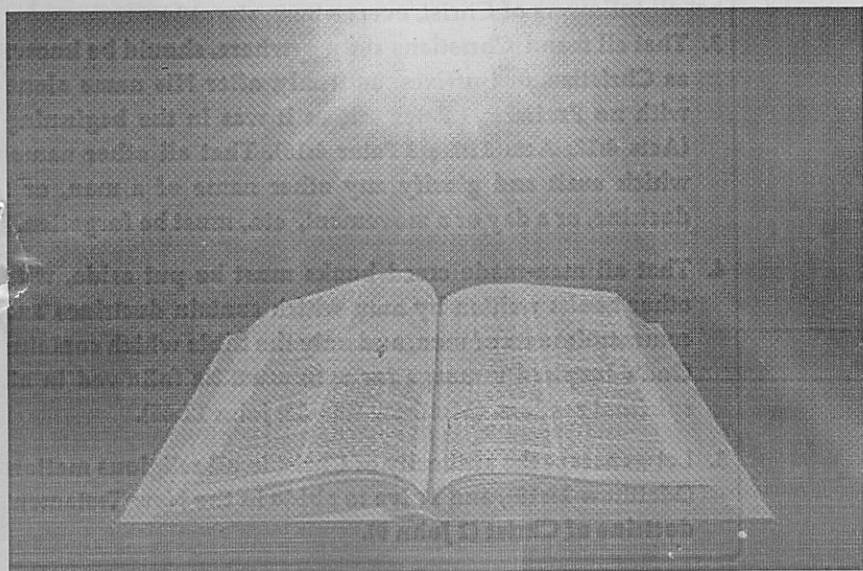


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THE BIBLE TEACHER



Our Plea

Let the Truth Prevail

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18; Col. 1:18). That congregations of the one church of the Bible everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the Church. (1 Corinthians 1:10; John 20:20, 21).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands to be saved are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His Spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, and Christians only, after His name alone, with no Prefixes or Suffixes, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men which contain doctrines and commandments of men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Jesus Arose From The Dead

THE GREAT FUNDAMENTAL of Christianity is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection bears directly upon the fact whether or not He is the Son of God, and thus upon His claim that He came from heaven. (John 1:1, 14; 3:16). Romans 1:4 says, "And declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." **The foundation on which the entire doctrine of Christianity is based is the fact of resurrection of Christ from the dead.** The extreme importance of this teaching is seen in the part that it played in the preaching of the apostles who declared boldly in every place that Christ who was crucified and buried in a tomb is risen from the dead on the third day after His death, as He had promised. The apostle Peter preached to the Jews, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know – Him, being delivered by the determine purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it." (Acts 2: 22-24). The apostle Paul aptly stated, "And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty." (1 Corinthians 15:14).



Christianity stands and rests upon the solitary basic fact of the

resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. If Christ had not risen from the dead, as He had claimed that He would on the third day after His death (Matthew 16:21; Mark 9:31) there will be no Christianity or the church of Christ on earth today. If there were no resurrection Christianity should have died out at the cross when the disciples fled for their lives seeing their Master was no longer alive.

The empty grave in which the body of Jesus was buried after His death is one incontestable proof which has confounded every futile effort to cast doubt on the resurrection of Christ. What happened to the body of Jesus if He did not indeed rise from the dead? Where did the body go? What happened to the body of Jesus? Why was the tomb or the grave in which the body of Christ was buried found empty on the third day?

Some have tried to evade the force of Jesus' resurrection by insisting that Jesus didn't really die on the cross, rather, He merely lost consciousness or swooned and later regained consciousness and then escaped from the grave. But what does the Bible say? It says that after Jesus was arrested by the mob, He went through a mock trial and was condemned to die. He was then scourged (Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15) which involved a severe beating. After the scourging Jesus was made to bear His cross (John 19:17) to go to the place of Skull or Golgotha where He was nailed to the cross. On that cross He was hanging suspended between heaven and earth for at least six hours. (Matthew 27:31-50; Mark 15:15-37). Also there were two criminals who were crucified on two other crosses with Him, one on the right and the other on the left. The authorities desiring to hasten the death of the three on the crosses told the soldiers to break the legs of the three. The record says, the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two criminals, but when they came to break the legs of Jesus, they did not break His legs, because they found that He was already dead. Yes, they knew that Jesus was already dead. "But", it says, "one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out." (John 19:31-34). After Jesus died on the cross, Joseph of Arimathea, one of His disciples, went to Pilate, the Roman governor, to ask for the body of Jesus so that he might bury it. The governor allowed him to take the body of Jesus for burial, but not before he had verified from the centurion that Jesus had actually died. (Mark 15:43-45; John 19:38; Matthew 27: 57-60). Moreover, If Jesus had merely swooned on the cross how could He have, in such a weakened condition, wounded all over His body with scourging, and His side

pierced with the spear, gathered enough strength to remove the heavy stone that was placed on the mouth of the tomb and sealed up by the authority? The fact that a Roman guard consisting of sixty soldiers were guarding the tomb, as they feared that His followers would come to steal the body to claim that He has risen (Matthew 27:62-66), made it impossible for Jesus to escape or for His disciples to remove His body. How would the sorrowing, fearful and demoralized disciples muster enough courage to face such a large number of soldiers to even attempt to remove the body of Jesus? And suppose, even if they did, and began preaching that He has risen, why did they not produce the body of Jesus before all to put an end to the resurrection story? If Christ had not risen from the dead, then His body was still in the grave, all they had to do was to produce the body of Jesus and Christianity would have been shown to be a fraud.

