

Sowing and Reaping and Other Fundamentals of the Faith

By
W. Douglass Harris

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Biographical Material

W. Douglass Harris began preaching in 1937 at Chapel Hill, Tennessee. He holds a BA Degree from Harding College and an MA from the University of Georgia.

His first local work was with the church in Kirbyville, Texas, having been recommended by Dr. George Benson, the President of Harding College.

On the recommendation of the Dean of Harding College, Doug left Kirbyville in 1941 and went to Valdosta, Georgia to teach in the old Dasher Bible School (now Georgia Christian School), and to do evangelistic work with the Central Church in Valdosta, who furnished the bulk of his support. He met his wife, Margaret Copeland, (now married 56 years) in one of those evangelistic meetings, who was teaching school there.

They were married, went to Athens, Georgia, supported by the old West End Church in Atlanta to preserve the church there, which they had started and was meeting in the Court Room of the City Hall. He succeeded in getting the church out of the City Hall and into a converted dwelling.

In 1945 Rose Hill in Columbus, Georgia, invited them to come and work with them. After much deliberation, they decided to go. Doug preached there 4-1/2 years and helped to start the Edgewood Church on the east side of Columbus.

In 1949 the Central Church in Anniston came calling. Again, after much prayer and visits on two different occasions, they decided to move there. During that time he helped to start the Saks congregation and the Colvin Street congregation, both of which exist until this day.

In 1953 the elders of the old Central Church in Birmingham convinced Doug and his wife to move to Ft. Payne, Alabama, to work with the church which they were supporting. They became self-supporting in three years and Doug helped to start two new congregations in the area.

In 1961 the Tarrant Church in Birmingham contacted him to come and work with them in some difficult circumstances they were having. The work grew until the building was filled, and eight new class rooms were added.

From there, they moved to the Decatur area where they have remained, working primarily with three congregations — Flint, Danville, Alabama, and Point Mallard Parkway.

Doug was the associate editor of the *Caribbean Evangelist*, edited by Ermon Bain, and is the editor of the *Caribbean Messenger*. He is a staff writer for *The Voice of Truth International*.

Through the years, he has helped start ten congregations.

To The Reader

This book is a compilation of editorials and articles written over long periods of time for local church bulletins and gospel papers to meet certain needs at the time they were written. There is no continuity of subject matter except that they are all Bible topics written over a period of more than fifty years. The best use that can be made of them is to check the table of contents for an article that might be of interest to the reader and refer to it. No effort was made to be eloquent or profound, but to be simple enough that the most uneducated could understand.

Because of the limitation of space where these articles first appeared, we were forced to be brief and concise, which prevented elaboration on many points. For this reason scripture references were not quoted verbatim, but only the references were cited. We assumed that if the reader had enough interest he/she would check the references and determine if the writer made correct application. It is one thing to cite scripture, but an entirely different matter to make correct application.

Material, thoughts, and ideas were gleaned from so many sources that memory is too dim now to recall. In a few instances, full credit has been given because we recorded the source. We purposely avoided the violation of any copyrights, and express appreciation to those who refused to copyright their materials so that they could be used for time to come in an ethical manner to save souls, to edify the church, and glorify God.

We express deep appreciation to Brother J. C. Choate for his help in preserving these materials for others when the writer is gone from earth.

Author

Publisher's Statement

I first met brother W. Douglass Harris while visiting a congregation in Alabama that was helping with our mission work in India. Later, we met him again when we were reporting to a congregation in Decatur, AL.

This faithful gospel preacher has worked through the years primarily with the Lord's church in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. He has been involved in helping to begin congregations in Columbus, GA and Anniston, AL.

Probably brother Harris' greatest influence has been through his writings. He has served as editor of the *Caribbean Messenger* for over 13 years and has made several trips to the Caribbean Islands to participate in lectureships and gospel meetings. He has had two books printed in India and is a staff writer for *The Voice of Truth International*.

I am very happy to be able to commend brother Harris as a faithful gospel preacher and to recommend his writings to all.

J.C. Choate
Church of Christ
Winona, MS
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“Who Is a Wise Man?”

“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?”
(James 3:13).

All right-thinking people have an innate desire for wisdom. Man’s interest in wisdom dates as far back as man’s origin. Eve was promised such by Satan if she would obey him (Genesis 3:4-6). A distinction is made in the Scriptures between true and false wisdom, and we need to learn the difference. This distinction is clearly made in the context of our text. But how will true wisdom evidence itself? How can we know who is a wise man? Webster says wisdom is “the ability to judge soundly and deal sagaciously with facts, especially as they relate to life and conduct.” Everyone who has it is precisely described and identified in the Scriptures. According to the Scriptures, who is a wise man? How does one show wisdom?

1. By “**his good life**” (James 3:13). Wisdom does not show itself so much in precept as in life. In the quiet, even flow of one’s daily life is it manifested. James said in answer to his question, “*Let him show by his good life his works with meekness of wisdom.*” Someone has said, “It is wise to be good; it is foolish to be evil.”

We learn from this passage also that true wisdom is always accompanied by meekness. Some men of learning who are noisy and overbearing may pass as great scholars, but they are not wise because they are lacking in meekness. “Knowledge may be proud and conceited that she has learned so much; but wisdom is

always meek and humble that she knows no more” (Leroy Brownlow). Inspiration says, *“Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness”* (1 Corinthians 3:18,19).

2. One who hearkens to counsel is wise. *“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise”* (Proverbs 12:15). A foolish person will not listen, but a wise person will. Foolish people are completely devoid of reason. They have to learn the hard way, because no other can tell them anything.

There is safety, also, in consulting a multitude of counselors. *“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety”* (Proverbs 1:7). God says, *“Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength”* (Proverbs 8:14). *“Speak not in the ears of a fool; for he will despise the wisdom of thy words”* (Proverbs 23:9). Many people make unwise decisions because they either would not listen to counsel or they did not seek enough counselling. How wise are you in hearkening unto the counsel of the wise? *“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding”* (Proverbs 4:7). *“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom”* (Psalm 90:12).

3. One who fears and departs from evil (Proverbs 14:16). “Fear” in this sense means to be afraid and cautious. A wise man knows what evil has done and will do. Knowing the deceitfulness of sin, he shuns it (Hebrews 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:22). Sin promises one thing, but substitutes something else. *“A prudent man seeth the evil, and hideth himself”* (Proverbs 22:3).

Joseph did exactly this when Potiphar's wife attempted to entice him into sin (Genesis 39:7-12). "*Fear the Lord and turn away from evil,*" is the admonition of the wise man (Proverbs 3:7). In the light of all of this, it is foolish to say, "I will try anything once." Job said, "*To depart from evil is understanding*" (Job 28:28). "*It is an abomination to fools to depart from evil*" (Proverbs 13:19). Surely it is wise to depart from evil, as well as fear it!

4. One who respects parents is wise. Children are commanded to honor their parents (Ephesians 6:2; Colossians 3:20). God-fearing parents know much by experience that their children do not know. Because of age, experience, and knowledge, God-fearing parents are entitled to this respect. "*A wise son heareth his father's instruction*" (Proverbs 13:1). "*A fool despiseth his father's correction*" (Proverbs 15:5). The scribes and Pharisees had a way of "avoiding" this responsibility; but Jesus condemned them for it (Matthew 15:4-6).

Many aged parents are dying with broken hearts because their children are not honoring them in their old age. The late T. B. Larimore, as a spokesman for aged parents wrote the following:

Take my withered hands in yours;
Hold them close and strong;
Cheer me with a fond caress;
 'Twill not be long'
Youth immortal soon will crown
 With its wreath my brow.
As I've loved and petted you,
 Love and pet me now.

5. One who refrains his lips is wise (Proverbs 10:19). *“For he that would love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile”* (1 Peter 3:10). Why is it wise to refrain one’s lips? Because *“in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin”* (Proverbs 10:19). *“Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from trouble”* (Proverbs 21:23). There are so many sins of the tongue — among them are lying, cursing, railing, filthy speaking, deceit, flattery, hasty words, and gossip. This makes it that much more important that we pray, *“Set a watch, Oh Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips”* (Psalm 141:3). May each of us make the following vow: *“I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue”* (Psalm 39:1).

A careless word may kindle strife.

A cruel word may wreck a life.

A brutal word may smite and kill.

A gracious word may smooth the way,

A joyous word may light the day.

A timely word may lessen stress.

A loving word may heal and bless.

6. One who hears and obeys the Lord is wise (Matthew 7:24-27). *“He that is of God heareth God’s word”* (John 8:47). “Hearing” in this sense means to yield a willing assent of the mind to the word of God, with a firm purpose to obey it. Such is man’s whole duty in life. *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man”* (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Many of our problems are symptoms of a misconception of the primary purpose of life. It is not to “eat, drink, and be merry,” as many may think; but to glorify God by conforming to His will (1

Corinthians 10:31).

Hearing alone is not sufficient: *“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”* (James 1:22). The gospel of Christ blesses those only who hear and obey it (Hebrews 5:8,9).

7. A wise man is one who wins souls. *“He that winneth souls is wise”* (Proverbs 11:30). This is exceedingly wise because of the value Jesus placed on just one soul (Matthew 16:26). Man’s soul is the only part of him that will survive the grave (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Everything else perishes (1 Timothy 6:7). **How many souls have you won to Christ?** We sing, *“Must I go and empty-handed? Must I meet my saviour so? Not one soul with which to greet Him: Must I empty-handed go?”* This forcefully explains why Jesus commanded us to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). Can we go before God in judgment with our hands unstained with the blood of others, not having saved a single soul (Ezekiel 33:8,9)???

8. A prepared man is a wise man. *“Prepare to meet thy God”* (Amos 4:12). It is folly of the worst sort not to be prepared for eternity. According to Jesus, a wise man anticipates the storm and builds upon the rock (Matthew 7:24-27). He also anticipates the coming of the Bridegroom, and prepares adequately to meet Him (Matthew 25:1-13). His philosophy is that of the ant, rather than the grasshopper (Proverbs 30:25; 6:6). One who is wise makes preparation now, rather than waiting until “tomorrow”, which may never come.

The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop—

At late, or early, hour.
Now is the only time you own!
Live, love, toil with a will;
Place not faith in "tomorrow", for
The clock may then be still.

— Anonymous

Are you wiser by having read this article?

Obedience

“Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22).

This was Samuel’s answer to King Saul who had attempted to justify to Samuel his disobedience of God’s commands. Samuel was simply saying to Saul that God would not accept any substitute for obedience to His word, even burnt offerings and sacrifices. In the very next verse, Samuel told Saul that disobedience, even the slightest deviation from God’s commands, is rebellion. Samuel also described Saul’s disobedience as a rejection of God’s word, which was the reason for God’s rejection of him as king. Oh, how the religious world needs to learn the principle taught by this example — that God requires strict obedience to His word! And until it does, there will never be any salvation from past sins and enjoyment of the blessing of the Christian life. Neither will there ever be the unity for which Christ prayed (John 17:20,21) and which was enjoined by the apostles (1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:1-6).

Two general attitudes toward God’s word: There are two general attitudes toward God’s word prevailing in the religious world. One is that God does not require strict obedience to His word — that if we come close to doing what He commands, or in the neighborhood of what He commands, it is acceptable. The example cited above ought to prove conclusively that this is a misconception. Growing out of this misconception is the idea that it does not matter what we believe or do in religion as long as we are sincere — that sincerity makes anything right. If this were true, there could not be any religious error, or false doctrine.

Could there be any disobedience if this were true? Why all of the warnings in the New Testament against error and false doctrine (Matthew 7:15; 1 John 4:6)? Does believing error change the error into truth — any more than believing poison to be cough syrup changes the poison to cough syrup? Those who have espoused this attitude are allowing themselves to be deceived and are deceiving others (Proverbs 14:12).

Another attitude toward God's word is that He says what He means, means what He says, and requires strict obedience to His word. This is the position espoused by this writer. If this is not true, why does He expect man to tremble at His word (Isaiah 66:2), or forbid that anything be added to, subtracted from, or substituted for His word (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18,19)? If this is not true, why did He punish Adam and Eve for their disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit in Eden (Genesis 3), or Uzzah for substituting an unauthorized method of moving the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6), or Moses for striking the rock instead of speaking to it (Numbers 20), or the young prophet for his disobedience (1 Kings 13)? All of these examples were recorded to prove to us that God does require strict obedience to His word (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6,11; Hebrews 4:11 ASV). They all need to be studied carefully to see how God applied His own word and punished the slightest deviation therefrom.

Eternal principles in God's dealing with man. God has dealt with mankind in every age of the world by three principles: grace, faith, and obedience. Examples: God by His grace created Adam and Eve in His image (Genesis 1:27), placed them in Eden (Genesis 2:8), and gave them a law (Genesis 2:16,17). But they had to believe God and obey His law to continue in that state

(Genesis 3:1-6, 22-24). This was faith and obedience, not faith only. But they disobeyed and were punished. Other examples from the Patriarchal Age would be Noah (Genesis 6:8; Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 8:22) and Abraham (Genesis 22:1-14; Hebrews 11:17-19).

From the Jewish Age is the example of the Israelites' deliverance from their Egyptian bondage. Hearing their cry for deliverance, sending Moses as their deliverer, and bringing all the plagues on Egypt to effect their release were acts of God's grace. But Moses and the Israelites had to believe and obey God. They were not saved from their bondage the moment they believed God had sent Moses, but after they had obeyed all of the instructions of God through Moses and had crossed the Red Sea. Read Exodus 14:30 carefully. It says, "*Thus the Lord saved Israel that day.*" Note carefully how Moses pinpoints the day of their salvation from the bondage of the Egyptians — not down in Egypt when they first believed Moses or even when the blood was placed on their door posts to save their firstborn from death (this was another salvation) but "that day". What day? The day they completed their obedience to God's instructions by crossing the Red Sea. Incidentally, their crossing the Red Sea is a type of our baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1-3). God's dealings with Naaman during the Jewish Age, also demonstrates the aforementioned principles (2 Kings 5).

In our age, the Christian Age, God still deals with man upon the same principles. God's grace has come to us through the teaching of divine revelation which reveals to us God's love for us and His offer of salvation by obedience to His terms (Titus 2:11,12). God's word is described as "*the word of His grace*" (Acts 20:32). But this grace must be received and appropriated

by obedience to the stipulated conditions. If we fail to do this, we receive the grace of God in vain (1 Corinthians 6:1). We must believe the facts and obey the commands necessary to our salvation. Even this is made possible by grace (Acts 18:27; Ephesians 2:8,9). Saving faith in the New Testament is synonymous with obedient faith (see John 3:36 ASV; Romans 1:5; 16:26). Thus, wherever faith is stated as a condition of salvation, it is referring to an obedient faith. *"Faith, without works (obedience) is dead"* (James 2:17,20). *"Ye see how that by works (obedience) a man is justified, and not by faith only"* (James 2:24). James is not referring to meritorious works, but to works of faith (obedience). *"It (justification) is by faith (obedient faith) that it might be by grace"* (Romans 4:16). Neither is James referring to the justification of a child of God exclusively. One of his examples of justification by works of faith (obedience) is Rahab (v. 25), who was not a child of God but an alien.

How is James harmonized with Paul in Romans 4? Paul was referring to one kind of works (works of the law or meritorious works) and James was referring to the works of faith (obedience or appropriative works). There is nothing meritorious about appropriative works. We appropriate the air we breath, the water we drink, the food we eat, the clothing we wear, etc., but we do not merit them. They all come to us through God's grace. When Peter preached to the Jews on Pentecost (Acts 2), grace was extended to them; they were not worthy; they were murderers. They believed in Christ (v. 37) and obeyed (vs. 38,41). Their believing, repenting, and being baptized were appropriative works. Baptism is no more a meritorious work than are faith and repentance. Baptism for remission of sins is a positive command (a command which by human reason has no connection with the result desired) which God requires as a test of our faith. It must

be obeyed because God said it and for no other reason. He who does not have enough faith to be baptized for the remission of his past sins because God said it, does not have enough faith to save him (Mark 16:16).

Conclusion: As general principles, God has always dealt with man on the principles of faith and obedience. The facts to be believed have not always been the same, and the conditions of obedience have varied, but the facts and conditions peculiar to the respective ages had to be believed and obeyed before God's promises could be enjoyed. You and I must believe the facts of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-3), and obey the commands of the gospel. *"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say"* (Luke 6:46). *"Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). *"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him"* (Hebrews 5:8,9). Christ will come the second time rendering vengeance on them *"that know not God and that obey not the gospel of Christ"* (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9).

The only right attitude towards God's word is: *"Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth; command and I will obey."*

Worship that Pleases God

Man is innately a worshipping being. It is as natural for him to worship something as it is for him to breathe or eat. All nations regardless of their condition worship some god, whether real or imaginary. Man may not always worship the right object, but he worships something, nevertheless. He may worship some idol, or his own reason, but he worships something either consciously or unconsciously. He cannot live and not worship, because he was created a worshipping being. This is one way by which man is distinguished from animals.

Because man is naturally a worshipping creature, it was not necessary for him to be commanded to worship, but he does need to be directed in his worship and to worship the right object. So man is commanded with reference to the right object of acceptable worship (Matthew 4:10; Revelation 19:10). He is forbidden to worship any other object, such as heathen gods (Romans 1:21-25), the goddess of pleasure (1 Timothy 3:4), the goddess of fashion (Job 12:42,43), or the god of mammon (money) (Matthew 6:24). This is important when we realize that one becomes like the object he worships. We should not worship something inferior to us, such as an idol made by human hands. Neither should we worship our equals, such as another human (Acts 10:23-26), but we should worship our superior — the God revealed in the Bible (Revelation 19:8-10). Man is also commanded with reference to the kind of worship that is acceptable to God. This will be properly emphasized later in this article.

Worship Defined

Worship is difficult to define. Webster says that “it is the act of paying honor to a deity,” but this falls far short of worship that is acceptable to God. Someone has defined it as “the adoring reverence of the human spirit for the divine.” We could multiply definitions given by men, but we need a scriptural definition. In our study and research through the years, the best definition we have ever seen is Psalm 95:6. It says, “*Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker.*” Worship, then, is not the mere performance of certain acts performed in ritualistic fashion; it is something that takes place in the human heart — the adoring reverence of the human spirit for the divine. This means that emotions must be aroused and this is done by the realization of who and what God is, and what He has done for us. To realize that He is our Creator who made our very being (in this world) possible (Acts 17:28), and that He still loved us when we separated ourselves from Him by our sins (Romans 5:8) and who sent His Son to die for us (John 3:16), is all the motivation, when rightly considered, that anyone ever needs to worship God.

