

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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EDITORIAL

Editorially Speaking

Looking back at the time spent, we find that all of us have made some progress. Physically, we have all grown; materially, we are better than before; and spiritually, we have become more responsible. To whom do we give credit for all of this? Many give credit to self, like the man in Luke 12 chapter, who spoke eleven times "I" or "My" just in two short verses of Luke 12: 17 & 18. Yet, he left that very night, bereft of all *his* possessions he was bragging about! Because he had heaped riches for himself, he was not rich toward God. His heart was on earth, because his treasure was on earth.

From Christ we learn: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6: 19-21).

According to 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Paul told Timothy to "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God; who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

Where is our trust? In what do we trust? Where are we using our growth? Or where are we planning to use our physical, material and spiritual growth in this year and in the time to come? We have been

forewarned to "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap; For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." (Galatians 6: 7 & 8).

Time is like a roller. Seconds turn into minutes; minutes into hours; hours into days; days into weeks; weeks into months; and months into years. And, before we realize, it will be time for us to go forever, into eternity. Have we made the necessary preparation to enter the joy of eternal life in heaven by believing in Christ the Son of God, who by the grace of God was made to taste death for everyone? He want all people to change, repent from all evil, and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins, and follow His steps each day while we live on earth. (Hebrews 2: 9; Mark 16:16; Luke 13:5; 1 Peter 2:21). The apostle Paul had done all this and therefore he was able to say at the time of his departure from this earthly life: "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." (2 Timothy 4: 7, 8). Let Jesus control our lives in this year and in the time to come.

Questionable Things in Worship

J.C. CHOATE

Human beings never seem to be content to do things the Lord's way. They are always questioning, introducing, and experimenting concerning what God would have them to do. A good example of this has to do with worship.

We are told that we must worship God in spirit and in truth, with the understanding and according to God's will. (John 4:24). But with most, this limits them. They therefore proceed to worship according to the doctrines and commandments of men. (Matthew 15:9). They also want to add mechanical music, clap their hands, and some even make sounds that compare favorably with instruments of music.

Now what is wrong here? Are we trying to please God in our worship, or are we attempting to entertain ourselves and others?

When it comes to the worship the Lord wants, he has asked that we sing and make the melody in our hearts to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:19). But what is wrong with mechanical instruments of music? Nothing, when properly used. But the simple reason for not using them in worship is that God wants his creation to worship him instead of us praising him through some cold, lifeless, instrument. God wants us to please him, and that is what pleases him.

As to hand clapping along with our singing, you might as well bring drums in and beat on them, both hand clapping and beating on drums brings about the same effect. In both cases one is beating on something to make sounds in addition to singing and making melody in one's heart to the Lord. In addition to that, hand clapping is done to stir up emotions, to get everyone excited, and to entertain. Furthermore, it drowns out the singing, the words of the song, and you end up with endless noise. Surely this is not the kind of worship that the Lord wants. You certainly do not read in the scriptures of any example of where the Lord's people worshipped by singing and hand clapping.

But what about making the sounds of mechanical instruments in our worship? The point is, had the Lord wanted us to use mechanical instruments of worship then he would have said as much in his word. But what is wrong with them if they are made with the human voice? These are but the inventions of men, they are only sounds, something that is added to worship without the Lord's approval. He has asked that we sing, that we use words through which to convey thoughts, with the purpose of teaching and exhorting one another. The Lord is praised in this way but not through some type of oddity that is used to get attention and to entertain.

God has made it clear and plain how he would have us to worship. It is not something that is new and different. It is not a new method that has recently been discovered. Rather, it is the kind of praise and honor that has been offered to the Lord down through the centuries. The Lord has not gotten tired of it. He is not bored with it and neither does he want a change. If we are wise, we will worship the Lord the way that he has asked us to worship him in his word. If we will do that from the heart, it will not become old and boring to us. Rather, it will always be fresh and exciting to us because we are doing what the Lord has asked us to do in the way that he wants it done.

May God help us to come alive to Christ, to open our mouths, and sing songs of praise to the Lord with enthusiasm and excitement. Through the meditation of our hearts and the words of our mouths we

seek to worship God and to teach one another. How can we improve on God's way?

Especially For Women

Satan—The Enemy

BETTY CHOATE

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

"It isn't fair," Anthony complained. "We had a good game of cricket planned and I wanted to play. Why do I have to help with the cleaning? Aseema can do that. She's a girl."

"What a bad attitude you have today, Anthony," Mary scolded. "Do you think life consists of playing? You're old enough to be feeling responsibilities in your family."