On the other hand, if there is sufficient evidence that Jesus arose from the dead, then there is scarcely any room to doubt His miraculous conception and virgin birth or any of His miracles. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who came into the world to save sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15). He is, by His death on the cross, the propitiation for the sins of the world. But greater than that, we believe that He was resurrected three days after His death, and that through His resurrection from the dead He has proven Himself to be the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Because if had only lived and died as all others, He would be just another man.

“IS CHRIST DIVIDED?”

J.C. Choate

UPON ONE OCCASION DIVISION reared its ugly head in the church at Corinth. As a result, Paul wrote: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was



Paul crucified for you? and were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect". (1 Cor. 1: 10-17). Thus, Paul condemns division and makes a plea for unity.

There were those at Corinth who wanted to follow Paul; others wanted to follow Apollos, etc. Evidently these brethren had completely lost their reasoning power, and to get them to think the apostle asked a few questions. His first question was: "Is Christ divided?" They knew that he was not, and therefore not justified in the steps they were taking. Next, he asked them: "Was Paul crucified for you?" Their answer had to be in the negative, and since Paul was not crucified for them, he was not to be recognized as their leader inasmuch as he was not the Saviour. The same applied to the others who were pointing to certain individuals as their masters. Then the final question was: "Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" They knew that they had not been baptized in the name of Paul, but rather in the name of Christ. Neither had the others been baptized in the name of some human being but had all been baptized in the name of the Son of God. Hence, Paul was merely showing them the absurdity of dividing up into little groups in order to honor certain men like themselves, when truly, they should honor Christ, their saviour.

Since division had entered the church at Corinth, Paul was glad that he had baptized only a few of them lest they should wear his name. On this basis Paul explained that the Lord had sent him to preach the gospel, not just to baptize. In other words, he was saying that the Lord had sent him to preach, but it is to be understood that when the gospel is preached, baptizing will always follow if there are those who believe and desire to obey the truth. Also, may it be understood that the gospel has never made anything but true Christians, members of the body of Christ. As surely, then, as the gospel is preached and accepted in obedience, it will make nothing but children of God. The gospel will not make this kind of a Christian, and that kind of a Christian; it never has and it never will. The truth brings people together instead of driving them apart. The church in Corinth was divided, not over what the Lord had taught them, but over their opinions and ideas. The same is true today: people are divided religiously, not over what the Bible teaches, but over their

opinions and ideas. The church in Corinth stood condemned and the religious world now stands condemned.

Division is an awful thing. It causes heartaches, sorrows, hatred, and above all, it will cause millions of souls to be lost. Such is of the Devil and it is thus sinful to the core. The Lord hates division and in the Shadow of the cross he prayed that we might be one. (John 17). Paul later gave a plan for unity when he said there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God. (Eph. 4:1-6). Christ is not divided and he doesn't want us to be divided, but rather he wants us to be one, even as he and the Father are one. When a person up holds denominationalism, etc., he is upholding the Devil's work; when a person says that we can't be one he is denying God's word. Hence, the church of Christ is pleading with people everywhere to return to the Bible for all that they say or do; to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent; to do Bible things in Bible ways. Yes, let us ever strive for unity.

Deceitful Persuasive Words VS. Sound Doctrine

Owen B. Moseley

IN COLOSSIANS 2:4, Paul said: "*Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.*" Paul warns of the danger of being deceived by the persuasiveness of words. Paul understood that the greater threat against the church, then, was from men who would use subtle and deceptive reasoning rather than threats from an obvious persecutor. Nothing has changed. Today, in many congregations of the church, the devil is actively at work from within through the use of enticing words that make light of doctrine. He deceives also, by appealing to the emotions and by focusing on the "felt" needs of the "unchurched" (a euphemism for sinners).

