

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

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## The Providence of God

So many Christians attribute everything to either good luck or bad luck. It is difficult for them to find another word when they want to bid someone God's speed. I often tell brethren that in the first century missionaries were sent out with prayer and fasting but in our time we send them out with a pot luck and good luck. But luck is a pagan concept and we should remove that word from our vocabulary. Surely as Christians we have more to go on than luck.

It seems that whatever happens in our lives that we attribute that to being fortunate or unfortunate, that it was an accident, or it just happened incidentally along the way. By listening to us one would think that we have a fatalistic view of life, that we believe whatever will be will be.

All of this is to say, that we find it very difficult to see God at work in our lives and in the lives of other Christians. We have

our family, brethren, and friends all around us. If we need some help, we can always go to them. We may ask God to help us but it is as though we cannot really expect him to do anything.

Perhaps it is the ones who go to the mission fields that can more easily see the providence of God at work in their lives. They don't have any brethren, at least in the beginning, to take their problems to. They don't have others to turn to. Therefore they look to God, and as they give themselves to him, and allow him to work through them, then they can begin to see that truly the Lord is with them and is helping them. It is not luck, an accident, coincidence, or good fortune. Rather, it is God at work.

God does not work today through miracles, signs, wonders, visions, or in any other way that would be contrary to the teaching of his word. But still he works. Someone has said that man takes laws, tools, medicines, materials, money, and all kinds of things and uses them to help his fellow-man. There is nothing miraculous about it. He just simply uses those things that are available. Why cannot God do the same to bless and help his people? He can work through the natural order of things, through the laws that exist, through the means that are available, to make things possible for his people. And so God takes those things that are available and uses them to bless those who yield themselves to him.

Paul tells us, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28). Christ said that he would be with us "alway, even to the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20). Again, he said, "...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5). Paul declared, "If God be with us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). He said, "...we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Romans 8:37). On another occasion, he said, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

(Ephesians 3:20,21). Then listen, as he says, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:8).

My brethren, God is at work today. If not, why do we even pray to him through his Son, Jesus Christ? Remember though, he cannot work in your life, or through you, unless you will allow yourself to be used by him to accomplish his purpose. Or if you will not go through the doors of opportunity that he has opened to you, how can he help you? God wants to bless you and do more and more for you, and he will, if you will allow him to do so according to his will.



## If You Are a Christian Then You Must Remember . . . .

That you are a new creation, a new person in Jesus Christ. The Bible in 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." As a new person, you are not going to live the way you have lived before becoming a Christian. That is why one must repent before becoming a Christian. (Acts 2:38). Repentance means a change. The prodigal son in Luke 15 had left his father and had gone into a far country where he was lost, but then he changed his mind, he repented, and came back to his father. The father accepted him as a new person, a changed man, he said, "This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." (Vs. 24). Also, we notice, the father ordered his servants

and commanded, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet." (Vs. 22). For the prodigal every thing had become new. And this is exactly what happens when a person comes to Christ with repentance. He looks at things differently now; he wants to do things in a different way; he treats other people in a different way; his conversation and life has changed. There is no miracle in this. He receives all new things from the reading and studying of God's word daily, where he finds how a person in Christ ought to live.

If you are a Christian then you must remember that you have put off the old person and have put on the new person. The Apostle Paul reminded the Romans when he said to them, "Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection, knowing this that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." (Romans 6:4-6). On the same subject when he wrote to Christians at Colosse he said, "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. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons (children) of disobedience, in which you also once walked when you lived in them. But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humble-

ness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do." (Colossians 3:1-13). The new life in Christ does not come by way of a miracle, but one must be willing to give himself to the Lord in every aspect.

When one becomes a Christian, God does not perform a miracle over him to make him a new creation. But one must be willing to bring the change in himself, like the prodigal son, by coming to the Lord, humbling before him, and by accepting and doing His will. Notice, in Colossians 3:5, Paul told the Christians that it was their responsibility to put to death their members on earth . . . . Then he said, "you must also put off all these . . . ." (Vs. 8). Again, "since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man . . . ." (Vs. 9-10). They had done all by themselves. After hearing about Christ and what He can do in their lives they were willing to change their lives by putting off their old man of sin with his deeds and by putting on the new man, Christ Jesus. In other words, they had now decided to live like Jesus, by their own choice. Are you a Christian? If you are, then you must be living the new life in Christ as a new man. But if you are not doing this, then remember what the Apostle Peter said, "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, then having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter 2:20-22). This shows that one can become a Christian by coming to the Lord in faith and obedience to His commands, but one can also leave Him and go back into the world and get lost. If you are a Christian then you must remember these things.