"Yeah!" James laughed "You'd better watch out! That old devil will get you!"

"It isn't something to laugh about, boys," Mary said. "Satan is a real being with power to cause terrible problems in our lives. We must always be on guard against him."

James' smile disappeared. "Who is Satan, Mother? Where did he come from? Did God make him too?"

"He is there in the first story in the Bible, James. Do you remember that Eve was tempted by a being in the form of a serpent to disobey God? We read about that in Genesis 3—the first book of the Bible. But we read more about Satan in the last book, Revelation. There it says, "And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Revelation 12:7-9) In Ezekiel 28:12-19 and Isaiah 14:12-15 we read about someone called "son of the morning", "Day-Star", and "the anointed cherub". A cherub is an angel, and evidently this angel, being anointed, was very important among God's servants. He was described as "perfect in your ways from the day you

were created, till iniquity was found in you." So it must have been that this leader among the angels of heaven rebelled against God and even led some of the other angels to follow him. There was war in heaven, and Satan was cast out. He came to the earth, where God placed Adam and Eve.

"God had given all of His creation the choice, whether to love and obey Him or not. He gave the angels that choice, and he gave humans the freedom to choose. Satan wanted greater power; he wanted to "be like the Most High." (Isaiah 14:14) So he lost his special place before God.

"When Satan came to Eve to tempt her, he told her that God had forbidden them to eat the fruit of knowledge of good and evil because He knew it would make them wise, that they would become like God, knowing good and evil. So Satan promised them the same thing he had wanted: to be like God! Even today there are many people who say they are god-men, and they are worshipped as God.

"But Satan, now, is described as 'a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' (1 Peter 5:8) He studies our hearts, looking for weaknesses he can use to lead us to sin. He is behind every wrong thing that is done. His goal is to rob God of the hearts of His entire creation. He tried to lead the angels to follow him, instead of God. After he was thrown out of heaven, he works on every human, trying to get us to rebel against God, like he has done."

Anthony said in a low voice, "I've been listening to Satan. I'm sorry about that. I don't want to disobey God."

"No, Anthony, I'm sure you don't. You just weren't thinking very well. We'll ask God to forgive you and to help you to be stronger."

- * Satan is the enemy of God, and is therefore the enemy of man.
- * Through thoughts, associations, temptations, problems, discouragements, pride, love of money, greed, envy, and many other avenues, he leads people to sin against God.
- * Parents need to be aware, themselves, of Satan's work to deceive them and to lead them away from God. In the face of temptation and problems, they must choose to do the right thing. By their godly example they can build a behaviour of faith in their children.
- * Parents, also, must verbally teach their children the warnings given in the Bible about Satan, so that they will be on guard against his deceit.

- * Parents should never joke about Satan or allow their children to take lightly the spiritual danger he poses for each soul.

Consider The Goodness And Severity Of God (Romans 11:22)

MINTAH AGYEMANG

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; that whoever believes in Him should not perish but shall have everlasting life" (Jhn. 3:16). Man always want to think of God in the light of His love towards mankind, that is, God is merciful, loving, long suffering and patience in His dealings with man. Many are those who think that in view of God's love, He will not destroy man and His creation in general. In view of this misconception there are many whose faults has been pointed out to them according to the word of God, but they have refused to repent.

It is true that throughout the Bible God's love towards mankind is mentioned. However His severity to those who disobeyed His commands are also presented in the Bible. It is clear from the Bible that God's love is always shown to those who obey His commands, and His severity towards the disobedient.

The following references in the Bible could be considered in the light of God's severity and goodness towards man.

God once destroyed the whole earth, His own creation with flood during the time of Noah, because of disobedience to His word, and saved only eight people, Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives who obeyed God's commands (Gen. 7; Lk. 17:26-27).

Sodom and Gommora, these cities were destroyed and everything therein by fire from God, because of the peoples' disobedience to God. However Lot and his household, with the exception of His wife, who obeyed God were saved from the destruction (Gen. 19; Lk. 17:28-30).

In addition, we should read how God destroyed His own nation (Israel) in the wilderness (I Cor. 10:1-11), Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1,2), Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:1-11), and many more which are written down as examples for us in this last age, so that we might fear

God and obey His commandments (Heb. 10:26-31; II Pt. 2:4-9; Jude 3-23).

The Bible Speaks Do Not Be Misled

BILL BROWN

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in latter times some shall depart from *the faith*, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils". (1 Tim. 4:1). "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light". (II Cor. 11:14).