Two General Principles of Acceptable Worship

Man is also commanded relative to the kind and manner of his worship. In John 4:24 Jesus said, “*God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*” There are, then, two general requirements of acceptable worship: 1) in spirit; and 2) in truth. “In spirit” is usually explained to mean in sincerity. This may be true, but have we missed the contrast Jesus made there by an over-simplified answer? Could not Jesus have been contrasting acceptable worship in the Christian Age

with worship under the law of Moses? All of the acts of worship under the law were carnal ordinances; they did not necessarily require the service of the spirit, or to be done from the heart. But the acts of worship authorized under the law of Christ are spiritual acts, which do require the service of the spirit or to be done from the heart, if acceptable. Is this not what Paul referred to in Romans 7:6 when he said, "*That we serve in newness of the spirit and not in oldness of the letter*"? Notice the contrast between the "oldness of the letter" and the "newness of the spirit." The former refers to the Old Testament and the latter to the New Testament. Under Christ all service (worship) must be from the heart, not formal or indifferent.

Worshipping "in truth" simply means to worship God as God's truth directs or authorizes. In praying to the Father in behalf of His disciples Jesus said, "*Father, sanctify them in thy truth; thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). This means we must worship God as He directs — in God's way, doing what He commands in the way He has commanded. To worship God in man's way is vain worship (Matthew 15:9). This naturally leads to the next question.

Who Is to Be Pleased in Worship?

Is not the purpose of worship to please God and not ourselves? Example after example in the Old Testament could be cited of those who failed in this — Cain (Genesis 4), Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10), and King Saul (1 Samuel 15), just to mention a few. They sought to please themselves, not God. Such were the vain worshippers Jesus condemned (Matthew 15:9). All sorts of things have been introduced into worship which men have devised which please them and disregard what pleases God.

Some of these are burning incense, worshipping Mary, instrumental music, mass, and failure to observe the Lord's Supper every first day of the week. These and many others are done in worship because man likes them, regardless of what God says. However, if we are not going to worship God in His prescribed way, we worship in vain (Colossians 3:17; 1 Samuel 15:22; Matthew 15:9).

Scriptural Avenues of Worship

In the New Testament there are five avenues of worship which are authorized. Four of these avenues are authorized in Acts 2:42. It is said that the church in Jerusalem "*continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*" One other avenue is authorized elsewhere in the New Testament — vocal music (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). From these and other passages we learn that worship which pleases God includes the apostles' doctrine, fellowship (giving), weekly observance of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2), prayer, and singing. Any item of worship added to these is adding to what God has authorized in the New Testament and is severely condemned (Revelation 22:18,19; 1 Corinthians 4:6 ASV; 2 John 9-11). God has not left it to man's tastes and preferences to decide what he wants to do in worship. For it to be acceptable, we must worship God in truth (John 4:24).

Dear reader, take a close look at the worship of your church. Is it designed to please God or man (Galatians 1:10)? Does it include those avenues only that are authorized by God in the New Testament? Do you not need to investigate the worship of those people whose worship is after the New Testament pattern? In the

final judgment at the last day, it will be too late if we discover then that we worshiped God, the right object, but by a false system of worship.

God's Drawing Power

"No man can come to Me, except the Father that sent Me draw him; and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Everyone that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto Me" (John 6:44,45).

How does God draw sinful men unto Him? Does He do it in some mysterious, irresistible, better-felt-than-told way? According to our text it is through teaching as the Old Testament prophets indicated. But what is this teaching by which God draws sinners to Him? Answer: This teaching is what the Holy Scriptures call the gospel. By the use of an acrostic of the word "gospel", let us see if we can learn what it is and how God draws men to Him.

Glad Tidings: Nearly all people, whether Christians or not, understand that the word "gospel" means "glad tidings or good news". In the New Testament, it is the translation of *euangelion* and denotes the good news about Christ and the salvation that is made possible through Him. So it is the glorious good news as was announced by angels to the shepherds at the time of His birth (Luke 2:8-14). It is more than good advice; it is good news that meets all of our spiritual needs as a key fits the lock. This good news was preached in promise unto Abraham (Galatians 3:8).

Originated in the Grace of God: It is called the "word of grace" (Acts 14:3). Paul affirmed that the commission given him by the Lord was "*to testify the gospel of the grace of God*" (Acts 20:24). Since this grace of God is the result of His love, John

says, "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). So this gospel originated in God's grace (John 1:17), but it would be a false conclusion that its being by grace makes salvation unconditional. This would ignore many other passages which state conditions with which man must comply to appropriate God's grace.

Simple Yet Profound: Paul warned against being corrupted from the "simplicity" that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3). And this word in the original includes the idea of simplicity as well as sincerity. The gospel contains simple facts to be believed (1 Corinthians 15:1-8); simple commands to be obeyed (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Matthew 7:21); glorious promises simple to understand (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:23; Mark 16:16); and simple warnings to be heeded (Mark 16:16b; 1 Peter 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9).

Power to Save: Paul affirms that it is God's power to save (Romans 1:16). Obedience thereto saves the believer from the power, the practice, and the guilt of sin. Paul reminded the Ephesians that they "*heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation*" (Ephesians 1:13). This gospel is powerful because it reveals God's love and grace, the love and sacrifice of Christ for sinners, and the Holy Spirit's exhortations not to harden the heart against it (Hebrews 3:7,8).

Everlasting in its Blessings or Benefits: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively (living) hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*" (1 Peter 1:3,4). No other

gospel can bring such benefits (Galatians 1:8,9; 2 John 9-11). Constant obedience thereto brings great joy in this life and eventually leads to heaven.

Let it be Proclaimed to Every Creature: (Mark 16:15): The gospel is not a luxury to be selfishly kept to ourselves, but a sacred trust to be shared with others. This is the reason Paul was such an avid proclaimer — he considered it a trust (1 Timothy 1:11), and charged Timothy to guard that (the gospel) which had been committed to him (1 Timothy 6:20).

Conclusion: This gospel is God's drawing and persuasive power (John 6:44,45; 12:32). Please read thoughtfully the following quote from Alexander Cruden: "The gospel is a revelation of the grace of God to fallen man through a Mediator. Or, it is a wise, and a holy, and gracious constitution of God, for by sending His own Son Jesus Christ in the flesh, to obey His law which man had broken, to make a proper atonement for sin by His death, and thus to procure the favor of God, and eternal happiness for all that believe, repent, and receive the gospel salvation." (Cruden's Concordance).

“Except Ye Repent”

“I tell you, nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3,5).

Repentance has been described as the most difficult of all commands to obey. Many find it hard to believe, to be baptized, to love others as self, etc., but to repent genuinely is difficult for every sinner, but so essential to salvation from past sins, as we shall see. Repentance is also difficult for many to understand. They confuse it with godly sorrow and reformation of life, which are related to repentance, but very different. Although it is mentioned frequently in the Bible, there are still many misunderstandings regarding it. In all its forms the word for repentance occurs 106 times. It is the fervent prayer of the present writer that we shall be able to dispel some of the misunderstanding.

Need and Importance of Repentance

Repentance on man's part pre-supposes sin. Sin is universal, therefore, repentance is universally necessary. Its importance is seen in the Bible depiction of sin — its nature (rebellion to God), its terribleness (spitting in God's face, as it were), and its punishment (eternal torment). Its importance is also revealed by its prominence in the preaching of God's messengers. Jonah preached repentance to the people of Nineveh (Jonah 3:4; Matthew 12:41). John the Baptist enjoined it in his preaching (Matthew 3:1,2); Jesus came to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32; 13:3,5); Peter bound it in his preaching as a prerequisite to baptism and remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 3:19); and Paul preached it as a condition of salvation (Acts 17:30). Jesus suf-

fered and died that repentance and remission of sins might be preached in His name (Luke 14:46,47). Its importance is further indicated by the joy there is in heaven over one sinner that repents (Luke 15:10). The only conclusion that we can reach from these premises is: that it is either repent or perish, turn or burn. The impenitent stand condemned (Romans 2:4,5; Matthew 12:41).

Repentance Defined

It might be well to approach first the subject negatively. **First, repentance is not fear.** Some preachers delight in relating deathbed tales, and other horror stories to induce repentance. Pharaoh was frightened by the plagues God sent on Egypt through Moses, but he never repented. Felix was terrified by Paul's preaching, but he did not repent (Acts 24:25 ASV). **Second, repentance is not regret.** Many think if they are sorry for their sins they have repented. Judas regretted that he betrayed Christ but he never repented. The word translated "repentance" in Matthew 27:3 with reference to Judas is another word and would have been better translated "regret" or "remorse". **Third, repentance is not reformation of life,** but reformation of life follows repentance. John the Baptist called upon those who submitted to his baptism to demonstrate the genuineness of their repentance by reforming their lives (Matthew 3:8). Reformation of life is the fruit of repentance. **Fourth, repentance is not prayer.** Repentance is usually associated with prayer at the so-called "mourner's bench". Praying is no guarantee of repentance. *"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination"* (Proverbs 28:9). **Finally, penance is not repentance.** Penance has been defined as "a sacrament consisting of contrition, confession, satisfaction and

absolution.” Bible repentance has no resemblance to penance. We must not confuse repentance with the things related to repentance. Repentance is to feel such sorrow for sin that it leads one to turn from it and seek forgiveness. It is a change of mind, or will, resulting in a change of life. In one of his timely parables Jesus said, *“A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented and went”* (Matthew 21:28,29). He changed his will, and when he changed his will he repented. This is the best definition of repentance to be found in all of Holy Writ. This same resolve was expressed by the prodigal son when he said, *“I will arise and go to my father”* (Luke 15:18). He changed his mind, or will respecting sin and his father. Jesus said the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. Jonah 3:10 says, *“They turned from their evil works.”* The change of mind which resulted in turning the Ninevites from their evil works was their repentance. In the light of these Bible definitions, how can anyone who reflects miss what it is?

Things Related to Scriptural Repentance

1. Right attitude toward sin, which is Godly sorrow. When one realizes he has offended God as a sinner and contemplates the goodness of God, he becomes sorry for his sins and this leads him to repentance (Romans 2:4). “Godly sorrow is produced by respect for God and His violated law, and produces a change of mind which induces reformation or change of life” (J. W. Brents).

2. Right attitude toward God, which necessitates returning to God. This is what the prodigal son did as a result of his

repentance (Luke 15:18). His attitude toward his father changed. Repentance results in one's turning his spiritual self from sin to God.

3. Right attitude toward self, which is the crucifixion of his pride and the humbling of himself. As a result of his repentance, the prodigal son told his father that he was "no more worthy" to be called his father's son (Luke 15:21). He was willing now to be his father's hired servant (Luke 15:19). What a reversal of attitude toward self!

4. Right attitude toward others — restitution. As an indication of his repentance the Philippian jailer washed the stripes he had put on Paul and Silas (Acts 16:33). Zacchaeus said that if he had taken anything from any man, he would restore it fourfold (Luke 19:8).

Genuine repentance, then, involves the right attitude in all these respects.

Order of Repentance and Faith

Because repentance is mentioned in the scriptures a few times before faith, many have erroneously concluded that man must repent before he can believe. Will this stand under the search light of God's word? In Hebrews 11:6 the writer states that without faith it is impossible to please God. If repentance precedes faith, it is without faith, and is not pleasing to God. Furthermore, how can one repent of sins before he believes he is a sinner? How did men ever get the order reversed? In all the examples of conversion mentioned in the book of Acts, faith always precedes repentance. The theory of repentance before faith grows out of the Calvinistic doctrine of total hereditary

depravity with repentance as a direct gift from God. This is completely contrary to the teaching of the Bible and every principle of reason and common sense. *“Yea, let God be found true, and every man a liar”* (Romans 3:4).

Conclusion

Repentance is in God’s plan of salvation. The impenitent stand condemned (Matthew 12:41; Romans 2:4,5). God’s attitude towards repentance is that all men should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). This attitude is expressed in the sweetest invitation that ever fell on mortal ears (Matthew 11:28-30). But He commanded men that they should all everywhere repent (Acts 17:30). Repent or perish; turn or burn!

The Father in the Home

God has given man the predominant role in the family. Paul states this was for two reasons. First, because of man's priority in creation (1 Timothy 2:13). Second, because Eve was deceived in the Edenic transgression (1 Timothy 2:14). Each member of the family has a part to contribute toward the fullest happiness and blessedness in the home, but the man's, as husband and father, is the predominant part. He sets the tone morally, spiritually, and psychologically in the home.

Head of the Wife and Home

To insure stability, peace, and order every institution must have a head. God has put this responsibility on man in the home (Ephesians 5:23). This does not mean that he is to be a tyrant ruling the home with an iron hand. Marriage is a partnership and should be so recognized by a husband who loves his wife as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). Every Christian husband's prayer should be that expressed by M. W. Caruthers in the following poem:

“Lord, may there be no moment in my life,
When she regrets that she became my wife.
Help me to do the utmost that I can,
To prove myself her measure of a man.
Since years must bring to all their load of care,
Let us together every burden bear,
And when death beckons one to its path along,
May not the two of us be parted long!”

He is the Provider

Just as Christ's love provided for the church, man is the primary provider in the home. This is normally taken as a matter of course, but it is divinely enjoined. Paul says that he who provides not for his own is worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8). Non-support is one of the major causes of divorce. To affirm that man is the primary provider is not to say that the wife cannot help provide for the family, if she does not neglect her duties to be the primary home-maker (Titus 2:3-5). God in His wisdom ordained that the father should be the primary provider, and the woman's abandonment of her domestic duties for a few more luxuries in life has greatly contributed to the breakdown of the home in our society.

Be a Good Example

It is the father who gives the first impressions of manhood to the children in life, therefore, the right kind of father must be the right kind of man. The Christian father is under special obligation to be true, honorable and clean. There are too many prodigal fathers, who are not the examples they should be. First of all, he should be the spiritual leader of the family and see that his children keep the way of Jehovah as Abraham did (Genesis 18:19). Many fathers provide well the physical necessities of their families but fail to provide the spiritual dimension.

Fathers should be the example of creating joy and happiness in the home, rather than being churlish, surly, ill-bred, and just a plain boor. It requires more than food and drink to make a home. To creature a happy home requires sacrifice, unselfishness, and determination to make life as pleasant as possible for the other members of the family. Circumstances in life are not always

ideal. The father cannot always find a pleasant job; sickness may characterize the home, etc., but the father should exert extraordinary effort to be cheerful and optimistic. He should be understanding of female weaknesses. The attitude taken by the father may turn night into day.

The Real Lover Is the Father

If there is any one word that covers a father's duties, it is the word "love". Paul said, "*Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loved the church*" (Ephesians 5:25). The husband is to love and cherish the wife as he does himself (Ephesians 5:28,29). Husbands should study Ephesians 5:22,23 prayerfully, noting the analogy of the marriage relationship to that of Christ and His church. Many wives have been cheated because their husbands did not "love and cherish" them as they are enjoined in Holy Writ.

A good father will love his children as a heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127:3). This involves more than being a meal ticket and writing a check to pay a department store account. He must love them by spending some time with them. Solomon said, "*A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame*" (Proverbs 29:15). This also applies to the father. He must also love them enough to discipline them when they need it, as God does His children (Proverbs 3:12; 23:13,14). He must love them enough to teach them respect for those in authority. If children are not taught respect for duly constituted authority in the home, they will not respect it in the school or society.

Conclusion

"God has decreed that man should be the head of the house.

He has decreed man should love his wife more than any creature on earth, that he should provide teaching, training, and discipline for the children in the home. It matters not how much money a man makes in his life or how high up the social ladder he climbs, if a man fails his wife as husband and his children as a father, he is a failure. He is not fulfilling the duties and responsibilities that God gave him. He is not a man as God would have him to be” (M. R. McKnight).

Justifying Ourselves

“But he (a scribe), willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29).

We are using “justify” in the sense of “to free from blame; declare guiltless; acquit; absolve” (Webster). It is an effort to put one’s self in the right when he is in the wrong. This has been a common practice and weakness of mankind from the beginning. Adam justified his sin by blaming it on his wife and Eve blamed it on the serpent (Genesis 3). Saul, the first king of Israel, blamed his disobedience on the people (1 Samuel 15:21). No group in the time of Christ attempted to do this more than the Scribes and Pharisees (Luke 10:29; 16:15). Read these passages.

Those who attempt to justify themselves judge by a different standard than God’s standard of judgment. Do you have a self-justifying and self-excusing heart? How would you complete the sentence by using Luke’s preface: *“He being willing to justify himself said,”*? We suggest in what follows what many say in completing that sentence.

1. “If I am sincere in what I believe, it does not matter what I believe.” This sounds so right that some think that it needs no refuting. But we ask: **in what** are you sincere? This whole question turns on the object of our sincerity. If a mother gives her child, who has croup, iodine sincerely thinking that it is cough syrup (which actually happened), does her sincerity change iodine into cough syrup? What effect does sincerity have in such a case? Was not Saul of Tarsus sincere when He was making havoc of the church by persecuting Christians (Acts 23:1;

26:9; 1 Timothy 1:12,13)? Did his sincerity make what he was doing right? Solomon said, *"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12). He also said, *"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool"* (Proverbs 26:28). Will not the people that Jesus described as arguing with Him at the judgment have been sincere? But will they make it to heaven (Matthew 7:22,23)? Sincerely believing religious error does not change it into truth.

Sincerity is not to be disparaged. Without sincerity life is but a mockery, but in **what** are we sincere? The concept that sincerity alone makes everything right puts a premium on ignorance. Henry Ward Beecher, the famous Congregationalist preacher, said, "But let a man sincerely believe that seed planted without plowing is as good as seed planted with plowing, that January is as favorable for seed sowing as April; and that cockle seed will produce as good as wheat, and is it so?"

2. "I am as good or better than some in the church, so why should I come into the church?" But is this not using the wrong standard of comparison? Comparing ourselves by others, there may be some truth in this rationalizing. But are others to be the standards by which we measure ourselves? Such rationalizing does not touch the point at all! The comparison should be between the soul and God; between a person himself and Christ. Comparing ourselves by others is man's most dangerous practice. By doing this one can always justify himself. This was the mistake that the self-righteous Pharisee made, who with the publican, went into the temple to pray (Luke 18:9-14). Paul said, *"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves by themselves,*

are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12). This is just another way of justifying one's self for not coming into the church.

3. **"There is so much mystery in the Bible that I cannot understand it."** True, there are mysteries in the Bible, but has God made understanding those mysteries a condition of salvation? *"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law"* (Deuteronomy 29:29). What God has not clearly revealed is not an essential to salvation. And what He has revealed as conditions of salvation is not revealed in mysterious and ambiguous language. God, who created man with understanding, gave a revelation that is adapted to man's understanding. Is this rationalization not a justification for not making any effort to study and understand what God intended for a man to understand? Have we seriously considered the implications of saying the Bible cannot be understood — how such reflects upon God? If He could have given a revelation that we could understand but say He did not is to impeach His goodness. Or to imply that He was able to do so, but did not, is not such an impeachment of His power? Or does it not impeach His wisdom to imply that He was not wise enough to give man a book adapted to his needs? Would not God be inconsistent to require man to study something that cannot be understood (2 Timothy 2:15)?