The word "doctrine" is used 37 times in 36 different verses in the NKJV of the Bible. Jesus talked about the doctrine of God in John 7:16,17: "*Jesus answered them and said, 'My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.'*" In John 18:19 we read: "*The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine.*" Are

those who want to de-emphasize doctrine suggesting that the doctrine of God and Christ is less important? Less important than what? Making people feel good? Do the ones who de-emphasize doctrine not fit into the category Paul warns against in 2 Timothy 4:3,4, *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."* Paul did not make light of erroneous teaching (doctrine). Paul knew that doctrine has a power to mold the character of an individual. In Romans 6:17 Paul said: *"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of **doctrine** to which you were delivered."* In Romans 16:17 Paul said: *"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the **doctrine** which you learned, and avoid them."*

Notice the importance Paul attached to doctrine in the following verses: 1 Timothy 1:3—*"As I urged you when I went into Macedonia; remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other **doctrine**."* 1 Timothy 1:10 — *"for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound **doctrine**, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust."* (Notice that sound doctrine is according to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. Many today attempt to separate doctrine from the Gospel.) 1 Timothy 4:6 — *"If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good **doctrine** which you have carefully followed."* (Notice that Timothy would be a good minister of Jesus Christ when he carefully followed words of faith and the good doctrine.) 1 Timothy 4:13 — *"Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."* 1 Timothy 4:16 - *"Take heed to yourself and to the **doctrine**. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."* (By taking heed to the doctrine, Timothy could save himself and others.) 1 Timothy 5:17 — *"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and **doctrine**."* (If doctrine is not important, or is less important, why are elders especially worthy of double honor if they labor in the Word and doctrine?)

John also considered doctrine to be important. 2 John, verses 9,10 — *"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the **doctrine** of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the **doctrine** of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you*

and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him." Notice that John talks about the doctrine of Christ, not the doctrine **about** Christ. The teachings of Christ and the teachings **about** Christ are two different things. Both are important. Equally important are the inspired teachings of the writers of the Bible.

May God help us to not be deceived by the persuasive words of men. May we all do everything within our power to adhere both to the teachings **about** Christ and the teachings (doctrine) of Christ as revealed by Christ and the inspired writers of the New Testament.

HOW IT WORKS

David Thurman

CHURCHES TODAY ARE LOOKING for ways to reach out to the communities in which they serve. Some look to the latest book, or the most recent demographics, the best mail lists and so on. I think sometimes we so over complicate church work and evangelism that we forget how it really works.

When we talk about reaching out to our world, we may think of long Bible studies, debates or special events. All of these things are good and can be productive. But a simple test in Acts 9 reminds us how evangelism really works.

"Now in Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did. And it came about at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, entreating him, 'Do not delay to come to us.' And Peter arose and went with them. And when he had come, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, 'Tabitha, arise.' And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord" (Acts 9:36-42). When we read this event, we tend to focus in on the great miracle God did when He responded to Peter's prayer. But, the fact is this turned

into a great evangelistic moment because of things that went way beyond any miracle. These principles are available to us today. We don't do the miracles, but we can do the ministry that was done here. The end result for them was that people came to Christ. When we learn how it works, we too can lead others to the Lord.

Based on Good Deeds

The whole event is built around a good woman named Tabitha (or Dorcas). This good lady was abounding in good works. That is, she didn't do a little here and there, she was busy in the kingdom doing good things for others. The reason the believers in Joppa sent for Peter was because of her many good works. When Peter showed up, her friends and those she helped were there mourning and showed Peter the effects of her abundant good deeds.

How often we forget that it may just be the little acts of kindness we perform that call attention, not to us, but to the Lord. *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:14-16). Jesus said it clearly. Our lives are to be full of good works so that other people will glorify God.

I know we don't do good things in order to get a pat on the back. I know we don't show off in order to prove how good we are. But, God does expect us to do good, and He will see to it that the light we share will have a positive impact. Peter does a great miracle, but the power in the story comes from a simple woman who devoted herself to doing good. The lesson for us is simple. We don't need a miracle. We don't need the greatest preacher to convince our neighbors. What all Christians need is right there before them. If we all did the good deeds Tabitha did, the church would grow like it did then.

Continuous Good Deeds

Dorcas was continually doing good works. This was not a stop and start kind of thing. She didn't save her good deeds for Sunday or any other particular day of the week. This consistency on her part is probably the cornerstone of her ministry. People were devoted to this good lady because she had proven over time that she was devoted to them.

Paul said it this way many years after this event. *"And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not*

grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:9-10). It is not just that we need to be doing good to those around us. What really counts is that we keep on doing good. Luke doesn't tell us details about this woman. Was she married? We are not told. Did she have children or family? Again, we don't know. But, if she was like us, she had a life, a home, relatives and friends. Yet, none of that kept her from her first love, serving the Lord by serving people. Her consistent service was deeply missed when she died, because she was so consistent.

Individuals Matter

When this kind servant passed away, the whole town seems to have mourned. Before she died, they sent for help from Peter. Now, Peter was a busy man. He was traveling and serving others himself. He was busy preaching and teaching, the primary work of an apostle and an evangelist. However, the apostle did not delay and went to offer help when called on. The reason he did this is that one individual matters. God cares about each person, no matter how insignificant that person might seem to others.

This is true for everyone. God cares about the leper (Mark 1), the tax collector (Luke 19) and even a woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8). For God, the individual matters. I think sometimes we forget that each person we meet is important to God. By realizing that a Dorcas is as vital to the kingdom as an apostle will compel us to treat everyone right, in hopes of influencing everyone to come to the Lord. We must not overlook any person. So, today, it may be the homeless, the homosexual, the drug dealer that is in need. But, God loves each of them, and wants us to abound in good deeds, even toward people like that. Peter, busy as he may have been, took the time to go to Joppa and help. He probably didn't even know Tabitha personally, but as an apostle he had seen Jesus tend to individuals throughout His ministry. Peter knew that even one person mattered.