Do not be misled by the many different teachings of many different ways to be saved. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me". (John 14:6). "Enter ye in at the strait gate: (singular) for wide is the gate, (singular) and broad is the way; (singular) that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, (singular) which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:13-14). "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive". (Eph. 4:14).

The truth is not elastic. Truth is fixed. There is only one plan of salvation taught within the pages of the New Testament. "For without faith it is impossible to please God . . ." (Heb. 11:6). "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God". (Rom. 10:17). But man cannot be saved by faith only, for there are many factors by which a person is saved. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and *not by faith only*". (James 2:17, 24). An active, working faith will lead a person to true repentance. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish". (Luke 13:3). "At the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent". (Acts 17:30). Therefore some things have to, and must change. Repentance is the hardest thing a person must do. If a person is committing fornication, he or she must stop. If a person steals, he or she must stop, etc. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of . . ." (II Cor. 7:10). An active working faith will then lead a person to do what Jesus stated

in Matt. 10:32 "If you will confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father which is in heaven". An example of this is recorded in Acts 8:35-39. There is still another factor in the plan of salvation that one must do. "... Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven". (John 3:5). "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. *Being then made free from sin*, ye become the servants of righteousness". (Rom. 6:16-18). To understand clearly the doctrine which they obeyed from the heart, is recorded in, Rom. 6:3-6. Read and study it carefully. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; all things are become new". (II Cor. 5:17). But just how does one get *into* Christ? There is but one way; "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). The answer given, nearly 2,000 years ago, to the question, "... What shall we do?" is as binding and relevant today as it was then. "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 Spirit". (Acts 2:37-38). There were no exceptions then, (*every one of you*), and there are no exceptions today since there is only one plan of salvation and every one must obey the gospel alike.

Do not be misled by the statement, "one church is as good as another". "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, Saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts". (Isa. 55:8-9). "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death". (Prov. 14:12). How about making the choice that Jesus made? "Upon this *Rock* I will build my church..." (Matt. 16:18). Jesus believed that his church was so important to the salvation of mankind, that he purchased it with his own blood. (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25-27). He became the head of it. (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 5:23). He is the saviour of the body, the church. (Eph. 5:23). He adds those to the church who obey the gospel from the heart. (Rom. 6:16-18; Acts 2:47). So why not obey the gospel from the heart and let the Lord add you to His church, thereby making the right choice since there is no other blood purchased church in the world, and he is the saviour of it.

You Learn To Listen Better The Second Time

JIM FAUGHN

They are an attractive couple. Both of them have been married before. One of their (her) children has been involved in some school activities with one of our children, so I have had some association with them in that way.

It was during one of those activities that I overheard the husband say, "You learn to listen better the second time. That's really true. _____ and I have both been through a divorce and you learn a lot about how to avoid a second one."

I didn't have my tape player handy, so that might not be an exact quote, but it is not far off. It has probably been close to a year since I heard what he said, but his words have been buzzing around in my head since I heard them.

You see, this man is not the only person I know who is working harder to make a second marriage "work" than was the case with a first marriage. Things like communication, cooperation, compromise, and commitment often become very important in order to avoid the trauma of another divorce.

I think there is a lesson here somewhere, isn't there? Wouldn't there be far fewer second marriages if these things were important to both partners in *first marriages*? I wonder if some second marriages last longer and appear to be more fulfilling than first marriages because the people involved *find* better mates or *become* better mates?

Please notice the word "*some*" in the last paragraph. There are those who find better mates. There are those who, according to the scriptures, have the right to find a better mate because of the unfaithfulness of the former spouse. Those of us who are not in that situation need to make sure that we do not treat them like theirs is some sort of second-class marriage.

How well do you listen? How well do you communicate? How thoughtful are you? How much "divorce prevention" are you doing?

I guess I could ask more questions, but I need to stop. I just thought of a note I need to write.

Trusting In Bruised Reeds!

DILLARD THURMAN

Hezekiah began his reign as king of Judah when he was twenty-five years old, and reigned for twenty-nine years. *"And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord . . . He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves; and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it He trusted in the Lord of Israel."* (2 Kgs. 18:2-5). Hezekiah was a good king who turned a people back to God; and God prospered him and his people, giving them victory over the Philistines, and they bowed not to the Assyrians! But this prosperity did not last!

DID JUDAH TRUST IN A BRUISED REED?

