

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 27

August 1996

No. 4

EDITORIAL

Preparing Ourselves For Eternity

This world is not our home. The Bible tells us that we ought to behave as sojourners or pilgrims while we live on earth. (1 Peter 2:11). We are here for some time and then we will have to eventually leave this world and go. The Bible reveals the fact that there is an eternity, a timeless realm, into which each person enters after physical death. (Ecclesiastes 12:7). In Matthew 25:46, Christ spoke about everlasting punishment of hell for the unrighteous, and heavenly eternal life for the righteous. In eternity there is no middle place.

Romans 8:1 states: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." No condemnation in Christ, that is, such will not face the everlasting punishment of hell because of their sins, since Christ has already died for their sins; Christ has been already punished for their sins, when He was put to death on the cross for the sinners by the will and plan of God. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

How does a person get into Christ, to live in Him and to die in Him? By obeying His gospel one gets into Christ. Christ died for the sinners and was buried in the tomb and was resurrected by the will of God, the third day, is the gospel for every human being. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). When a person obeys the form of this doctrine of the gospel; that is, believing in Christ with whole heart and repenting of sins (death to sin) and goes down into the tomb of the waters of baptism (burial of old man of sin), and thereafter comes out from the tomb of baptism

(resurrection of a new life in Christ), one is born anew in Christ to live in Him a new life according to His will of the New Testament of the Bible. (Romans 6:3-6; 15-18). The Bible, at Galatians 3:27, states: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Obeying the gospel of Christ is the first step that each person must take towards the heavenly life of eternity. Next, one must try to live the new life in Christ daily, as the apostle Paul states in Colossians 3:1-3: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Thirdly, one must worship God, every first day of the week, with other Christians, who have obeyed the gospel likewise, as the New Testament of Christ teaches, (John 4: 23,24). And, lastly, continue to be faithful to Christ, and God until death (Revelation 2:10). The apostle Paul, after living a faithful life, wrote in 2 Timothy 4:6-8, at the point of his death: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearance." Only those who are in Christ would love the appearance of Christ. Because He will appear as a righteous judge on that Day (Acts 17:30, 31). "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:46). Not only do we all know that we must leave this world and go into eternity, but we can also choose where we want to live in that eternity. Eternity is not the place where we go to spend sometime, rather it is the place where we will live forevermore. Choose now!

The Second Coming of Christ

J.C. CHOATE

The Bible clearly teaches that Christ died on the cross and was buried, but it also just as clearly teaches that he was resurrected from the grave and ascended back to the Father in heaven to return in like manner. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 1:9-11). Christ himself promised that he would arise from the grave and that he would come again. (Matthew 20:17-19; John 14:1-3).

There are many views concerning the return of Christ. Of course

there are those who do not even believe that Christ died on the cross. Others conclude that when he died, he died, and that was the end of it. If that be true, then naturally he will not be coming again.

But to doubt the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is to reject the divine record that is recorded in the pages of the Bible. To do that one must also reject all of the facts that are openly set forth for all to examine.

This article, however, is being written on the basis that we believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God and that it presents the truth concerning the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. That also means that we believe Christ will come again.

But when will Christ come again? Some think that because it has been almost 2,000 years since Christ came forth from the grave to return to his Father in heaven, that he is not going to come again. The reason that even the Apostles and Christians of the first century were expecting his return most any time and they really believed the Lord when he said that he would come again. Does that mean that they looked for his return in vain? Not at all. We must remember that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as one day. (2 Peter 3:10). Furthermore, for them to expect him shortly to return, or for us today to expect him shortly to return, regardless of when he comes, it will be a short period of time in comparison to eternity. To say that the Lord will shortly return is not to say that the Lord will return in the next few days, or even in the next few years. One could truthfully use that statement even if it is a million years or more before the Lord returns. This means nothing to the Lord since he has always lived and will live forevermore. Our statements concerning his return is against the backdrop of eternity, and consequently we do believe in view of that that he will soon come again.

Peter said in his day, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts. And saying, where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto the fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:3-7). In other words, there were those who reasoned that since the Lord had not come up to their time that he was not coming. Peter reminds them of the flood, and that the same word

that said that there would be a flood was also saying that the Lord would come again and with his coming the world would be destroyed by fire. The same scoffers of our day would do well to remember those words.

There are those in the religious world who go to the other extreme in talking about the Lord's second coming. They constantly talk about and emphasize his imminent return. They leave the impression that they are so anxious to see him face to face. Yet, these same preachers and others are in churches that you can not read about in the Bible, wear manmade-names, teach false doctrines and do things in their worship that is contrary to the scriptures. Of all people who will not want to meet the Lord as they are, it is them. They will be shocked to find that while they think they are ready to meet him, in reality they will not be ready. Instead of being accepted of the Lord, they will be rejected.