Prayer Works

When Peter got there he didn't jump in with some staged miracle show. He didn't seek donations and put on a "healing service." He simply sent everyone out of the room and prayed. In this simple act of speaking with the Lord, God answered and Tabitha was raised up. It wasn't the flashy show so called "healers" put on today. It was a private, simple moment of prayer.

Once again we are reminded of the power of prayer. The good

news is that prayer is available even to the least in the kingdom. I had a good sister in Colorado who was a shut in. But she was a prayer warrior. She couldn't sleep at night, so would toss and turn. But then, she would just start praying and pass the night talking with the Lord. When she finally passed on to be with the Lord, I could feel the difference in my life. She prayed and it worked for me and many others.

I hope this is encouraging. No matter your situation, you can pray. No matter your limitations, you can pray. No matter your obligations, you can pray. Unlike Dorcas, I can't sew a thing. But I can pray. Unlike her, I may not be consistent in my good deeds. But, I can pray. And Peter demonstrates again that prayer works.

People Believed in the Lord

The final part of this story tells us its true impact. Many people in the city of Joppa became Christians. They knew Dorcas. They knew all about her lifestyle and good works. They knew she was a good woman with a deep faith in God. They heard about Peter, who, along with others, could tell them about Jesus. When the good works were coupled with the good news, people were saved.

How It Works

The bottom line is that anyone can be a sharer of good news, just like Tabitha. Anyone can pray, just like Peter did. Although we may not get the miracle Peter did, we can still live the kind of lives that point people to God. We can still call on the Lord to intervene in the lives of people so more can be helped and saved. When all these ingredients come together, you have church growth. It is not based on some outstanding new program of ministry (although that may be good). It is not based on the latest demographics of your community (although that can help too). It is based on real people living real faith in front of that community. It is about genuine servants seeing the value in every individual and treating every individual with dignity and respect. It is about faith filled people who call on the Lord in prayer, knowing He is powerful and able to help.

So, are you continually active in doing good in the lives of people? Are you serving the needs of those you love, and those you barely know? Tabitha did, and she had a huge impact on the conversion of her community. Are you willing to put aside your busy life and help an individual, maybe someone you don't even know? Are you ready to see that every person you meet, every person on the highway with you, every person with whom you do business matters to God and should matter to you? And, finally, are you praying that

the God of heaven will be active in your life, in your community? When you and I put these simple ingredients together, we will see how it works.

EFFECTS OF ABANDONING GOD

Bill Nicks

"FOR THIS CAUSE GOD gave them up unto vile passions: for their women ' changed the natural use into that which is against nature; and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error [perversion] which was due" (Romans 1:26,27). "Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves" (Romans 1:24).

This passage describes the effects of man abandoning God. God abandons man by withholding His providence from them. Three times in this chapter it is said, "God gave them up" (1:24,26,28). The reason God had abandoned man is that man had first abandoned God.

Man, with the image of God stamped upon him, was made for fellowship with God (1 John 1:3) and to depend on the Spirit of God. Man destroyed the balance of life when he rebelled against his Creator and sought independence from Him. Seeking freedom, man projected himself into the most abject slavery. The crux of sin is pride, and this pride led man to his fall, utter servitude to self and Satan.

Originally, "passions" (pathos) referred to all our feelings, good or bad. In the New Testament, the only uses are bad, passions of dishonor, vile passions (1 Thessalonians 4:5; Colossians 3:5). The resultant burning in their lust one toward another of men toward men and women toward women describes the homosexuality of the pagan world. Strangely, some moderns of the world defend this practice as a "valid lifestyle". Were it not for the threat of AIDS, precipitated in part by the sordid practice of homosexuality, this reversion to an ancient sin might have become a leading class of respectable people in a modern perverted and morally defunct society.

How can anyone defend this practice in the light of Romans 1? God created them "male and female" for the natural, heterosexual

use, as stated in Genesis 1:27. Lesbianism is a perversion of God's natural and original order. It is dishonoring the body, which is a *"temple of the Holy Spirit"* (1 Corinthians 6:19f). In burning in their lust one toward another, males worked *"unseemliness,"* an old word meaning "deformed". This word is translated *"shame"* in Revelation 16:15, describing the one who is naked, who does not keep his garments, *"lest they see his shame"*. To all children of God, the practice is shameful! To God, such deeds are *"deserving of death"* (Romans 1:32).

I BELIEVE

Joe W. Nichols

WHAT A WONDERFUL CONSOLATION we have as Christians to be able to say, "I believe". According to Scripture, faith has to do not only with an *"assurance of things hoped for"*; but also *"a conviction in things not seen"*. Another version renders the latter as, *"the evidence of things not seen"* (Hebrews 11:1), Faith therefore is not dependent upon the Word of God alone, but also "evidence" supporting those words,

God's creation offers such evidence: *"For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity..."* (Romans 1:20). Noteworthy is that *"the invisible things are clearly seen...through the things that are made"*. We therefore can see what otherwise could not be seen — the creation self-evidences God!