In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, the king of Assyria took the walled cities of Judah. Even after he had received the gold and silver from the king's house and the temple, his captain showed contempt for Hezekiah's staunch stand for the Lord. He taunted him with the words: *"Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on them."* (v. 21). Scorn and ridicule suggested that Judah would soon fall, and is painted as a forlorn cripple, leaning on a staff of a bruised, or broken, reed! The derision of the adversary caused Israel to more carefully question where its trust was placed. Egypt existed as a bruised reed, having become weakened by its wars with Assyria. An alliance with Egypt would not strengthen Judah's position at all. Relying on Egypt would be like leaning on a bruised reed! It could offer Judah no support!

Judah should have trusted in God alone! Through generations, God had guided, nourished and protected His own! He alone could strengthen, uphold and protect Judah. *"Can the rush grow up without the mire? can the flag grow up without water? Whilst it is yet in its greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish: whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web."* (Job 8:11-14). Try learning for support on a broken, bruised reed, or a spider's web; this is the folly of forgetting God! But one trusting in God

will stand! *"Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."* (Prov. 29:25). What other trust is so safe? Remember the warning that we are not to *"trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy"* (1 Tim. 6:17). How far do you really trust God? Our trust in God is well founded; why turn to lean on weakened, bruised reeds? *"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."* (Psa. 35:5). He is not brushed, splintered reed with frail support! Isaiah cried out: *"Trust in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."* (Isa. 26:4).

JUDAH'S TRUST WAS WELL REWARDED!

After the enemy had taunted Hezekiah, ridiculed his defenses, and mocked Judah as a people delivered for destruction. Hezekiah joined with Isaiah the prophet in prayer to God. Their plea was heard, and God promised: *"Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me . . . I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land."* (2 Kgs. 19:7-8). And that thing came to pass, and the Lord God in whom Judah trusted won their battle for them! God further promised: *"For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for the sake of my servant David."* (19:34). That very night the angel of the Lord smote the enemy so that eighty-five thousand died, and the forces of Sennacherib left for Assyria! Judah did not trust in a bruised reed!

TRUSTING THE BRUISED REED OF MORALITY!

Despite the many lessons etched in God's word, there are still multitudes trusting in the bruised reed of morality! They believe morality will save them, and state: "I am just as good a moral man as any in the church!" Some contend, "I haven't done anything worthy of eternal hell! I am a good neighbor, husband, father and friend: why would I be lost?" But in all this, God is ignored! The Wise Man said, *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."* (Eccl. 12:13-14). No sane man can carefully examine his life, with all its secrets, and go before God's judgment bar on the basis of his goodness! The bruised reed of morality is splintered under the indictment: *"As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one," "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* (Rom. 3:10,

23). And what is the end result of sin? *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Rom. 6:23). Will you trust the bruised reed of morality? or will you turn for the gift of salvation that is found in Christ? (2 Tim. 2:10). What "good moral man would want to compete with Cornelius, *"a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always"*? (Acts 10:2). Yet this man was instructed by an angel to send for Simon Peter, *"Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."* (Acts 11:13-14). I have heard of no better moral man than this, yet he had to hear the gospel and believe, and then was commanded to be baptized! Friend, are you leaning on the bruised reed of morality?

THE CONSCIENCE IS A BRUISED REED

Too often we hear, "One must follow his own conscience, so let your conscience be your guide. No one will be lost if he follows his conscience!" This recognizes no higher power than what one believes to be right or wrong, and is little god with man that can transport him to heaven at last! It is a bruised reed that turned one away from trusting God, and doing His will! *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not on your own understanding."* (Prov. 3:5). It is foolish for man to try to devise his own way to heaven; and just as foolish to elevate one's conscience to become a god! All too often the conscience is in error. The Wise Man wrote: *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."* (Prov. 14:12). As the prophet extolled: *"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps."* (Jer. 10:23). The conscience is a bruised reed that can not support you!

No better example is found in this realm of action than the apostle Paul. He could say: *"I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."* (Acts 23:1). Also, *"And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men."* (Acts 24:16). Yet he admitted that at that time, *"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which things I also did."* (Acts 26:9-10). Now, notice that Paul scrupulously followed his conscience! Still, he confessed that he was then *"a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious,"* and was chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:13-15). Paul was unwilling to lean on conscience as a bruised reed; he knew that salvation was to be had only in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10; Eph. 1:3).

Many religious people have thought they were right, yet were in gross error. Paul showed his concern for such: *"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."* (Rom. 10:1-2). They were conscientious in seeking to establish their own righteousness; but they were still lost! A man can be honest, but honestly mistaken; religious, but religiously misguided; conscientious, but conscientiously in error! You have only to look to the life of Paul to prove it! If the conscience could save, then Christ died in vain! Why lean upon the bruised reed of one's conscience?