# **The Greatest Assurance : No Condemnation**

**Martel Pace**

Upon entering Romans 8 one quickly finds the most comforting chapter of Romans, perhaps of the entire Bible! It ranks with Psalm 23, John 14 and I Corinthians 15. Probably part of its glory resides in the stark contrast it offers to the near despair of chapter seven. "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (7:24). Romans 7:14-25 seems to depict a hopeless warfare as the "flesh lusts against the spirit" (Gal. 5:17). But in Galatians 5:16 Paul had just said, "Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." Romans 8:1-7 is a divinely inspired commentary on that verse.

The freedoms emphasized in Romans (as set forth by Nygren) are: Freedom from the wrath of God by God's love (5:1-11); Freedom from sin through baptism (6:1-14); Freedom from the law through the death of Christ (7:1-6), and Freedom from death through the Spirit (8:1-11). Truly, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II Cor. 3:17). We have been called to liberty (Galatians 5:13).

Strangely, although perhaps not so, the word "Spirit" is nowhere found in Romans 7, but He fills chapter 8! So long as we try to war against the flesh without the Spirit we fight a losing battle. If we avail ourselves of the Spirit's "law of life" we become "more than conquerors." The great blessings provided and given in Romans 8 are numerous; I counted 21 but there may be more. If we have the first, "no condemnation," the rest will come naturally. A few are life, peace, made alive, sonship, witness, heirship, hope of future glory, all things working for our good, and God is for us. What others can you find?

The Old Law condemned by pronouncing sin and judgment. In Christ that is gone! We are shown that not even now are we in "the body of this death" (7:24). Remember that the Law made

people see their sinfulness and helplessness. "No condemnation" does not mean that we will entirely escape the Judgment Day but rather escape "the judgment which follows the sentencing" (Arndt-Gingrich). In Christ we should live as though we are pardoned because we are !Some still live with the fears of a prison house. Remember, Romans 6:3 established that we are "baptized into Christ." Now we are in "faith-union" with Christ, having died with him, been buried with him, and been raised with him (6:4). We are now so much *with Christ* that Paul can switch back and forth easily from the Person of Christ to his spiritual body ("corporate personality"—Bruce). The latter is comprised of Christ who is at God's right hand and all his people who share his life of "no condemnation."

To be "in Christ" is to be a member of the church. It is not just a name on the books, but it is to be a limb or an organ of his body. As such we are dependent on him for life and he is dependent on you for his will to be done on earth.

"No condemnation" is often misapplied to mean, "I have no condemnation; therefore I can't lose my salvation." This is not the thought under consideration. Paul is just showing what you have while in Christ. One might run into a cave for safety during a storm, but that does not guarantee all future safety (Whiteside). Being set free does not rob us of all responsibility for future conduct. By sin's very nature it must be condemned wherever it is found, whether in a Christian or a sinner. But in Christ condemnation can always be avoided.

The thought of chapter 7 is reduced to one sentence in 8:2,3. Many want to find something mysterious in "spirit," but it need not be so. The Spirit indeed gives life, but he does so through words (John 6:63). What gives life is what saves; this is simply the gospel (Romans 1:16).

It is only the "law of the spirit of life" that makes free from "the law of sin and death" (8:2). But what is the "law of sin and death"? It cannot be the law of Moses. If it did, Paul was saying, "The law of Moses could not set me free from the law of Moses" (Whiteside). It is rather the principle which was working

through the flesh mentioned at 7:23-24 (the "different law"). The law of Moses could not set us free from the principle of warfare in the flesh which causes us all to be spiritually dead through sin.

That law couldn't do the job because it was weak through our flesh (8:3). It is the weakness and vulnerability of man that gives sin a beachhead in your life (Barclay). To "live according to the flesh" (8:5) is to live dominated by its dictates—the desires of human nature. But *in Christ* one can live a life dominated by the love of God. It is because the appetites of the flesh so often lead to sin that "flesh" is called "sinful". "Sins of the flesh" are not just sexual sins, for among them are wrath, envy and murder (Gal. 5:19-21).