Be assured that the Lord will return in our life time or after we have departed from this world. Will we be ready to meet him? Now is the time to prepare for that great day and the judgment of God that will follow.

Especially For Women

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'" (Mark 16:15,16)

"Anthony, you've told us that you want to become a Christian, and we're so happy about that," Peter said as the family gathered for the evening study. "But we want to be sure you really understand what you are doing and why you are doing it.

"When Peter and the other apostles were teaching the first gospel sermon on the day the Lord's church was begun, what did they say? Do you remember, or do you want to read from the second chapter of Acts, beginning with verse 22?"

Anthony read: "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you, by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death, whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of

death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it."

"So Peter was teaching them to have faith in . . .?" asked Papa.

"In Jesus, that He was the Son of God, and that even though they had killed Him, He had not stayed in the grave," Anthony answered.

"Then look down to verse 36. What does it say?" asked Papa.

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

"What happened when he said that? Read the next verse."

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'"

"If you had lived then and had been a part of that crowd of people, do you think you would have been convinced that Jesus was really God's Son?" "Yes, I'm sure I would have believed in Him," Anthony said.

"Then you probably would have asked what they asked in the next verse: 'Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" What did Peter tell them to do? What would he tell you today if you were asking that question?"

"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."

"James, can you tell me what 'repent' means? We've talked about that before."

"To stop and turn around and go to the other way; that's what repent means."

"Stop what?"

"I know, Papa," spoke up Aseema. "It means to stop doing the wrong things and to turn around and live like God wants us to."

"You're right. That's a hard thing for people to do, sometimes. They're used to living like they want to live, so it's hard to put their lives under God's control."

"But it's the best way—you told me—because when we do the good things God wants us to do, we don't get into trouble, do we, Daddy?" asked James.

"That's right. God knows what's best for us, and He doesn't ask us to stop anything that's good. And He doesn't ask us to do anything that is bad for us. So when we follow God we can know that we're going in the best way.

"But what else did Peter tell those people to do, Anthony?"

"To be baptized."

"Can you explain that?"

"I've seen people being baptized. After they tell that they really do believe that Jesus is God's Son, they go into some water and they are put down under it."

"That seems a strange thing to do, doesn't it? What could water have to do with saving us from our sins?"

"We wash things in water," answered Anthony. "Is it showing that our sins are washed away?"

"That's right. Do you remember that we read last night about Saul's conversion, and that the Christian named Ananias came and asked Saul, 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord?'"

"I remember that the Bible says that we are buried in the water like Jesus was buried in the grave, too," Aseema said.

"You're right, again!" Peter smiled. "I'm proud of you children, You're understanding so many of the things about being saved. So, we're baptized 'for remission of sins,' or to have our sins taken away. What happens then? What else does that verse say?"

"'You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' What does that mean, Daddy?" asked Aseema.

"As sinners, we were dead to God—just as God had warned Adam that he would die when he disobeyed. It is our own spirit in our body that makes us alive as a human. And it is the gift of God's Holy Spirit that makes the new Christian alive to God.

"So, now, who can find the verse that tells us what God did with those people who were baptized that day?" Peter asked.

"I know!" James answered. "Here it is Verse 47 says '... the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.'"

"So if we had lived back then and had been in that crowd, God would have added us to His church, wouldn't He?" asked Peter.

"Yes," answered Anthony. "When I am baptized, will He add me to the same church?"

"That's right, Anthony. There is only one place for all of the people who have been saved and that's in God's family, in His church—the very same one that was started that day, almost two thousand years ago, in Jerusalem!"

Reverend . . . Father . . . Prophet . . . Apostle

M. MINTAH

All of these titles exist in the Holy Bible both in the Old and New Testaments. Some of them are entitled to God and others to certain people in the Bible for certain roles they played in the work of God. Let's go systematically to find out the above names and their relevance today in this Christian age.

Psalms 111:9, reads, He sent redemption unto His people: He hath commanded His covenant for ever: Holy and Reverend is His name. In this passage the Psalmist is telling the name of the redeemer of Israel, who was no other person than God. Men have now taken upon themselves the Holy name of the Almighty as, Reverend . . . From the Old Testament where Aaron was ordained as a High Priest, he was not called "Reverend." Even Christ never called Himself a Reverend. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, But, made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:5-7). Even if Christ who the Bible describes as a person without any guilt on earth refused to be equal with God, how much more fallible men are making themselves equal with God by possessing his names and titles. Christians need to imitate the traits of Christ, His humility, gentleness, and obedience to the Almighty, and do everything according to His will rather than what we human feel or desire.