"SAVED BY FAITH ONLY" A BRUISED REED!

Many have leaned on a premise stated by human creeds: "That we are saved by faith only is a very wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." It is prominent in church books; but is absent from the Book of God! This notion leaves out any need for obedience, moral integrity, or religious devotion! Just "Kneel at your radio, or TV, and accept Christ as your personal Saviour," and the rest is paid in full! "Faith does it all for you!" But this covers too much territory! *"Thou believest that there is one God; thou does well; the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"* (Jas. 2:19-20). How is one elevated above the devils by leaning on the bruised reed of "faith only"? A saving faith is one that prompts respect and trust, and prompts obedience to God's will! Of Abraham's faith it was written: *"Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?"* (Jas. 2:22). One must have sufficient faith to follow the Lord! *"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."* (Heb. 5:8-9). Such trusting obedience makes us a follower of Christ; who by such obedience became the author of eternal salvation to them that obey! But leaning on the bruised reed of "faith only" offers no support!

TRUSTING IN "CAN'T FALL FROM GRACE"

This bruised reed is labeled, "Once saved, Always saved," "Impossibility of apostasy" and "Eternal security of the believer." But it is still the same doctrine that declares, "You can't fall from grace!" This doctrine of Satan gives people a false security, making them more vulnerable to his wiles! *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary*

the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5:8). God would have given no such warning if we could not fall! After listing "the Christian graces," Peter said: *"If ye do these things ye shall never fall."* (2 Pet. 2:10). But why this, if we could not possibly fall from God's favor?

In a parable Jesus told of a servant who went bad, He said, *"Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (Mt. 25: 30). Does this sound like "once saved, always saved"? Again He said, *"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them, which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."* (Mt. 13:41-42). Jesus didn't promote this idea of "can fall from grace" in these (and other) passages! Paul flatly declared: *"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."* (Gal. 5:4). Lest you be led astray by this false doctrine and lean upon this bruised reed, we would warn again: *"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."* (1 Cor. 10:12).

Spiritual Maturity

JOHNNY RAMSEY

There is no possible way to really know the Lord and serve Him properly without a knowledge of the Scriptures. Many feel or think or imagine they can be strong Christians while avoiding Bible study, but such folk are sadly mistaken and in for a rude awakening! Ezra 7:10 is the classic reminder of this: *"Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord; and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."* Devoted servants of God prepare, seek, do and teach the sacred text as a reflection of their loyalty to God. Brethren who poke fun at or make light of Bible preaching truly reflect upon their own integrity. The world and the church need far more Scripture and less human philosophy. There are too many after-dinner speakers among us already, and not nearly enough old-fashioned gospel preachers! When the saints assemble and Bible classes convene, we can do without a revival of the Toastmasters Club, but we must have teachers and preachers who believe with all their hearts in the power, inspiration, beauty and necessity of straight Bible proclamation.

Students who "*desire the sincere milk of the word*" (1 Pet. 2:2) and intend "*to handle aright*" (2 Tim. 2:15) the Scriptures certainly assist in the maturing process. Since we shall be judged by the sacred text (Jno. 12:48), we must be thoroughly acquainted with it now. Those who "*hunger and thirst after righteousness*" (Matt. 5:6) never complain about "too much Bible being preached." Folk who reason in that manner reflect their shallow, secular emphasis in life. Jesus Christ knew the Scriptures and shared them with others (Matt. 4:4; Lk. 24:32). So should we, if we claim to follow Him.

Perhaps one of our basic problems is that some do not really want to know, because they are not willing to "*take time to be holy*" (Rom. 10:1-3). Others may only study mechanically and learn the Bible academically just as they pursue a knowledge of math or history. Jesus rebuked the sadducees for such behavior in Matt. 22:29, "*Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.*" Proper Bible study is that arrangement whereby we fall in love with the Author of the Book and know Him and His message (2 Tim. 1:12). After all, there is not one single thing you can know for sure about God that you did not learn from the Bible!

Why is there such lack of Bible knowledge? Maybe these are some of the reasons.

