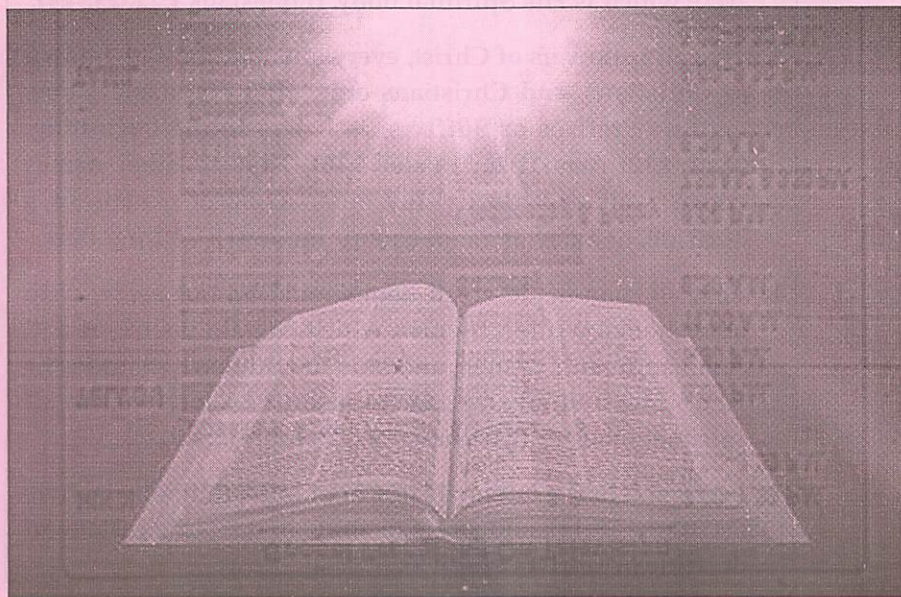


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# THE BIBLE TEACHER



## ***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

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## Editorial

### What Does the Bible Teach?

#### *Redeeming The Time*

THE APOSTLE PAUL PENNED THESE WORDS in his epistle to the Ephesians: "Redeeming the time." This carries the idea of making the most of the time. New Year is time, that is, it consists of time. By the time you receive and read this journal, you would have already used several days and hours and minutes and seconds of God's gift of time to you from this New Year. What does this New Year have in store for us? None of us know. One of the writers of the Scriptures at Proverbs 27:1 wrote: "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth." Another wrote: "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit" whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." (James 4: 13-15). When we had entered the year 2020 we didn't know that soon we would be living under a lockdown. Most of us had never even heard of a lockdown. The deadly Covid19 virus has changed most everything, worldwide, as we used to know. Time has changed everything.



Time is the most valuable asset in the world that we have. Money and possessions; silver and gold may be taken away from us, but time can regain them. Health may be lost and regained again. But time lost cannot be recalled. Speaking about the brevity and

uncertainty of time King David, at Psalm 39:5 wrote, "Indeed you have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before you; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor." Again the same writer said, "As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone." ( Psalm 103:15-16).

Yesterday is gone, and gone forever. Tomorrow, we don't know, what it will bring. Today is all what we have. What are you going to do today? How are you using your time each day? The inspired writer taught: "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:15-17). God has given you this life, and the time that you have. Do not waste it. God has revealed His will for us in His Book, the Bible, that was written by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21), and He expects us to understand His will and live by it, using the gift of time wisely. The wise man said, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).



## **BAPTISM FOR REMISSION OF SINS**

**J.C. Choate**

On the day of Pentecost Peter preached the gospel of Christ for the first time in fact. Upon hearing the truth the question was asked: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Now note the answer given: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift to the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:37,38). In substance Peter was saying: If you want to be saved you must repent of your sins and be baptized to have the remission of those sins; and as a result of this, you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The record goes on to say that around three thousand of them obeyed the Lord and were added to the church.

In every example of conversion to be found within the book of Acts, one particular act stands out, and that is baptism. Aside from

the example already given consider the conversion of the eunuch, the conversion of Saul, the conversion of Cornelius, etc. (Acts 8,9,10). If people of New Testament times had to be baptized in order to be saved, it stands to reason that if we are going to be saved we must be baptized. But somebody says: "I think one can be saved without being baptized." It is not a matter of what you think, it is a matter of what the Bible teaches.

There are those who teach that on repenting of one's sins, a person receives the remission of his sins and then may be baptized to express such. But according to Acts 2:38 one must repent of his sins and then be baptized to have the remission of his sins. Now who is right on the matter? Friend, I don't know about you, but I'll take the Bible any time. It matters not what man may say about baptism, my New Testament tells me that one must be baptized to please the Lord.

To further emphasize the importance of baptism, go with me to some other passages of scripture. Christ commissioned the apostles: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mk. 16:15,16). To believe and be baptized is to be saved but to believe not is to be damned. It's just that simple.

Next consider another statement made by the apostle Peter: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3:21). The writer here says emphatically that baptism saves. Who will be the first one to deny Peter's statement? Friend, if you say that one can be saved without baptism you are calling this apostle a liar, and God as well. Think this over and ask yourself the question: "Do I believe the scripture?"