Christ taught, "Do not call any one on earth your Father, for one is your Father, He who is in heaven" (Mat. 23:9; Eph. 6:2; advice children to honour their fathers and mothers. Jesus in Mat. 23 was advising His followers and disciples. He was talking to matured people who would abide by His words. All Christians are followers and disciples of Christ hence this commandment is for us. According to 2 Jhn. Verse 9; whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. The only Father in Christian worship is the God Almighty.

A prophet was an interpreter between God and man. God revealed His commands and laws through the Prophets in the Old Testament

time to his people. In the New Testament also there were Prophets through whom, God by His Holy Spirit, has revealed His commands and Laws to mankind in this last age. Paul is telling us in Eph. 3:1-7; that the dispensation of the grace of God which was given him for us through revelation of the Spirit is what he has written down for our learning to understand his knowledge in the mystery of Christ. Paul told the Christians in Galatia and it applies to us also that if they (the Apostles and Prophets) come to preach any other gospel than what have been preached already they should not accept it. According to 1 Cor. 13:8-12; prophecy shall cease when that which is perfect has come. All the revelations did not come through Paul alone, part was revealed to Peter, part to James also to John and the rest as clearly seen in the Bible. All those partly revelations which were given to the individual prophets through the Spirit, has been joined together as a whole and is perfect for our salvation (Jas. 1:25; 1 Jh. 1:1-5). Christians must be aware of false prophets. God's divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness (II Pt. 1:2,3).

Who is an apostle? According to Lk. 6:13; Jesus called His disciples to Him, and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles. Acts 1:21-26; gives us the qualification for one to become an apostle. A person who was qualified to be an apostle should have been a person who saw Christ and was with Him and accompanied them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up. In the beginning of the same chapter Jesus called the chosen twelve and commanded them to witness Him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. The apostles were the eyewitnesses of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Acts 5:32; Jhn. 15:26, 27; I Jhn. 1:1-5). Apart from the twelve and Paul who the Bible describes as an apostle chosen by the will of God, (and later Matthias was Chosen in place of Judas), there is no apostle mentioned in the Bible. Can there be an apostle on earth today who saw Jesus to give an eyewitness account of Him from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up? Whatever the apostles witnessed and heard from Christ which are essential for our Salvation have been written down for us to believe in His name (Jh. 19:35; 20:30,31).

How To Overcome Our Fears

CLEM THURMAN

Fear governs the lives of a majority of the earth's people, from the jungle to the metropolis. We are afraid of loneliness, poverty, rejection, sickness, failure, betrayal, death and dozens of other frightening problems or threats. Around such fears are great novels and movies woven, for these are the fabric of our lives. Such fears crowd into all our waking moments and then plague us in our dreams. But there is help, to deliver us from all of our fears.

Before Jesus departed from His apostles, to return to the Father, He told them, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful*" (Jno. 14:27). Jesus knew the power of fear. His generation lived under dictatorial power similar to that in many parts of the world today. They knew the spiked heel and mailed fist of Rome, the embittered forces of war, the poverty brought on by heavy taxes. It was to people in that kind of world to whom the Lord said, "*My peace I give unto you.*" The "*Prince of Peace*" (Isa. 9:6) offers peace to fear-ridden souls today. He exhorts, "*Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me*" (Jno. 14:1).

Only with Faith Can We Overcome Fear

Fear cannot be ignored. It creeps in to infiltrate the mind and permeate the soul. It keeps us from living the full, happy life which God intended for us. The only way to overcome such fear is to live by faith. We read, "*Without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him*" (Heb. 11:6). Paul writes, "*The righteous shall live by faith*" (Rom. 1:17). This is the point that Jesus makes in Jno. 14, "*Let not your heart be troubled . . . Believe in me.*"

The storm was fierce, tossing the boat violently, on the sea of Galilee that day. Jesus was asleep in the back when the disciples awakened Him, "*Master carest thou not that perish?*" He calmed the storm, both wind and wave, immediately. But He asked, "*Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?*" (Matt. 8:26). Peter was enabled by the Lord to walk on the water, until fear took control: "*He was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and took hold of him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore, didst thou doubt?*" (Matt. 14:30-31). Fear

is the antithesis of faith, and faith is the only answer to fear.

Paul wrote, "*I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day*" (2 Tim. 1:12). Now, there is the faith that overcomes fear! The same apostle wrote, "*We know that to them that love God all things work together for good . . . if God is for us, who is against us? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*" (Rom. 8:28, 31, 35-37). Too many are controlled by fear that they cannot do certain things, but they fail to put their trust in Him that can do all things!

Overcoming Faith is Obedient Faith

David wrote, "*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble*" (Psa. 46:1). Often one will turn to Bible-reading and prayer only when his life has become enslaved to fear. But this is not what it means to "*live by faith*." To live by faith means active, day-to-day, living of the life which Christ designs for us. Christianity is an active religion, encompassing all parts of our lives. It is not just an escape hatch for trying times. To live by faith means allowing Christ to decide for us what kind of life we are to live: "*Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*" (Lk. 6:46).

