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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment".

Contrary to the belief of some that humans are reborn in one form or another as living creatures after death; the Bible teaches that God has appointed for all humans to die once and after death must face His judgment. (Hebrews 9:27). When a plant dies it withers and goes out of existence. When an animal dies it ceases to live anymore. However, when a human being dies, the Bible says, "The silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the well. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:6, 7).

Man's spirit or soul lives forever, since unlike plants or animals, man was created by God in His own image and after His own likeness. (Genesis 1:26, 27). Therefore, like God all humans will live forever. In the beginning, when man was created, the Bible says, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." (Genesis 2:7).

When will the judgment occur? From the Bible we learn;

Christ taught, "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." (John 5:28, 29). From this we observe that the Bible teaches that before the judgment of all take place; all will be resurrected at the same time, both good and evil or the righteous and the wicked. Concerning the judgment, the apostle Paul preached, at Acts 17:30 & 31, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent. Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." Again, at 2 Corinthians 5:10, he mentioned, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what He has done, whether good or bad." Since man continue to live after death, where does man go after death? From the story of the rich man and Lazarus, at Luke 16, we learn, that both rich man and Lazarus went into Hades after they were dead, though, both were in different states or places. While the rich man was in torments in Hades; Lazarus, on the other hand, was with Abraham in Paradise. While their bodies had returned to earth, their spirits or souls were in Hades. Christ, after His death, also went into Hades. As we read from Acts 2:27 & 31, "Because you will not leave my soul in Hades . . . he foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption." Just before His death on the cross, Christ had promised the penitent criminal. "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43). Christ had entered Paradise in Hades. Hades is the Greek word, meaning, unseen place of the dead.

The 15th chapter of the New Testament book of 1st Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 teaches that the resurrection of all will take place when the Christ will appear up in the clouds as the judge. The bodies of all the dead, since the time of Adam, will be resurrected by the power of God, and just as God gives a new body to each seed that falls into ground and dies, so shall all the resurrected ones will be raised incorruptible; they shall be changed into spiritual and immortal beings, in a

moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Speaking of the day of judgment, the book of Revelation at 20:13 says that Hades will deliver up the dead that are in it. Thus, the changed, immortal bodies will be reunited with their eternal spirits or souls, and thus will all stand before the judge, the Christ, in two groups of wicked and the righteous, and thus His judgment will be pronounced: "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25: 46).

This reminds us of Christ's teaching of Matthew 10:28: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." While at death, both soul and body are separated, at resurrection, however, both will be reunited, and will enter their respective eternal abodes, either hell or heaven.

Do We Inherit Sin Today?

J.C. CHOATE

There are many in our time who believe that babies are born into the world as sinners. This belief is called "original sin"—that all children are born with the guilt of the sin of Adam and Eve. Another term for this doctrine is "total depravity." This belief has resulted in the creation of a plan to save babies from sin, which is totally foreign to scriptures. In a ceremony of cleansing and dedication, babies are "christened", with water sprinkled on their heads, or they may even be immersed in water. The doctrine teaches that a child who has not been christened is lost. Of course, the Scriptures teach none of these things.

Let's go back to Genesis to see the beginning of guilt. Adam and Eve were created by God without any sin. They were placed in the Garden of Eden, had everything they needed, and had access to the tree of life. God told them they could partake of everything in the garden except for the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden. They were further told that the day they partook of that fruit they would surely die. But the old Devil, in the form of a serpent, tempted Eve by assuring her that she would not die. He further told her

that God knew that in partaking of the tree of knowledge, they would become wise as gods. Seeing then that the fruit was to be desired, she partook of it and gave to Adam and he also ate of it. God had given them the choice of obedience or disobedience in this one thing, and they chose to disobey. Now their eyes were open to good and evil. Their conscience now realized sin and guilt. As a result, they were afraid and tried to hide from God. They were also ashamed of their nakedness and covered themselves with fig leaves.

God placed punishment on humanity as a result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Humans, now, would have consciences, recognizing right and wrong, good and evil! Many choices of obedience or disobedience would now be open to people, and there would be many consequences of the sins that would be committed. Up to this time Eve had not given birth, but now she would have increased conception and she would suffer in childbirth. Adam had not had to work, being in the garden with everything available to them, but now it would be in the sweat of his face that he would provide food for his family. Finally, they were driven from the Garden, away from the tree of life, which would have enabled them to live forever. Because of their sin they died spiritually on that day, and eventually they would die physically.

The Scriptures nowhere state that the children of Adam and Eve, and all children following them, inherit their sin. As already indicated, though, the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin would plague mankind for all time. This was because their eyes were now open, they knew right from wrong, and they no longer had access to the tree of life.