4. **"There are so many churches that I do not know which one is right."** True, there are so many churches and that is confusing. But is God the cause of the confusion? *"God is not the author of confusion, but of peace"* (1 Corinthians 14:33). Has God left us without any means of identifying the true church? Just as God gave Moses a pattern for the tabernacle in

the Old Testament (Hebrews 8:5), He has given us a pattern in the New Testament for the church which He authorizes. It can be identified by its founder (Matthew 16:18); the place and time of its establishment (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8); its foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11); its organization (Ephesians 1:22,33; Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1); its plan of salvation (Acts 2:38; 16:31; Mark 16:16); and its system of worship (John 4:24; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19). So the above rationalization is a justification for not diligently searching the scriptures to determine which church is right.

5. **“Rather than obey the gospel I will put my trust in the mercy of God at last.”** This amounts to saying that one will ignore the doctrine of Christ and bypass the church purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). But Jesus said, *“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21). **Where is mercy dispensed in God’s scheme of redemption?** Is it not by the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and mediation of Christ? Where is the consistency of trusting in His mercy at last rather than trusting in His mercy at first? While we live in this world is the time of mercy. When we stand before Christ in judgment at the last day, the day of mercy will have passed. *“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, today is the day of salvation”* (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Conclusion

Do you have a justifying or self-excusing heart when it comes to the matters of attending the services faithfully, giving liberally, visiting the sick, teaching others, restoring delinquents, and being ready unto every good work?

Instrumental Music and the Pioneers

In the religious context, “pioneers” usually refers to the pioneer preachers of the Restoration Movement in America which began in the late 1700s and early 1800s. This would include such men as James O’Kelly, Abner Jones, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, and Thomas and Alexander Campbell.

By the “Voice of the Pioneers” we do not mean that they are the final authority in religious matters, but it refers to their Biblical stance. Their plea was to call men back to the Bible in all matters of religious faith and practice. In some religious circles the pioneer preachers of the Restoration Movement have been misrepresented by claims that they supported certain religious practices which they did not espouse. This is especially true regarding the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship. We shall let some of them speak for themselves later in this article.

The Original Pioneers

The original pioneers of our faith were the inspired apostles of Christ. Any doctrine or practice which cannot be supported by their authority has no divine authority to support it. If they are silent regarding any practice, that is evidence that it cannot be done by divine authority and sanction (1 Peter 4:11). Thomas Campbell coined the slogan that “we will speak where the scriptures speak and we will be silent where the scriptures are silent.” This slogan is eminently scriptural and has been espoused by this

writer all of his life. Without this attitude the flood gates are open to practice anything they want to in worship and religious practice. To presume on the silence of the Scriptures is to be guilty of the sin of presumption, which is a most serious sin. To say something is authorized because it is not specifically forbidden is to be guilty of the same sin that Saul, the first king of Israel, Nadab and Abihu, and Uzzah committed (1 Samuel 15; Leviticus 10:1,2; 2 Samuel 6:3-8). And they suffered the wrath of God's punishment for their presumption.

What kind of music did the apostles authorize to be used in worship? We shall let them speak for themselves. *"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:18,19; emphasis mine, WDH). *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"* (Colossians 3:16). *"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name"* (Hebrews 13:15). Singing is specified in all these passages. Just as "gopher wood" in the instructions to Noah for building the ark (Genesis 6:14-22) excluded every other kind of wood, so singing (vocal music) excludes every other kind of music. If the apostles had said "make music", it would have been generic and we could have any kind of music, but how could they have made it more specific? Therefore, all those who respect the authority of Christ and His apostles limit their worship in praise to singing.

What Say Early Restoration Leaders?

Alexander Campbell, an illustrious leader of the Restoration

Movement in America, had this to say: "That all persons who have no spiritual discernment, taste or relish for spiritual meditations, consolations and sympathies of renewed hearts, should call for such aid is natural. Those who have real devotion or spirituality in them and whose animal nature flags under the oppression of the church service, I think that instrumental music would not only be a desideratum (the thing most desired, WDH), but an essential prerequisite to fire up their souls even to animal devotion. But I presume to all spiritually minded Christians, such aids would be as a cow bell in a concert" (Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, p. 366). J. W. McGarvey, one of the greatest scholars of his time, said: "It is manifest that we cannot adopt the practice (the use of mechanical instruments) without abandoning the obvious and only ground on which a restoration of Primitive Christianity can be accomplished, or on which the plea for it can be maintained" (in his tract, "What Shall We Do About The Organ?"). F. G. Allen, one of the early preachers of the Restoration Movement, wrote: "Singing, as an act of worship in the religion of Christ, is either of human or of divine origin. If it is of human origin and became a recognized act of acceptable worship, then it is true that man is the author of a part of his own worship. Then if he can be the author of one part, why not another part? If one part, why not the whole? If all or any of this is true, then on what ground could Paul condemn 'will-worship', or 'self-chosen worship'" (Colossians 2:22)? God does not allow men to choose **what** they will worship, or **how** they will worship. If we may bring our songs and offer them to God in worship, in the name of Jesus Christ, when Christ never appointed a worship of that kind, then we may bring our play and our dance and everything that we may choose, and offer them to God in worship in the name of Christ. Hence, if we accept the position that

singing is an acceptable act of worship, and is of human origin, we simply cut loose from the divine legislation in matters of worship, and delight our souls in a religion of our own formation. We are compelled, therefore, to conclude that singing in worship is of divine origin” (*Old Path Guide* Vol 3, 1881, p. 22). Moses E. Lard, another early restoration preacher, said: “What defense can be urged for the introduction of instrumental music? The answer which thunders into my ear from every page of the New Testament is, none! Did Christ ever appoint it? Did the apostles ever sanction it? Or did any of the primitive churches ever use it? Never” (Lard’s Quarterly, Vol. 1, 1864, p. 330).

Conclusion

Even if these pioneers were not opposed to it, our final appeal must always be to Christ and His apostles. These men opposed its use because they found no scriptural authority for it. In the final analysis, when asked why churches of Christ do not use mechanical instruments of music in worship, the simple answer is that there is no authority for it in the New Testament.

Growing to Maturity in Love

If there is any area in which we should be striving for maturity, it is in the area of love. This is enjoined by the Holy Spirit in numerous passages in the New Testament. Paul said that he prayed for the Philippians that they might abound more and more in love (Philippians 1:9). To abound means to be plentiful or exist in large amounts. To the Thessalonians he said, "*And the Lord make you increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men*" (1 Thessalonians 3:12). How many professing Christians are really abounding in their love toward other Christians? If we were, the world would be taking more notice of us. This characterized the early Christians to the extent that even uninspired historians made note of it. One of them was so impressed by their love for one another that he exclaimed, "Oh, how these Christians love one another!"

Our Model to Follow

In growing to maturity in love, we have a perfect example to follow — that example is Christ. Peter affirmed that He left us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). This certainly includes His example of love. Paul said, "*Be ye imitators of me, even as I am of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 11:1 ASV). Certainly this would embrace His example of love. It is the conviction of this writer that He loved as no other ever has, but we should be striving daily to reach the level of love that He exemplified. This naturally evokes the question, **How did He love?** We shall consider several aspects of His love toward which we should be growing.

Loving the Unlovable

Since Jesus was God in the flesh, anything that is said about God's love would be true of Christ. Paul says, "*But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). Sin is an insult to God — a spitting in His face as it were, which made man unlovable, but Christ loved us anyway. When one seriously contemplates the suffering Christ endured and the shameful death He died as though he were criminal, in spite of man's unlovableness, we should be overwhelmed by such love.

To imitate His example we have to learn to love the unlovable. Many people are unlovable in their ways, including brethren, but we must love them anyway! John said, "*He who loveth God, loveth his brother also*" (1 John 4:21). The same apostle said, "*He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*" (1 John 4:20). If God could love me with all my sins, surely I can love my brother whose ways might be very unlovable. Peter said, "*Love covereth a multitude of sins*" (1 Peter 4:8). Lord, help us all to be more blind to our brother's faults and more aware that ours may be just as glaring and pronounced as his! Jesus said that we are to "*love one another; even as I have loved you!*" (John 13:35). So His love for us is to be the measure of our love for others.

Loving Our Enemies

No one has ever contended that this is easy to do, but growing toward maturity in love requires it. Jesus on the cross prayed for the forgiveness of His executioners (Luke 23:34). This death for His enemies made it possible for us to be reconciled to God. Paul said, "*For if, when we were enemies we were reconciled to*

God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10). Jesus Himself said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). But He laid down His life for His enemies. No greater love has ever been shown!

Jesus introduced a new dimension of love when He said, *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:43-48). The perfection enjoined here is that of loving our enemies as God loves His enemies.*

Mature Love

In the great Bible chapter on love (1 Corinthians 13), Paul describes mature love both negatively and positively. We want to quote it from Phillips New Testament in Modern English: *“This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience — it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive; it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage, it is not touchy, it does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all*

men when truth prevails. Love knows no limits to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen.”

Someone unknown to this writer has made the following application of 1 Corinthians 13. “Love keeps on loving when the other person does not love back. Love does not get jealous when the next door neighbor can afford a new car. Love does not show off to the next door neighbor when he can afford a new car. Love is not rude to the salesman at the door. Love is gracious when the line he is standing in for an hour closes when he reaches the counter. Love is not happy when his lazy partner at work finally gets laid off. Love keeps on loving even when embarrassed by his teenager’s hair, music, or friends. Love is not thwarted by ten hours of screaming kids, soiled diapers, dirty dishes, and a perpetual mess in the living room. Love never fails. Whether there be knowledge of Greek or Hebrew, he’ll eventually forget it. Whether kids be in a Christian school, they will graduate. Whether he lays by in store every first day of the week, his wallet will be stolen.” It should be our unwavering aim in life as Christians to reach this maturity in our love.

The Baptism that Saves

No Bible subject, perhaps, is as controversial as that of baptism. There is controversy over whether it is essential to salvation or not; over its purpose; and over its action. There is agreement that it is a Bible subject, and since it is, the problems connected therewith must be settled by every accountable person. The importance of the subject is indicated by the fact that with the exception of the Quakers all churches require it as a condition of membership. Therefore, if one ever expects to become a member of any church, he must submit himself to what that church calls baptism.

The Baptism of the Bible

Several baptisms are spoken of in the Bible — baptism unto Moses, John's baptism, the baptism of suffering, of the Spirit, of fire, and the baptism set forth by Christ and taught and practiced by His apostles. We shall note each of them briefly.

Baptism unto Moses (1 Corinthians 10:1,2), involved a multitude at one time, including only Israelites, and occurred only one time.

John's baptism was a preparation for the coming of the Messiah, and involved Jews only, and was not acceptable after the Pentecost of Acts 2 (Matthew 3; Acts 19:1-6). The baptism of John could not be the "one baptism" for which Paul contended (Ephesians 4:5).

Holy Spirit baptism, a promise of Christ to His apostles, came upon the apostles (Acts 2:1-4) and the household of

Cornelius (Acts 10:44-47). How do we know this promise was limited to the apostles, with one exception? From Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14 we learn without a doubt that only the apostles were present when they were promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit in John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 1:8. There are only two cases of Holy Spirit baptism on record. First, on the apostles as promised on the first Pentecost following the death, burial, resurrection, ascension and coronation of Christ at God's right hand (Acts 2). Second, on Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-47; 11:15). The reasons for its coming on Cornelius and his household are stated in Acts 11:1-15. Holy Spirit baptism was neither promised to, nor received by, others. It could not be the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5.

Another baptism mentioned in the Bible is that of fire (Matthew 3:11). But the very next verse explains what it is — the punishment of eternal fire. This is not a baptism to be desired, as it is reserved for the wicked. It does not refer to the tongues of fire which sat upon the apostles on Pentecost. This baptism could not be the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5.

What Baptism Is Not

Viewing a thing from the negative standpoint is a good way to understand and appreciate exactly what it is. Viewing baptism negatively should help us understand it better. What baptism is **not**:

1. Baptism is **not** merely a physical act, but is a gesture of the heart (Romans 6:16,17; Acts 18:8).
2. Baptism is **not** the putting away of fleshly filth, but is an answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21).

3. **Baptism is not a church ordinance, but is a condition of salvation from alien sins (Acts 2:38).**
4. **Baptism is not a christening ordinance, but is a condition of salvation from alien sins (Acts 2:38).**
5. **Baptism is not a Christian duty, but is a condition of becoming a Christian (Galatians 3:26,27).**
6. **Baptism is not a work of man's righteousness, but a command of God's righteousness (Titus 3:5).**
7. **Baptism is not an outward sign of an inward grace, but is an act of obedience that washes away sins (Acts 22:16; 2:37,38).**
8. **Baptism is not an act performed to show the world we are saved, but is an act of obedience complied with in order to be saved (Acts 2:38). (The idea of baptism to show the world we are saved is about like washing our feet to show (prove) we are Americans, or taking a bath to show that we have been healed of an ulcerated stomach.)**
9. **Baptism is not sprinkling or pouring, but is a burial and resurrection (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:4,5).**

Baptism and Salvation

Six different times baptism and salvation are mentioned together in the same passages in the New Testament and each time baptism is mentioned before salvation or its equivalent. We will note them separately.

Mark 16:16
Acts 2:38

Baptism and salvation
Repentance, baptism, and

Romans 6:4	washing away sins
Galatians 3:27	Baptism and newness of life
1 Peter 3:21	Baptism and putting on Christ
1 Corinthians 12:13	Baptism and salvation
	Baptism and the one saved body

Did the Holy Spirit anticipate that there would be those later who would teach that one is saved before he is baptized, and so inspired the writers of the New Testament to deny it by emphasizing the order of baptism and salvation? What other conclusion can the honest reader draw from the above passages on the scriptural order of baptism and salvation?

Some Things Baptism Does

1. It puts one into Christ (Galatians 3:26,27).
2. It puts one into relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19,20 ASV).
3. It is for (unto, or in order to) the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
4. It saves the penitent believer (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21).
5. It puts one into the Kingdom of God (John 3:5; Colossians 1:13).
6. Baptism is predicated on faith, repentance, and confession (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:37). **Baptism alone** will not save from past sins or take one to heaven but no accountable person can be saved unless he is baptized.

Conclusion

Baptism is an appropriative act, as are faith, repentance, and confession; it is not a meritorious act. Christ's death is the meritorious factor in our salvation. Faith, repentance, confession, and baptism simply appropriate the benefits of His death to our souls. Have you obeyed the Lord in baptism? If not, why not?

We Are Servants of God

One of the most common metaphors used in the New Testament to describe the Christian's relationship to Christ is that of master and slave. Paul's most common self-designation was that of a bond servant or slave of Christ (Galatians 1:10; Romans 1:1). In the Greek New Testament the word that is used is *doulos*. It was the most abject and servile term used by the Greeks to denote a slave. In ancient times slaves were branded with the master's name and a sign to indicate whose possession they were. Ownership, then, is the primary significance of the metaphor.

The master-slave concept of our relationship to Christ has been overlooked by many professing Christians. It is not an enforced slavery, but a voluntary servitude. Paul said to the Roman Christians, "*Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants (doulos) unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness*" (Romans 6:16 ASV). By choice we can be either the servants of Christ or sin. Jesus said, "*Everyone that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin*" (John 8:34).

Since Christians are servants of God, we should learn how to be good servants. Only good servants will be rewarded. What does the New Testament teach about how to be good servants?

1. A good servant is obedient. This is the primary duty of a good servant. A good servant of Christ is one who has been obedient to the primary conditions of becoming a servant. Paul said to the Roman Christians, "*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form*

of doctrine that was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:17,18). Peter describes this as obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:22,23). Christ left us an example of obedience to follow (Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 5:8,9).

A good servant obeys **all** of his master’s commands. So good servants of Christ obey His command to assemble (Hebrews 10:25); His command to remember Him every first day of the week in the observance of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7); His command to lay by in store on the first day of the week as they have prospered and as they have purposed in their hearts (1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9:7); and His command to preach the gospel to the whole world (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16). How can we claim to be servants of God and not be concerned about evangelizing the world? We may have failed more miserably in our failure to do this as God’s servants than in any other way.

2. A good servant is diligent. He is desirous of knowing his master’s will that he may be a good servant. For this reason he is a student of the Word. Paul’s instructions to Timothy were, *“Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15 ASV).

A good servant is diligent in his service. Paul said, *“In diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord”* (Romans 12:11 ASV). This diligence is a must if we would enter into that rest prepared for us (Hebrews 4:1,11). Slothful servants will be cast into outer darkness (Matthew 25:26,30). Who would keep a servant who loafed on the job half of the time?

Being diligent is essential to making our calling and election

sure. Peter said, *“Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things (add the aforementioned graces) ye shall never fall”* (2 Peter 1:10).

3. A good servant is humble. Being humble he is submissive. Paul said to the Galatian Christians, *“Through love be servants one to another”* (Galatians 5:13). This is the Lord’s formula for true greatness. He said, *“Whosoever would be first among you, let him be your servant (doulos)”* (Matthew 20:27).

What does this mean? It means taking the lead in showing deference to one another. Deference is yielding one’s own judgment or preference to that of another. We must give each other priority in honor. Peter said, *“Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble”* (1 Peter 5:5). Speaking in the imperative Peter lays down the law of Christian humility. Peter may have based this injunction on his memories of Jesus’ action when He humbled Himself to wash the disciples’ feet (John 13:4,5). *“Jesus once put on the slave’s apron and undertook the humblest of all duties, the duty of washing His disciples’ feet; so we too must in all things put on the apron of humility in the service of Christ and of our fellowmen; but that very apron of humility will become the garment of honor for us, for it is he who is the servant of all who is greatest in the Kingdom of God”* (William Barclay).

4. A good servant is courageous. After Moses had been God’s servant for 40 years, Joshua was chosen as his successor and admonished by God to be strong and very courageous as God’s servant (Joshua 1:6,7). Peter admonished believers to add to their faith, virtue (courage) (2 Peter 1:5).

“As the soldier of an earthly leader is to act in all things

according to certain rules laid down in a code drawn up for the purpose, so the Christian soldier has his code drawn up for him by God himself, and revealed to him in the oracles of truth. This code he is to study with diligence, that he may conform himself to it in every particular. **This will require all the courage that any man can possess**" (Emphasis mine, WDH) (Preacher's Homiletic Commentary).

5. A good servant is devoted to his master. In ancient Israel, if a servant was so devoted to his master that he did not want to go free, a permanent mark could be put on his body to identify him as his master's servant (Exodus 21:1-6). In a very true sense one bears the marks of the master he serves. Paul said he bore on his body the marks of his campaigns and sufferings for Christ — the brand of his slavery to Christ (Galatians 6:17). He sought only to please his master (Galatians 1:10). If he had been out to curry the favor of men, he would not have had his scars. These marks were the final and conclusive proof that his one aim was to serve Christ, not to please men. As R. C. H. Lenski said, "He declares that he had ever shown himself a 'slave' of the Lord, one who submitted his own will completely to his divine Lord and took all orders and directions from Him alone."