The apostle wrote, "*This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith*" (1 Jno. 5:4). But that faith must be obedient faith: "*Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only deluding your own selves . . . Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself . . . Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*" (Jas. 1:22; 2:17,24). As the prophet wrote, "*The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save*" (Isa. 59:1). As long as we walk "*in the light*" (1 Jno. 1:5-7), we can be free from those destructive fears with which Satan tries to control us. It is when we walk in the way of the world, the way of sin, that we are overcome by fears and anxieties. When we "*crucify the old man of sin,*" and "*buried with him by baptism,*" then are "*raised to walk in newness of life*" (Rom. 6:3-6), fear is destroyed in victorious faith. This is what enabled Paul to say, even as he stared death in the face, "*For me to live is Christ, to die is gain*" (Phil. 1:21). Because he had lived for Christ, he had the confidence that death would bring him to live with Christ.

Victory is Ours Only in Jesus Christ

Our faith is not merely a mental acceptance of Jesus, it must be a

life of trust. As God caused to be written, "*As the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead also*" (Jas. 2:26). Unless faith leads to a full commitment of one's self to Christ, it remains a dead faith that avails nothing. But Paul wrote, "*Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. 15:57). It is "*in Christ*" that we have salvation (2 Tim. 2:10), all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3), all promises (2 Cor. 1:20) and eternal life (1 Jno. 5:11). The faith that overcomes is faith that leads us to Christ and causes us to live for Christ.

In the great commission, Jesus gave the reason for His death: "*That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations*" (Lk. 24:47). He also made promise, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mk. 16:16). Victorious faith is the faith that leads to repentance and baptism into Jesus Christ: "*Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins*" (Acts 2:38). When the Lord sent Ananias to Saul, the message was clear: "*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins*" (Acts 22:16). He did it, by faith. Faith led him to be "*baptized into Jesus Christ . . . baptized into his death*" (Rom. 6:3), and it was faith that led him to be "*raised to walk in newness of life*" (v. 4). The same faith leads one "*into Christ*" today!

But being baptized into Christ does not end the story, it begins it. Christians are to "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pet. 3:18) as we "*walk in the light, as He is in the light*" (1 Jno. 1:7). Being told, "*Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love*" (2 Pet. 1:5-7), those who live by faith will thus make their "*calling and election sure*" (v. 10). As one is "*transformed into the image*" of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18) by this life of faith, the fears that formerly enslaved him are overcome.

Fear will come to us, but we don't have to allow it rule our lives. Because we walk with God, we can say with David, "*I will fear no evil: for thou art with me*" (Psa. 23:4). The apostle Paul said it well, "*In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanks giving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 4:6-7). You can have peace, if you want it. You can overcome fear, if you want to. Christ is the answer. Come to Him, for "*If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*" (Jno. 8:36).

More Abundant Living

DON WALKER

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jno. 14:6), "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (Jno. 10:10). The most fulfilling life a man can live is the life of a faithful Christian. No man holds a position which is more rewarding than the servant of God! Paul showed the reasonableness of Christianity while exhorting the brethren at Corinth, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Truly, the Christian has a more abundant living, for Paul wrote of God, *"Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20)*. At this time we would like to look at why the Christian's life excels all others.

The life of the Christian is best because of the blood of Jesus Christ. The Lord said, *"For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28)*, and, *"Without the shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22)*. When the soldier with spear pierced the Lord's side (Jno. 19:34), he fulfilled the passage which prophesied, *"In that day there shall be a fountain opened . . . for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1)*. Christians now have *"redemption through his blood" (Eph. 1:7)* because, *"He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5)*. We become Christians by being *"baptized into Jesus Christ . . . baptized into his death" (Rom. 6:3)*, being thus *"buried with him by baptism into death" we are raised to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4)*. It is at the point of baptism (into His death) that we contact the blood of Christ and thus have remission of sins (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38).

The Christian has the best life because he does not have to fear death. *"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" (Rev. 14:13)*, *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psa. 116:15)*. The apostle Paul, writing concerning the possibility of his own death, said: *"For me to live is Christ, to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21)*. Continuing this thought, he expressed his desire to *"depart, and be with Christ" (v. 23)*. When his time was drawing near, we see his great hope: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Tim. 4:7-8)*.

Christians can say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:56-57). The more abundant life offers an answer to death.