Some speak of David's statement in Psalm 51:5 to try to prove that he said he was born *with* sin. David actually said, "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" But some mis-translations have David saying that he was born *with* sin. In these cases, the translator has used "with" instead of "in" because of his own biased belief that man is born with sin. David's literal statement was that his mother was a sinner and, as a sinner, she conceived him. Nowhere in God's teaching on this subject is there any evidence that anyone is born with sin.

You may remember that when David's son died he said that

the child could not come back to him but he could go to the child. He surely wasn't saying that his son had died as a sinner, and had gone to hell—even though this child was illegitimate. Rather, he believed that his son had gone to be with the Lord, and that as such he could one day be with him in heaven.

Ezekiel laid down a principle that has always been true. He said, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*" (Ezekiel 18:20). In other words, each one must be responsible for his own sin. This means that no one is born into this world with the guilt of Adam's sin or any one else's sin. Rather, a baby is born pure and whole, without any sin, and continues that way until he reaches the age of knowing right from wrong. Then, when he *chooses* to sin, he becomes a sinner.

But doesn't Paul say in Romans 3:23 that *all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God? That is true, but if you will read the context you will find that he is speaking of those who speak lies and shed innocent blood. Now who is guilty of such things? Those who are *old enough* to do those things, accountable beings, adults, not babies.

Christ told the disciples in Matthew 18:1-5 that one must be converted and become as little children to enter the kingdom of heaven. If children had been born totally depraved, He surely would not have been encouraging the disciples or anyone else to become converted and be like little children.

The gospel and the terms of pardon are directed to those who have a conscience, who know right from wrong, who are accountable to God and are therefore sinners in need of salvation. Christ commanded the apostles to go and teach all nations (Matthew 28:19), to encourage them to hear and understand God's word (Romans 10:17), to believe in God and in Christ as the Son of God (Hebrews 11:6; John 14:1-3), to repent of their sins (Acts 17:30), to confess with their mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32, 33), and to be baptized, buried in water, to wash away their sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). Now these teachings and commands are not directed to babies, infants, or even small children. Rather, they are directed to those who are *old enough* to hear the truth,

old enough to understand it and to believe, old enough to repent of their sins, old enough to confess with their mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and old enough to be baptized for the remission of their sins.

The idea that sin is inherited, as one would inherit a disease, is certainly foreign to the Scriptures. It is true that when man sinned, definite consequences were brought to all of mankind, but innocent infants did not inherit the guilt of the sin of Adam and Eve or of any other human being. Each person becomes a sinner when he, himself, chooses to sin, having reached the age of knowing right from wrong. At that point he has a conscience concerning his sin, and he is then in need of salvation. Both man and woman have to suffer many consequences of sin, and finally all have to die, physically.

Still, Adam and Eve, and all others since them, have had to answer for their own sins, not the sins of another. Christ said that if we reject Him and His word, we have one that will judge us in the last day—His word (John 12:48). Even in that final judgment, each one of us will stand before God individually and answer for our own sins, not for the sins of Adam and Eve or anyone else. *"And the dead were judged according to their work. . . each one according to his own works"* (Revelation 20 : 12, 13).

Especially for Women

What If a Man Calls on a Woman to Speak Publicly?

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

In this age of the influence of "Women's Liberation" movement, all types of reasoning are put forward, attempting to authorize women to take a public leadership role.

Realizing that the Scriptures say, *"I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man . . ."* (1 Timothy 2:12), the question is asked, "Elders, or the men of the congregation, are to have authority over the women. If an elder called on a

woman to pray or to preach in the assembly, would that be permissible, since she would only be obeying the directions of the elder?"

This would *seem* to be in order. After all, how can a woman be *usurping authority over a man* if the men themselves are the ones who have asked her to pray or to teach? But we must not forget a very important point: *the head of woman is man but the head of every man is Christ!* (1 Corinthians 11:3). By the authority of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures were penned, not by the opinions of the human writers. When they wrote that men are to provide the public leadership in the assemblies of the church, they were writing what the Holy Spirit instructed. The words were not their own.

If an elder or a man in the church today calls on a woman to pray or to preach to a mixed audience, he is asking her to violate clear instructions in the Scriptures. Even though, as a man, he is in a leadership role over women, he is not an authority above and beyond Lord Himself! To ask such a thing is a presumptuous sin, an attitude strongly condemned in the Scriptures.

In the book of Deuteronomy we have a parallel to this type of question. God said that if a prophet or a dreamer (some person claiming authority) tried to lead the Israelites astray, even "performing" a "sign or a wonder", and saying, "Let us go after other gods", "*you shall not listen to the words of that prophet. . . You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God. . .*" (Deuteronomy 13:2-5).

We do not live under the Law of Moses or in the age when God's people are the authorities to execute those who break God's commandments, but we should not minimize the importance of hearing what He says and obeying His voice. To presume to rewrite God's instructions and to change the order of authority He has established are grave offences on the part of any man or woman. Surely, no Christian would want to be guilty of such a sin.