Conclusion

Do you as a professing servant of Christ have these characteristics? Are you truly a servant of Christ? To be His servant is to be a king. To be His slave is the way to perfect freedom (John 8:36; Romans 6:18,22).

"To the work! To the work!
We are servants of God,
Let us follow the path

Our master has trod;
With the balm of His counsel
Our strength to renew,
Let us do with our might
What our hands find to do.”
— Fannie J. Crosby

Following Christ in Daily Living

Following Christ is what Christianity is all about. There are numberless blessings that result from following His example and teaching, and we should never forget these. However, we should also remember that these blessings involve corresponding responsibilities. We can never really enjoy the blessings, which come by faith and obedience, until we fulfill the responsibilities. It is a great privilege to receive Christ by obeying the primary conditions of the gospel, but after receiving Him, it is our responsibility to abide in Him and to follow Him in every relationship in life (Job 8:31,32; 15:1-8). In whatever situation we find ourselves in life we should ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do in this situation?" Until we have resolved to follow Him in life, we are not His true followers. We shall study several of His characteristics that we are to follow.

He Came to Serve

"For the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matthew 20:28). "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). His life had real meaning to it, because He served others. He came to do the will of another (John 6:38). He prayed for others (Luke 23:34; John 17:20,21). He died for others (Hebrews 2:9), and He is the Savior of others (Hebrews 5:8,9). He was so interesting to others because He was so interested in others. "Others, Lord, yes, others — Let this my motto be, Help me to live for others — That I may live like Thee" (C. D. Meigs).

Think as He Thought

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). Christ always did right because He thought right, and the Scriptures state in many places that one's thinking determines his conduct (Proverbs 23:7; Matthew 12:34; 15:19). Christ's thoughts were thoughts of obedience always (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). To follow Him we must be striving to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4,5). There are many avenues available to us to help us think as Jesus did, such as studying the Bible, profiting from all the preaching that is possible, daily prayer, and regular worship. It is also a valuable aid to think on things that are **true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report** (Philippians 4:8). It is an immeasurable tragedy that so few professing Christians ever come to think like the One they are supposed to be following. Who controls **your** thinking?

He Lived Above Sin

"For He (God) hath made Him (Christ) to be sin (Lit. a sin offering) for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Although we can never attain it because of ignorance and weakness of the flesh, sinless perfection should be the aim of every Christian. A well known gospel preacher of a past generation frequently affirmed that any professing Christian who does not aim to live above sin is a **willful sinner**. The practice of justifying and excusing sin on the grounds of being human like others or that it is a characteristic of human nature to sin is an admission of **willful sin**. In appealing to his readers to strive to live above sin, the writer of Hebrews cited Christ as his example, who is our sym-

pathetic High Priest because He was tempted in all points as we are, yet **without sin** (Hebrews 4:15). As another writer said, "It is not failure, but **low aim**, that is crime." Even Peter in admonishing Christians to follow in the steps of Christ, added: "*Who did not sin*" (1 Peter 2:21,22). No, we cannot live above sin, but to follow Christ in daily living, we **must be striving to live above it**.

Give as He Gave

No other wayfarer to this planet ever gave as much as He did. He gave Himself for us (Titus 2:14). He gave Himself for His church (Ephesians 5:25). What He gave is beautifully portrayed by William McCormick in the following lines:

"He gave His head to the crown of thorns.
He gave His back to the cruel lash.
He gave His cheeks to those who smote Him.
He gave His face to rude, dirty human spittle.
He gave His shoulders to be draped with the robe of mock
human royalty.
He gave His clothes to His murderers.
He gave His mother to the beloved apostle John.
He gave His hands and feet to be transfixed with nails to the
accursed tree.
He gave His body for the life of the world.
He gave His spirit to God.
He gave Himself, He gave everything, for me."

To follow Him in daily living we must give ourselves body, soul, and spirit. "*I implore you by the mercy of God to offer your*

very selves,” said Paul (Romans 12:1 NEB). This was responsible for the liberal giving of the Macedonian Christians (2 Corinthians 8:5). The spirit of giving is **caught** as well as **taught**. We need to catch it from Christ.

Growing as He Grew

Following Jesus in growth requires balanced growth. “*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man*” (Luke 2:52). His growth was not lopsided, but balanced. Many of His professed followers grow in nearly every way, except that which is most important — spiritually. Peter admonished babes in Christ to lay aside malice, guile, hypocrisies, envyings, evil speakings, etc. and desire the spiritual milk of the word that they might grow thereby unto salvation (1 Peter 2:1,2). The writer of Hebrews reprimanded his Hebrew readers because of their failure to grow to spiritual maturity (Hebrews 5:12-14). Many of Christ’s followers are still on a milk diet, because they have not grown in grace and in knowledge, as Peter admonished (2 Peter 3:18). We should not be spiritual “runts” all of our lives, who can be tossed about by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 2:14-16). This was a basic failure of the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). Many of our problems in the church grow out of our spiritual immaturity. Christ’s challenge to His followers is to grow as He grew. Are you trying to meet the challenge?

Conclusion

We should strive daily to live as Jesus lived. We should partake of His mind and spirit or divine nature (Philippians 2:5; 1 Peter 2:21; 2 Peter 1:4). How would we live if Jesus were our neighbor just across the street? He is even closer than that if He

dwells in us as Christians (2 Corinthians 13:5,6; Ephesians 3:17). Would we worship as we do if Jesus were sitting on the front seat? He is there, but not in person! What a challenge our Lord has given us, to live as He lived! Only those who accept the challenge to follow Him all the way will make it to heaven.

“Preach the Word”

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:1,2).

Preaching has always been in God’s plan of communicating with man. Before the flood, Noah was “*a preacher of righteousness*” (2 Peter 2:5). Jonah was commanded to preach to the wicked people of Nineveh (Jonah 1:2; 2:2). All of the Old Testament prophets were God’s preachers for that age. They were more “forth-tellers” than they were “foretellers”, although they did both. John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea as the forerunner of Christ to prepare the way for His coming (Matthew 3:1; Luke 3:3). Christ sent the twelve and the seventy to preach repentance to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to prepare for the establishment of His kingdom which was “at hand” (Matthew 10:5-7). In the present age, God has suspended the salvation of the world on preaching (John 6:44,45). These verses state in unmistakable language that no one can come to God until he has been taught. This involves preaching, since it is a method of teaching.

A Most Solemn Charge

To impress Timothy with the seriousness and solemnity of the charge Paul was giving him, Paul called upon God and Christ as his witnesses (see text). This is the most solemn charge ever delivered to mortal man or that was ever clothed in human lan-

guage. This should impress us with its weight and importance. It is a reiteration of the universal commission Jesus gave His disciples just before He ascended (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46,47). It is backed by all of the authority of heaven (Matthew 28:18). My authority for preaching the word does not come from any man or group of men, but from Christ in His word. No one has to be licensed to preach the word, but he needs to remember the woe that is pronounced against anyone who does not preach the word (1 Corinthians 9:16; Galatians 1:8,9).

Content of Preaching

Our text says, **“Preach the Word”**. This definitely puts a limit on the content of preaching which God approves. We are not to preach social change, philosophies of men, political issues, or the doctrines and commandments of men, but only that which is revealed in God’s word. When the church at Jerusalem was scattered by persecution, they *“went everywhere preaching the word”* (Acts 8:4). As a result of the scattering, Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *“preached Christ unto them”* (Acts 8:5). Thus, preaching Christ and preaching the word are the same. Luke later says, *“When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women”* (Acts 8:12). So Philip in preaching the word preached about the authority of Christ and things pertaining to His rule. Paul said he preached the cross of Christ as the power of God unto salvation (1 Corinthians 1:18,23).

God’s saving and converting power is now in the word and in the word **alone**. Paul said, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that*

believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:23,24). None of the apostles of Christ ever said the written word of God is a "dead letter", but they affirmed the opposite. In Hebrews 4:12, the inspired writer says, "*For the word of God is quick (living, ASV), and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.*" But someone says, "In 2 Corinthians 3:6 Paul says the letter kills." Friend, the context shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that Paul is referring to the Old Covenant. This has been one of the most badly abused and misapplied passages in the New Testament. To take passages out of their context is to do violence to those passages. And we must make the word of God harmonize, or else the critics of God's word will say we do not believe it either. How can 2 Corinthians 3:6 harmonize with Hebrews 4:12 if they both refer to the written revelation of God? To do so is to involve one's self in a hopeless contradiction.

The idea that before one can understand the word that it has to be illuminated or discerned for you either by the Spirit's operation on the word or on the sinner grew out of the Calvinistic doctrine of "irresistible grace" and "inherited depravity", none of which is taught in the Bible, but found only in the creeds and articles of faith of most denominations. As for me and my house, we will "*let God be found true, and every man a liar*" (Romans 3:4).

The Manner of Preaching

In our text Paul charged Timothy to preach the word "*instantly in season, out of season.*" "Instant" carries the idea of readiness. "In season and out of season" carries the idea of being opportune and inopportune. God's word is to be proclaimed when the time is favorable and opportune, and when the circum-

stances seem unfavorable. There is no closed season on preaching the word.

Paul also charged Timothy to *“reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long suffering, and doctrine.”* “Reprove” is from the same word as “convict”. Conviction of sin, then, is to be brought about by the preaching of the word. The Spirit uses the preached word to accomplish this (John 16:8; Ephesians 6:17). To pray and to expect conviction of sin independent of the word is to expect that which will never happen. Paul had just said in 2 Timothy 3:16,17 that the Scriptures furnish us completely for reproof. To teach that the Holy Spirit now operates independent of the word is the Devil’s lie.

“Rebuke” needs no definition. It means to censure or reprimand. This may be the dimension that is sorely lacking in our preaching today, and may be the reason more sinners, in and out of the church, are not brought to repentance. To the same young evangelist, Timothy, Paul said, *“Those that sin rebuke before all, that others may also fear”* (1 Timothy 5:20). The element of rebuke has almost disappeared from preaching in these modern times.

“Exhort” is the final dimension of preaching the word enjoined by Paul. It simply means to beseech, entreat, and to admonish. After people have been taught the word and brought under the conviction of sin, they need to be exhorted to obey it. As preachers of the word, we need to be exhorters as well as proclaimers. Titus was instructed to do this *“with all authority”* (Titus 2:15). Peter did this with telling effect on the Pentecost of Acts 2 (Acts 2:40). We need to keep our preaching balanced with all of these ingredients.

Conclusion

God no longer communicates directly with man, but through the written revelation of the Bible only. He has specified **what** we are to preach and the **manner** in which it is to be done. What a fearful responsibility falls upon those who attempt to preach the word! If we fail to do the preaching God has commanded us to do, a fearful woe is pronounced against us (1 Corinthians 9:16; Galatians 1:8,9). A preacher's duties are summarized in God's instructions to Ezekiel, one of His preachers for that age, when He said, "*Hear the word of my mouth, and warn them from Me...if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou has delivered thy soul*" (Ezekiel 33:7-9).

What the Bible Teaches About the New Birth

No Bible subject, perhaps, is as badly misunderstood and perverted as much as that of the new birth. It is often presented by denominational preachers as a mysterious experience — a better-felt-than-told feeling — which you know happens but which you cannot understand or explain. John 3:8 is the stock scripture that is used to prove that it is a mystery which no one can understand, but the passage is perverted. It does not say, “So is the birth of the Spirit,” but “*So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.*” It simply teaches that the part of man which is born again is invisible, and it teaches nothing else.

It has become very fashionable in our day to say you are a “born-again” Christian. There never has been any other kind and there is no other kind now. If one is a Christian he is born again, and if one is born again, he is a Christian.

No one who believes the Bible denies the necessity of the new birth. Jesus settled the necessity of it in His conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:3,5). Since one cannot enter the kingdom (church) without the new birth, it is of the utmost importance that we understand what it is and whether we have undergone it or not. Too much is at stake to be deceived about it.

Two Necessary Actions of Birth

Although the new birth is not a literal birth (“born again” is figurative), there are two necessary actions in any kind of birth:

(1) a begetting, and (2) a delivery. There are also two elements involved in the new birth: (1) the Spirit, and (2) water (John 3:3-5). Jesus was not talking about two births in John 3:3-5, but **one birth of two elements**. Since we must be born of the Spirit, what is the Spirit's part in the new birth? The Spirit leads in the process (Romans 8:14), but He does not do this independent of the revelation He gave us. It was the Spirit who revealed the word, which He uses in bringing about the new birth. We are begotten by the word as revealed by the Spirit (James 1:18; 1 Corinthians 4:15; 1 Peter 1:23). Begetting comes in no other way in the new birth. It is not by a direct operation of the Spirit independent of the word.

Faith is essential to the new birth (John 1:11,12; Galatians 3:26), but how is faith produced? The Spirit gives faith through the word (Romans 10:17; Acts 15:7; Ephesians 1:13). *"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:26). Since faith is produced by believing the evidence of God's word and faith is essential to the new birth, there can be no new birth without the agency of God's word. One is begotten by the Spirit through the word when he is convicted and convinced that he is a sinner who needs to change or reverse his course of life. One is begotten, therefore, when he believes, *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God"* (1 John 5:1 ASV).

MUST BE BORN OF WATER AS LED BY THE SPIRIT

Being begotten is only one of the actions in the new birth. Jesus said, *"Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"* (John 3:5). We have already

learned what the Spirit's part is in the new birth. **But what is the birth of water?** Jesus was not referring to the physical birth when He used the word "water," but to a second birth. He said, "Except a **m-a-n**," not an unborn embryo, "*be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*" He was addressing a grown man who had already undergone the physical birth. Even Nicodemus understood Jesus to be referring to more than the physical birth, because he said, "*How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?*" (John 3:4). "Water" could not possibly refer to any other act in the process of the new birth than baptism. What other action than baptism in becoming a child of God has water associated with it? So say all the recognized scholars of antiquity from Justin Martyr, who lived in the 2nd century, to a relatively recent Lutheran scholar by the name of R.C.H. Lenski. If we should be called upon to do so, we could cite an almost endless list of quotes from these scholars. If scholarship can settle anything, it has settled the meaning of "water" in John 3:5. But the matter is settled by God's word. We are raised out of the water of baptism to walk (live) in newness of life (Romans 6:3,4). One is a new creature (born again after being baptized into Christ) (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:26,27). One becomes a babe in Christ after being baptized into Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1). By the process of the new birth one enters "into" Christ, (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27), and becomes a babe in Christ.

An Example of the New Birth

Nicodemus is not an example of the new birth, because we do not know what he did in response to the Lord's teaching. All Bible believers, however, readily agree that the 3,000 baptized on

the Pentecost of Acts 2 were born again. What was the process involved in their being born again? First, they heard the gospel of Christ preached by Peter and the other apostles (Acts 2:14,22,23). Second, they were led by the Spirit through Peter to believe in Christ through that preaching (Acts 2:36,37). Third, they repented of their past sins (Acts 2:38), and fourth, they were baptized for the remission (forgiveness) of their sins (Acts 2:38,41). If a sinner today should do the same things they did, how much would they lack of being born again? And, as we study the other examples of conversion in the book of Acts, we learn that they all did the same things in being born again.

Other Ways of Defining the New Birth

An old adage says that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. The new birth equals the kingdom (John 3:5). This equals being converted, because Jesus said, *“Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 18:3). But both of these equal the will of God, because Jesus said, *“Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21). By putting all of these together and by believing all the facts given, being converted, or doing God’s will, and being born again, all mean the same thing. If not, why not?

Conclusion

We have learned in this study that the new birth is not repentance (although repentance is involved), that the new birth is not a mystery, or an instantaneous miracle, or a personal encounter with Christ in the sense that Christ personally appears. Neither is

it an emotional experience — a better-felt-than-told feeling, although emotions are involved. When one is led by the Spirit through the word to believe in Christ with all his heart, to repent genuinely of his sins, to confess his faith in Christ (Acts 8:37), and be baptized for the remission of sins, he is born again. If not, none of those we read about in the book of Acts were born again, because they all did these things. Dear reader, do not allow yourself to be deceived about this matter! **It is your soul that is involved!**

The Church: Its Creed

Our English word "creed" is derived from the Latin verb "credo", which simply means "I believe". Therefore, a person's creed is what he believes. Every man has one; I have one; you have one, every church has one; the church of Christ has one.

I. What is the creed of the Church of Christ? Or stated more properly, Who is the creed of the church of Christ? We answer with one word: "Christ". The New Testament gives expression to it in several places. "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,*" said Peter in reply to the Lord's question: "*But whom say ye that I am?*" (Matthew 16:16). John said, "*Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name*" (John 20:30,31). Paul said, "*For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2). The same apostle gives expression to our creed in his deathless words: "*For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day*" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Therefore, "The creed of the *living* church of the *living* God is the *living, ever-living* Christ." The object of our creed is not a *thing* but a person; not a *religion* but a *Redeemer*; not a plan of *salvation* but a *Saviour*. As it has been said, **whom** you believe determines **what** you believe.

Requirements of a Good Creed

II. There are five essentials of a good creed and Christ meets them all:

A. A good creed must be simple. Creeds of men are clothed in obscure theological terms and are therefore difficult to understand and make a show of man's wisdom. This is done purposely to cloud the issue, make a show of learning and to confuse people. But allowing Christ to be one's creed and believing what He says is the very essence of simplicity. The New Testament speaks of "*the simplicity that is in Christ*" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Christ, our creed, meets the needs of the scholar and the unscholarly; of the learned and the unlearned. It matters not what our academic attainments or lack of them are, we can all unite upon Christ as our creed because of the simplicity of His teaching.

B. A good creed must be universal. Creeds of men are not universal. They are designed for special groups. The creed of one denomination will not meet the needs of another denomination. Christ meets the needs of all people in all ages from the first century to the 20th century. Accepting His teaching, and that alone, as one's creed eliminates the need of revision from age to age. Creeds of men are constantly undergoing revision, because by the same authority (of men) by which they were first written, by that same authority they can be revised. But the universal creed of Christ needs no revision.

C. A good creed is comprehensive. Creeds of men contain some truth, but not all the truth. No human creed contains all truth, because they are man-made creeds. But Jesus was truth clothed in human flesh. In Him and from Him is all truth that pertains to salvation. When we say we believe in Jesus

Christ, that means that we believe what God has said — what He has revealed from Genesis to Revelation — with no truth left out. Our creed has only one article: *“I believe with all my heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”* (Acts 8:37). This is all that the Ethiopian eunuch was asked to believe before he was baptized. Believing this took care of everything he believed. Anything authorized by Christ should be incorporated into our faith and practice, and nothing else.

D. A good creed is living. From the council of Nicea (325 A.D.) which compiled the first human creed, men have been in the creed-making business. Creeds of men are constantly being amended and changed and brought up-to-date. Conventions are held by religious leaders for this very purpose. Men are not willing to submit to the direction of the Lord, without telling the Lord what they want to believe. But the prophet Jeremiah said a long time ago, *“O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”* (Jeremiah 10:23). Christ our creed is alive forevermore. He is the same today, yesterday, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). And the same inspired writer said, *“He ever liveth to make intercession for us”* (Hebrews 7:25). This is the reason that the church is alive, because it has the living creed, and eventually this living creed will lead us to that never-ending life beyond the grave into that sphere that is described in inspiration as “immortality”.