Along with a greater and more abundant living, also comes a greater responsibility. Something that is worth having is going to take effort. Jesus promised we would receive the "crown of life" if we are faithful (Rev. 2:10). We have the great responsibility of overcoming Satan, self and sin if we desire to reap the benefits of this bountiful life (Rev. 3:21). No one will accidentally stumble into these marvelous blessings. The ones who experience this abundant life will be those who are "growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). If we wish to reap bountifully, we must also sow bountifully (2 Cor. 9:6). If we desire a life which is more abundant, we must listen to Jesus: "If any man come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). We must be willing to pay the price, for "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).

Christ Jesus came to earth so that we might live. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he were rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Was the price paid for nothing? Is Christ offering the abundant life to no avail? Jesus is the author of eternal salvation "unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9). May we ever be found obeying Christ, and thus enjoying the rich life which He offers.

We Preach Salvation Wholly by Faith!

DILLARD THURMAN

When controversy arises over salvation by faith versus works, someone is fighting a "straw man" they have erected, rather than facing the real issue. All admit that we are saved by faith, and that is vital for one's salvation! This is stressed in the words: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for the that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6). It is utterly impossible to please the Lord without faith! That is axiomatic!

Relation of Faith and Works of Obedience

There is the prevalent notion among the ignorant and unlearned, (and deceitful sectarians), that the church of Christ de-emphasizes faith, and exalts works, to obtain salvation. Often the challenge is hurled: "You folk trust in works to save you. I trust in the Lord, and will be saved by my faith!" On the surface, this shallow claim of saving faith may seem to have struck a mortal blow: but this charge is patently false! First, we do not trust in works to save, but remember the words of Paul, that in Christ Jesus it is "*faith that works by love,*" (Gal. 5:6). It is evident from many Bible passages that "*Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*" (Jas. 2:17). Rather, faith must be that which trusts God sufficiently to obey without question! Check back on Abraham: "*Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*" "*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*" "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*" (Jas. 2:22, 24, 26). There is none who holds to faith more than I—but my faith will not lead me to repudiate the terms of salvation God has set before me! Secondly, a claim to trust in Christ and be saved by "faith only," is not of faith! We use the scriptural challenge, "*Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith with my works.*" (Jas. 2:18). "Faith only" is an invalid claim which can offer no evidence or proof without works, which it rejects! Faith without works is dead—unavailing!

Do these passages from James minimize the importance of faith? Assuredly not! They emphasize the need of a trusting faith that will obey the Lord! They offer an answer to a question offered: "*What doth it profit, my brother, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?*" (Jas. 2:14). Can't you see that James magnified and exalted faith by showing the results of an obedient faith! One has no faith in a physician if he rejects his prescriptions and refuses his orders! you show no faith in a guide you refuse to follow! Even so, you show no faith in the Saviour when you refuse the terms of salvation!

Salvation Wholly by Faith

Faith comes by reliable testimony! We believe the words of one whom we trust; one in whom we have confidence. This is especially true in spiritual matters.

"*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Rom. 10:17). Therefore when God has spoken, this should be the end of the matter! But if God has not spoken, then it remains in the realm of human opinion. We are not saved by human opinion, but by faith! Thus the word of God is of paramount importance in salvation.

Cornelius was told to send for Peter, *"who will tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."* (Acts 11:14). Those words would produce faith to the saving of his house! So, it would be salvation wholly by faith! Preaching salvation wholly by faith means that every thing preached falls in the category of *"Thus saith the Lord."* Otherwise it would not be of faith at all! Let us study the chart in detail to fully appreciate this.

The Gentiles Justified Through Faith

"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." (Gal. 3:8). It was through faith that the heathen (Gentiles) would be justified, for God had made that provision and published it long before! How greatly we have been blessed! *"Seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith."* (Rom. 3:30). Paul stressed this truth when he withstood Peter: *"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."* (Gal. 2:16). Notice the work and purpose of the law: *"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."* (Gal. 3:24). The Gentiles (and the Jews) were justified by faith in Christ! We are to preach it that way! God's word says it; so it is wholly by faith!

The Promise of the Spirit By Faith

Paul informs us that *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."* (Gal. 3:13-14). This could surely be preached by faith, for as Peter had quoted the prophet Joel: *"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh."* (Acts 2:17). But the promise of the Spirit was only for those who had obedient faith, for Peter said, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."* (Acts 2:38). It is through faith that we partake of the Spirit, *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . . and are all made to drink into one Spirit."* (1 Cor. 12:13). Any other course than this is not of faith! Peter said, *"And we are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."* (Acts. 2:38).

Ye Are Children of God by Faith

Many who claim to be children of God actually repudiate the process by which we become His children. Paul made it very plain: "*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.*" (Gal. 3:26-27). One becomes a child of God by faith when he believes sufficiently to put Christ on in baptism! "*But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.*" (Lk. 7:30). Even as the Pharisees and lawyers opposed themselves in rejecting God's counsel concerning John's baptism, multitudes today reject God's terms of entrance into His family! We would be rejecting Christ as God's Prophet if we refused his teaching, that "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*" (Mk. 16:16). "*If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed*" you will not refuse the teaching of our Lord! Faith does not question His authority: faith obeys!