Furthermore, besides the evidence found in creation that reveals God, there are also the internal and external evidences that give credit to the Bible as being a revelation from God. These evidences are available to the diligent student of the Bible. The only conclusion to be drawn from such study, dismissing of course all assaults against the Bible, is that, *"all Scripture [is] given by inspiration of God"* (2 Timothy 3:16). With such a faith, there is no stumbling blindly, no leap in the dark, no areas of doubt, and no skepticism. It is a complete and sustaining faith, which is able to carry the believer through this life to heaven above (Acts 20:32).

Paul, in writing to the Philippians, stated, *"So then my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and*

to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12,13). Christians notably have Scripture for what is believed and practiced — nothing is to be believed or practiced religiously without scriptural warrant! Jesus condemned the Jewish leaders because they were guilty of "teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Matthew 15:9), and having "made void the word of God because of [their] traditions" (verse 6). There is a consequential difference in applying faith to religion and mere human judgment. Faith in religion, we know, pleases God (Hebrews 11:6); but what can be said of forcing human judgment or tradition into religion? How comforting it is as Christians to readily apply Scripture to our religious beliefs and practices; thereby, we can confidently say, "I believe".

THE VALUE OF A SOUL

Charles E. Burch

IT IS HARD TO truly realize the value of one soul. Yet, when one considers that every soul will live eternally in one of two places, it points to its importance. One can begin to comprehend its value when the purchase price is considered.

The apostle Peter wrote, "*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1 Peter 1:18,19). Notice it took something far greater than silver or gold to redeem one soul. To multitudes there is nothing of greater value than silver and gold. Yet, Peter said "the precious blood of Christ" was far more valuable. Our Lord's blood was the most precious thing the Father had with which to redeem the lost human race.

The word "redeemed" means to set free by payment of a ransom. It was frequently used in the days of slavery through the payment of a sum of money for their release. Speaking of Himself, Jesus said, "*Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*" (Matthew 20:28). Again we can see the purchase price of a soul, not just one soul, but every soul that is willing to surrender to the Lord's will.

Another way to look at the value of a soul is to consider what God did in the beginning. It was God's own will that He made Adam, and later Eve. But in so doing, God created them to live with Him eternally. Yet, when they sinned they brought death upon themselves,

both physical and spiritual. God could have simply destroyed them, but He didn't! He began to set forth a plan whereby He could redeem the human race from sins. This is where the precious blood of Christ comes in. The Hebrews writer stated, "...without the shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Again he stated, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4).

It also took something far more valuable than the blood of an animal, the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without spot or blemish. It took the most precious thing God could find to redeem the lost human race. God's love and His effort to redeem the lost race, again point to the value of the soul. "...not willing that any should perish..." (2 Peter 3:9). With the soul so valuable, should we not be doing all to save a soul?

Something No Man Can Do

Bill Dillon

MAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN capable of vast accomplishments. The world marveled when Tenzing-Norgay and Edmond Hillary conquered the summit of towering snowcapped Mt. Everest. The world's tallest mountain felt the picks and footprints of human climbers at last. In July, 1969, Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the moon and, again, the world marveled in awestruck silence at the majesty of such an accomplishment.

Man can plumb the depths of the oceans or traverse the poles of the planet. Men can change their allegiance, as did the infamous Benedict Arnold, who after traitorous disloyalty, took refuge in England. Men can change their families, as is frequently the case in this day of disposable marriages.

Men can redirect the course of rivers, blast mountains from their places, and redraw the boundaries of nations; yet for all this, there remains one change no cleverness can ever produce: the salvation of the soul! Man is not saved by cleverness, but by Christ. Abraham Lincoln could free an entire race from slavery, but no son of Adam can ever liberate a soul from sin. All human efforts at redemption, apart from God, are a dismal wallowing in the slough of despond. For salvation man looks beyond himself and receives heaven's counsel. At the household of Cornelius, the heavenly messenger promised that Peter would come and tell Cornelius words whereby they could be saved (Acts 11:14). The emphasis is continually upon

the importance of the Word in the saving of the soul. Paul wrote, "the word is nigh thee" (Romans 10:8). The Lord's language in John 15:3 was, "now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

God could have made man's conversion a hard, complicated concern, but He loved us too much for that. His wisdom and love were married in the bringing forth of the plan of salvation. The only barriers that prohibit man from accepting God's way of salvation are such things as pride, unbelief, and a love for the unholy.

It is a thankful matter that man, among his numerous other lofty and far-reaching achievements, also has the power to dethrone Satan from sitting in his heart. Man's response to heaven's grace is faith. Faith that turns from sin and speaks the good confession and acts by being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins is a faith that opens the door that makes deliverance from sin a reality. Man continues his journey of living by faith realizing that the life in Christ, despite its sorrows, is one hundred times worth the living. The journey ends in death; and death in Christ, even with its pain and parting, is ten thousand times worth the dying.