E. A good creed is heaven-born. This means that it must have originated in heaven. No creed is genuine if it was born in Rome, Italy, or London, England, or Nicea in Bithynia, or Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, or Salt Lake City, Utah, etc. No creed can be divine that did not come from above. Our creed is

heaven-born; it came from God. When one accepts the last will and testament of Christ, he is accepting the creed that was authorized by Christ and His apostles and is the divine creed (Hebrews 9:16,17; Matthew 18:18; 1 Corinthians 14:37). Where did your creed originate? This could make the difference in your eternal destiny.

III. Acceptance of Christ as creed removes every difficulty.

First, it removes atheism, because it requires acceptance of Christ as God's Son. It also eliminates paganism, because it acknowledges Christ as the Son of the Living God. It also removes Unitarianism because it recognizes that God and the Son are two different personalities. It also removes Judaism because acceptance of Christ, which means "anointed one" or Messiah, is to acknowledge that Judaism is a thing of the past. It removes sectarianism, because to follow Christ and just be a Christian is not sectarian. Finally, it eliminates self-righteousness and morality alone as sufficient to save, because to accept Christ as "Saviour" which is the meaning of the word "Jesus" is to acknowledge that these are not sufficient to save.

Conclusion

If the religious world is ever to be united, it will have to be on this creed, and it alone. There will never be a chance of obtaining scriptural unity based on any creed compiled by man. The creed of the church of Christ has always been, is now, and always will be *The Christ of the Bible: His Teachings And That Alone.*

(Author's Note: I am indebted to Brother J. M. Powell, a faithful gospel preacher, for many of the thoughts in this article.)

Judging

“Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1).

“Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

There seems to be a contradiction in the two passages cited above, but only to those who fail to understand that the word “judge” is used in a good and a bad sense in the New Testament. This failure is the reason many misapply and pervert Matthew 7:1. Someone says, “But you judge people,” not realizing that they are making a judgment by their accusation. But the other passage (John 7:24) enjoins “righteous judgment.” So we are to judge in the sense allowed.

In another passage in the same chapter, Jesus said that we can judge one’s character by his fruit (Matthew 7:15-20). Did the Lord contradict Himself in the same chapter? When He said, “Judge not”, He was condemning censorious, harsh, carping, self-righteous judging. We are involved in making judgments every day, and to accuse others of judging because they exposed our sin is to involve ourselves in hopeless inconsistency and in the smearing of others to cover up sin. Jesus said it is like trying to remove a mote (speck) from another’s eye when one has a beam (plant) in his own eye (Matthew 7:3-5). We should not form hasty conclusions from wrong motives about others without knowing all the facts. There are many reasons why we should not do this. We shall note as many as space will allow.

1. Jesus said, “That ye be not judged.” The same judgment we pass on others will be passed on us (Matthew 7:2).

When Jesus said, "Measure for measure", He was referring to the irrevocable law of reaping as one sows (Galatians 6:7; James 2:13). "We judge ourselves or condemn ourselves by judging others, when we are guilty of the same sin; again we are judged by our fellow men, for we give occasion and invite severe judgment from others when we pass sentence on others" (H. Leo Boles).

2. Inability to form a correct judgment. Jesus said that when we have a beam in our own eye it unfits us for passing judgment on others. "Censoriousness is a compound of many of the worst passions: latent pride, which discovers the mote in our brother's eye, but hides the beam in our own; malignant envy, which, wounded at the noble talents and superior prosperity of others, transforms them into the objects and food of its malice — if possible, obscuring the splendor it is too base to emulate; disguised hatred, which diffuses in its perpetual mutterings the irritable venom of the heart; servile duplicity, which fulsomely praises to the face and blackens behind the back; shameless levity, which sacrifices the peace and reputation of the absent, merely to give barbarous stings to a jocular conversation; altogether forming an aggregate the most desolating on earth, and nearest in character to the malice of hell" (E. L. Magoon).

3. Not everything we condemn in others is in reality a sin. Jesus and Paul were often condemned by their critics, but they were not sinners. Job's three friends condemned him, but they misjudged him. And critical, severe condemnation of others may be a cover-up. It is easier to judge others than to improve ourselves, but charity begins at home and he that loves not his own soul enough to refrain from judging (the wrong kind) can hardly be trusted with the souls of others.

4. Failure to understand circumstances. A judge should never pronounce final sentence until he has heard all the facts on which to base a judgment. If we form hasty judgments about others, society will judge us without pity. An old Indian expression says, "Don't criticize another until you have walked a mile in his moccasins." *"He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy"* (James 2:13).

5. Not our prerogative to make such judgments. It is God's prerogative to pass final sentence (1 Corinthians 5:3-5). *"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth...But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, As I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Romans 14:4,10-12).

Conclusion

Self improvement is a necessary qualification for the improvement of others. Jesus said, *"First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye"* (Matthew 14:4a,10-13).

The Value of Time

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15,16).

Time is very difficult to define. It has been described as the duration or measure of motion, which does not help much. In the American College Encyclopedic Dictionary there are forty definitions of time. One of those definitions says, “Duration regarded as belonging to the present life as distinct from the life to come, or from eternity.” This definition is sufficient for this study. Not enough teaching has been done on the value of time.

1. A common misconception of stewardship. Most of us think that stewardship involves only money or material things. As evidence of this many brethren will give the Lord their money, but not a minute of their time. It is easier to get ten dollars out of some brethren than to get ten minutes of their time. Stewardship involves talent, education, influence, money, and time. Peter exhorted Christians to be good stewards of the “manifold” (Many-sided, all the different powers, and gifts) of God’s grace (1 Peter 4:10). Yes, we will have to give account for the use we make of our time.

2. Time is the most precious commodity in the world. It is the indispensable element in every activity. “Time is the most important thing in the world” (Thomas Edison). “Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for time is the stuff of which life is made” (Ben Franklin). Socrates said, “Time is the best of all possessions.” This means that time wasted is mere existence

without any purpose; properly used it is fullness of life. Its value is the reason for so many allusions in the Scriptures to its brevity (Cf. Job 7:6; 14:1,2; James 4:14).

3. Unique characteristics which indicate its value. It cannot be stored up or saved like money and other things; it can only be spent either wisely or unwisely, and if not spent well is wasted. As another has said, "It cannot be stored up like money, brought back like health, hurried up like travel, or slowed down like work. We can only make wise or unwise use of it." Man cannot create, borrow, or destroy a single moment of time.

Everyone has exactly the same amount of time in each day. Material inflation is not the only problem that confronts us, but we are faced with the inflation of time — its constant increase in value. One of the major problems of Christians in this fast moving age is how to use their time wisely and effectively to the glory of God twenty-four hours a day. Americans have more time-saving devices and less time than any nation in the world. Even more often than people say, "I don't have the money," they say, "I don't have the time." In most instances we do not find time for the most important things in life — those things that are unseen and eternal (2 Corinthians 4:17,18). One of the greatest problems of our day is to find time for solitude and meditation, especially in the study of God's word. Someone has said that "for every 90 minutes of reading, you need 45 minutes of meditation." The Psalmist said that the truly happy man is the one who meditates on God's law day and night (Psalm 1:2).

4. We are held responsible for the use we make of our time. To employ time well is one of the most difficult things in life, but there are frequent admonitions in the Scriptures to remind us not to squander it. *"So teach us to number our days,*

that we may apply our hearts to wisdom" (Psalm 90:12). "*Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is*" (Psalm 39:4). This is further emphasized in the expression — "redeeming the time," literally "buying up the opportunity" (Ephesians 5:15). Paul uses the language of the marketplace, and if paraphrased would say we are in the marketplace, as it were, buying up opportunities. We can buy only those in the marketplace in the present — past opportunities are no longer in the market. "The mill will never grind again with the water that has passed," says an old poem. So we redeem time when we diligently embrace and improve all the opportunities God presents to us, and life may be described as a succession of opportunities. How can we best do this? Give less time to the least important things, take time from people and places where it is wasted, and use the best time of the day for the most difficult tasks.

It is important to make the right use of leisure time. "The whole end and object of education is the right use of leisure time" (Aristotle). Like all other time, it must be used to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31). If we are God's adopted children, all of our time belongs to him. If our greatest joy is in serving God, we will grasp every opportunity of increasing our knowledge of him, of the Scriptures, and how to render the service that is expected of us.

Success or failure is determined by the use we make of our time. "Tell me how a boy spends his evenings and I will tell you what he will do with his life" (Weaver). It is not how long we live that counts, but **how** we live. Methuselah lived on earth 969 years and our Lord only 33, but nothing is mentioned that Methuselah accomplished. Joseph and Paul are outstanding examples of how to make the best use of time. This we should

start doing early in life. *“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them”* (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hand will stop –
At late or early hour.
Now is the only time you own!
Live, love, toil with a will;
Place not faith in tomorrow, for
The clock may then be still.
– Author Unknown

Is It Nothing to You?

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" (Lamentations 1:12).

These words were spoken by Jeremiah in bewailing the miseries of Jerusalem which had fallen into the hands of the conquering Chaldeans — the people carried away into captivity and the city left desolate. No city perhaps has ever experienced the desolations and distresses as Jerusalem, and Jeremiah is complaining that no one seemed to care. This is a pathetic picture. People are passing by and none seem to care. Jeremiah had foretold this kind of situation (Jeremiah 18:13-17). Although Jerusalem was suffering for her sins, suffering of any kind usually attracts sympathy but not Jerusalem. She is pictured as a widow woman sitting in the dust and weeping (1:1), and the elders are pictured as sitting on the ground in sackcloth and throwing dust on their heads (2:10). And still no one seemed to care. What a pathetic picture!

Because of the time in which we live, Jeremiah's question seems so apropos. Is it nothing to YOU that:

1. Most of the six billion souls plus on earth have never heard of Christ? Thousands pass into eternity each day without knowing that Christ died to save them, but they cannot be saved in ignorance of Him. Do you care enough to pray that they might hear of Him? Do you back your praying by giving so that others might go into all the world as Jesus charged? Is your attitude toward lost souls like those who were indifferent to the crucifixion of Christ? Brethren who are in a position to know tell me it

is harder now to raise support for mission work than it was twenty-five years ago. Is it nothing to us that so many souls are going into eternity unprepared to meet God?

2. Liberalism is making inroads into the church? Some congregations have already been carried into apostasy by compromising preachers and others have taken the first steps in that direction. Brethren are adopting denominational practices and destroying the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the Lord's church. Papers are being published to re-structure the church and turn it into another denomination. Some churches are claiming to administer to "the needs of the whole man." Some co-called gospel preachers could preach indefinitely in a denominational church and not receive any flack, because their preaching is not distinctive.

The Lord's church was not a denomination when it was established in Jerusalem in 33 A.D. and if it is now what it was then in all its earmarks, it is not a denomination now. Is it nothing to you as to whether the Lord's church maintains her uniqueness or not?

3. You as a parent have a divine responsibility? Are you sinning against your children by your failure to provide adequate spiritual training? This would include setting the proper example for them. By **your** training and example, where will **your** children be twenty-five years from now in relationship to the Lord's church? Do you consider your children as a heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127:3)? Is it nothing to you that their eternal destiny is in your hands? Can any Christian parent ever fulfill his duties who never has prayer and Bible study with his children? Does your parental responsibility mean nothing to you?

Conclusion

Are you like Amaziah and Israel of old “*who would not hear*” (2 Kings 14:11; 18:12; Nehemiah 9:29). Do you refuse to hear? **Is it nothing to you?**

God's Precautionary Laws

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

“Precautionary” describes an action in advance; preventing by taking measures in advance. Some old adages stress this principle: “A stitch in time saves nine,” and “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

Our text suggests that respect for and obedience to God's laws in youth will prevent evil days or the consequences of sin. There are so many influences in society that blight youth, destroy happiness, and bring sorrow that may be avoided by taking precautions. Because of a failure to see the benevolent purpose of law, our age is a lawless age of rebellion and anarchy against the laws of God and man. Many ignore the blessings and benefits resulting from respect and obedience of law. Obedience to law is a means of preventing evil and its consequences.

1. Laws of men illustrate the precautionary purpose of law. In medicine we vaccinate to prevent disease by fortifying our immunity. Polio, smallpox, and other diseases have been wiped out by injections of vaccines. By applying the laws of health, many physical troubles can be avoided, such as walking and keeping cholesterol low to prevent heart attacks. If we abuse these laws by lack of exercise, over-eating, over-working and over-indulgence, we harm our bodies. We need to remember that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). Traffic laws are precautions. A red light stops traffic for safety;

a solid yellow line prevents head-on collisions; and speed laws are to prevent vehicles from going out of control. A driver's license is not a license to fly low. There is no question about the benevolent purpose of these laws. We can see and appreciate their precautionary purposes.

2. God's laws in the spiritual realm are preventive. God's word hid, or laid up, in the heart will prevent sin (Psalm 119:11). Woodrow Wilson wrote on the flyleaf of a New Testament: "This book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book." Jesus resisted temptation by His knowledge of the Old Testament (Matthew 4:1-11). Wisdom (God) says, "*He that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul*" (Proverbs 8:36). In addition to wronging others and offending God when one sins, he wrongs his own soul. Every command of God says, "Do thyself no harm". The only way to prevent reaping corruption is not to sow to the flesh (Galatians 6:7,8). Every transgression and disobedience will receive a just recompense (Hebrews 2:1,2). How shall we escape this recompense if we neglect so great a salvation (Hebrews 2:3)? Jesus suggested the means of avoiding temptation when He said, "*Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation*" (Matthew 26:41). Paul said, "*Abstain from (shun) all appearance of evil*" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). This principle is very graphically emphasized in an Old Testament passage regarding the judgment of Judah and Jerusalem. Isaiah said, "*The look on their faces testifies against them; they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves. Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds. Woe to the wicked! Disaster is the fruit of their deeds. Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them! They will be paid back for what their hands have done*" (Isaiah 3:9-11, NIV).

3. Application of the principle to the church. To prevent apostasy and drifting away from the fundamentals there should be regular preaching on the “first principles” of the gospel. Timothy was charged by Paul to preach the word with urgency (2 Timothy 4:1-4). This should be done until all know the fundamentals of the faith and are grounded in them. Paul reminded the Ephesians elders that he had “*not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27). This involves both negative and positive teaching. It also involves teaching against extremes, such as anti-ism and liberalism. These can be avoided by diligent preventive teaching. Precautionary preaching will help to keep the unity enjoined by the New Testament. Preaching discipline will help to prevent the corruption of the church. “*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,*” said Paul (1 Corinthians 5:6). Many church problems could be avoided by adequate gospel teaching.

4. Principle applied to marriage. God’s guidelines for marriage and laws against divorce are safeguards to marriage. Marriage was ordained by God and is to be regulated by the teaching of His Word. Proper preparation for marriage would prevent many divorces. Warnings are found in both the Old and New Testaments against mixed marriage of believers and unbelievers. In fact, they were forbidden in the Old Testament and the New Testament warns against being unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14). One’s eternal welfare or woe can be determined by the precautions he takes toward having a scriptural marriage. Parents by diligent teaching and example can assist their children in preventing many heartaches and unhappiness in the married lives of their children. The church can help, but it cannot take the place of the parents. A constant diet of TV “soap operas” and plural marriages (Hollywood style) are not good

preventives of unscriptural marriages.

5. Preventive side of the drug problem. Let's face it! Alcohol is a drug! Our society legalizes one drug and outlaws another. This inconsistency amazes the thinking and the prudent. Alcoholism is a major problem in our nation. It is a hundred times better to prevent becoming an alcoholic than to cure it. *If one never takes the first drink, there is no way that he would ever become an addict.* None of the advertising of alcoholic beverages ever shows the delirium tremens of the addict or the withdrawal pains during treatment. But Solomon pictured such in Proverbs 23:29-35. This same approach applies to other drugs. Young people need to be taught that experimenting with drugs is fraught with dangers that can destroy their lives and their souls.

6. Salvation has a preventive side. It is wise to remember the Creator early in life — it will prevent the coming of “evil days” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). If one obeys the gospel early in life before sin hardens him, he can save himself a lot of misery and shame and maybe from eternal damnation. No one ever obeyed the gospel early in life, lived a faithful Christian life, and at the end expressed regret for so doing.

Conclusion

In the words of another writer: “To prepare and prevent is better than to repair and repent.”

(Note: I am indebted to the late A. C. Dreaden for the approach used in this article.)

Imperatives of Salvation

An imperative is an absolute essential; something that cannot be avoided or evaded. In the noun form it means the same as a command. God has enjoined certain imperatives with which sinners must comply in order to be saved. In the question asked by the Philippian jailer, he used the word “must”. “*What must I do to be saved?*” (Acts 16:30). If God endorses the statement that sinners **must** do something to be saved, I see no way possible that man can devise to set aside such a sacred obligation. No amount of quibbling or rationalizing can eliminate this “must”. So there are certain things that sinners must do in order to be saved. Peter called upon the multitude on the day of Pentecost to “*save yourselves from this crooked generation*” (Acts 2:40).

Preliminary Considerations

God’s grace and love made salvation possible and available to man. But man’s response through faith is just as important. Christ loved sinful men as no other has ever done (John 3:16; 13:1; Luke 19:10). During His earthly ministry He was accused of being a friend to sinners, because He demonstrated His love for sinful man (Luke 15:1,2). His concern for all of us as sinners is clearly taught in the parable of the marriage feast (Matthew 22:1-14). In spite of such love, He never lowered the cost on man’s part. When the rich young ruler asked what to do to inherit eternal life, the scriptures say that Jesus loved him (Mark 10:21), but He did not lower the cost. Without meeting certain imperatives stipulated by the Lord, Christ’s love alone was not enough to save him.

Man's response must be by an obedient faith. Jesus said, "*He that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life*" (John 3:36 ASV). Every action which we take in becoming a Christian must be an act of faith. God has never rewarded an action unless it was taken by faith. Read all the examples of faith recorded in Hebrews 11 and note when faith availed or was rewarded. It was when faith obeyed. Walking by faith involves "steps" (2 Corinthians 5:7). Paul said we "*walk in the steps of that faith of our father, Abraham*" (Romans 4:12). When we walk, we take steps. Everything we do in becoming a Christian may be correctly described as a "step" of faith.

Obedience of faith does not void grace. Paul said that salvation "*is of faith that it might be by grace*" (Romans 4:16). When the children of Israel obeyed God's instructions for taking the city of Jericho, it was faith obeying. They knew it was by God's grace that the walls fell, and that there was nothing meritorious in their obedience. "*By grace are ye saved through faith*" (Ephesians 2:8,9). "Grace" incorporates everything that God has done and is doing to make man's salvation possible. "Faith" incorporates everything that man must do to appropriate to his soul the benefits of God's grace. The only meritorious factor in man's salvation is the death of Christ. Man's obedience is simply appropriative, not meritorious.