1. Laziness and indifferences. If we really believe the gospel is "*the power of God unto salvation*" (Rom. 1:16), we will study it.
2. Improper study habits. We must set proper priorities, then we will find regular time for Bible study.
3. Overemphasis on methods. We get so enamored with methods we forget the real purpose in Bible study is to learn.
4. Too much stress on emotionalism. Emotion is necessary, but it should result from reason and knowledge.
5. Too much promotionalism. We need preachers, not promoters, to take the gospel to the lost.
6. Not enough practical teaching. Theory is fine, but it is no substitute for showing people (from the Bible) how to live each day.
7. Entertaining people instead of challenging them. This is especially true with our teaching of teenagers.
8. Too much psychology and not enough Scripture.

9. Wasting time on arts, crafts and recess when such time could be spent on learning the Bible.
10. To many preachers using too little Bible. Remember, "*the power of God unto salvation*" is the gospel, not our skill in teaching it.

We need to get back to what made the church grow in the first century: "*Preach the word.*" That is what made the church strong a hundred years ago, fifty years ago. Spiritual maturity demands that we feed upon the spiritual message of heaven instead of the baubles of the world.

Rewards Of Reading

TOM HOLLAND

In an age when seeing is such a significant force in life, thanks to television, videos, and motion pictures, we need to remember the importance of reading, especially the importance of reading God's Word.

God's Word is important to the young. It provides information by which young people may live a pure and productive life (Psalm 119:11; Ecclesiastes 11:9).

God's Word has the ability to provide the message of the Lord by which we are saved from sin, to an abundant life now, and eternal life in heaven (James 1:21; John 10:10; 1 Peter 1:5).

God's Word can edify the souls of God's people (Acts 20:32). God's Word applied to life enables a person to develop a godly character.

God's Word provides comfort to hurting hearts (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Our brethren in the first century were grieving over their loved ones that had died. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write words of truth by which people could be comforted.

God's Word produces faith, (Romans 10:17; John 20:30, 31), and faith is the foundation of hope (Hebrews 11:1).

A public reading of the entire Bible would take approximately 70 hours. It takes about 52 hours to read privately the Old Testament and about 18 hours to read the New Testament. If one reads the Bible one

hour per day it would take 2 months and 10 days to read the entire Bible.

Reading the Bible is like working in a gold mine; priceless treasure is found in God's truth. Reading the Bible is like searching for diamonds, rich jewels of truth are found on every page.

To those who are determined to read the Bible through this year, keep reading. If you started to read the Bible through and stopped, you still have time to start anew and read the Bible through. Not only will you accomplish something that not too many people ever do, namely read the Bible through in a year, but you will have exposed your mind to words of truth that will enrich your life and also "give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

Our Doctrine—Jesus Christ

ELWOOD HOLT

There are congregations of Christians meeting to worship God just as the Christians of the first century did, using only teachings of Christ. These teachings are the New Testament.

It is the belief of these people, who comprise the churches of Christ, that God should be worshipped just as the inspired apostles taught, following the pattern set down by first century Christians. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). This is the teaching of an inspired apostle. Furthermore, Christ has given no authority to anyone to change first century worship. In fact, Paul warned against anyone changing the teachings of Christ: "there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:7-8).

Members of the Churches of Christ believe that the Old Testament is inspired too; however, they believe that God did not mean for Christians to follow the Old Testament teaching in Christian living. They believe that the Old Testament is a record of the dealings of God with people, a "tutor to bring us to Christ" (Galatians 3:24).

The New Testament clearly teaches that the Old Testament (Moses' law) was "blotted out," taken out of the way, and nailed to the

cross (Colossians 2:14). When the old law was abolished, the new and better covenant of Christ went into effect (Hebrews 8:6, 8, 9:15-18).

Taking the New Testament as the rule of faith and practice, members of the Churches of Christ propose to speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where it is silent.

To obey any "man made" doctrine, to follow after any creed other than the New Testament, to fail to obey the teachings of the New Testament, to add or to take away from the New Testament, would be against the clear teachings of Christ.

It is a plain teaching of the New Testament that "all authority" has been given to Christ (Matthew 28:18), and that God has spoken through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2). Therefore the teaching of Christ are the only logical and safe teaching to follow.

Members of the church of Christ believe that salvation is a free gift of God's grace and is not procured by man's works (Ephesians 2:8, 9). They believe, though, that this gift comes through an active faith which leads one to obedience of all Christ's teachings.

So, we see that churches of Christ today have the same guide that was followed by the Christians of the first century, the teachings of Christ, the New Testament.