There is, therefore, something *no man* can do, but there is something *every man* must do to be pleasing to God. He must believe and obey (Hebrews 11:6).

*"Just as I am without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bids't me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."*

— Charlotte Elliott

Belief in God Is Not Enough

Kyle Butt

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO go to heaven without believing that there is a God (Hebrews 11:6). But a mere mental assent to the fact that God exists is not enough to save a person's soul. In fact, the Book of James says: "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!" (2:19).

Once a person opens up to the vast amount of evidence available to prove that there is a God, that person must follow up belief with a desire and resolve to obey the Creator. An email that came into our office illustrates this point well: After reading on our site an article that defends the existence of God, one gentleman wrote: "For many,

many years I began to write off all religions as 'fake'. I'm not completely convinced still. However, after reading this article, I was faced with the absolute fact that not only does God exist, but that He is surely angry with me for disbelieving in Him." Acknowledging the existence of the Creator is the first step toward assuaging His anger, but it cannot be the last. In fact, the term "practical atheist" is applied to a person who technically acknowledges that there is a God but does nothing about that belief.

What, then, must follow a person's belief in the Creator? That individual must find God's message to His creation. An honest search for such communication will bring that person to the realization that the 66 books of the Bible are God's inspired Word to man. *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is 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).

Upon discovering that the Bible is God's message to humanity, a diligent study of the Scripture reveals that Jesus Christ is the prophesied Messiah and the Son of God. *"...if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.' Then they said to Him, 'Who are You?' And Jesus said to them, 'Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.'*

"They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father. Then Jesus said to them, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.' As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'" (John 8:24-32).

By following the teachings of Jesus, the honest investigator realizes that Jesus has opened the door of salvation to all who will receive it as He has commanded. *"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"*

(Matthew 11:27-30).

At Apologetics Press, it thrills us to hear that a person has left false, atheistic views and embraced the idea of a Divine Creator. Yet, we know that such a mental shift is simply the first crucial step to eternal life. A penitent heart and faithful life of obedience to God's commands must accompany that belief in order for it to be of any real, eternal value. The only thing that separates condemned demons that believe in God and saved humans is that the humans have translated that belief into obedient action.

The Old Testament Prophets

Gary Hampton

THERE CAN BE NO doubting the role Old Testament prophesy plays in helping one to understand and fully appreciate the New Testament, in general, and Jesus Christ, in particular. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill"* (Matthew 5:17). After His resurrection, He explained to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, *"These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."* After helping them to understand more fully, the Lord went on to say, *"Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem"* (Luke 24:44-47).

Modern man may have limited his view of prophesy to the books which were written by prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc. Clearly, the Lord did not see these as the only prophetic writings. Instead, His words indicate He viewed all of the Old Testament to be prophetic in nature (John 5:37-39). A full understanding of the writings of the Old Testament can only come to one willing to explore the meaning as revealed in the New Testament.

The Greek word "prophetes" means, "a proclaimer of a divine message" (W.E. Vine. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Nashville: Nelson, 1983). In a sense, any inspired writer could appropriately be described as a prophet. So, Paul could tell the Jews of Antioch of Pisidia, *"For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them*

in condemning Him" (Acts 13:27). Because the Jews did not understand the meaning of words they read every Saturday, they crucified the very Son of God! Interestingly, their ignorance led, in part, to the fulfillment of the very prophecies they failed to understand (Acts 13:38). As a result, Paul was able to write, *"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 Corinthians 15:3,4).

Peter confirmed the same when he told the people in the temple, *"But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled"*. He went on to say Jesus had been received into heaven *"until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."* One of the prophets he was referring to was Moses, who foretold the coming of a prophet like himself. *"Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days"* (Acts 3:18-26; 26:22,23).

One of the most perplexing truths about prophecy is that those who spoke or wrote it may not even have been aware of the meaning of their message. Peter explained this to his early Christian readers.

"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who as in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:10-12).

Later, Peter answered the question which follows in many of our minds. That is, "How can someone write about things they do not even understand?" He said, *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1:20,21). In other words, the words of the prophet were not a product of his own mind or invention. Instead, they were carried along in their message, much as a ship is carried along by the wind, by the Holy Spirit.

An excellent example of such a prophetic writing is found in Psalm 22, which may have been written by David during the time

he was being persecuted by Saul. F. Delitzsch, in his *Commentary on the Old Testament*, plainly states that he knows of no historical time in the life of David which exactly coincides with the events described here. They were realized in some small degree in the life of David. He went on to say, "On the other hand, the first portion exactly coincides with the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and the second with the results that have sprung His resurrection" (Volume 5, 305). There can be no doubt that David was speaking by the Spirit of God's Anointed when he wrote this beautiful psalm!