Buried in Baptism and Raised By Faith

One of the clearest demonstrations of faith is expressed in this reading: "*Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*" (Col. 2:12). No person fully appreciates his baptism into Christ for the remission of sins without faith in God's operation, for it raised up Christ to die no more, and one is raised in baptism into a sinless state also! Paul speaks of this more directly: "*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.*" (Rom. 6:4-5). One is buried and raised through faith in God's operation, which brings him into Christ (Gal. 3:27). "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*" (2 Cor. 5:17). This can be preached exactly this way, for God has spoken, and "*Faith cometh by hearing the word of God.*"

Hearts of Gentiles Purified by Faith

After Peter had preached to the house of Cornelius, and the Gentiles had come into the church, the matter of circumcision of Gentiles faced a conference in Jerusalem. Peter defended Paul's actions, saying that God "*put no difference between us, and them, purifying their hearts by faith.*" (Acts 15:9). Faith in Christ, and confidence in the life He lived, will purify our lives. "*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.*" (1 Pet. 1:22).

The truth purifies the soul and makes it free from sin. Jesus said, "*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" (Jno. 8:32). But the truth must be accepted in the fulness of faith to purify our lives.

By Grace Are Ye Saved Through Faith

To the saints at Ephesus, Paul wrote, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (Eph. 2:8-9). Plainly we are told we are saved through faith by the grace of God, and it is not of works! Does this contradict the words of James? Of course, not! For both wrote by the same Spirit of God! But they are discussing different works! Paul was showing that we are not saved by the works of the law, which was nailed to the cross (vs. 13:17). But James was speaking of works of obedient faith which does effect our salvation! There was no contradiction, for they spake of different works!

Scriptures Make Wise Unto Salvation

The evaluation of the scriptures and their relation to saving faith was set forth to Timothy: "*That from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*" (2 Tim. 3:15). Peter spoke of saints, "*Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*" (1 Per. 1:5). It is through faith that salvation is assured; and the word of God gives faith! "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us . . .*" (Tit. 2:11). That which teaches also brings salvation, for it gives faith! So Paul speaks of it as "*the gospel of your salvation.*" (Eph. 1:13).

By Faith We Preach Men Must Hear

Peter prefaced his sermon on Pentecost by saying, "*Hearken to my words,*" and "*Ye men of Israel, hear these words . . .*" (Acts 2:14, 22). They had to hear to have faith! We still preach it that way! The angel told Cornelius: "*Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words whereby thou and thy house shall be saved.*" (Acts 11:13-14). The question still remains, "*How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*" (Rom. 10:14). When we call on men to hear the word of God, (and all the word of God, Mt. 4:4), we do so wholly by faith!

Preaching Belief in Christ by Faith

It is wholly by faith that we preach belief in Christ! He said, "*For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*" (Jno. 8:24). This is the reason the scriptures were given: "*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." (Jno. 20:31). Jesus had made it quite clear that folk should hear and believe His word! *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."* (Jno. 12:48). So, when we preach that men must believe on Christ, it is by faith, for we read: *"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."* (Acts 16:31). Faith comes by hearing the word of God, and we find people were told to believe to be saved!

We Preach Repentance Wholly by Faith!

Jesus plainly stated, *"I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."* (Lk. 13:3, 5). Faith comes by hearing His word, and we preach it by faith! Paul told the Athenians, *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."* (Acts 17:31). Our faith is crystalized by our Lord's words: *"That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name."* (Lk. 24:47). Peter preached repentance (Acts 2:38; 3:19), and wrote that the Lord awaits our repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). The most urgent need in our society is to waken people to the need of repentance! Masses are grovelling in sin, yet feel not need to repent! This is the hardest step the sinner must take to be saved! Yet God demands it, and we act in faith when we preach repentance to be saved!

We Preach Baptism Wholly by Faith!

Jesus Christ said: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."* (Mk. 16:16). Thus when we preach that people are to be baptized to obtain salvation, we do so by faith; for we really do believe Jesus spake truth! Peter obeyed the commission, and when the Jews on Pentecost asked, *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* he replied, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."* (Acts 2:37-38). We could not speak in faith and preach another way to be saved! It is by faith that we give the same answer to the same question! Faith comes by hearing the word of God, as given by Ananias to Saul of Tarsus—*"And now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."* (Acts 22:16). Since the Word of God says it, we preach that baptism inducts one into Christ as a child of God! *"For we 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."* (Gal. 3:26-27). Too, one is brought into the body of Christ, the church, by this same means: *"For by one Spirit are we all*

baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13).