Drinking

FRANCIS DAVID

There are some states in India, who have banned the drinking of liquor. A number of people appreciated this good step taken by their Government. The Andhra Pradesh and Haryana state have put the total Prohibition on this bad habit. Some people were very unhappy by this action of the Government. They got discouraged by this and began to think that the life will be dull and boring without the alcohol. I even heard that there are some who are trying to cross over to the next state to get their favorite drink. On the other hand many housewives and children were happy about this, because they were deprived of their rights for a good peaceful life. Many husbands will come home and beat their wives and children and were not even taking care of their families well.

The history of drinking alcohol is very old. Even in ancient times people used to drink. What we can say, that this particular habit is an ancient bad habit. All over the world people are forming this filthy habit and no doubt the drinkers are increasing everyday. There are some who are casual drinkers and there are some who are habitual drinkers. But whether casual or habitual, they are still drinkers.

There are repeated warnings from the social and as well as religious organisations about the bad affects of liquor but inspite of this nobody cares. People those who are enslaved to this habit do not pay any heed to such warnings. Some say, "how can you expect us to leave liquor?" We have to get along with people, we want to look more stylish, We want to be successful people." Can you imagine, how foolish arguments people make to defend this bad habit.

There are some who started this by a little drink, and you know this, little drink gradually turned into a big bottle. The beginning was from the very small quantity. We need to teach and warn our children about the bad affects of drinking and smoking etc. Show them your personal example. A number of times we read or hear that this accident or wreck occurred

because the driver was under the influence of liquor. How many times we have heard that person murdered the other fellow because he was drunk. Yes many crimes take place, just because of this bad habit. A boy or girl, a man or a woman never thought that the little quantity of wine will some day turn into a big quantity. Dear friend, the liquor industry is doing a good business by enticing you with big attractive advertisements. They may advertise like this: "Become a successful man or woman, drink this brand".

Listen to the word of God, what it says about drinking liquor. The book of Proverbs is an excellent book. The wise man Solomon says that "WINE is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." (Prov. 20:1), Be not among winebibbers or among gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags. (Prov. 23:20-21); Who has woe? who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine, those who go to try mixed wine, and he says further "DO NOT LOOK at wine when it is RED, When it SPARKLES in the cup and goes down smoothly. At the last it BITES like an ADDER (Serpent) (Prov. 23:29-31); In Leviticus 10:8-9 Lord spoke to Aaron and told him "Drink no wine nor strong drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting lest you die; it shall be a statute to you for ever throughout your generations." Some have the wrong idea that Bible does not condemn drinking. The people who say this want to defend their drinking habit, but no matter what they say they can't prove that which is wrong. Wrong is always wrong. People often say in order to defend themselves that Paul encouraged Timothy to take wine. Do you know what did Paul say and why? Nowhere in the Scriptures we read that Timothy took wine. Paul told him to use a little for your stomach sake. Here we see the medicinal use of wine which Paul is talking about. But now we have the more advance medicines and therefore it does not justify the taking of wine. We should know that Paul and Timothy had the knowledge of the scriptures where the taking of liquor is condemned. Timothy knew that liquor is not connected with the Christian character. It is very much not connected with the

Christian character. So we see it is very much clear that Timothy did not take wine. Paul must have thought that he might use it for his disordered stomach. Paul is talking about the sickness here. A true Christian will never indulge himself in drinking liquor.

Some tried to justify taking liquor by giving the example that Jesus made wine in Cana. My friend, Jesus did not make liquor in the marriage. The place where the wedding took place is in Palestine and in Palestine the grapes are very common and consumption of grape juice was very common in celebrations. It is just like when I go to Kerala, I see there that Pineapple juice and Coconut water are very common drinks. The grape juice which Jesus made was not intoxicating. The Bible says everyone in the wedding had plenty of drink and suppose if it was an intoxicating drink then what kind of situation could have arisen there? It is sad, sometime people do not handle the word of God rightly. We need to handle it rightly (II Tim. 2:15).

Dear reader, the liquor should be avoided by all. Dear friend, if you are a drinker and if you want to get rid of this bad habit then I would encourage you to come to God and ask his help and guidance, He would surely help you. You must know that liquor is harming your body and your mind. Your family and loved ones are reaping the consequences of your bad habit. Your body belongs to God. Do not abuse it. The Bible says: "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore GLORIFY GOD in your BODY and in your spirit (I Cor. 6:19-22). If you have not given your life to Jesus, you can do it today by obeying his commands. James says through the inspiration of God "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:7). Today is the day of salvation (II Cor. 6:2). You can repent of your old sinful life and give yourself to Jesus by believing on him as the Son of God and then be baptised in the watery grave for the forgiveness of your sins. After completing your obedience to Christ and God, you will be a child of God.

Please encourage your friends, relatives, loved ones and everyone, who is within your reach to quit taking liquor.