These verses also suggest the importance of baptism: Peter commanded Cornelius and his household to be baptized. (Acts 10:48). Saul was asked to arise and be baptized to wash away his sins. (Acts 22:16). The sinner is to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. (Matt. 28:19,20). Now in the light of these truths, and others, a person would be a fool to think for a minute that baptism is unimportant.

True baptism is a burial or immersion in water. An example of this may be found in Acts 8. Then Paul definitely says: "Buried with him by baptism." (Col. 2:12). Anything short of a burial in water cannot be scriptural baptism. This is further stated in Rom. 6:3,4.

Also, he says that this act puts one into Christ, and the church. (Gal. 3:26, 27; 1 Cor. 12:13). But how many baptisms are there? There is only one true baptism. (Eph. 4:5).

Baptism alone will not save anyone. Yes, the scriptures say that baptism saves but they nowhere say that baptism only saves. When does baptism save? Only after one has scripturally believed, repented of his sins, and confessed Christ as the Son of God. Also remember that baptism does not assure eternal salvation. That is, after one has been baptized for the remission of sins he must live the faithful Christian life to go home to heaven. Baptism is a test; God wants to see if you believe his word to the extent that you will go down into the water to be immersed. Those who pass this test are saved but those who fail aren't fit for the kingdom of God.

## The IMPOSSIBLE Made Possible

**David R. Pharr**

*"CAN THE ETHIOPIAN CHANGE his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil"* (Jeremiah 13:23).

Most of our preaching has the expectation that people can and should change their lives. Jeremiah seems to say that it is impossible for some ever to change. The prophet has prayed, preached, and wept, seeking to bring them to repentance. They were so accustomed to doing evil, so set in the ways of sin, that it seemed impossible for them to change.

The Bible shows the hardening effects of repeated sin. The conscience can become *"seared with a hot iron"* (1 Timothy 4:2) and some are *"past feeling"* (Ephesians 4:19). Someone has said that many lives are like concrete: "thoroughly mixed up and permanently set." Love of sin can have a mighty hold.

Regarding the possibility of any real change of character, the world is generally quite skeptical. "He will never change, and if he does, it will not last."

Our own experiences often confirm how hard it is to change the leopard's spots. How hard it is, for example, to change a habit! Habits erode deep grooves in the mind and in the character. "We first make a habit and then the habit makes us." Past failures haunt us and make us think that failures will always follow. "I have tried, but it's just no use." "I am what I am and that is all I will ever be."

Some foolish psychology has tried to solve the dilemma by telling

people to just accept themselves as they are. It is evident, though, that where sin is involved, it is not acceptable to stay as we are. Transgressors need forgiveness. Guilty consciences need assurances. Lost souls need redemption.

The wonderful fact is that some people do make dramatic changes. Bad habits can be broken; personalities can be reshaped; character can be changed. The ultimate issue, however, is forgiveness. You may reform your life, but you can no more forgive your own sins than the leopard can change his own spots.

It is God who can make the impossible possible. One place this is wonderfully taught is in Mark 10:23-27. After Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved, the disciples asked incredulously, *"Who then can be saved?"* But Jesus declared, *"With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."* Men cannot save themselves, by themselves, but God makes it possible.

*I wish there were some wonderful place  
Called the Land of Beginning Again,  
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches  
And all our poor selfish grief  
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door,  
And never be put on again.*

—Louisa Fletcher

There is such a place—a spiritual place—where lives can begin again, where the slate is wiped clean, where the past is forgiven, and where the rest of life can be different. That place is in Christ. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). When a penitent believer is baptized into Christ, his sins are forgiven (Galatians 3:27; Acts 2:38) and he becomes a *"new man"* (Ephesians 4:22-24).

The gospel shows the man who is a failure that he does not have to remain a failure, the criminal that he does not have to remain a criminal, the sinner that he is not hopelessly trapped in sin. God can change the leopard's spots, if we will surrender our lives to Him.

There is a corny old joke that goes like this: "How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb?" "Just one, but the light bulb has got to want to change!" That is where the issue must be left. The Lord can do His part. Your life can be changed. But not unless *you want to change.*

# ***Men Have Perverted the Gospel!***

**Dillard Thurman**

IN WRITING TO THE churches of Galatia, the apostle Paul said, *"I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ"* (Gal. 1:6-7). Isn't it strange that some would hear the gospel of Jesus Christ in its pristine purity, and then pervert it? Yet it had happened.

The word "pervert" is defined this way: "To turn from its right purpose, use, or meaning. To alter for the worse. To turn away, avert, divert." Its synonyms are: "Corrupt, distort, falsify, garble, misquote, misrepresent, misstate, stretch, twist." This may show you the sordid behavior of one who would pervert the gospel of Christ. The gospel is turned from its right purpose, its proper use and its true meaning. It is no longer uncorrupted as God gave it. And it will no longer accomplish that purpose which God intended that it should.