So many extol the worth of the blood of Christ in obtaining redemption and remission of sins, but yet do not accept what God says about reaching that blood! Paul wrote, "*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*" (Rom. 6:3-4). It is by faith that we preach that in baptism one comes into the death of Christ where the saving blood was shed! There one contacts the blood of Christ: "*In whom we have redemption through his blood one contacts the blood of Christ: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."*" (Col. 1:14). Moreover, one who preaches any other means of reaching that blood cannot do so in faith; for the word of God has not so said! And faith comes only from hearing the word of God!

Lessons Learned From Tearing Down A Shed

DON WILLIAMS

Before my grand-mother died, I spent some time at her house, doing some work out in her yard. Along with my father and brother-in-law, we spent most of one day tearing down two old storage sheds. They were at least fifty years old, and were the only remains of the original home-place that had stood on this land. It was a little sad to see these remembrances come down.

As we worked knocking out the side-boards, taking off the tin roof, then the coner beams and finally breaking up the concrete foundation, I could not help but think of some analogies to this and the church. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the foundation of his church: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). Other verses refer to him as the chief corner stone of his building (Matthew 21:42; 1 Peter 2:6-7). In tearing down the sheds, we found the corner stones the hardest to remove. Try as man will, Christ and his church will not be torn down or removed. As he himself said, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail

against it" (Matthew 16:18).

As Christians, we too are a part of the structure of the church. We can be seen as the planks or bricks (or stones) that make up the walls of the building. We found that in tearing down the sheds, the supporting planks come off easily. Later, these same planks were taken to the landfill, to be burned up and destroyed by fire. We too, as part of the church, can easily become separated from the structure. Angry words said to one another can cause hard feelings that loose us from the structure (Ephesians 4:31). Lack of care and concern expressed for each other can cause discouragement that often leads to separation from the church (James 2:15-16). These and many other things are seen as blows that loosen the Christian's life from the structure of the church. Whether right or wrong in terms of a proper reason, this often is the way it happens.

There is one other lesson I learned in this day of demolition. It is much easier to tear a building down than it is to build one. Sheds that would have taken several days to construct were brought to ruins in about eight hours of work. Electrical work, in a shed that took my uncle all day to install, was pulled out and dismantled in just a few minutes. It is the same way in the church. It is very easy, by the use of words or by doing nothing, to tear down and bring discouragement to the lives of fellow Christians and friends.

Let us be builders and not wrecking crews! Let us be people that build up and encourage and exhort the lives of others. In cards, dishes of food, prayers and other acts of kindnesses, let us show that we care and love those around us. By doing so others will desire to be like us and one of us, and ultimately Christ will be glorified (Matthew 5:16). May the words of Ephesians 4:29 be our goal to strive for: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

Make It Plain !

JOHNNY RAMSEY

One of the truly supreme chapters of the Bible is the second stanza of Habakkuk. The background to this unknown part of the prophets can be found in Jeremiah 25:9 where the ruler of Babylon is called the servant of God! Yes, Jehovah used an evil nation and a ruthless leader to subdue Judah for her sin of rebellion. Truly, as Daniel

4:25 affirms so the inhabitants of Jerusalem learned: "God rules in the kingdom of men."

Instead of arguing and complaining Judah was told to hush and let God do the talking (Habakkuk 2:20)! The message of Jehovah's sovereign power was to be made so plain that those who ran could read it (Habakkuk 2:2). That is always the kind of preaching the world and the church needs. Nebulous, halting, compromising pronouncements never saved or strengthened anyone. Such wishy-washy proclamation weakens people who need to be challenged by the clarion call of gospel truth. Woe to the preacher who heralds a message of cheap grace and false hope when his audience is dying in ignorance and shame.

The Creator has a proper claim upon all mankind and we dare not forget the demands of His revelation to the lost and dying world! The most cowardly man on earth is the one who holds salvation's requirements from those perishing in sin. There is no honesty or safety in by-passing the commandments of Christianity when the souls of men cry out for deliverance. Make it plain or their blood will God require at our hands was the sterling message of Ezekiel 3:17-19.

A lack of distinctive preaching today is one of the leading contributions to an aura of apostasy one can detect in our midst. Swelling numerically is not necessarily the sign of spiritual growth—just ask Gideon (Judges 7:2). Such "growth"(?) might even be a contradiction of Christ's parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13). It could be the result of calculated scheming in view of the psychological weaknesses of humanity instead of deep respect for the plan of the Lord.

In God's plan, men must "obey from the heart that form of teaching" the Savior demands instead of being coerced and bamboozled by slick techniques of personal work experts (Romans 6:17). There is a difference in fakery and the genuine! Success in the kingdom of Christ does not come by aping sectarians with gaudy programs and trappings. It comes only by being faithful (Revelation 2:10) to the ONE who alone does the adding anyway (Acts 2:47; I Corinthians 3:7). It is our task to make the message clear and plain—in word and deed (James 1:22). God takes care of the numbers and no human gauge can measure that. Only heaven knows, so there are no human experts. . . .