Jesus' Powerful Blood!

GARY C. HAMPTON

Sin Stands Between Man and God

A careful reading of Genesis 3 leaves one with the distinct impressions that man and woman, prior to violating God's will, were able to walk with God. Apparently, God came during the cool of the evening to walk with man in the Garden of Eden. Unfortunately, sin spoiled that relationship. Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden and that close fellowship with God was lost.

However, God longed for man to once again be in a close relationship with him. In fact, even before forming the world, God formulated a plan for restoring lost mankind in case he should fall into the snare of sin (Ephesians 1:7-11; 3:8-13). To achieve his purpose, the Almighty had to find a way to rid man of sin, since it is sin that separates between man and God. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). Every man or woman, who has reached an age where they can discern right from wrong, must admit they are guilty of sin (Romans 3:10, 23). Sin's paycheck is eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23).

Life Is In Christ's Blood

Medical science has caused us to realize the life of our physical bodies is in the blood. Of course, God knew that all along, as he had Moses write in Leviticus 17:11, 14. Physical blood is needed to sustain physical lives. That is why we have blood banks and urge individuals to give blood during blood drives. Someone may need surgery or have an accident which will require them to have a blood transfusion to prevent the loss of life.

In a similar way, the blood of Jesus is the life blood of the spiritual body, or church. Paul told the Ephesian elders, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). When we remember, "according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood

there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22); we come to realize our need for blood to be cleansed from sin and restored to a full fellowship with the Father, or spiritual life. Not just any blood would satisfy sin's demand. It had to be the blood of an innocent one, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ (John 1:29).

Christ Left His Blood in His Death

The Savior shed His precious blood in His death on the cross of Calvary (John 19:33-34). It was because He was already dead that the soldier pierced His side with a spear and blood came out mixed with water. Since the blood of God's innocent Lamb is absolutely essential to having our sins remitted, we must ask how we can reach His death where He left His blood?

Scripture only describes one means of reaching that death. "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4). In writing to the Colossian brethren, Paul again explained that we are buried with Christ in the watery grave of baptism. He also indicated baptism was the means of our being circumcised by God. The Almighty cuts away the old body of sins and makes us alive with Christ (Colossians 2:11-13).

Christ's Blood Is the Means of Restoring God's Friendship

In Romans 5:9-11, we are said to be reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus. Thayer says the word reconciled means, "to be restored to the favor of God." Hence, some have said the word means to make friends again (compare Colossians 1:20-22). Two proofs are offered by Paul to show we are reconciled to God. First, God does not impute to us our sins. Second, he has given us the message of reconciliation to carry to the world (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Such reconciliation is conditioned upon our being in Christ (verse 17). We must be baptized to be in Christ (Galatians 3:26-27). Further, we must walk in God's way if we are to enjoy the constant cleansing his blood affords (1 John 1:7-9).

Christ's Blood Can Give One Remission from Sin

Christ's blood is also able to release us from the bondage of sin, or give us remission. Jesus told his disciples about his blood

while he was instituting the Lord's supper. "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). In Christ's parting charge to his disciples, he said, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47). Significantly, in Acts 1:4, Luke reports that Jesus commanded them to wait in Jerusalem until the promise of the Holy Spirit was received.

They were in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, when they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in languages they had never studied. That led to a crowd gathering asking questions about how such a thing could occur, which, in turn, gave Peter and the others the opening to tell them about the resurrected Lord. Once the assembled multitude realized what they had done, they asked the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter answered, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:1-38). So, the blood of Jesus which was shed for the remission of sins is available to anyone who meets the condition of repenting and being baptized by Christ's authority.

Christ's Blood Is the Ransom for Man's Release from Sin

Paul told the brethren from Ephesus that redemption is through Christ's blood. (Ephesians 1:7; also Colossians 1:14). Redemption describes one's release through the payment of a ransom price. That price was paid for people living empty lives of sin. Our freedom was not obtained through the hoarding up of perishable items, but with the highly valued blood of God's own Son (1 Peter 1:18-19). Again, we find redemption to be conditioned upon our calling out to God for a clean conscience through baptism (1 Peter 3:21).

John describes Jesus as the propitiation for our sins and the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). It was God who sent Him to play that role (4:10). God, being just, had to require an appeasing sacrifice to enable him to look favourably upon man (compare Isaiah 59:1-2). We are able to find such favor in Jesus, through faith (Romans 3:25). Such faith is produced by hearing God's word and obeying it in baptism (Romans 10:17; Galatians 3:26-27).

Christ's Blood Give Us Boldness to Approach God's Throne

Christ's blood is also able to cleanse us from sin's defilements (Revelation 7:14; 1:5). Saul learned that he must not wait but arise and be baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). Baptism is clearly our means of calling on the Lord's name to be saved (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13-15).