## **The Evils of a Perverted Gospel**

Notice an example of perversion. Water is a God-given power for quenching thirst. But you can add a saline solution to water, without even changing its appearance, and it will no longer quench the thirst, but will make one even more thirsty. Bread is "the staff of life." Yet if you add a little arsenic to that bread, it will destroy life. Now, in the spiritual realm, we are to *"hunger and thirst after righteousness"* (Matt. 5:6). But if God's word has been diluted and perverted, it will eternally condemn us. Therefore, the word of God must be accepted in its original purity—uncorrupted.

Multitudes follow men today who pervert the gospel of Christ, and they will staunchly defend these spiritual perverts, even when shown by the inspired Scriptures that they do not serve the Christ. Many feel that a pious demeanor and a sepulchral tone makes it impossible for damnable error to be fostered. But our attitude should be that expressed in Isa. 8:20, *"To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no light in them."* The preaching of each doctrine must be weighed in exactly this manner!

## **The Subject of the Gospel is Perverted**

The apostle Paul declared, *"For I am. not ashamed of the gospel:*



for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). This is a flat declaration of the gospel and its power. But even this was soon perverted, as Paul warned the elders of Ephesus: "I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30).

Those false teachers would be speaking a perverted gospel to "draw away the disciples after them." Again the apostle wrote, "Some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:1-2). Yet this was to emanate from religious leaders. To warn against this perversion of the gospel, Paul told Timothy, "For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). We now live in such a time. The gospel is warped, twisted, wrested and perverted by men who claim to preach it, but who actually don't even believe it.

### **The Subject of Faith is Perverted**

All too often you hear the expression, "But my faith is this—," and there follows a fanciful idea or opinion that is foreign to the Scriptures. Yet we are told, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). If it is not in the word of God, it is not scriptural faith. It is when each one formulates his "own faith" that the worth of the Bible is entirely discounted. Just recently one was declaring his belief in God, yet was strongly arguing, "God is dead." He began with scriptural faith, and the perverted it to his own selfish end, striving to make himself a God.

Modernists extol their faith, but at the very same time pervert it to suit their fancy. They claim to believe in Jesus Christ, but deny that He was the "only begotten Son of God" according to the record God gives us. Rather, they confess Him to be a great teacher and moral leader, but deny His deity. They reject the virgin birth, discount His miracles, scoff at His vicarious death for us, and ridicule the thought of a bodily resurrection. Yet they profess faith in Christ! It is a faith perverted to their own egotistical reasoning, with all saving power drained from the gospel they preach.

Sectarians profess faith in Christ, but they then pervert that faith to their own desires. They extol the Bible as the word of God, but

then dilute it with their “Book of Mormon,” “Key to the Scriptures,” “Pendleton’s Manual,” “Articles of Faith,” “Discipline,” “Augsbury Confession,” “Catechism” or other church creed-book. The simplicity and purity of the faith is thus destroyed. The Lord Jesus said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matt. 4:4). We cannot add to, or take from, that word without perverting and corrupting it (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18). A simple, trusting faith accepts ALL God has said, and will not fashion a creed on what God has NOT said. It is perversion to acknowledge Jesus as Christ and Lord, and then minimize His authority by refusal to accept His word and obey His commands.

### **The Subject of Baptism is Perverted**

All religious groups who claim to follow Christ teach and practice baptism. But there is as much perversion in this area as found in any field. The matter of infant baptism has from the first been recognized as being without any scriptural foundation. This matter had forced a drastic change in Martin Luther’s thinking in the beginning of the Reformation movement. He had been going on the basis that he would follow God’s word in every detail. But when he confronted the matter of infant baptism, his prior training triumphed. He then took the position that he would accept any practice which the word of God did not specifically condemn. Of course, that would have prevented his every effort at reformation. The Bible doesn’t mention the sale of indulgences, but that was the practice that Luther originally opposed that started the whole Reformation movement! But from its innovation, no Scripture has been cited to substantiate infant baptism. Penitent believers were to be baptized—not those incapable of believing. This is a perversion that is still in existence.

Baptism has been taught by many as being essential to church membership, but not essential to salvation. This perverts the statement of the Lord Jesus, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”* (Mark 16:16) and Peter’s sermon on Pentecost, *“Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins”* (Acts 2:38). Saul was told, *“Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name”* (Acts 22:16), and Peter declares that *“baptism doth also now save us”* (1 Pet. 3:21).

The Scriptures plainly reveal that baptism brings us *“into Christ”* (Rom. 6:3). It is in baptism that we are united with Christ: *“For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ”* (Gal. 3:26-27).

We are saved by the blood of Christ, shed in His death, and, *“Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”* (Rom. 6:3). It is by this baptism that we enter into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Any alteration of this doctrine destroys the very purpose of the baptism of the gospel of Christ.

### **The Subject of the Church is Perverted**

The true picture of the church is obtained in looking to it as it is revealed on the pages of God’s word, Jesus said, *“I will build my church”* (Matt. 16:18). He gave Himself for the church (Eph. 5:25), He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28), He is the Savior of the church (the body, Eph. 5:23) and He adds the saved to His church (Acts 2:47). The church of Jesus Christ is unique and complete. There was and is no other existing by divine authority, nor shall there ever be!