Some think Christ gave us power to keep the righteousness demanded under the law. This would mean we now have a super-human power to live above sin. "Such an interpretation flies directly in the face of Paul's whole view" (Nygren, p. 317). Our salvation is because of what Jesus did, and not what we can now do.

Christian holiness means that we have a new spirit (II Cor. 5:17). What the law was powerless to produce because of inadequate human material is produced by the forgiving power of Jesus' death. It is not what we can do but what Jesus did for us.

We are not holy because we can now perfectly keep 10,000 precepts. It has something to do with the new heart provided the "new creature" in Christ. Indeed, we are to have a new love in appreciation of God's love (I John 4:19), and this does indeed fulfil the law (Rom. 13:9-10).

To run and work the law commands,  
Yet gives me neither feet nor hands;  
But better news the gospel brings;  
It bids me fly, and gives me wings.

A vine does not produce grapes because of an Act of Congress, but because it is naturally tied to the vine and the vine's own life is in it; in our case, this is Christ's life.



Jesus now covers and protects us. When Cuba was under Spain an Englishman was arrested for lingering over a man another had stabbed. He was arrested and scheduled to be shot at sunrise the next day. The British ambassador learned of it. He went to the man before the firing squad, threw the "Union Jack" over him and said, "Now, shoot if you dare!" The power of England protected him. The governor reviewed the case and released him. With Jesus around us, and us in him, the fiery darts of Satan cannot harm us.

## The Relevance of Christianity

Clay Wilkerson

We know, that as the servants of God in this life, we have a mission to teach our friends, family, and co-workers, about the salvation of their souls. As Christians, each of us should commit ourselves to being more evangelistic.

And, of course we want our evangelistic efforts to be successful. We want to see the Lord's church grow. We want to see the lost brought to Christ. In committing ourselves to being teachers of God's word. And each one of us is a teacher.

The primary goal of a teacher is to show how the topic being taught is relevant, that is, its applicability in the lives of those being taught. Our challenge today as teachers, as evangelists of Christianity, is to show Christianity answers the questions and concerns that people find most relevant in their lives. That's the only way we'll ever be able to interest those around us in coming to know Christ as their Saviour.

It's a tough challenge, because Christianity is not known for its relevance. As teachers of the gospel, we have to fight for every second of attention we get from those who are not Christians. We must learn to appeal to people's primary interests, because people will talk about the things they are interested in or the thing they need. We have to show how the Bible and Christianity answers the issues that society considers relevant before we can ever interest people in studying the word of God.

It's sad, but its true, people simply will not listen to something they do not see as relevant to their personal lives. Our challenge then, is to make Christianity relevant. How can we do it.

First we have to look at the issues that people already find relevant, and then show them the message of the Bible as it relates to that issue.

Many people are interested in committing their lives to a cause. It may be political, social, or religious. It may be a profession or a career, or some other humanitarian cause. Whatever the cause may be, people are looking for something they stand up for, speak out for, or believe in.

Some have yet to find that "something" that they can commit themselves to. Yet they are constantly searching. Bible has a relevant answer to this need that many people have. Christianity can fill that void that some people are seeking. They can commit themselves to the most noble cause of all, the Cause of Christ.

The apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:1, "Therefore, my beloved brethren who I long to see, my Joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord my beloved." And in Ephesians 6:10-13, Paul says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm."

The idea here is of a soldier, in the heat of the battle standing fast his ground, not giving in inch, even in the face of an onslaught by the opposition. Paul was urging those Christians to be committed, to take a stand for what they believed in, and what they knew to be true. This admonition is repeated over and over in the scriptures.

So when this topic of being committed to something comes up in your conversations with your friends and co-workers, take the approach that Christianity is a relevant cause that people can commit their whole lives to, a cause with rewards far beyond any earthly cause. 11 Timothy 4:7-8 says: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but to all who have loved his appearing." Christianity is a cause worth believing in.

Another issue that many people attach significant amounts of relevance to is themselves, and their problems. It's just part of our human nature. And what we really like is for someone else to take an interest in our problems.

But society doesn't tend to like facing or dealing with other people's problems. Everybody is too busy with his own problems. Lack of care and concern for others is rampant in our world. Genuine concern for others reaches out to the person next door who is suffering from a broken marriage, a life crises, or just needs a friend, or someone to talk to.