When we recall that sin is the barrier between us and God, we come to recognize the necessity of being cleansed from sin before we try to approach God's throne. Christ's blood gives us boldness to approach God's throne because it removes the terrible stain of sin (Hebrews 10:19-20). Through Christ, we even have the assurance that we are on the way to heaven (John 14:1-6). Like all the other blessings the blood gives us, this one is conditional. We must do the will of the Father in heaven to have the hope of entering into the eternal city (Matthew 7:21). Of course, that will require us to believe and be baptized to be saved from sin (Mark 16:16).

Thank God for the blood of Christ and all the blessings it supplies!

We Need Better Listeners!

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Many a great Bible sermon has failed to bear fruit due to poor listening habits by an audience. The preacher was successful in delivering the message of salvation but the crowd failed by not really giving rapt attention. Jesus plainly stated in Luke 8:18.

"Take heed how you hear."

Several times in Revelation the Lord reminded those with ears to *hear*. Nothing impedes progress in the divine realm so greatly as poor listeners. No one is as deaf as those who will not hear (or adhere) to the gospel message. A recent television commercial described how those who fail to pay attention to what is said in the classroom or board meeting or military induction centres actually become their own worst enemy. Poor listening habits cost industry millions of dollars a year. The fine art of listening must be developed by all of us if we would

succeed in any avenue of life. The Bible is filled with many examples of folk who failed because they forgot to concentrate upon that which had been clearly enunciated. Some sinned grievously because they did not listen properly and thus missed the application of Truth. I really believe slothful habits in this area of consideration will cause many people to be lost in the Day of Judgment. It is just that serious! Let us notice a few illustrations of this dilemma in the Bible.

1. In Acts 13:26-27 Paul tells the Jews in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia that they had heard the voices of the prophets every Sabbath for years tell of the coming of the Messiah. Yet, when He did come, in fulfillment of the very passages they had read, they put the Savior to death instead of obeying Him! What a classic example of hearing but not hearing. No wonder then that James reminds us to be doers of the word and not hearers only (James 1:22). That is another way of saying:

Take Heed How You Hear!

2. In Numbers 4:15 God plainly told the people *not* to touch any holy thing. Even casual folk need help to misunderstand that. But, in spite of such directness and clarity, Uzzah was struck dead for his failure to pay attention to it (II Samuel 6). People today who constantly hide behind such slogan as "I did not mean to" or "I just forgot" need to learn a lesson from these examples. They were written for our learning (Romans 15:4; I Cor. 10:11).

3. Several times in the gospel account by John we learn that Christ came unto his own but they refused the light of divine counsel in spite of the fact that He fulfilled Messianic passages minutely. (Read John 1:5; 1:11; 5:40). In fact, in John 7 they even ask themselves: "What will the Messiah do when he comes that this man has not already done?" Yes, II Peter 3:5 labels their error as *willful ignorance*. This is a classic example of hearing but *not* hearing.

4. The book of Acts reflects the sadness of pitiful listening techniques (attitudes). In Acts 2:41 we learn of those who "gladly received the word." But in Acts 13:46 we find others who heard the very same message but "thrust it from themselves." Those on Pentecost were "pricked in their hearts" by the message of truth and responded favorably. In Acts 7 Stephen's hearers were

also convicted of sin by the gospel story but they responded by killing the preacher. Poor listeners have run off good preachers ever since. *Take Heed How We Hear* will echo down the corridors of Hell. People who listen with preconceived ideas, with bias toward truth and prejudice toward the speaker are truly their own worst enemy. When we allow secular thoughts and mundane interests to clog our minds and stop our ears we are on the road to spiritual ruin. We really do need better listeners in every assembly and in every Bible class. Our very souls hang in the balance. Just ask Jehoiakim how he reacted to what he heard in Jeremiah 36 if you think we have overdrawn this point. Moses (Numbers 20), King Saul (I Sam. 15) and Pilate also listened to the wrong crowd and serious consequences followed. The fine art of listening has everlasting repercussions!

That's Your Opinion!!

ALLEN WEBSTER

This phrase has ended many religious discussions. The truth may be so carefully explained concerning the oneness of the church or the necessity of baptism, as to leave no doubt about what the Bible says. But with an air of dismissal, someone says, "Well, that's just your opinion."

After faithful preachers have preached the Book on such matters as divorce/remarriage, social drinking, immodest dress, or the necessity of attending each service, on passing many exclaim, "Well, that's your opinion." Many are not aware of the difference between **opinion** and **application**. The Bible is a book of commands, principles, and examples. It does little good for one to learn the facts of the Bible, the meaning of its words and its interesting stories, unless these find application in some way to personal life. For example, for one to learn that "lasciviousness" (Gal. 5:19) means "unchaste handling of males and females" and "conduct which excites lust" would do little good unless this definition is applied to the modern evils of dancing, mixed swimming, and petting.