Man Is His Own Worst Enemy

CECIL CORKREN

A principal step of progress for man is for one to cogitate on himself, and realize that he is his own greatest problem. Paul knew this when he said, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates" (II Corinthians 13:5).

It is easy for me to say this with my mouth but not really say it from the bottom of my heart. Too many times we are not honest with ourselves. David said, "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts thou shalt make me to know wisdom" (Psalm 51:6).

Fault finding is a destructive habit that destroys us. We might be surprised when a serious inward look at ourselves reveals the same faults that we have been so quick to find in others. The time we spend being critical of others will promote more ulcers, lose more friends, and deplete our nervous systems than almost anything. Man has the habit of looking in the wrong places for his problems! Habits become "trait" jackets. Don't allow the habit of always being critical of others, as well as being critical of yourself, to rein your possibilities for happiness.

Take a careful look at yourself today. Was your first statement this morning one of appreciation or criticism? Would you like to associate with someone like yourself today? We make better critics when we first criticise ourselves. Have you expressed today an attitude of gratitude to God, as well as to your fellowman?

There is no greater problem than the human heart. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). So, when we examine ourselves we should look for the defects, and the blemishes we all have and the forgiveness we are all in need of. Have you been working on yourself as your greatest problem? Jesus approach was "pull the beam out of thine own eye; then shall thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:4-5).

No Clouds, No Showers

"An old Christian speaking so joyously of God's love as though she

had never known a trial was asked, 'Have you never had any clouds?' She replied 'Why, of course, elsewhere would all the showers have come from that refreshed and blessed me so?' No clouds, no showers."

God Does Not Require Results But He Does Expect Effort

EDSEL BURLESON

Someone has said, "Everything worth while has a wall around it—but always there is a gate and a key." God has never required results but he does expect effort. Paul said of the establishment and growth of the church at Corinth, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (I Corinthians 3:6). The planting and watering are the responsibilities of Christians. The increase is God's business. We can be assured that if we are diligent about our work, God will be faithful in His.

Several years ago Personal Journal contained this statement: "The wayside of business is full of brilliant men who started out with a spurt, but lacked the stamina to finish. Their places were taken by patient and unshowy plodders who never knew when to quit." It is sad that so much of the Lord's work is done in "spurts". We look for new and different ways to get jobs done. Somebody comes up with something which causes a little excitement and we take hold of it believing we have found the answer to growth and development, only to learn that this is not the answer. Nothing will ever take the place of steady effort.

There are going to be discouragements. Not everything will be successful. But Paul assured Corinth, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58).

Several months ago Bulletin Digest included an article from a Sugarland, Texas, bulletin which showed the importance of effort in reaching our potential. "A man found a cocoon of the emperor moth and took it home to watch it emerge. One day a small opening appeared and for several hours the moth struggled but couldn't seem to force its body past a certain point.

"Deciding something was wrong, the man took scissors and snipped the remaining bit of cocoon. The moth emerged easily, its body large and swollen, the wings small and shriveled.

"He expected that in a few hours the wings would spread out in their natural beauty, but they did not. Instead of developing into a creature free to fly, the moth spent its life dragging around a swollen body and shriveled wings.

"The constricting cocoon and the struggle necessary to pass through the tiny opening are God's way of forcing fluid from the body into the wings. The 'merciful' snip was, in reality, cruel. Sometimes the struggle is exactly what we need."

Billy R. Helms wrote the following, entitled, "That Little Extra Effort," which appeared in the Gospel Advocate.

"The difference between success and failure is often determined by the willingness to put forth that 'little extra effort.' The margin of success may be very small but usually it is that 'little extra effort' that spells success . . .

That 'little extra effort' that gets us to Bible class as well as worship on the Lord's day morning.

That 'little extra effort' that brings us back to the evening worship and mid-week Bible study.

That 'little extra effort' that causes us to spend more time in private study of God's Word.

That 'little extra effort' that reminds us to frequently claim the privilege of prayer.

That 'little extra effort' that helps us to be more sacrificial in our giving as measured by our prosperity instead of our carnal nature that says give as little as possible.

That 'little extra effort' that keeps us at the home congregation except in cases of necessity.

That 'little extra effort' that leads us into a compassionate concern for the lost and wayward and reminds us to speak to them about their spiritual condition.

That 'little extra effort' that helps us engage wholeheartedly and attentively in all phases of our worship.

That 'little extra effort' that involves us in every activity of the work of the local church."

God does not require results, but He does expect effort!