The opening verse was quoted by Jesus as He hung on the tree (Matthew 27:46). The tragic agony of one being crucified is vividly pictured in verses 14-17. No wonder our Lord cried, "*I thirst*" (John 19:28)! Of course, someone might say Jesus was fully versed in Scripture and simply quoted the words of David. However, it should be observed that others who had no apparent thought of God's Word also delivered lines from this prophetic psalm. Those around the cross clearly showed their contempt for Him with their mouths (verse 7). They also said, "*He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God'*" (verse 8; Matthew 27:39-44). Though the soldiers who crucified the Lord had no known respect for the writings of the Old Testament, they did divide His garments and cast lots for His coat (verse 18; John 19:23,24). The writer of the letter to the Hebrews uses a quotation from verse 22 to portray the role the resurrected Lord would play among the saved (2:11,12). Interestingly, Jesus did call the disciples His "brethren" after the resurrection (Matthew 28:10; John 20:17). The closing verses of Psalm 22 are a beautiful depiction of the evangelistic thrust of Christ's followers into all the world (verses 27-31).

The Greatest Need Among Us

Ken Tyler

GENUINE BIBLE STUDY. This is it! When we do not study, we become ignorant. This is the reason many Christians do not know the answers to basic Bible questions. We are letting our society destroy us spiritually. Too much entertainment; too much responsibility; too much prosperity. We do not have the time. We do not feel the need.

When we come to worship, we think we have to be entertained.

The preacher who is the best entertainer is the man for the job. We are competing with TV, computers, and satellites. When will we be able to see that what we really need is genuine Bible study? How long has it been since you studied a passage like Psalm 23? I'll tell you one thing, I know it had an impact on your life, an impact that the entertainment of this world cannot give.

A Christian cannot live without the Word of God, just like a person cannot live without food. Have you quit eating? *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..."* (Hosea 4:6). This is a verse we must never forget. And here is another one: *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee"* (Psalm 119:11). The Word keeps us from sin. Have we forgotten?

Brethren, genuine Bible study—that's the greatest need among us. It's not going to be easy in our environment, but the person with his head on right knows he cannot live without the Word of God. Pay the price! You won't ever regret it.

The Importance Of The Holy Scriptures

Wayne Jackson

THE INFORMATION CONTAINED WITHIN the Scriptures is important for so many reasons. Consider the following.

First, without a knowledge of the Bible, we have no detailed information of the character of our Creator. While something of the wisdom and power of God may be discerned from a consideration of the vastness and marvelous intricacies of nature, it takes concrete communication in the form of words to instruct us of Jehovah's kindness (Titus 3:5), mercy (Ephesians 2:4), love (1 John 4:8), grace (Ephesians 2:8), righteousness (Romans 1:16,17), etc. The divine book expands our perception of deity immeasurably.

Second, when the historical record of the Bible is dismissed, man is absolutely bereft of any knowledge of his origin. The confusing and contradictory theory of evolution is a pathetic substitute for the sublime Mosaic narrative which reveals the brilliance of Him who fearfully and wonderfully fashioned our mortal frames and endowed our spirits with His own blessed image (Psalm 139:14; Genesis 1:26). Pity the man who ignorantly believes that he is but an evolved brute.

Third, the Holy Scriptures are essential to reveal our true spiritual status. It is doubtless true that mankind -knows that something is wrong in the human condition. An ancient Chinese proverb says:

"There are two good men: one is dead and the other is not yet born". The Roman philosopher Seneca declared: "We have all sinned, some more and some less". But how do we define the precise nature of what is right and what is wrong? Unbelief can supply no answer. Agnostic Bertrand Russell argued that the man who brings happiness to others is better than the man who brings misery, but he confessed: "I do not know of any rational ground for this view" (**Autobiography**, Vol. 3,29). And then there is this question: how does man remedy this woeful condition? The myriad confusing human philosophies attempting, without success, to address this matter is evidence aplenty that divine revelation is needed if man is to properly focus upon his true moral and religious estate.

As a mirror that reflects the real nature of the human situation (James 1:23), the Bible benevolently, though bluntly, informs us that we, as rational human beings, have departed from a familiar relationship with God (Romans 3:10-18; 23). Sin has marred us and separated us from a warm association with the Author of our very being (Isaiah 59:1,2). Spiritually speaking, we are but corpses (Ephesians 2:1). The whole history of Scripture is a documentation of man's sordid journey away from the Source of all righteousness. As a consequence of our fall, this planet has been plunged into a state of distress that begs for relief (cf. Romans 8:20-23). Those who ignore the testimony of the Bible and who entertain the view that man, the "noble savage, is the measure of all things" (the philosophy of humanism) are destined to wander in a hopeless maze of spiritual and emotional confusion. The Scriptures drive us to our knees in recognition that we need a plan whereby reconciliation to the Creator can be effected.

Fourth, Jesus Christ is the very center of human history. Even unbelievers have paid Him tribute. Infidel philosopher John Stuart Mill said that Jesus of Nazareth must be placed in that "first rank of men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast" (**Three Essays on Religion**, 255). But what do we know of Christ apart from divine revelation? Granted, there are extra-biblical historical allusions to Jesus (e.g., Josephus, Tacitus, Seutonius, etc.), yet these reveal nothing of the character and redemptive work of our Lord.