God did not give a book that is impossible to understand nor

does He expect each to have his own interpretation. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32), implying we can know the truth. To say otherwise is to make God "the author of confusion" (1 Cor. 14:33). Jesus prayed for unity in doctrine (Jn. 17:20, 21), Paul commanded it (1 Cor. 1:10-13) and the early Christians practiced it (Acts 2:42-44). We are all to "be of the same mind" (1 Cor. 1:10).

There are matters of opinion in Christianity. These areas God has not revealed to us and are left to our judgment. On such matters, one man's view is just as good as another's. This would include how many songs to sing in a service, where to assemble, what occupation to practice, and whether or not to eat in a church building. Paul commands that in matters of opinion, "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Rom. 14:13).

Then there are matters of revelation or faith. These are things on which God has spoken and expects His followers to obey. This includes direct commands, principles, and approved examples. These must be accepted, believed, applied, and obeyed. This would include how to become a Christian, how to organize the church, what to do in worship, and how to live the Christian life. Paul wrote, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. . . ." (Col. 3: 17). This means that what we practice must be by His authority. The authority to which we must appeal is the Bible. What it says we must do and what it forbids we must not do.

The problem is, many have not studied the Scriptures enough to understand the difference between matters of opinion and matters of faith. Many are like those of Hosea's day who were "destroyed for a lack of knowledge. . ." (4:6) Peter wrote of those who were unlearned and unstable who "wrested" (from a word meaning an instrument of torture; literally, "to torture my words") the scriptures "unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16). When one classifies matters of faith as opinions, he is wresting the Scriptures to his own hurt. Therefore, each must study the Bible regularly, carefully, and sincerely.

Others have justified worldly actions in their own minds and cannot accept application of the Bible's teachings to their lives. The lawyer who confronted Jesus was guilty of trying "to justify

himself" (Lk. 10:29) and was seeking a loophole by which to bypass obedience. Those to whom Stephen preached had already made up their minds and thus "stopped their ears. (Acts 7:57). We must be careful not to make the Bible fit our desired lifestyle rather than making our lifestyle fit the Bible.

True Repentance

BRIAN KENYON

It has been observed that repentance is one of the hardest commands to obey. It is not always easy to change one's mind and reform his or her life. There are many biblical examples that teach the true repentance, but for this study let us consider the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians, Paul addressed many problems with the church. However, when Paul wrote 2 Corinthians about six months later he had a much more pleasant tone. Why? Because the Corinthians had truly repented! Let us learn from 2 Corinthians 7:8-11 what true repentance requires.

First, true repentance requires the realization of the nature and consequence of our sin. "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent [regret it ASV], though I did repent [regret it ASV]: for I perceive that the same epistle hat made you sorry, though it were but for a season" (2 Cor. 7:8). Paul's writing of 1 Corinthians brought to their attention the grievous sins they had committed and the consequences of those sins (cf. 1 Cor. 5:11-13). Because of this confrontation, the Corinthians were made sorry, and thus repented. Paul did not regret that he confronted them with their sins, because his letter accomplished its purpose of making them sorry for their sins. Suppose that Paul had never brought these sins to their attention. Would they have been made sorry? Would they have repented?

If we are to truly repent we must also realize the nature and consequences of our own sins. The consequences of sin are spiritual, and from God (Isa. 59:1-2; Ezk. 18:20; Rom. 6:23). It is no wonder then that Jesus said, "But except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish". (Lk. 13:3).

Second, true repentance requires godly sorrow. "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to

repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of [which bringeth no regret ASV]: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:9-10). Paul's previous letter accomplished its purpose—repentance (cf. 2 Cor. 2:3-4). Note that the Corinthians were made sorry after a "godly manner" and that their sorrow is described as "godly sorrow." Godly sorrow is literally "sorrow according to God." That is godly sorrow is the automatic result when we see sin as God sees sin. God hates sin (Prov. 6:16-19; cf. Ps. 1:6)! Therefore, we must hate sin (Ps. 119:104; Prov. 8:13) and be of such a disposition that sin rends our hearts and causes us to seek forgiveness from God (Mt. 5:3-4; Jms. 4:8-9). Note also that godly sorrow works towards repentance, thus leading to salvation. There is a difference between mere sorrow and repentance. Sorrow may lead to repentance, but it is not repentance. One can be sorry without repenting, but true repentance can never occur without first being sorry after a "godly manner." Repentance is a change of will, produced by sorrow for sin, which leads to a reformation of life (cf. Lk. 15:17-20a). Godly sorrow is also contrasted with the "sorrow of the world" which "worketh death". Sorrow of the world is a sorrow which results from worldly considerations rather than godly. We can be sorry for something merely because we "got caught," or because we lost out on some worldly activity or fleshly lust. However, such sorrow leads to death because it does not lead to true repentance. Only when we realize that sin is an offense to God and results in our separation from Him, will we have godly sorrow which "worketh repentance."