What are the imperatives in man's salvation or the appropriating factors?

Hearing the Gospel is Indispensable

To become a Christian it is necessary to hear the saving truth of God's word. There are sincere people but no Christians among those who have never heard this saving truth. We print Bibles in

all languages and send missionaries to all peoples of earth that they may hear God's saving truth. "*How shall they hear without a preacher?*" (Romans 10:14). Jesus has commanded His disciples, "*Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15). This is to be done to give them opportunity to hear the gospel by which we are saved (Romans 1:16). After Paul had preached the gospel to the Corinthians we are told that "*many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized*" (Acts 18:8). Peter said it was by his mouth that the Gentiles were first to hear the gospel (Acts 15:7).

Faith is an Imperative

When we have heard the testimony of the gospel, we must believe it to be saved. "*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17). "*Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book: but these things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing ye might have life in His name*" (John 20:30,31).

Faith begins as a belief of testimony — an acceptance of facts regarding God and Christ. But faith must demonstrate itself in works or obedience (James 2:14-16). One who trusts Christ will do the work that God has commanded. One who does not trust Christ will refuse to obey God's commandments. Paul taught that saving faith is faith that works through love (Galatians 5:6). Faith without works (obedience) will not save. "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead*" James 2:26). Faith, then, is not the only imperative of salvation. "*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*" (James 2:24).

Repentance is an Essential

The natural and logical reaction and result of faith is to repent. One cannot repent of sins until he first believes that he is a sinner. How did men ever get the order reversed? We first believe in God and Christ, then we turn to them, which is the result of repentance. Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of life (Matthew 21:28-32). It is neither sorrow for sin nor reformation of life. Godly sorrow produces repentance, which results in a change of life (Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10). Repentance is to turn from the things that we did before which were wrong and not do them anymore. Repentance results in the act of turning away from sin. This action takes place within the sinner and is often referred to as a "change of heart" or a "change of life". We are sorry for our sins; we turn from them; and we live a different life. "*Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish*" (Luke 13:3). God "*now commands all men everywhere to repent*" (Acts 17:30). In answer to their question, Peter told those believing Jews on Pentecost that the first thing they needed to do was repent (Acts 2:38). Nothing short of genuine repentance can ever bring us into a saved relationship with God.

Confession is a Necessity

To be a Christian one must confess his faith in Christ. The church of the New Testament is built upon the truth that Christ is the Son of God (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11). Every person who becomes a Christian **must** believe in Christ and must confess that faith (Romans 10:9,10). The Ethiopian nobleman confessed before his baptism that he "*believed that Jesus is the Son of God*" (Acts 8:37). No other confessions are authorized in the New Testament. "Do you believe that God for Christ's sake

has pardon your sins” was never required of any penitent, believing sinner who requested baptism under the preaching of Christ’s apostles. What confession did you make prior to baptism? Was it the same one the eunuch made in Acts 8:37? Christ has promised that if we confess Him before men He will confess us before the heavenly Father (Matthew 10:32,33). This would include confessing Christ before baptism and on all other occasions by our actions and lives.

Baptism is a Requirement

This has been made an imperative by the Lord Himself. He said, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”* (Mark 16:16). This is the consummating action that changes one’s state or relationship. *“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3:26,27). Before baptism we were outside of Christ, but when we are baptized (upon the proper prerequisites) we have then entered into Christ — His body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). All who believe, repent, and confess are commanded to be baptized (immersed) (Acts 2:38). It was Peter who said, *“Baptism doth also now save us”* (1 Peter 3:21).

We have not said that baptism is the only thing that saves us, nor do we believe it. But it is the testing point of our faith, because there is no rational connection between being baptized and having our sins washed away. God said that it does, and we must believe it and be baptized.

Conclusion

We do not want to leave the impression that these are the only

imperatives involved in our being saved eternally in heaven. These things are only the beginning of the Christian life. We must continue to grow and mold our character more and more into the likeness of Christ's character (2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Peter 2:1,2). We are to become partakers of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:3-11).

May we appeal to you with all the power of our being to make your calling and election sure in doing those things God has authorized, as we have proved in the preceding. *"Yea, let God be found true and every man a liar"* (Romans 3:4).

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

Many important questions confront man in life, such as how to live as long as possible, how to make a livelihood, how to find a cure for cancer, heart trouble, etc. But the greatest question that has ever confronted mortal man is: **What must I do to be saved?** Every other question that can be imagined must stand secondary and subordinate to it. The answer to this question takes priority over one's duty to other men, to worshipping God acceptably, living the Christian life or even to one's physical health. None of these count for anything until the former is settled in God's way.

This question is asked three times specifically in the book of Acts (2:37; 9:6; 16:30), and is answered many more times. In fact, the book of Acts was written primarily to answer the question. The answer is not to be found in any Old Testament books, although there are principles revealed therein which help us understand how God deals with man. Acts reveals what Christ's apostles bound on sinners as they were guided directly by the Holy Spirit in carrying out the Great Commission. There are many things stated and implied in this question. We shall note some of them in the balance of this article.

That Man Is a Sinner

Our question implies that man is a sinner before God, is lost and needs salvation. This is taught emphatically elsewhere in the scriptures (Romans 3:9,10,23; 1 John 1:10; 1 Kings 8:46). Man

cannot be saved by his moral goodness alone. Man's failure to keep the law of Moses perfectly, which required moral perfection, proves this (Galatians 3:10-12; 2:16,21). As defined by Webster, salvation is "deliverance from destruction, danger or great calamity." Man's spiritual danger is hell-fire or eternal destruction from God (Matthew 5:22; 25:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). Morality alone cannot save one from this danger. Furthermore, if one can be saved by his morality alone, Christ's death was all in vain (Galatians 2:21).

Teaching Implied

It is implied in the question we are studying that the sinner must be taught — be TOLD what to do to be saved. He cannot know by his own wisdom (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12; 28:26). So he needs to seek for the answer from Christ's inspired apostles (Matthew 16:19; 18:18; John 16:13; Matthew 28:19,20). Under their preaching sinners had to be told (taught) what to do (Acts 9:6). An angel said to Cornelius of Peter, "*Who shall TELL thee words whereby thou and thy house shall be saved*" (Acts 11:14). So learning the answer to our question involves human instrumentality — preaching or teaching (1 Corinthians 1:21; John 6:44,45). There is not a single case of conversion in Acts that did not involve a preacher.

Conditionality Implied

Nothing is more clearly implied in our question than that the sinner **must do** something to be saved. In fact, the word "**do**" is in the question. Numerous passages show the conditionality of salvation (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46; Hebrews 5:8,9). The question is not: "What must I **get** to be saved?" No one ever asked

that question under the preaching of the apostles, thus no answer to such a question.

If salvation is unconditional, man is not a free-moral being, and if anyone should be lost God would be a respecter of persons. Perish the thought!! Because the Bible clearly teaches that God is not a respecter of persons.

Two Sides Implied

Our question implies that there are two sides to salvation — the divine and the human. “What must I do?” suggests the human side. “To be saved” suggests the divine side. Man meets the conditions stipulated by God and then God extends the pardon of mercy and forgiveness. God’s part is by grace (Ephesians 2:8; Titus 2:11), and man’s part is by faith (Ephesians 2:8), a faith that obeys (James 2:20-26). “Works” in James 2 is synonymous with obedience (Cf. Romans 16:26; Hebrews 5:8,9).

Readiness to Obey Implied

In every instance in the scriptures where this question was asked, it is implied that those asking were ready to do all commanded in answer thereto. In reply to the Philippian jailer who asked Paul and Silas the question, Paul said, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31). **But Paul did not stop there.** He then preached to him the word of God so that he could believe (Acts 16:32; Romans 10:17). Having heard what he **must do**, he was **baptized the same hour** and then rejoiced as a saved man (Acts 16:33,34). By faith he obeyed (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 5:8,9).

When Peter announced the conditions to the inquiring

Pentecostians (Acts 2:37,38), they that gladly received his word were baptized in order to have their sins remitted. They were not already saved before they were baptized. Why would Peter call upon them to save themselves by doing what he said if they were already saved (verse 40)?

When Saul of Tarsus was told what to do by Ananias in answer to his question (Acts 9:6; 22:10,16), "*he arose and was baptized*" (Acts 9:18).

None of these quibbled about the necessity of baptism — that if they had to be baptized that would mean that they would merit their salvation. This idea was conjured up later in the minds of those who rejected baptism as God's test of one's faith. Baptism is an appropriative act, as are faith and repentance. Anything done by faith is not meritorious (Romans 4:16).

Conclusion

In this study we have learned the scriptural answer to this great question. Unbelievers were told to believe (with all that it involves) to be saved (Acts 16:30,31; 2:36; Mark 16:16). Believers in Christ were told to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:37,38; 16:30-33). Penitent believers in Christ were told to be baptized (Acts 9:6; 22:16). Dear sinner, decide which you are and what you need to do, and **do it now**.

(Note: Dear reader, if you are a sinner and lost, you need to check every passage that has been cited in this article to learn what you must do to be saved.)

The Lord's Supper: Its Meaning

Nearly two thousand years ago Jesus instituted a simple memorial of unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine (Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25). After the church was established on the Pentecost of Acts 2, weekly observance was practiced by the church and approved by the apostles (Acts 20:7). To understand its meaning and observe it properly is most important (1 Corinthians 11:27). Its design and significance are clearly set forth on the pages of the New Testament.

1. It is a commemoration. As He instituted it, Jesus said, "*This do in remembrance of Me*" (Luke 22:19). It is a reminder of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ which is the heart of the gospel and redemption (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Jesus fully understood man's proneness to forget and He made the Lord's Supper a constant reminder of His death, burial, and resurrection. In using simple unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, He made the emblems accessible anywhere man can exist on the earth. In observing the Lord's Supper by faith, we can see Christ's death for us and be stirred to humble gratitude. How can we be so calloused and indifferent as to let trivial matters prevent our remembering Him each Lord's Day as He has appointed (Acts 20:7)?

"Feast divine, all else surpassing,
Precious blood for you and me,
While we sup Christ gently whispers;
'Do this in my memory.'"

Tillit S. Teddlie

2. The Lord's Supper is a communion. Paul said the cup and the bread are the communion of the blood and body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). "Communion" is the translation of the word *koinonia* and it means participation in or sharing. In the Lord's Supper we participate in and share the benefits of Christ's blood and body that were sacrificed for us on the cross. So the Lord's Supper reminds us of our union with Christ and that in the observance of it we are identified with Christ.

There is a two-fold communion in the Lord's Supper. First, there is communion with Christ. In eating it we signify our union with Christ — that we are one with Him and share His grace and salvation (1 Corinthians 10:16). Secondly, it is a communion with each other as Christians. In observance of it, we signify that we are united with one another — that we are the body of Christ and are mutual sharers in the benefits of His death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 10:17). In reality Paul is teaching in these passages and in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 that division destroys this communion, and to observe it in the manner that they were doing in Corinth was a failure to discern the unity of the body (the church) (1 Corinthians 11:29).

“When we meet in sweet communion,
Where the feast divine is spread;
Hearts are brought in closer union,
While partaking of the bread.”

Tillit S. Teddlie

3. The Lord's Supper is a proclamation. Paul said, “As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye *proclaim the Lord's death till He come*” (1 Corinthians 11:25). So it is a proclamation, announcement, or publication of the death, burial

and resurrection of Christ. This is one way that every Christian can proclaim these great verities. "Those who come to it, therefore, should come not to satisfy hunger, nor the gratification of social feelings, but for the definite purpose of bearing testimony to the great fact of redemption, and to contribute their portion of influence to the preservation and propagation of the knowledge of that fact" (Charles Hodge).

4. The Lord's Supper is a dedication. As it was being instituted Jesus said, "*This cup is the new covenant in my blood*" (1 Corinthians 11:25). The Lord's Supper represents the blood-ratified covenant between Christ and Christians. In eating the Lord's Supper, Christians bind themselves to implicit obedience to Christ, because of entering into a covenant with Christ that is sealed, ratified, and dedicated by His blood. He will keep His part of the covenant, if we keep ours. It also means that we practice in religion only those things authorized by the New Testament which was ratified by His blood. There is none of the blood of Christ on anything that was practiced in Old Testament times, except those principles which are eternal and not peculiar to that age.

5. The Lord's Supper is an anticipation. Again, Paul said, "*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come*" (1 Corinthians 11:26). It has been said, and correctly so, that the first and second comings of Christ are linked together by a chain of weekly observances of the Lord's Supper. In observance of it, we proclaim our hope of His second coming. We have this hope rekindled in us every week as we observe it. What marvelous blessings are in store for those who anticipate His coming and do it by a weekly observance of it (Acts 20:7)!

“And thus that dark betrayal night,
With the last advent we unite
By one bright chain of loving rite,
Until He comes!”

George Rawson

Conclusion

There is far more involved in eating the Lord's Supper than meets the eye of the casual observer. And we need to be reminded constantly of its meaning lest we forget. If properly observed by Christians, it will result in greater love, appreciation, unity, faith, zeal, obedience, hope, and joy. May the Lord deliver us from a ritualistic observance empty of any meaning.

'Tis set, the feast divine –
The bread, the fruit of the vine –
And saints commune before the shrine,
In the supper of the Lord.
May we the Lord discern,
His death our holy concern;
We feast in faith, His coming yearn,
In the supper of the Lord.

Vana R. Raye

Forgiveness

“Forgive one another, even as Christ forgave you” (Colossians 3:13). Forgiveness is a marvelous and transcendent doctrine of divine revelation. There is nothing in this world that is more God-like than forgiveness. It has been called man’s deepest need, and his highest achievement. There is nothing that withers the soul so much as being unforgiving. “Malice in the soul crucifies the higher self, strangles the best within us, and eats away the finer elements of life. It crushes friendships, isolates us from humanity, and gives life a loneliness” (Frank L. Cox).

Our text requires us to forgive as Jesus forgave. Never are we more like Him than when we forgive; never are we more unlike Him than when we fail to forgive. How did Jesus forgive?

1. Jesus loved men even when they were unworthy of forgiveness. *“For God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). Jesus hated sin, but loved the sinner. Forgiveness is impossible without love. It was God’s love shown in Christ that enables Him to forgive us (Ephesians 4:32). If we have found it difficult to forgive others, it could be because of a lack of love. In Luke 7:36-50, a contrast is made between the love Jesus had for the sinful woman and that of Simon. Read it!

2. Jesus took the initiative to make possible our forgiveness. Jesus, the innocent party, came to the guilty and died for our forgiveness (Romans 5:8-10). The innocent now should take the initiative — take the first steps — to bring about forgiveness and reconciliation (Matthew 18:15-18). I once heard of a man

who travelled 1,500 miles to ask another's forgiveness and to obtain a reconciliation. Are we this forgiving?

3. Jesus prayed for those who wronged Him (Luke 23:34). He did not pray for the destruction of His executioners, but for their forgiveness. He even pleaded their ignorance as grounds for that forgiveness. Like Jesus, we should pray with a forgiving heart for those who wrong us. How can one hold a grudge against one for whom he is praying? "Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hate. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness" (E. C. McKenzie).

4. Jesus forgave freely, completely, and readily (John 8:1-9; Luke 7:50; 23:34). Jesus does not put those He forgives under a suspended sentence. He keeps no filing cabinet of wrongs so as to have the goods on the offender later. He forgives us over and over, again and again and teaches His followers to do the same (Matthew 18:21,22).

Conclusion

Do we forgive others as **Jesus did**? Forgiveness is too big for little people, because it is one of the biggest things one can do. "To err is human, to forgive, divine" (Alexander Pope). "He that cannot forgive others, breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass if he would ever get to heaven; for everyone has need to be forgiven" (George Herbert). "Doing an injury puts you below your enemy. Revenging one, makes you even with him. Forgiving it sets you above him" (Benjamin Franklin). Necessity requires that we forgive others because we need it ourselves.

"If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you" (Matthew 6:15).

God Hates Putting Away

"Therefore take heed to your spirit and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For I hate putting away, saith the Lord" (Malachi 2:15,16).

Someone recently described the break-up of marriages in our society as the "divorce explosion". It has certainly reached alarming proportions. In some areas of our country the number of divorces has equalled the number of marriages. This "divorce explosion" could jeopardize the future of our society. According to the famous historian Gibbons, the rapid increase in the divorce rate was one of the major causes of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. American, take warning!

Divorce Not in God's Original Plan

Divorce was not in God's original plan for marriage. When the Pharisees questioned Jesus regarding the causes for divorce and why it was allowed for any cause under the law of Moses, Jesus replied by referring to God's original intention for marriage and said, *"From the beginning it (divorce for any cause) has not been so"* (Matthew 19:3-6). So divorce is an intruder into God's plan for marriage, which God allowed under the law of Moses because of the *"hardness of their hearts"* (Matthew 19:7,8). This was for the purpose undoubtedly of preventing greater evils and as a protection to the wife. "In a culture where odds were stacked against the wife, this was no doubt to favor her as much as possible — to protect her against impulsive and unceremonious expulsion from her home and children, and to provide her with legal proof of freedom to remarry should she be put away" (Cecil

Wright). But God's original plan was one man, for one woman, for one lifetime. Whenever a divorce occurs today, it means that a marriage has been a tragic failure, with all the tragic consequences that accompany such. Death severs marriage, but it was not God's original intention that it be broken otherwise.

No Divorce Now Without Sin

Although allowed by Moses for any cause, under Christ's law there can be no scriptural divorce without sin. Jesus said, "*Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery.*" And Mark makes this apply equally to the wife who puts away her husband (Mark 10:12). How could language be plainer than this used by our Lord! It doesn't need to be explained; it only needs to be believed and enforced by leaders in the church. Since the laws of human government are in direct conflict with the laws of God, every Christian should seek God's will in this matter and follow it. The eternal destiny of two souls at least (the contracting parties) is at stake. A husband or wife is bound to his companion by God's law as long as his or her companion lives, except where fornication has occurred (Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:10-12; Matthew 19:9). To divorce one's companion without scriptural ground is **sin**, a defiance of God's law respecting the permanence of marriage. Even in cases where one party has been guilty of fornication, repents, and wants forgiveness on the part of the innocent party, forgiveness is better than divorce and a broken home. The causes of the prevalence of divorce in our society are many: lack of respect for the sacredness of the marriage bond, change of attitude toward it, modern working and living conditions, selfishness, divorce laws, etc.

What About Cases of Desertion?

Some have attempted from 1 Corinthians 7:15 to justify divorce and remarriage on the grounds of desertion. This is based, we believe, on a gross misunderstanding of what Paul said in this passage. The marriage contemplated is that of two unbelievers and one of them becomes a believer, thus resulting in a marriage of a believer and an unbeliever where no immorality has been committed, but the unbeliever refuses to live with the believer unless the believer renounces his faith in Christ. Paul says the believer is not enslaved to the unbeliever to this extent — that he must renounce his faith to get the unbeliever to continue to live with him. Such leaves the believer only two options: (1) renounce his faith in Christ, or (2) let the unbeliever depart. Paul says let the unbeliever depart, but does not say, the believer is free to remarry. In fact, Paul indicates in the context that the believer should remain unmarried (v 10,11) until such time when the unbeliever becomes guilty of adultery, giving the deserted companion the right to remarry under the terms of Matthew 19:9. There are no grounds for putting away for remarriage in God's sight until immorality has occurred.