Waxing In The Bible

GLENN COLLEY

The Bible teaches that sin, gone unchecked, has a progressive nature. The Greek word "Prokopto," translated "wax" or "increase" is used to teach us this fact. Thayer says the word means, "To lengthen out by hammering (as a smith forges metals); to promote, forward, further, go forward, advance, proceed . . ." (Thayer, 4298). Consider what Paul writes, using this word:

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (II Timothy 3:12, 13).

During the month of September, 1993, there were at least two separate news stories carried over Cable News Network which

pertained to homosexual couples adopting children. Both stories were about actual cases, one with two lesbians, the other with two "gay" men, and their attempts to be legal, child-rearing, families.

This sad state of affairs didn't happen overnight. It was gradual. It illustrates the fact that when people break through commonly accepted moral barriers, a chain reaction will gradually occur in society. The "domino effect" can clearly be seen in the gradual acceptance of homosexuality. Consider the perversion progression in this generation, and how the normalization homosexuality has moved forward:

—First, "Gay is OK."

—Then, "It isn't fair to discriminate against gays just because of their sexual preference."

—Then, "Homosexual doesn't describe what a person does, it describes what a person is."

—Then, "Gays must be considered equal in all ways."

—Then, "We don't mind if our president supports homosexuality as being as normal as a husband-wife relationship. The economy is a much more important issue."

—Then, "Gay couples should be legally recognized as parents."

—Then, "We must teach in public schools that homosexuality is normal."

Where does it go from here?

Dr. Harold M. Voth, diplomat of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology has authored a book entitled, "Real Men Don't Abandon Their Responsibilities." He states: *"The basic fabric of our society is changing . . . The trend is toward disintegration; a devitalizing process is at work, involving individual and social factors in a vicious and downhill cycle . . . One can only hope that there will be enough people of strength, vision, and the capacity to take responsibility to intervene decisively before it is too late. The crucial question is whether or not the present trend in America is reversible."*

Reverse the trend? That's too big a proposition for me. If I view the possibility as "we against the trend," I may cower back and do nothing. That's too much for one man. I must view the solutions on a smaller, simpler scale. What is clearly reversible, is the life of every sinner I meet who will listen to God's word. We can do our part to change our country, one person at a time. People are still being baptized into Christ every day! People who fill their lives with Christ will leave sin (I Corinthians 6:9-11). Are you involved in studying the Bible with any non-

Christians right now? Are you setting up Bible studies? Do you talk to people about the solution to sin? Do you introduce spiritual topics into your conversations? (i.e. "How are things between you and the Lord lately?") "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14).

May we all remember that "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4), and then may we all react with the bold conviction, "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord, nor to defend His cause . . ."

What About Homosexuality?

DANNY PETTUS

Like Jesus, Christians are to love the sinner, and hate the sin. Homosexuality is a sin. The Bible says, "Neither fornicators; nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

The verses teach that one cannot continue to steal, and inherit heaven. One cannot continue to practice adultery, or homosexuality, and inherit heaven. Jesus demands repentance (Luke 13:3).

Some homosexuals at Corinth, Greece believed in Christ and were baptized into Christ and into his church. Did they continue to be homosexuals? No! The Bible says, "And such were some of you" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Not, "Are," but "Such *were* some of you." In the past, they were homosexuals, but not any longer. They had changed. What does God call this change? Repentance!

Both the Old and New Testaments condemn homosexuality. This sin carried the death penalty in the old Scriptures. "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death" (Leviticus 20:13).

The law of Christ, the New Testament, also teaches that homosexuality is sin. Fornicators and sodomites are contrary to sound doctrine (1 Timothy 1:9-10).

"Sodomite" is used today to refer to a homosexual. This is because homosexuality was one of the sins of the city of Sodom (Genesis 19). For our learning the Bible says, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

The New Testament condemns homosexuality by saying, "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Romans 1:26-28). The word of God says homosexuals "dishonour their own bodies between themselves" (Romans 1:24).

Several denominations accept, fellowship, and give their approval to homosexuality. They teach it is not a sin. They say, "it is different now." These denominations teach that Paul and Jude were influenced by their culture when they wrote, but now times are different.

We may live in a different time and culture, but the Lord who cannot lie said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Peter said, "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever" (1 Peter 1:24-25).

God is eternal, and so is his word! Men make laws that become outdated, but God is not a man! His word is to all generations. Every generation is to pass the word on to the next generation (II Timothy 2:2).

There are different cultures; However, culture does not change the word of God. The word of God changes culture! This change is called repentance! Man must not change the Bible (Revelation 22:18-19). We must allow the Bible to change us!

The forty men, who wrote the Bible, wrote it by divine guidance. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21).