Third, true repentance requires a reformation of life. "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Cor. 7:11). The Corinthians had changed! They now had an earnest care (cf. "carefulness") for their present course (cf. 1 Cor. 5:2). They removed the evil from among them and were thus self-vindicated (cf. "clearing of yourselves"). They now possessed a righteous anger (cf. "indignation") with themselves that they allowed and tolerated such sins as were mentioned by Paul in 1

Corinthians. They now had a "fear" for the measures Paul could have taken had they not responded to his word (cf. 1 Cor. 4:21). They now had a longing (cf. "vehement desire") not only to be restored to God, but to gain a restoration of favor with Paul. They now zealously sought to make up for their past indifference toward sin. They now had properly disciplined the offender(s) according to Paul's instructions, thus leaving "revenge" (avenging ASV) to God. Through this reformation of life the Corinthians proved themselves to be pure in this matter and, therefore, showed that they had truly repented.

True repentance requires: (1) the realization of the nature and consequences of our sin; (2) Godly sorrow for our sin; and (3) a reformation of life. God calls all to repentance (Acts 17:31), and He is long suffering to that end (2 Pet. 3:9). Whether one is outside of the body of Christ or an erring child of God, one must truly repent if he or she is to find favor with God (Acts 2:38; 8:22). Have you truly repented?

An In Depth Study of John 3:16

ROBERT R. TAYLOR, JR.

One of the great passages of Holy Writ is John 3:16. Perhaps this verse has been memorized more than any other verses, of its length, in the entire Bible. In somewhat of a larger context it reads:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved (John 3:14-17).

STATELY TRIBUTES

Many marvelous tributes have been laid at the feet of this precious passage of Sacred Scripture. It has been called, "The Golden Text of The Bible." The passage is eminently worthy of this beautiful designation. It would be difficult indeed to find another verse that would equal it in setting forth in few words

what the general gist of the Bible inculcates.

It has been called "The Little Bible" or "The Bible in Miniature." This duet of designations is quite fitting because John 3:16 is somewhat like a capsule of basic Bible teaching. It is an exciting epitome of the Scheme of Human Redemption as devised by Deity and executed by the coming of Christ and Christianity to our mundane sphere.

The countless sermons preached on this text constitute a stately tribute to its literary greatness. That many people consider it as their favorite text of Holy Scripture is another tribute of its exquisite beauty, breadth and brevity. Brother Gus Nichols, a famous gospel preacher was fond of preaching many sermons with this as his foundational text.

ATROCIOUS ABUSES

In the face of the marvelous, majestic tributes that have been placed at the feet of John 3:16 have come also some serious, inexcusable abuses of this declaration of Sacred Scripture. Some have concluded that John 3:16 is all the Bible we need. This is serious abuse of any passage. It falls into the same category of the person who says that the only portion of the Bible necessary is the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 or perhaps just the Golden Rule of Matthew 7:12. People make this same egregious error when they contend that all we need are the red letter sayings—the actual statements made by the Lord Jesus. The truth of the matter is that we need ALL the Bible. We are not amenable to all of it but we need all of it. Scriptures of the Old Testament have been preserved for our learning, comfort and admonition as per Romans 15:4. We need every sermon found in the Bible—not just the Sermon on the Mount. We need every one of the 31,102 verses found between the opening syllable of Genesis 1:1 and the final syllable of Revelation 22:21. All the hundreds of chapters and thousands of verses which come before John 3:16 are needed. Verses prior to and subsequent to John 3:16 help to magnify and beautify John 3:16. They mirror its marvel, majesty and magnificence. Deity wrote the Bible in such marvelous manner that ALL its varied parts are essential. No part of the Bible is superfluous matter; no part of it is deficient. It is a serious abuse of this passage to affirm that it is the only portion of the Bible that is needed. Had that been the case this would have been the only portion of the

Bible the Spirit of inspiration would have penned and that Deity would have preserved. Of that we can be certain. The rest would have been omitted. But it was not omitted. Therefore, what was included was absolutely needed.

Some have looked at John 3:16 and concluded that the employment of the verb believeth makes this a "faith only" passage of Scripture. Very quickly and decisively they will eliminate everything from the gospel plan of salvation except a simple profession of intellectual assent to the Deity of Christ. To their surface way of thinking (???) there is no room for anything else save this type of "faith only" passage in the New Testament offering salvation at this point and this point exclusive of all other imposed stipulations. "Faith only" occurs but once in the New Testament and there the writer of Inspiration says that one is not saved by it void of all other commandments. James wrote in James 2:24, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and NOT BY FAITH ONLY" (Emphasis supplied). There is no contradiction between James 2:24 and John 3:16. John did not teach salvation by faith only in John 3:16.