That church housed all the saved during the days of the apostles, and for every subsequent age and time. To be saved is to be in that body of saved people, the church. Paul exclaimed, *“Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen”* (Eph. 3:21).

When false prophets declare salvation can be outside that church, or in any other, they have perverted the gospel of Christ. Every man-made church stands in open competition to that church which Jesus built, and He has prayed against all of them: *“Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me”* (John 17:20-21). When men plead, *“Accept Christ, then join the church of your choice,”* they pervert the gospel. God never has, and never will, give man a choice regarding churches in which he may be saved. This is a perverted and corrupt gospel that blights the religious world with discord, disunity and factionism.

### **The Pure Worship of God is Perverted**

The church of the New Testament had a very simple pattern of worship which God accepted and blessed. But that worship has also been perverted by unholy men. Of the first disciples we read, *“They continued stedfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers”* (Acts 2:42). Still later, *“And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them”* (Acts 20:7). Paul also wrote, *“Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him*

*in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2). Again, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God" (Col. 3:16). As long as men accepted the full and complete authority of the Scriptures, we had no discord regarding New Testament worship.*

First of all, there was no gradation of any priestly honor in worship. There were not clergy ranks to lord it over the laity. There was no wearing of robes, nor ecclesiastical honors. They were all merely children of God, brethren, who had fellowship in common worship. The Lord's Supper was never used to elevate priests. From the time of its institution, it was spiritual and simple. There were no instruments of music, no prayer wheels, no candles.

The only way to overcome a perverted gospel is to reject those who pervert it. You aid and abet the works of Satan when you support and endorse false teachers (2 John 9-11). Follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

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## ***The Nuts and Bolts of Pornography***

**Louis Rushmore**

THE WORD "PORNOGRAPHY" MEANS "the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement" (*Merriam-Websters Collegiate Dictionary*). It comes from the compound Greek word, "pornographos," "porne" meaning "prostitute," "whore" or "harlot" and "grapho" meaning "to write." The word "pornography" entered the English language in about 1864. It is no wonder, then, that the word did not appear in the earliest English translations of the Bible, which predate 1864. Although subsequent translations do not include the word "pornography" either, biblical instruction definitely warns against it.

First, though, let's attempt to quantify "pornography" so that we can see more clearly the scope of its reach and affect. Pornography is typically categorized as "soft porn" and "hardcore porn". Hardcore pornography is a worldwide exploding epidemic, but so-called soft pornography has already completely saturated especially western culture to the point that nearly everything advertised is marketed with some degree of sex appeal (e.g., hamburgers, jewelry, clothes, cars). Movies, music videos, video games, magazines, books and the Internet are awash with soft and hardcore pornography.

Pornography of some degree is so plentiful that it is not uncommon for children or adults to come in contact with it even involuntarily. As long as pornography continues to be big business (billions of dollars annually) and to appeal to the baser side of humanity (mostly to men but to many women, too), it will continue to reshape both individuals and society in the mold of wickedness, away from the *“good and acceptable and perfect will of God”* (Romans 12:1,2 NKJV).

In addition, pornography desensitizes men and women about the interpersonal, reciprocal sexual relationship that God designed for one man and one woman alone within the bounds of God-approved, lifelong marriage (Genesis 2:24,25; Matthew 19:4-6, 9).

Pornography highjacks the true beauty of physical intimacy between a husband and a wife (Song of Solomon 4:5; Proverbs 5:18-20; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5), relegating it merely to compassionless physical involvement with no moral significance, which furthermore, has as its only object carnal pleasure. Through pornography, men and women and children are degraded to the status of tools as though they were mere inanimate objects with no greater value. Pornography changes individuals adversely and has scandalously altered western culture.

Some estimates state that up to 10% of the Internet is comprised of pornography, and that 25% of web searches daily are for pornography. High percentages of men and women engage in pornography regularly through various media and find nothing wrong with consuming it and being consumed by it. The plague of pornography cuts across all demographics (e.g., race, politics, religions, education levels, economic brackets, etc.); no one is immune from its allurements or from its pervasiveness. Frequently very young children encounter some form of pornography innocently, creating problems and damage that can never be entirely undone.

Pornography is an ancient vice with pictures, statues, huge rock carvings and writing depicting nudity, intercourse and sexual perversions. Only contemporary technology and media have modernized the venues and the ease with which pornography is viewed. The devices have changed, but mankind is the same—corrupted through the same three avenues of sin by which men have always been allured (1 John 2:16). Pornography is infectious and resistant to expulsion; it dulls the perception of reality and has altered the conscience of the world.

Biblical principles would have us expunge from our lives pornography and be on guard against its appeal. For instance, Jesus said, *“But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her*

*has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell"* (Matthew 5:28-29). Our Lord's words strike at the heart of pornography—"lust"! He also indicated the nature of viewing women in such a way; it is a precursor to the physical sin of adultery. Then, Jesus underscored the seriousness of lust with the hyperbole (exaggeration) in such instances of gouging out one's own eye if that is what it takes to avoid the sin. Visual sexual excitement outside of marriage is forbidden!