But someone may ask, "What is the meaning of 'not under bondage'"? It means that the believer is not so enslaved (*dedoulotai*) to the unbeliever that he is expected or permitted to renounce his Christianity to get the unbeliever to live with him. It is our sincere judgment that those who make desertion grounds for divorce and remarriage are rendering a great disservice to Bible teaching on the question. They fail completely to take the context into consideration, and the meaning of the Greek word for bondage. Paul is not referring to the marriage bond in 1 Corinthians 7:15, but to enslavement. The believer is still under

the marriage bond after the unbeliever departs, but is not so enslaved to the unbeliever that he is required to renounce his or her Christianity to keep the unbeliever from departing.

God Still Hates Putting Away

Even under the law of Moses when God allowed divorce for any cause (because of their hardness of heart) it is said that God hated divorce. And God hates it no less now, in spite of the respectability it has gained in society. As long as God's teaching in the New Testament is disregarded, divorces will continue to be sought and granted. Jesus said, "*Whatsoever God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Matthew 19:6). This is a warning for man not to tamper with the binding nature of God's sacred bond of marriage. Yes, God still hates putting away!

Sins that Crucified Christ

It was a sinful, perverted, degenerate, and prejudiced religion that was unauthorized by God that crucified our Lord. Leaders in the Jewish religion who were contemporary with Christ had such a perverted, materialistic conception of the promised Messiah that they did not recognize their Messiah in Christ, but rejected Him and condemned Him to be crucified. Jesus would not accept, or comply, with all their traditions which they had added to the law of Moses. He said they had made void (or of none effect) the word of God by their tradition (Mark 7:8,9; Matthew 15:6).

Let us study some of the most prominent sins that brought about the crucifixion of Christ, and remember that by committing the same sins we can in a figure be guilty of crucifying Him afresh (Hebrews 6:4-6). May God help us not to be guilty of this!

Sin of Ignorance

As we indicated in the introduction, ignorance was a root sin that caused the crucifixion of Christ. As further evidence of this, Jesus while on the cross prayed for the forgiveness of His executioners because of their ignorance (Luke 23:34). Peter later charged them with ignorance in the crime (Acts 3:17).

Truth can be rejected in ignorance today. This shows conclusively that one cannot be saved in ignorance of the gospel of Christ. There was a time (ages past) that God overlooked ignorance, but no more (Acts 17:30,31). If we have not been brought to faith in Christ, we are already condemned (John 3:18). Jesus

said, *“Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). How much more sore will be the punishment of those who close their eyes and stop the ears to the saving truth of God’s word (Matthew 13:14,15)! To do so is to crucify Christ afresh (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Hatred of Good

Another sin that crucified Christ was hatred of good. Jesus said this would be one of the causes of His death (John 15:25; Psalm 35:19). Jesus went about doing good during His life on earth (Acts 10:38), and did not deserve to die. But evil loves darkness and hates the good (John 3:19,20). Jesus’ teaching and life condemned the hypocrisy and ungodliness of the scribes and Pharisees, so they hated Him and condemned Him to die. They delivered Him to the Romans and pressured them until they crucified Him on a Roman cross. Is there any wonder that the earth was darkened for three hours as He hanged on the cross (Matthew 27:45)? This showed God’s displeasure with their wicked deed.

Sin of Envy

Matthew says that Pilate knew that it was envy that the Jews delivered Jesus to him to be crucified (Matthew 27:18). It was envy that motivated the Jewish religious leaders to try to kill Him by stealth or deception (Matthew 26:4).

Envy is a terrible root sin. It is the evil feeling of the heart which makes one grieve and fret when he observes the successes and good fortunes of others and wishes them evil. It creeps into the mind unawares and becomes a cancer of the soul (Proverbs 14:30). Much of the strife in the church is rooted in envy. Religious prejudice grows out of envy. It is one of the attitudes

and sins that is to be laid aside when one becomes a Christian (1 Peter 2:1,2). Nothing reveals the smallness of one's soul as does envy. It is one of the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:21). James says that where it exists there is confusion and every evil work (James 3:13,14). One motivated by love does not envy (1 Corinthians 13:4), so because of their envy of Jesus they hated Him and condemned Him to be crucified.

Love of Money

Another sin that crucified Christ was the love of money. It was this that motivated Judas to ask for a bribe of the chief priests (Jewish leaders) to deliver Jesus into their hands (Matthew 26:13,14). Love of money is a root sin that causes all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:9,10). Many times today the church is betrayed into the hands of her enemies for money. Peter warned that there would be those who would make merchandise of the gospel (2 Peter 2:3). Knowing the dangers and temptations associated with riches, I never pray for anyone to be rich. Jesus said, "*A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*" (Luke 12:15). There is nothing wrong in making money (if it is made honestly) but it is just as important to use it righteously.

Sin of Lying

After Jesus was arrested, the religious leaders hired witnesses to testify against Him falsely (Matthew 26:59). It is never right to lie or falsify by word or deed. Some think that lying is justified when good comes from it, but we are never justified in doing evil that good may come from it. Paul said some of his contemporaries slandered him by saying he taught the people to

do evil that good might come from it (Romans 3:8). He emphatically denied the charge. It is never right to do wrong even for a good cause, such as using games of gambling, or selling intoxicating drinks to raise money for a good cause.

Sin of Moral Weakness

Pilate, the Roman governor before whom Jesus was tried, knew that Jesus was innocent of the charges the religious leaders brought against Him (Luke 23:13,14; John 19:4), and he had the authority to release Christ. He even desired to do it (Luke 23:23). He could have acted magnanimously and firmly, but he sacrificed principle for expediency. He was a moral coward! This is such a common sin today. We should never sacrifice principle for expediency. To do so shows a lack of conviction and also moral weakness.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, it was sin that crucified Christ — my sins, your sins, and the sins of all mankind (Romans 3:23) and Paul said He “*died for our sins*” (1 Corinthians 15:3). Anyone who rejects His atonement for our sins by refusing to obey the plan of salvation sealed and ratified by His blood (Hebrews 10:19,20; 9:11-28) is guilty of crucifying Him afresh (Hebrews 6:4-6). The conditions in this plan for man to obey in appropriating to himself the benefits validated by His blood are so simple: (1) Hear the gospel (Acts 15:7; 18:8), (2) believe the gospel (John 8:24; Mark 16:16), (3) repent of all past sins (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 17:30,31), (4) confess faith in Christ (Romans 10:10), (5) be baptized (immersed) for remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). If you, dear reader, reject this plan, you will have cruci-

fied Christ afresh! Are you guilty?

If you desire further study, you may contact anyone any time of the church of Christ and they will be more than happy to assist you in obtaining a saving knowledge of God's word. If you are an honest seeker for the saving truth, we believe God's providence will make it possible for you to be taught that truth (John 7:17). Only the truth of God's word will save (John 8:32).

Let the Bible Speak...on the Organization of the Church

In letting the Bible speak on church organization, we are limited to the New Testament, because Christ's church had not been established in Old Testament times. The pattern for the New Testament church is revealed in the New Testament. *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God"* (1 Peter 4:11).

After the Lord's church was established by the Spirit-empowered apostles on the Pentecost of Acts 2, and the divinely authorized organization for the church was revealed and recorded in the New Testament, the first departure from the New Testament order was in the organization of the church. This had been predicted by Paul in his seashore farewell to the elders of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:30). This first departure developed during the second century as a result of elders in local churches selecting a permanent presiding elder, which they designated as "the bishop" to distinguish him from the other elders. In the New Testament the names "elders" and "bishops" are applied to the same men, and there is no distinction made among them in rank and authority. If we let the Bible speak and make no deviations therefrom, no such distinctions will be made today.

What is the organization authorized for the church in the New Testament?

Uses of the Word "Church"

To understand New Testament church organization, it is nec-

essary to understand how the word "church" is used in the New Testament. First, the word is used in a general or universal sense to include all of the saved everywhere. It is so used in Matthew 16:18, where Jesus promised to build His church and which is the first occurrence of the word "church" in the Bible. It is used in this sense when inspired writers affirm that Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18). In this universal sense there is no kind of organization which ties all congregations together, therefore, any inter-congregational machinery has no divine authority. The only government authorized for the church in the universal sense is the divine head, Christ. According to the New Testament, Christ's church has no earthly head or earthly headquarters. The headquarters is with the divine head. Second, the word "church" in the New Testament is used in a local or congregational sense. Such as "*the church of God which is at Corinth*" (1 Corinthians 1:2); "*the church of the Thessalonians*" (1 Thessalonians 1:1), or "*the church of Ephesus*" (Revelation 3:1). In this local sense, each congregation was an independent, self-governing unit under Christ, the head. These congregations, when scripturally and fully organized, had a plurality of bishops (elders, presbyters, shepherds, pastors) and deacons with the evangelists and members (Philippians 1:1; Acts 14:23; 20:17,28). In light of this, any church larger than a local congregation in organization is not the one you read about in the Bible, and any church smaller than the church in the universal sense (not including all the saved) is not the divine church.

Simplicity of New Testament Organization

As already noted the organization authorized in the New Testament is very simple. There is to be a plurality of bishops

and deacons in each local congregation (Philippians 1:1; Acts 14:23; 20:17,28). There is no hierarchy of any kind even remotely hinted at in the New Testament. As we let the Bible speak, we observe that there were no synods, conferences, dioceses, parishes, or associations tying together a group of churches. All of these forms of church government originated this side of the first century and are without any scriptural warrant whatsoever.

Another departure from the New Testament pattern which contributed to unscriptural forms of church government was the distinction made between the so-called "clergy" and "laity". As a result of this distinction, the so-called "clergy" came to be exalted above the so-called "laity", which suggests rank and subordination, but Jesus said, "*Ye are all brethren*" (Matthew 23:8). From this unscriptural distinction arose the practice of addressing certain of the "clergy" as father and reverend which is condemned by Jesus in Matthew 23:8-12. Even the self-proclaimed successor of Peter allows himself to be addressed as father and be worshiped, although Peter refused to be worshiped (Acts 10:24-26). It is the aim of churches of Christ to go back of all these humanly-authorized departures to the original pattern revealed by Christ and His apostles in the New Testament, and by letting it speak and be our sole authority, restore the New Testament church to its pristine purity in its organization and in every other respect. To argue that this cannot be done is to argue that the New Testament is not an infallible guide.

Scriptural Terms for Church Officers

In the New Testament no distinction is made between bishops and elders. In fact, there are six names used to designate the elders, which are translated from three Greek words. One is the

Greek word *episkopos*, which is translated bishops or overseers (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1). The second word is *presbuteros*, translated presbyter or elder (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), and the third Greek word is *poimen*, translated pastor or shepherd (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:2). These six English terms, though indicating different functions, all refer to the same men, and there was always a plurality of them in each church that was fully organized. No church in the first century had only one pastor. The pastors were the elders who had the oversight of the spiritual welfare where they were selected and appointed by each congregation. If we view them as being of mature age and experience, they are elders or presbyters, as the terms suggest. If they are viewed as those who feed and care for the churches, they are pastors or shepherds, and if they are viewed as those who have the oversight, they are the bishops or overseers. To apply some of these names to church officers of different rank is not to let the Bible speak, and is making distinctions not made in the New Testament.

Qualifications of New Testament Officers

Space forbids that qualifications for scriptural church officers be discussed in this article. Suffice it to note here that the readers will find their qualifications both negatively and positively listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. Before any congregation selects and appoints elders, they should carefully and prayerfully examine proposed prospects in the light of these qualifications. Incompetent and unqualified leadership has done immeasurable harm to the Lord's church.

Conclusion

We appeal to our readers to join hands with us, if you have not already done so, in rejecting all humanly devised forms of church government, and with the New Testament as our sole and only guide to strive to restore the simple autonomous, congregational government of the first century. This can be done by letting the Bible speak and by abiding by its precepts. May the Lord hasten that day!

“I Will Not Be Negligent”

“I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance” (2 Peter 1:12,13).

These are the words of the aged apostle Peter to all those who have obtained like precious faith. Because of the importance of the things he had just enjoined, he said he would not be negligent to call them to their remembrance. He was speaking primarily of his duty as an inspired teacher of God’s word. What a tremendous responsibility this is! And we should never grow weary in doing it. But let us note some other ways in which we should not be negligent.

1. Of our relationship to the Lord and His church. We should not be negligent in our attendance. Faithful attendance is a pre-requisite to spiritual growth and the first sign of spiritual decline is negligence in attendance. We should not be negligent to give as we have prospered (1 Corinthians 16:2) and to work to build up the church numerically and spiritually. This can be done partly by shining as lights (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:15). We should not be negligent to pray for the church. Those who neglect their relationship to the Lord and His church neglect the “great salvation” and there is no escape from punishment for those who do (Hebrews 2:3).

2. Of the spiritual needs of our families. Parents are responsible for the spiritual training of their children (Ephesians 6:4). Neglect in doing this while the children are young will

surely surface in later life. Very few parents neglect the secular education of their children, but neglect their spiritual training. Timothy was taught the Holy Scriptures from childhood (2 Timothy 3:13,14; 1:5). Many children are a grief of mind to parents in their old age because they neglected the spiritual training of their children while they were young. A major part of this training is to set the proper example. May God help parents to realize that children are “a heritage of the Lord” (Psalm 127:3), and not neglect their spiritual training.

3. Of the physical needs of our families. He who does is worse than an infidel and has denied the faith (1 Timothy 5:8). This would include supplying the needs of our parents in their old age (1 Timothy 5:4). What Bible student can forget our Lord’s commission to the apostle John from the cross in behalf of His mother (John 19:26,27)!

Of the things we have attempted to say in the foregoing, this is the sum: I will not be negligent of the great salvation, because if I am, there is no escape from punishment (Hebrews 2:3).

Builders for Eternity

God has granted to us a little space in this thing that is called time. This space we call life. It is only a short interval between two eternities. Life is but a dressing room, as it were, in which we are to prepare for eternity. If we could only realize how important this interval is and that we pass this way only once, how careful we would be about the character that we are building! Day by day we shape our characters for eternal misery or eternal bliss. We have to make the choice while we are here — it cannot be made after death (Hebrews 9:27). Christ described the alternatives as building on the rock or on the sand (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46-49). Christ is the rock on which we must build our spiritual houses, if we expect them to stand the test of judgment (Matthew 16:18; Isaiah 28:16; 1 Corinthians 3:11). **How do we build on Christ?**

First, we must dig deep and build on the right foundation (Luke 6:48). We must dig through the doctrines of men (Matthew 15:9), denominationalism (John 17:20,21; 1 Corinthians 1:10), human creeds as guide books (2 Timothy 3:16,17), human names in religion (Acts 4:12; 1 Peter 4:11), additions, subtractions, and substitutions to God's word (2 John 9:11; 1 Corinthians 4:6), and the concept that morality alone is sufficient. Cornelius was a morally good man, but that was not enough. Some may have to dig through all these things; others may not, but the digging must be done. No structure is more secure than its foundation, so in building our spiritual houses we must dig until we build on the Rock of Ages.

Second, how do we build on Christ? We build on Christ

when we build on the following: **(1) the teaching of Christ and His apostles** (Matthew 7:23; 16:18; Galatians 1:6-9); **(2) the unity enjoined by the Spirit** (Ephesians 4:1-6; John 17:20,21; 1 Corinthians 1:10); **(3) the Bible as the all sufficient guide in religion** (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:3); **(4) the God-given designations for the church, its members, officers, and head** (Romans 16:16; Isaiah 62:2; Acts 11:26; Philippinas 1:2; Ephesians 1:22,23); **(5) strict obedience to God's word** (Matthew 7:21; Revelation 22:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9). This would include the conditions with which man must comply in becoming a Christian, as well as worshipping as commanded, and living the life that God's word authorizes. **(6) The divine plan of salvation, the church, and the divine system of worship, as authorized in the New Testament.**

Conclusion

Too much care cannot be given to building a spiritual structure that will guarantee our eternal salvation. Striking are the words that Jesus used to describe the fall of the foolish man's house: "*And the ruin of that house was great*" (Luke 6:49). In God's sight the fall of one immortal soul is a thought full of unspeakable sorrow and tragedy. How supremely important it is that we build our spiritual houses so that they will stand when the worlds are on fire!

Isn't it strange that princes and kings,
And clowns that caper in sawdust rings,
And common folks like you and me,
Are builders of eternity?

To each is given a book of rules,
A shapeless mass and a bag of tools,
And each must make ere life has flown
A stumbling block or a steppingstone.
— R.L. Sharpe

The Pull of the Under-Current

“Save yourselves from this crooked generation” (Acts 2:40 ASV).

Sometimes along the beaches of the ocean signs are erected warning would-be swimmers that the water there is dangerous because there is an undercurrent or under-tow there that could pull them out to sea and they would be drowned. That “crooked generation” was the undercurrent that threatened the destruction of Peter’s hearers. This would refer to all the temptations, allurements, and appeals that can pull people away from God and right and drown them in destruction and despair.

The devil is the prince of this world (John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2), and he uses every tactic at his command to lure unsuspecting souls into his service — to pull them into the current that daily drowns men and women in the destruction of their souls. Even Jesus was tempted by the pull of the undercurrent (Matthew 4:1-11), but He successfully resisted its pressure and overcame.

1. Peter’s exhortations: Peter exhorted them not to be swallowed up by the tendencies of the age. This is so easy to do. It requires no back-bone, determination, or resistance. All that one does is follow the crowd, the currents, the trends, and the tendencies of the age. It is all down hill until one starts reaping the consequences.

Peter also exhorted his hearers to live straight in the midst of a crooked generation. The word “crooked” is from a word which carries the idea of weaving from side to side rather than going straight. Peter was calling on his hearers to be pure in the midst

of impure surroundings; to be high-minded in the midst of debasing circumstances. It was a warning that if they were caught in the under-current of the age, their usefulness to their Creator would be wrecked.

2. The devil's tactics to pull us into the under-current:

His tactics are so subtle that if one is not careful he can unconsciously be deceived thereby. One of his most effective tactics is peer pressure. He uses fads, fashions, fun, and frolic to draw souls into his lures. "Everybody is doing it" does not make it right or justify it. "*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*" (Exodus 23:2). Christians must not be conformed to the age in which they live (Romans 12:2). If they do, the under-current will eventually overcome them.