Closely akin to this is the fabled idea that John 3:16 kills passages which demand gospel works of obedience in order for salvation to be attained. We can quote a passage like Mark 16:16 which states, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" and the one who opposes this type of teaching will say, "Oh, but I know a Scripture which kills Mark 16:16." When asked what, the person will say, "John 3:16." They will give the same response if Acts 2:38 is quoted which demands of the alien sinner that he repent and be baptized for (unto) the remission of sins. Again, the same response will occur if a passage like Acts 22:16 is given which demands baptism in order that the sins of the guilty may be washed away. Basically, the same response will be given toward passages like Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:27 and I Peter 3:21. Now where did people receive the idea that one Scripture kills, negates or nullifies another Scripture? Surely, they did not receive such from God and His Holy Book. John 3:16 is a part of the New Testament; so is Mark 16:16; so is Acts 2:38; so is Acts 22:16; so are Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:27 and I Peter 3:21. There is not as much as a tiny particle of disharmony between John 3:16 and any of the foregoing passages which demand baptism for salvation to materialize. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus

Christ made a birth of water and of the Spirit mandatory for each one who would enter the kingdom (John 3:5). Only eleven verses separate John 3:5 from John 3:16 when John came to write this marvelous chapter. Surely, the Lord did not demand baptism, which is what the birth of water means, and then contradict Himself with a promise in John 3:16 that faith only is all that is essential. There is nothing but beautiful harmony between John 3:5 and John 3:16. Trouble emerges when men reject John 3:5 and abuse John 3:16. Passages of Scripture which demand of the alien sinner that he repent, confess and be baptized for the remission of his sins are not killed, negated or nullified by John 3:16.

Other surface students of John 3:16 feel it is a haven of Scripture which will pretty well support every kind of religious practice and person. A real, thorough understanding of John 3:16 will not allow anyone to rest underneath its shade who has gone soft on truth and is condoning errors of various kinds. The truth of the matter is that there is NO other verse in all the Bible which refutes more errors than does John 3:16.

The People Of God

VANCE HUTTON

Christians are referred to in Heb. 4:9 as the people of God. Peter in I Pet. 2:9-10 said that only after our conversion are we the people of God. In a very special sense are we the Lord's people. He bought us and thus we belong to Him (I Cor. 6:19-20). He did not force us to be His people. We responded to His invitation. Being His people, there are many responsibilities that come our way. Please notice with me four of these.

I. PEOPLE OF PURPOSE

The people of God have a noble purpose in this life. Man's primary mission does not have to do with pleasures and treasures. Solomon said in the long ago that to fear God and keep His commands was the whole duty of man (Ecc. 12:13). The New Testament plainly bears this same purpose in essence. We are here to please God (I Thess. 4:1). Our labors are to have judgment day in mind and to be acceptable to the Lord (II Cor.

5:9-10). Life is not bound up in possessions (Lk. 12:15) and we are to be laying up treasures in heaven (Matt. 5:16). Our affections and labors are to be geared toward the spiritual (Jn. 6:27; Col. 3:1-2). God loves all and all have potential for heaven. The choice is now yours and mine. The people of God have a great, high and noble purpose while here.

II. PEOPLE OF PURITY

The people of God have the awesome responsibility of living pure lives. "Keep thyself pure" were the words of Paul to Timothy (I Tim. 5:22). Jesus said the pure in heart would see God (Matt. 5:8). The Hebrews penman wrote that unless we are holy we will never be privileged to enter heaven and be with the Lord (Heb. 12:14). Those dominated by sins of the flesh shall not enter heaven according to Gal. 5:19-21. The Bible closes by saying no sin can go to heaven (Rev. 21:27), and the ungodly will be on the outside (Rev. 22:15). The Bible is our standard and Jesus our pattern. Let us live lives of purity.

III. PEOPLE OF PRAYER

It is imperative that the people of God be a people of prayer. In prayer we honor God (Matt. 6:9-12), Ask petitions (Matt. 7:7-11), offer thanks (Phil. 4:6), and make confession of sins (I Jn. 1:9; Acts 8:22; Lk. 18:13). Are not these vital to our spiritual lives? Jesus got up early to pray (Mk. 1:35) and at times prayed all night (Lk. 6:12). We are taught to continue in prayer and be dependent upon prayer (I Thess. 5:17; Col. 4:2). There are so many areas of concern in our lives that demand prayer. Yes, we are to be people of prayer.

IV. PEOPLE OF POWER

God expects His people to be a people of power. God has granted us the means to be strong (II Tim. 1:7). We can be strong in Christ (Eph. 6:10-11). We are to add self-control and moral courage to our faith (II Pet. 1:5-7). It takes power for us to endure. We must overcome discouragement and may be even persecution. We must not grow weary. We must say "no" to sin. Yes, we are to be a people of power.

God's people have a unique future. Heaven, it is for the faithful. Let us face our responsibilities. How are we faring as the people of God?