The Scriptures are a gracious revelation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Therein we learn of His eternal existence as the preincarnate (before flesh) Word (Micah 5:2; John 1:1). Throughout the Old Testament there is a distinct thread of unfolding information

that prepares the world for the coming of the Messiah. Strange appearances of deity in human form, recorded frequently in the Old Testament (cf Genesis 18:1; 32:24f), prepare the mind for the eventual arrival of One who would become flesh and dwell among us (John 1:14). Christ is seen in the scores of Old Testament prophecies which herald, with graphic detail, His coming (Isaiah 53; Micah 5:2; Daniel 9:24f). He is previewed in bold types that condition the soul for acknowledging His mission (see Exodus 12:1f; cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7). And so, after sufficient preparation, when the time was exactly right, God sent forth His Son into this world (Galatians 4:4).

Fifth, without the New Testament, we would have no primary information about the ministry and message of Jesus of Nazareth. The Gospel writers, with varying emphasis (yet with absolute harmony) record the works and words of the Son of God. His miraculous deeds, supporting His claim that He came from heaven to satisfy the spiritual needs of mankind (see John 6:33), declared him to be a man approved of God (Acts 2:22), qualified to accomplish this divinely appointed task. His elevating words brought comfort and hope into a world of decay and despair. Indeed, "*Never man so spake*" (John 7:46; cf. Matthew 7:28,29).

Without the New Testament record, we would not have an accurate knowledge of what happened in Jerusalem almost twenty centuries ago. We would have no facts concerning the atoning death of Jesus Christ, and of His grand resurrection from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). We would have no information regarding the theological purpose of His crucifixion — namely that it was an essential ingredient in the plan of God to offer ruined man a way of escape from the devastating consequences of his sin (Matthew 20:28; 26:28).

Sixth, without the biblical account we would be ignorant of the precious church which His shed blood was used to purchase (Acts 20:28). Apart from the light of the Scriptures, we would know nothing of how to enter into that sacred body of saved souls (Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 12:13). And what would we know of how to acceptably worship Jehovah? Utterly nothing.

Seventh, if we did not possess the New Testament, we would be adrift in a sea of confused immorality with no precise way to determine ethics and moral conduct toward our fellows. Each person would be a moral dictator unto himself. The moral hysteria that currently reigns is evidence aplenty of what happens in the absence of divine revelation (since the Scriptures have been rejected in a

practical way by millions of this generation).

Next, if we had no Bible, would there be any ray of hope beyond the unfriendly confines of the grave? Hardly, for life and immortality have been brought to light through the Gospel (2 Timothy 1:10). What does the atheist know of existence apart from the environs of the earth? Not one thing. Would we know of man's ultimate accountability, and of the terror that awaits the disobedient (Matthew 25:46) but for the Bible? No, for only the Scriptures supply that information (Luke 16:30,31).

How grateful we are for the illumination of the inspired Word of God. Let us treasure this Holy Book. May we absorb its rich truths, and then, with grateful hearts, impart the message to others.

Ye Know Not What Ye Ask

Owen Cosgrove

EVERYTHING WAS BEGINNING TO happen at once—the fault-finding questions, the triumphal entry, the second cleansing of the Temple, the crucifixion — so much was going on. The time was passing so quickly.

Egos were rampant. *"Who's the greatest?" "You are not going to wash my feet." "To what purpose was this waste? We could have added that money to the treasury...." "If all should be offended, I will never be offended."*

Even Zebedee's wife, bowing and scraping in obeisance, had a very selfish motive. "I want you to make my boys First and Second Vice President in your new kingdom." How often are our ambitions totally out of touch with reality and spirituality?

"Are you able to drink of the cup I am about to drink?" Jesus asked. *"We are able"* they replied. They had no idea what they were saying. They couldn't even stay awake during His agony in Gethsemane.

The betrayal, Peter's denial, the mob, the trials, the scourging, the crown of thorns, the beatings, the ridicule, the disgrace, the disappointment, the fatigue, the excruciating pain—oh, so little we often realize what pain and burdens others bear! So is the cross to everyone who seeks Christianity as a fun trip down glory road. So is everyone who is more interested in being a "big shot" than an humble servant in Christ's kingdom.

“The rulers of the Gentiles love to appear to be important—but this is not what I want for you. For you two who have made this request and for you others who are so indignant, I want you to learn to be servants and to sacrifice of yourselves.”

Within ten years, James lay dead, killed by the sword by the authority of Herod Agrippa I. Years later the beloved apostle John, exiled to Patmos, wrote the stately, magnificent, and majestic book of Revelation, made all the more rich and grand by the bitterness and loneliness of persecution suffered almost from the very inception of the church.

“Father, forgive us of our pride. Forgive us of egotism and vainglory. Thank you for Your love for us in whatever suffering we must bear for Your cause. Help us from it to appreciate more than ever what our Savior has done for us. In His Name. Amen.”

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(See Rule 3)

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