The commandments these men of God wrote are the Lord's! The apostle Paul said, "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (I Corinthians 14:37).

Those who try to justify women preaching, ignore these verses. In doing so, they show disrespect for the word of God! Those who try to justify homosexuality, ignore the same verses, and in doing so, they show disrespect for the word of God!

If cultures are different now, they must change!

If our nation makes laws, which approve of homosexuality, the truth still remains that on Judgment Day, not one person will be judged by those ungodly laws. "We ought to obey God, rather than man" (Acts 5:29).

The Lord will judge us, not man! We will be judged by the word of God. "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12). "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Romans 2:16). "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" (John 12:48).

No one is born a homosexual. Not all agree with this statement, but learned men such as Pattison, Hauer was, Patton, Karlen, Money, Stoller, Gadpaille, and Bieber do not believe homosexuals are born homosexual. We must agree with these men, not just because they are authorities in this area, but *because they agree with the Bible*, which is the Word of God!

Contrary to some's doctrine, men are not born sinners (Matthew 18:3). It is contrary to the Bible to believe that God would led a person be born a homosexual, only to condemn that person to hell, if they do not stop practicing homosexuality!

"God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1:13). There's not a genetic cause of drunkenness, murder, homo-sexuality, etc. Temptation comes from the devil!

Our upbringing, conditioning, and environment do lead to a person being tempted more with certain sins. What ever the sin is "which doth so easily beset us," God wants us to be a soldier, to put up a good fight, and to come out a winner (Hebrews 12:1; 1 Timothy 6:12).

Homosexuals at Corinth, Greece received forgiveness from God after they quit practicing such behavior, and obeyed the gospel of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Some in the Lord's church today were living in homosexuality, but now they have been forgiven. Now they are living as Jesus commands.

Regardless of what the sin is, repentance is a must! The Bible

says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

The Bible pronounces a woe upon all who say homosexuality is not a sin! "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20). "Fools make a mock at sin" (Proverbs 14:9). "He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the just even they both are abomination to the Lord (Proverbs 17:15). "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Proverbs 30:12).

God wants all to be saved (I Timothy 2:4). Jesus died for the sins of every man (Hebrews 2:9, I John 2:2). God's plan of salvation to every man is as follows:

Hear the gospel . . . John 6:45; Believe the gospel. Romans 10:9.

Confess that belief . . . Luke 12:8-9.

Repent of sins . . . Acts 3:19

Be Baptized into Christ . . . Romans 6:3.

After obeying God's plan for man, we must not give in to ungodly lusts (I Peter 2:11). God's grace does not extend to those who keep on living a life of sin (Romans 6:1-2). We are to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" and live godly (Titus 2:12).

The Last Days

MIKE BENSON

"Are we living in the "last days?"

Yes, Carefully study the following:

1. The Old Testament prophets said "the mountain of the Lord's house" (i.e., the church) would be "established" (i.e., built) in the "last days." "And it shall come to pass *in the last days*, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isaiah 2:2). See also Micah 4:1.

2. The church Jesus promised (Matthew 16:18-19), was established on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of the Lord (Acts 2:47), thus the "last days" (i.e., the Christian age)

began in Acts 2, in fulfillment of Jesus' promise. In fact, the apostle Peter told his audience that what was happening on that very occasion (in Acts 2), was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy which was to come to pass in the "last days" (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:16-17). Hence, the "last days" began on Pentecost.

3: Thus, we are now living in the "last days," and we have been living in them for nearly 2,000 years. We read, "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has *in these last days* spoken to us by His Son . . ." (Hebrews 1:1, 2a). Here the Hebrew writer makes it clear that the last days were currently in effect. If the last days were already in effect at that time, then we must conclude that they continue today.

Summary:

- (1) The church was to begin in the "last days";
- (2) The church was established on Pentecost; hence, the "last days" (i.e., the Christian age) began on that occasion;
- (3) Thus, the "last days" continue to today and will not cease until Christ returns (I Corinthians 15:24-26).

Can God Have A Son?

Sometimes people try to bring God down to the Human level. They say, "God was not married; therefore He could not have a son." But we must remember that the Creator of the universe is not limited in any way. In fact, the Scriptures say, ". . . *With God all things are possible.*"

So, yes—if God chooses to have a Son then certainly, it is possible.

In Luke 1:35, the virgin Mary was told, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."

Why was this Holy One born as the Son of God? ". . . when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman. . . to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." (Galatians 4:4,5)

How marvelous that *through* the sonship of Christ, *we are sons!*