From the words of our Lord in Matthew 5:28,29 above, as well as from Mark 7:21-23, it becomes clear that one does not have to perform explicit, physical acts to commit sin, but one can commit sin internally—within his or her own mind. *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."*

However, we also commit sin when we approve the sinful activities of others (Romans 1:32), and no truly pious person would dismiss as spiritually inconsequential various gradations of public undress to fornication, adultery and every conceivable manifestation of carnal debauchery. We cannot approve of sin and remain innocent ourselves!

We must *"flee sexual immorality"* (1 Corinthians 6:18), which implicitly would preclude our appreciation of it acted out by others. We must bring *"every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:5), and we must choose to *"meditate"* on *"anything praiseworthy."* *"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things"* (Philippians 4:8).

We need to police ourselves to view the world and its enticements, not through the corrupted lenses of ungodliness, but instead as Almighty God views it. We need to screen the television shows that we watch, the movies we view, the places to which we go, our music (lyrics and videos) and the companions with whom we spend time. It may be necessary for us to reevaluate what we perceive as beautiful to coincide with what God deems as lovely and honorable.

# ***HOLINESS from HUMILITY***

**Jeff Wealan**

HOLINESS...HUMILITY.... One of them we get from God, the other we can get only from putting ourselves aside. Both of them are essential to have, or we will never be like our Saviour or even get to Heaven.

Jesus said, *"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven,"* (Matthew 18:3,4). It was the inspired writer who said, *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"* (Hebrews 12:14). Humility and Holiness are equally important, without either of them we will not be saved from the awful consequence of our sins.

- Humility lets us desire to hear God's word, which is essential for our salvation. (Romans 10:17).
- Humility enables us to believe that what we are hearing from God's word is true. (Mark 16:16 & Hebrews 11:6).
- Humility gives us the ability to repent from our sin and start making a real change from the ways of the world that are in us, in order to get to Heaven. (Luke 13:3 and Acts 17:30).
- A humble heart lets us confess that Jesus is Lord of lords. Without this we cannot be saved. (Romans 10:9).
- Humility will let us accept the true reason for immersion in water for the forgiveness of our sin. (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21 and Romans 6:3,4).
- Humility will help us keep living active lives full of faith, in order to grow in our salvation (1 Peter 2:11,12).
- Without humility, we will not be saved; it is the attitude which enables us to take each step in God's plan of salvation for our souls.

There are so many things we need in order to be saved. Just thinking about them reminds me of that beautiful old song, "I Need Thee Every Hour". Why do people doubt the necessity of baptism? Why do so many people argue about what is real repentance? Could it be because we have forgotten that essential active ingredient: humility? Humility can be defined as giving God the credit instead of giving ourselves the honour of it. When we can push ourselves aside and admit that we are not self-made or self-taught—or self-saved—, we can then accept the truth of what we need in order to

be saved by our Lord.

Only God can give our soul a sanctifying wash. When we do this with Him we are blessed with *holiness from God*, and our souls can then experience the answer to our prayers for a clean and pure heart. **Holiness is something God gives, after and only after, we have learnt the lesson of humility and we keep living it.** Holiness is not as elusive as it seems, we just need to keep our eye on the cross and remember to be willing to pick up our own, when daily we are called to carry it. (Luke 9:23).

- Holiness is so precious and rare in this world, it may seem like a jewel hidden deep in the earth.
- The good news is that God graciously offers it freely to all of us who will humbly look into His word and count it as trustworthy to obey.
- God is holy and He gives holiness to us through the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38,39). That is how God makes us holy.
- It is only after we have adopted a humble attitude towards all of God's commands that He can make us holy and fit for Heaven.
- It is our cooperation with Him in trying to do what He wants, for the right reason, which leads Him to fill us with His holiness and on the last day graciously let us through the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven. Holiness is something that we are given, but it is also something that we need to live out in our daily walk of life. Peter says, "... *but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into.*

*"Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in the time of your ignorance: but like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy.*

*"And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear: knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold,*



*from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without spot, even the blood of Christ: who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of times for your sake,"* (1 Peter 1:12-20).

These words have been written to encourage each one of us to examine ourselves, looking for humility and holiness in our life. Are they present? Do they clearly show themselves in the way we speak to our friends and family? Can people see them in the kind of clothes we wear?

Where is holiness in your life? Where is humility in your life? If you find it hard to see humility, keep watching the little children, who are quick to say sorry and to learn a better way of living. Little children often find it easier to show love than adults do, and a child's humbleness will always let him trust parents to teach him what he needs in order to be safe and happy. These abilities little children have from their humbleness, and this is why Jesus said they belong to the Kingdom.

We have all lost the innocence of childhood, and the beauty of holiness is now absent as we look into the mirror of adulthood. But the good news is that God wants to give it back to us and help us grow in His holiness which comes from His Spirit through our humility.