Sometimes the devil will use a family member to lure us away, as he did Eve to get to Adam. He uses friends to pull us away from God, the church, and its services. He uses attractive and appealing advertising that appeals to the lust of the flesh. He will influence one's thinking to make him believe that since we live only once, not to let the "good life" pass you by. "Eat, drink, and be merry today, because tomorrow you may die." It is no wonder that Paul warned us not to be ignorant of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Conclusion

It is so easy to be swept into hell by one's surrounding, to be a victim of circumstances, rather than makers of circumstances. Which are you??

(Note: The outline for this article was borrowed from John D. Reese.)

“Zealous of Good Works”

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).

Zeal can be properly or improperly motivated. If improperly motivated, it is misdirected. Zeal in a good cause is one of the greatest powers in the world, but in a wrong cause or without knowledge (Romans 10:2), it can be one of the most harmful forces exercised by man. Zeal for human tradition, false religions, and wrong causes has done immeasurable harm. Our text enjoins zeal (enthusiasm, fervor), in “good works” which is zeal properly motivated and directed. Three aspects of such zeal are outlined in the text. They are as follows:

1. The right direction of zeal — “good works”: Such injunctions as *“being fruitful in every good work”* (Colossians 1:10), and *“Be ready unto every good work”* (Titus 3:1) are the directives of inspiration. These are called works of faith (1 Thessalonians 1:3), and works that are opposed to spiritual darkness (Romans 13:12). In the New Testament all good works are grouped under one of three headings: evangelism, edification, and benevolence. These are all essential to the advancement of Christianity in the world. Reduced to its simplest ingredient, doing good works means doing the works that Christ did.

2. The enthusiasm by which such works should be done — “zealous”: The primary meaning of the word is to be “boiling hot” (Thayer). We cannot serve the Lord acceptably by lukewarmness, as did the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:15,16).

He said to them, "*Be zealous therefore, and repent*" (Revelation 3:19). "*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord*" (Colossians 3:23). We should work with all our might (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Lukewarmness is the only condition mentioned in the Scriptures which is said to nauseate the Lord. We need to get on fire for the Lord!

3. The secret of this zeal — Jesus' giving Himself for us: Knowledge that Jesus gave Himself to redeem us from all iniquity should be all the motivation we need to be zealous in good works. The secret to passionate zeal in serving God is redemption and conversion. To the unconverted a zealous Christian seems to be fanatical, because the unconverted does not know the secret of the motivation. An Indian, having heard from a white man some scriptures on zeal, replied, "I don't know about having too much zeal; but I think it is better the pot should boil over than not boil at all."

Conclusion

Our text says zeal for good works makes God's people **peculiar**, not queer or oddballs, but peculiar in loving our enemies, doing good to those that hate us, visiting the sick, blessing those that curse us, helping the poor, making the world a better place to live, etc. This is the kind of peculiarity to which our text refers. "*The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*" (Psalm 69:9). **Do you have this zeal in good works?**

Sowing and Reaping

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:7,8).

Our text states an immutable, universal and divine law — as one sows, so shall he reap. It is as true in the spiritual realm as it is in the natural realm. All men are sowers, sowing either to the flesh or the Spirit whether they realize it or not. Paul warned of the gravity of not doing the right kind of sowing. He said, *“Be not deceived, God is not mocked.”* Men may deceive themselves into thinking that they can live one kind of life and reap an entirely different kind of harvest; but in the end they will discover that it is not true. As an old country song says, “You Cannot Do Wrong and Get By.” Harvest time is coming when the wheat will be separated from the tares (Matthew 13:24-30,36-43).

“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap asserts the continuity of personal existence, the connection of cause and effect in human character. It makes man the master of his own destiny. It declares that his future depends upon his present choice” (James Hastings). We need to ponder seriously the sowing and reaping principles. We shall note three of these principles.

1. One always reaps what he sows. “Whatsoever” refers to kind and degree. This principle was stated in the beginning when God said each plant and animal would reproduce **after its kind** (Genesis 1:11,12,21,24). We all recognize this principle in

the natural realm. If one plants wheat, he expects wheat to come up. Our text says that if one sows to the flesh, he will reap corruption, but if one sows to the spirit he will reap eternal life.

2. One always reaps more than he sows. “If this principle were not true, no one would farm for a living. Farmers have a hard time anyway these days, but imagine how it would be if they only expected to make as much as they planted.” Our text says that those who sow to the flesh (worldly desires) will reap corruption in this life and eternity in hell in the next life. This means that although there is one sowing time (this life) there are two reaping times, so one reaps more than he sows.

3. One always reaps longer than he sows. A man may commit a crime in just a few minutes, and spend the rest of his life reaping the penalty. It takes a courting couple only one night of folly to bring about what can never be forgotten. A girl who has a child out of marriage will reap for years and years the shame of sowing to the flesh just one night. And this does not include eternal damnation if one dies unforgiven. We may have to reap all the rest of our lives for just a moment’s reckless folly.

Conclusion

Oh, how we need to consider the harvest before the sowing! Dear reader, are you sowing to the flesh and hoping for a crop failure? It appears that this is what many are doing. This present life is sowing time for eternity. What shall the harvest be from your sowing?

“Sowing the seed by the daylight fair,
Sowing the seed by the noon-day glare,
Sowing the seed by the fading light,
Sowing the seed by the solemn night
O what shall the harvest be?”

— Mrs. Emily S. Oakely

If “Christians” Were Christians

What kind of world would we be living in if all those who profess to be “Christians” were Christians in the biblical sense? There are about five hundred million nominal “Christians” in the world today — those who claim to be “Christians”. Attempts are made to distinguish different groups of them by hyphenating a qualifying word to the name Christian — a distinction which is not made in the New Testament. If so, what kind of a Christian were Paul, Peter, John, et al. No such distinctions existed in the first century of the church.

We shall note in what follows some of the things that would be true in the religious world if “Christians” were Christians.

1. There would be only one church of those who claimed to be Christians. There were no denominations or sects of Christians that we read about in the New Testament. First century Christians were not members of denominational bodies. None of them had come into existence by that time. In fact, according to history, the first one did not develop until 606 A.D.

If all of those who profess to be “Christians” were in the biblical sense, there would be no men of great ecclesiastical authority (popes or cardinals occupying seats of power, or arch-bishops, presidents of associations, etc.). There would be no synods, conventions, conferences, dioceses, world conclaves, etc. None of these existed in the first century and there is no divine authority in the New Testament for them to exist now.

Can you imagine Christ’s coming back to earth today and

recognizing all the lordly men and warring institutions claiming to be His followers — even claiming to be His personal representative on earth? What kind of Lord would He be if He sanctioned and approved all the conflicting doctrines, different names, and unauthorized practices existing today among professing “Christians”? James Russell Lowell (1819-1891), an American poet, essayist, and diplomat, wrote a poem entitled “A Parable” in which he tried to imagine Christ’s returning to the divided Christendom of today. Note some things he said:

“Where ever His steps they led,
The Lord in sorrow bent down His head,
And from under the heavy foundation-stones,
The son of Mary had bitter groans,
And in church, and palace, and judgment hall,
He marked great fissures that rent the wall,
And opened wider and yet more wider
As the living foundation heaved and sighed.”

The Lord is not responsible for this shameful condition existing in the religious world.

What Saith the Holy Scriptures?

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus promised to build His church, when He said, “*Upon this rock*” (the truth Peter confessed) “*I will build my church.*” Note that the Lord spoke in the future tense (“will build”), in the possessive case (“my church”), and in the singular number (“church”, not churches). In Ephesians 4:4 Paul affirmed that in the unity which the Holy Spirit enjoins there is “one body.” That body is the church of which Jesus is the head (Ephesians 1:22,23). And it follows by correct exegesis and log-

ical conclusion that there is only one church authorized in the New Testament.

Our Lord's intercessory prayer recorded in John 17 included the petition that all who believed in Him "may be one" through the revelation given by His apostles (verses 20,21). How could the divided condition of Christendom ever be the answer to this prayer? If all those who claim to be "Christians" were true Christians, no one would pray contrary to this prayer and thank God for the many churches in existence so that one can join the church of his choice. Such is diametrically opposed to the Lord's prayer in John 17:20,21.

To a divided local congregation Paul said, "*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*" (1 Corinthians 1:10). If "Christians" were Christians, we would not have the babel of conflicting voices that is heard today in Christendom. In essentials or matters of faith all would be speaking the same thing, or Paul commanded the impossible.

If this teaching had been followed through the centuries since the establishment of the church in Jerusalem in 33 A.D. (Luke 24:46,47; Acts 2), there would be only one church now of those who claim to be Christians as it was in the first century.

2. There would be no racial prejudice — no anti-Semitic or any other racial prejudice. Jesus and all His apostles were Jews. Jesus said that salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22), meaning that it was through the Jewish nation of old that the divine Scheme of Human Redemption was developed and unfolded, which included the coming of Christ as the promised

Redeemer.

The essence of Christianity is brotherhood. In his famous sermon on Mars Hill in Athens, Greece, Paul said, "*God has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth*" (Acts 17:26). The best Greek manuscripts do not support the occurrence of the word "blood", but paraphrase the meaning. What Paul "affirms is the unity of the human race with a common origin and with God as the Creator."

Christ's teaching and example: Jesus understood the prejudice between the Jews and the Samaritans, because the Samaritans were a mongrel race, but He ignored it and requested a drink of water from a Samaritan woman at Sychar. Being stunned by His request the woman said, "*How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?*" Jesus ignored her question and proceeded to deal with her real problem — her complicated marital life. He converted the woman and accepted the invitation of the Samaritans to abide with them, which He did for two days. What a bold action on the part of our Lord to destroy the wall of prejudice that existed between the ancient Jews and Samaritans!

Apostolic teaching and example: It required a miracle to convince Peter that he should comply with the summons of Cornelius, a Gentile. But when he arrived at the house of Cornelius he said, "*Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him*" (Acts 10:34,35). The greatest fission of racial prejudice in the history of the world was that of long centuries ago and still existing in the first century between Jews and Gentiles. There was an old Jewish prayer which Jews prayed every day and it said, "Thanks that Thou hast

not made me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.” Paul reversed this. All genuine Christians know that Paul said Christ abolished this distinction by His death on the cross (Ephesians 2:11-22. Be sure to read). As far as God is concerned there has been no racial distinction since Christ died (Cf. Galatians 3:26-29). *“If ye are Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise”* (Galatians 3:29). This is the test of being a Christian, not fleshly blood, or pride, or race, or nation. Genuine Christians are spiritually color blind. If we are genuine Christians, we will love each other regardless of race, or nationality, and will live in peace.

“Every man on whom is the image and the blood of Christ, is a brother to every one who bears that image, and should be treated accordingly. What an influence would be excited in the breaking up of the distinctions of rank and caste among men; what an effect in abolishing the prejudice on account of colour and country, if this were universally believed and felt!” (Albert Barnes).

3. There would be no war among Christians. Christians do not settle differences by fighting them out by carnal warfare. The United States and its allies fought two wars to end all wars, but wars continue to be fought. Christ, who is the commander-in-chief of Christians, never led an army or fought a battle in carnal warfare. Jesus is one king that does not conquer by carnal warfare. He said, *“My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence”* (John 18:36). He taught strongly on this point. When He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter drew his sword to defend the Savior, but the Savior said, *“Put up thy sword again into its place: for all they that take the sword shall*

perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). He also taught in His famous Sermon on the Mount what a Christian's attitude should be toward his enemies (Matthew 5:38-48).

It was foretold in prophecy that those in the kingdom of God would not wage carnal war, but would "*beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks*" (Isaiah 2:2-4). This idyllic scene is also described by the same prophet in Chapter 11:6-9. These are not referring to some future date when there will be no more wars among the nations of the earth, but are figurative descriptions of the attitudes of those who have joined ranks under King Jesus. There is no teaching in the Bible that foretells universal peace among all the nations of the earth at some future date.

When all professed "Christians" crown Christ king in their lives, wars among them will cease and they will sing in unison:

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall!

Bring forth the royal diadem,

And crown Him Lord of all!

Let every kindred, every tribe,

On this terrestrial ball,

To Him all majesty ascribe,

And crown Him Lord of all!"

— Edward Perronet

4. If "Christians" were Christians, the world would be turned upside down. This is what Paul and the early Christians did by their teaching and practice in the first century (Acts 17:6). We need a burning zeal for Christ and His cause like they had.

Regretfully, the love and zeal of many professing Christians have grown cold. The Lord's admonition to the church at Ephesus is just as apropos now as it was then (Revelation 2:4,5).

If professing and nominal "Christians" were Christians in the scriptural sense with the zeal and love of first century Christians, there would be a wholesale return to first century Christianity with the Bible as the sole guide in religious matters, and the church of the New Testament as the only religious body. This is the only way to make the world safe for democracy and to walk in the "Old Paths" religiously (Jeremiah 6:16). May God hasten that day, but until that day we are forced to sing the words of the old song which says,

"Tho' with a scornful wonder
We see her (the church) sore oppressed,
Her doctrine rent asunder,
By names and creeds distressed.
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
They cry, 'How long, how long?'
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song."

- S. J. Stone

Maintaining the Purity of the Church

In English dictionaries the first definition of “pure” is “free from extraneous material, or mixture of anything of a different, inferior, or contaminating kind.” Paul said of Christ that He “*gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession*” (Titus 2:14). Because of the ecumenical syndrome of our times, compromise of the truth by some brethren threatens to corrupt the purity of the church. By allowing an admixture of man-made doctrines and practices of men, the purity of the church is destroyed. **How do we keep the church free from extraneous and unscriptural matters?**

1. It must be kept pure doctrinally. The church at Jerusalem continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine — the doctrine taught by the Spirit guided apostles (Acts 2:42). There is a body of teaching that is identified as the “doctrine of Christ”, which we are forbidden to go beyond (2 John 9-11). This doctrine unmixed with the doctrines of men provides us with all the reproof, correction, and instruction that furnishes us unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Preaching the word (gospel) and it only as Paul charged Timothy to do will keep the church pure in doctrine (2 Timothy 4:1-4). Four times in his letters to Timothy and Titus, Paul charged them to speak the things that become (befit) “sound doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1). “Sound” is from a word that means “healthy or wholesome”. It is paraphrased in the New Century Version: “You must tell everyone to

follow the true teaching.”

One becomes a Christian by obeying a certain “form of doctrine” — a likeness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This all takes place in scriptural baptism (Romans 6:16-18; Cf. vs. 1-5). So there is a pattern of doctrine that must be followed, the opinions of some brethren to the contrary, not withstanding.

Modern change agents begin navigating their agendas for change by corrupting Bible doctrine. There are frequent warnings in the New Testament against departures from the apostles’ doctrine (1 Timothy 4:1,2). Preaching the word as Paul commanded Timothy excludes everything else (2 Timothy 4:1-4).

2. The church must be kept pure in practice. Twenty-one books of the New Testament are devoted to exhorting members of the church to live pure and holy lives. Here are some of the injunctions from the inspired apostles: *“Come ye out...and be separate and touch no unclean thing”* (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1); *“Be not conformed to the world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds”* (Romans 12:1,2); *“Keep yourselves unspotted from the world”* (2 Timothy 2:19,20); *“Love not the world, nor the things in the world”* (1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4).

Conclusion

Eternal vigilance is the price of the purity of the church. Maintaining the purity of the church requires a pure faith (doctrine) and a pure practice. “Neither ridicule nor opposition from denominationalism can defeat us as long as we keep the church pure — refuse to compromise in either doctrine or Christian living” (Gordon J. Pennock).

What Will Your Answer Be?

No fact is taught with greater positiveness and clearness in the Bible than the fact that we must all answer to God for our actions in the Judgment at the last great day (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:12). But judging by the way many of us live and act, it is apparent that many of us do not expect to have to answer for our deeds and neglect. *“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment”* (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

Ignorance of the Bible

What will your answer be before God in judgment if you have failed to learn the saving truth of God’s word? The Bible is God’s revelation to man, which reveals the divine plan of salvation (Ephesians 3:1-3). You cannot die in ignorance of God’s truth and be saved eternally (John 8:32). And God’s word will be the standard of judgment on that last great day (John 12:48). With Bibles as plentiful as they are in our day, there is no excuse for anyone’s dying in ignorance of God’s saving truth. We must study to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Timothy 2:15).

False Teachers

What will be your answer in the judgment if you have been deceived and misled by false prophets and teachers? Jesus warned against being deceived by false teachers (Matthew 7:15-20). He also warned that if the blind follow the blind they would

both fall into the ditch (Matthew 15:14). John, the apostle, admonished his readers not to believe every spirit (teacher), but to try the spirits whether they be of God (1 John 4:1). This is done by measuring what they teach by the truth revealed in the Bible. *“To the law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”* (Isaiah 8:20).

Being in Christ

What will your answer be if you meet God in judgment out of Christ and as one who spurned opportunity after opportunity to obey the truth (Romans 2:8,9; Hebrews 2:1-3)? How to get into Christ is made crystal clear in the New Testament (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27). There is no other way revealed in the New Testament to get into Christ and there is no salvation out of Christ (Ephesians 1:2,3; 2 Timothy 2:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Will you be speechless before the judge at the last great day because you went to meet the bridegroom (Christ) without a wedding garment (Matthew 22:14)?

Love of the Brethren

What will you answer in judgment be if you have failed to love your brethren? Jesus said this would be evidence to the world that we are His disciples (John 13:34,35). It is also evidence that we have passed out of death (spiritual death) into life (1 John 3:14). No other duty is enjoined more frequently in the New Testament than this one. If the Lord could love us with all our faults, surely we ought to be able to overlook one another's faults as Christians and love one another. We cannot claim to love God and not love our brethren (1 John 4:20,21).

Apostasy

What will your answer be if you have put your hands to the plow and then looked back (Luke 9:62)? What will your answer be for having crucified the Son of God afresh and putting Him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:4-6)? What could an apostate answer? *“It had been good for that man if he had not been born”* (Matthew 26:24; 2 Peter 2:20-22).

Excuses

What will your answer be for all the flimsy excuses you may have made for absenting yourself from the Bible classes and worship services of the church (Hebrews 10:25; Luke 14:15-35)? When you are asked for a reason and you only have an excuse, what will your answer be? If you have failed to mold your life sufficiently into the likeness of Christ’s life by failing to assemble enough for worship, how will you answer Him?

First Things First

What will your answer be if you have failed to seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33)? When the Lord inquires about your missing services to entertain company, or to go to anywhere else you wanted to go but could not get to services, what will your answer be (Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26; Colossians 3:1)?

Conclusion

What a sad day it will be if we meet the judge of the universe unprepared! Speechless! Condemned! Lost! For eternity!

Some day you'll stand at the bar on high,
Some day your record you'll see;
Someday you'll answer the question of life,
What will your answer be?

Sadly you'll stand, if you're unprepared,
Trembling, you'll fall on your knees;
Facing the sentence of life or of death,
What will your answer be?

Now is the time to prepare, my friend,
Make your soul spotless and free;
Washed in the blood of the Crucified One,
He will your answer be.

What will it be? What will it be?
Where will you spend your eternity?
What will it be, O what will it be;
What will your answer be?

- Tillit S. Teddlie