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## ***THE BLESSINGS OF FRIENDS***

**Demar Elam**

One doesn't HAVE TO travel far down the road of life before realizing the need of having sincere friends. It has been said that no man is an island unto himself, and how true that is. Proverbs 17:17 says, "*A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*" The type of friends spoken of in this passage are not found in abundance, but must be cultivated. If you want friends who are totally reliable and trustworthy and who don't fail you, then you must be that kind of friend to others.

**Everyone needs friends!** This life is filled with hardships and disappointments, the nature of which demands that we have friends who stand by us in good times or bad. Do such friends exist? Yes, everyone can have such friends in life, but true friendships do not develop down a one way street. One must be worthy of his friends. If you perhaps wonder sometimes why you do not have true friends, you would do well to remember Proverbs 18:24. "*A man that hath*

*friends must show himself friendly,*” and the rest of the verse says “. . . and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” We all need friends who surpass the standard and are friends who stick closer than a brother.

John 15:13, *“Greater love hath no man than this; that a man lay down his life for his friends.”* The greatest friend any of us will ever have is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We often sing the song, “What A Friend We Have In Jesus,” yet so often we fail to realize the meaning of the song. The blessings of friendship with the Christ are innumerable! He has already died in our behalf, and in the words of the song, “Can we find a friend so faithful?”

The amazingly beautiful thing is that when one accepts the friendship of Christ in his life it opens vistas of numerous friendships with those who are already friends with the Anointed One! Surely every Christian enjoys relationships with other Christians who meet every standard of what a true friend should be. Oh, the blessings of friendship with the friends of Jesus! However, we all need to take stock, to take inventory of our own lives and see if we are being such a friend to other people. Are you thought of by another as being “... a friend that sticketh closer than a brother”? Surely we ought not to want in life what we’re unwilling to give. Just as we need friends who surpass the standard, there are others depending on us to surpass that standard for them.

Each Christian is to strive to be more Christlike. It has been said that we are “Christ in miniature.” Simply put, that means we can only be a copy of Jesus on a much reduced scale. We can never measure up to the example of Christ, but we can strive to do our best and at least be like Him on a smaller scale. In John 11:35 we read that *“Jesus wept.”* Why did He weep? He was, to Lazarus, *“a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”* The Jews, seeing Jesus weep openly, said, *“... Behold how he loved him!”* Ah yes, the blessings of friendship with Jesus and with His friends are innumerable.

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## Why So Much Violence?

**Ardron Hinton**

THINGS THAT HAPPEN HAVE causes. So let’s raise the question: What is causing our national epidemic of violence? Obviously, there is no simple, one-shot explanation, but in this brief article we’d like to suggest one major contributing factor.

Romans 8:16,17 (quoting from Isaiah 59) gives this explanation: *"Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known."* Peace, like other aspects of life, has to be **learned**. Now, just as in Isaiah's day, many have learned how to foster **destruction** and **misery**, but not how to promote **peace**.

In Romans 8:6 Paul wrote, *"For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."* A mind filled with the ways of the world will have difficulty even seeing the peaceable path, much less understanding it. In 14:19 of this letter Paul urges us to *"pursue the things which make for peace."* He is telling us to look for ideas and possibilities for promoting peace. Recall the words of Jesus, *"Blessed are the peacemakers."* In Romans 12:18 Paul pursues this same positive approach to our subject, *"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."* Paul makes it clear that promoting peace is not only something that CAN be taught, but something that we NEED to be teaching.

Since children learn their social skills and patterns of behavior in actual situations, it takes time and deliberate effort to do the needed teaching. A peaceful person would need to be a kind, gentle, caring, and patient person. You possibly recognized these as qualities arising from Biblical love. They are essential in the promotion of peace, and they can readily be taught to small children. In a world that is well supplied with violent people, and violent "entertainment", it will take even more effort to train anyone, young or old, to be a person who is peaceable in his or her own life and who promotes peace in their world.

Jesus, whom Isaiah called "the Prince of Peace", has taught us that true peace is not achieved by sacrificing truth and principle, but by sacrificing self-interest, and by developing self-discipline and a serving heart. Are we really teaching peace?

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## ***The WHY Of Our Faith***

**David Deffenbaugh**

FAITH IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. Much emphasis is given to what faith is, but no less important than the **what** of our faith is the **why** of our faith. Peter explains, *"But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence"* (1 Peter 3:15). Not only must Christians know **what** they believe, but also **why** they believe it.

The Bible speaks of only one valid source for faith, and that is the Word of God itself. *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ”* (Romans 10:17). Any other source is insufficient. There may be several reasons why people believe what they believe. For many people, their faith started with their parents and grandparents. This certainly is a valid means of transmitting faith. God commands the teaching of children by parents (Deuteronomy 6:7; Ephesians 6:4). Timothy’s faith was begun by this very means (2 Timothy 1:5). However, the *why* of his faith could not be explained solely on this basis. Paul also tells that *“from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (2 Timothy 3:15). Timothy’s faith, like any valid faith, had to have as its source the Word of God.

Obviously there is a place in God’s plan for preaching and teaching in the spread and development of faith (Romans 10:13-15). However, God never intended for these proclaimers of the Gospel ever to become the foundation of anyone’s faith. That role can be filled only by the Word. The Berean Jews stand for all time as testimony to the necessity of measuring the message by the Word (Acts 17:11). They were not willing to accept even the message of Paul at his word alone.

Examples of inadequate faith abound. All children of God must evaluate themselves carefully, not only as to **what** they believe, but also as to why they believe it. Paul admonished, *“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!”* (2 Corinthians 13:5). Only then can we say, *“This is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith”* (1 John 5:4).

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## Make Your Life Count!

**Maxie B. Boren**

WITH THIS SIMPLISTIC STATEMENT, the Bible tells us of a man: *“... and all the days of Methuselah were 969 years; and he died”* (Genesis 5:27). Other than that, we know very little about him. He was the son of Enoch and the grandfather of Noah; that’s all. The reason we remember him is because he lived longer on the earth than any other man — 969 years — and he died. Like a bird which passes through the air leaving no trace, so also was Methuselah.

Contrast that with the life of Jesus. He lived only 33 years, but did He ever make them count! Look at (1) His teachings, and (2)

what He did: He gave to the world the greatest teachings it had ever heard, or ever will hear. His words impacted the minds of the people who lived in that day as if they had been hit by a sledge hammer. . . *"No man ever spoke like this man!"* (John 7:46). And His words have continued to impact the minds of every generation since then, worldwide! And His deeds . . . "simply amazing" would best describe what He did. We have four accounts of His life that open the New Testament, and they are full of what He did. And yet, the last of these writers ends his narrative with these words: *"And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written"* (John 21:25).

Make your life count! Tell people about Jesus . . . what He taught and what He did. And follow His example of love, kindness, and gentleness.

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## THE PRUDENT PAUSE

**Tim Nichols**

WE LIVE IN A TIME in which restraint and self-discipline are not widely considered to be virtues. Impulse guides behavior more than reason. The gap between the impulse and the resulting action is sometimes so small that, to many, it seems not to exist. Many seem to be willing to pronounce any act justified if the impulse that prompted it is in any way justified.

But we are accountable to God for our actions whether the world recognizes our accountability or does not. When tempted to do a thing that is wrong, we are equipped with the God-given ability to pause and think before acting. What happens during that pause may have eternal consequences. The Philadelphia Youth Study Center used to have this slogan: "The difference between the delinquent and the non-delinquent youth is the pause between the temptation and the act." The slogan is just as true if we delete the word "youth."

As we pause in the midst of temptation we ought to remind ourselves that we do not usually have to act swiftly. We sometimes make rash decisions rather than allow ourselves to choose our actions or words slowly and deliberately (Proverbs 6:18; Romans 3:15; James 1:19). Slow down. Wider, the gap between the impulse and the action.

Take the time to think about the earthly consequences of your actions. How will your actions affect your family, the church, your friends, or your own reputation? Do you want to live with those consequences?

Take the time to consider all of your options. Under pressure we sometimes develop "tunnel vision." We see only one course of action when, in fact, there are many options available to us. Look for them. At least one of your options will always be morally right (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Take the time to consider the eternal consequences (Revelation 21:8). The fear motive may not be the "highest" motive in the rating system that some brethren use, but we ought to be grateful that God has revealed both His goodness and His severity (Romans 11:22). If a knowledge of God's wrath helps us to gain one ounce of resolve to do right and avoid evil, then we ought to be pleased to have such knowledge.

Take the time to contemplate the goodness of God. He is the source of every good gift (James 1:17). He loved you enough to give His Son that you might have eternal life (John 3:16). Pause to think of the debt of gratitude that you owe.

Pause to consider God's Word. It contains divine guidance that can keep you from evil (Psalm 119:9-16). Sometimes in the midst of temptation, when tempers or passions are hottest, we search the Word of God less when we need it most. It is during such times that we would do well to heed the words of our Heavenly Father, Who said, "*Be still, and know that I am God*" (Psalm 46:10).

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## **DECISIONS**

### **Dalton Key**

WE ARE CONSTANTLY FACED with the task of making decisions, the outcome of which may affect our quality of life here, and determine our eternal destiny "over there." Decisions which have to do with right and wrong are of great importance.

We cannot be free from the responsibility of decision-making. The following are a few guidelines which may be of help to you in your decision-making.

**Does the Bible specifically mention this thing? If so, is it condemned or condoned?** Two examples of sins specifically forbidden would be (1) sexual relations outside marriage (Hebrews

13:4) and (2) lying (Colossians 3:9; Revelation 21:8).

**Does this fit within the framework of the Bible's perfect principles?** For instance, one of the more basic principles of the Bible teaches that man is to work for what he has (Genesis 3:19; 2 Thessalonians 3:10). One who expects to live off the wealth of others, or receive "something for nothing," would be in violation of this principle.

**Will this harm my body?** According to inspiration, we are not our own; we are the Lord's (1 Corinthians 6:19,20; Romans 14:7,8).

**Will this help (or hurt) my Christian influence?** In all that we do and say, we must be "*an example of the believers*" (1 Timothy 4:12; Philippians 2:15; Matthew 5:15).

**Will this strengthen (or weaken) my fellow Christians?** "*Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another*" (Romans 14:19).

**Will this be injurious to anyone's health or reputation?** Paul tells us that "*Love worketh no ill to his neighbor*" (Romans 13:10).

**Are my motives pure?** In Christianity, not only are actions important, but the motives behind the actions are important as well (1 Corinthians 13:1-3; Galatians 5:26; Matthew 6:1-18).

**Will this make me a stronger Christian?** Anything which would discourage from spiritual growth should certainly be avoided.

**Ten years from now will I look back on having done this with sorrow or rejoicing?** "The memory of the just is blessed" (Proverbs 10:7).

*Would Christ do this?* This provides the acid test. The mind of Christ is to be our mind (Philippians 2:5); He is to be our example in all things (1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Peter 2:21).

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## GOD'S CARE

**Don W. Walker**

*"THOUGH HE FALL, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalm 37:24, 25).*

The fact of God's constant care is displayed all the way through the Sacred Text. Peter wrote that we should be found "*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you*" (1 Peter 5:7). The writer of Hebrews records these comforting words. "... *he hath said, I will*

*never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me"* (Hebrews 13:5, 6).

We thrill to the words of the Psalmist when he wrote, *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"* (Psalm 46:1). One of the most well-known of the Psalms also centers around this wonderful thought. *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want ..."* (Psalm 23). When Jesus challenged the apostles with the great commission He promised, *"... and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matthew 28:20).

All of these passages and many more should give us strength and courage to press on in this chaotic and wicked world. When I truly understand and believe that *"all things work together for good to them that love God"* (Romans 8:28), then I will follow through with His desires, knowing that *"if God is for us"* no one can be against us victoriously (Romans 8:31).

Appreciating the all-seeing eyes of God and the provisions for victory that He has provided (Psalm 139 and 1 Corinthians 15:57) will give us confidence in what we can accomplish for good.

When we are overwhelmed with the everyday rigors of life, we must remember that we have to *"lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and... run with patience the race that is set before us"* (Hebrews 12:1).

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## ***GOD ON BAPTISM***

**Rick Cunningham**

JESUS WAS BAPTIZED (Matthew 3:16). *"Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'"* (Matthew 28:18,19). *"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mark 16:16). *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins maybe forgiven"* (Acts 2:38). *"Those who accepted his message were baptized"* (Acts 2:41). *"When they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women"* (Acts 8:12). *"They came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?'"* (Acts 8:36). *"Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and*



*Philip baptized him* (Acts 8:38). *"Something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized"* (Acts 9:18). *"Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water?"* (Acts 10:47). *"So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ"* (Acts 10:48). *"She and all the members of her household were baptized"* (Acts 16:15). *"Immediately he and all his family were baptized"* (Acts 16:33). *"The Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized"* (Acts 18:8). *"They were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus"* (Acts 19:5). *"Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name"* (Acts 22:16). *"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"* (Romans 6:3). *"For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body"* (1 Corinthians 12:13). *"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ"* (Galatians 3:27). *"This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also"* (1 Peter 3:21). That's what God said about baptism. Who can argue with God?

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## OUR KING IS COMING

### **Bobby Key**

While our Lord was yet among men, He promised, *"I will come again"*. Though many centuries have come and gone, this promise still echoes through the ages, bringing comfort to the suffering saints. *"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation"* (Hebrews 9:28). Over three hundred times in the New Testament our Lord makes the promise: *"I will come again"*.

Yes, our King is coming — not to be crowned and begin His reign, but rather to end His reign and receive His own! Let us notice some of the characteristics of His coming.

- **It will be majestic.** *"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory"* (Matthew 25:31).
- **It will be sudden.** *"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh"* (Matthew 25:13). *"Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"* (Matthew 24:44).
- **It will be the end of preparation.** *"And before him shall be*

*gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats” (Matthew 25:32). “These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46).*

- **It will be the beginning of supreme joy for some.** *“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).*
- **It will be the beginning of great sorrow for others.** *“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).*

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## **GOD And LOVE**

**Greg Tidwell**

*“ABOVE ALL HOLD UNFAILING your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).* Love is not only one of the Christian virtues, love is the central principle of our religion.

Salvation is grounded on God loving the world so much that He was willing to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the atonement for our sins. We are forgiven because of God's love for us. This truth, repeatedly emphasized in Scripture, is the ultimate assurance of our salvation.

God is love. To be godly is to think and act with His love guiding and directing every motive and desire. The law of God subsists in two commandments: Love God; Love each other.

All of us are mortal and prone to sin. We fail to do all the things we know we should, and we continually do things we know we should not. Beyond our sins, which are many, our humanity limits our understanding and leads us into honest, but hurtful, mistakes.

Continually we rely on God's love to bring forgiveness for our sins and failures, and He has promised, in love, to forgive.

In the same way, His love should lead us to forgive those around us and to cover their shortcomings. There is enough wrong with each of us that we should each seek grace for all of us.

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