Generally, people don't want to offer anybody any help in something they are struggling with. The trend is to take care of ourselves and forget about everybody else. But the Bible has a relevant answer to this interest that people take in themselves and their problems.

As Christians we are instructed to "bear one another's burdens" in Galatians 6:2. Again in Philippians 4:3 Paul admonishes Christians to share in the struggles of others. Although these verses relate specifically to Christian relationships, we can be interested in the hurts, the sufferings, and the troubles that face our non-Christian friends and neighbours.

In our Jobs, in our neighbourhoods, there are those who are having difficulties. It may be a marriage problem, a drinking problem, or it may be someone having trouble finding a Job, or finding a place to live. As Christians we should be concerned enough to want to help.

Christ's invitation in Matthew 11: 28-30, "come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden" was for all people. He was concerned about people and their problems. Rather than turning away, as Christians we should say, "How can I help?" That's how we make Christianity relevant to our friends and neighbours.

A third issue that has relevance in the minds of most everybody, Christians and non-Christians alike, is happiness. People tend to seek happiness in all the things of this world; wealth, pleasure, material things, and some go so far as to seek happiness from alcohol and mind-altering drugs.

These things promise happiness, and give a fleeting type of happiness for a while, but then that happiness fades, and the search resumes for something else that promises happiness. Happiness that is dependent on earthly things and earthly circumstances always fades. People all over the world are interested in finding a lasting type of happiness.

And that is just the type of happiness that Christianity offers—a deep, inner, lasting happiness that is independent of earthly circumstances and things. Paul says in Philippians 4:4 "rejoice IN THE LORD." And in Philippians 3:7-8: "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ."

There is a genuine, inner happiness that permeates into every crevice in a Christian's life, that happiness is the result of knowing Christ. The Christian finds happiness in serving others as the example of Christ in John 13. James 5:11 teaches that happiness is the result for those who have endured the trials and temptations of life, and have overcome. Luke 11:28 teaches "happy are those who hear the word of God, and do it." That's where true, lasting, happiness is found: in knowing the Lord, and obeying the word of the Lord.

We can appeal to the interest people have in finding lasting

happiness by showing them the relevance of Christianity as it pertains to the quest for true happiness.

A fourth issue that society considers relevant is tomorrow. Society has a deep concern in living without fear as to tomorrow. All people are interested in the future. We all get worried, and distressed when things are not going well. It is part of our human nature to be concerned about having a place to live, of not being able to provide for our loved ones, and many other worrisome things.

And the Bible has an answer to this concern as well. In Matthew 6:25 and 34 Jesus says: "Do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will take care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

This doesn't mean that the Christian is to give no consideration to the future. We are to take thought of these matters, but **WITHOUT ANXIETY**, as Paul says in Philippians 4:6.

The Christian life is serene in respect to the future. We know that the Lord has promised that he will sustain us, that he will take care of us. We can't go and sit under a shade tree and say "Lord, build me a house, put shoes on my feet, and feed my family"—we have to do our part—but as God's children, we don't have to worry about tomorrow. We know that the Lord will not forget us.

Christ addressed this concern in Luke 12:30, "For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek his kingdom, and these things shall be added to you."

So in your conversations with your friends and co-workers, when this topic comes up, you can show them that the Bible does have something relevant to say about tomorrow.

We can show those around us that there is a better way to live. Take time to reflect on your own life, and the lives of those

whom you know who are not Christians. Focus in on something that is of relevance in their lives, and then show them that as a Christian, you are interested in those things as well. Show them the relevant issues of life from the Christian perspective, it may be Just the answer they are looking for.

## We are all Trying to go to the Same Place

J.D. Boyd

The above is the most frequently heard statement made by most members of any denomination one may attempt to teach what the Bible says about the church Jesus built (the one body—Eph. 1:22-23), about the name “Christian” being the new name which “the mouth of the Lord named” (Acts 11:26; Isa 62:2; I Pet. 4:16), or about the one baptism (Eph. 4:5) being a burial in water (Rom. 6:4; Acts 8:38) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). My usual reply is, “Well it doesn’t seem that most people are trying very hard.”

We might mention just here that the name Christian was applied to individuals in the Bible and never to the church, and that the one baptism doesn’t mean only one immersion. Regardless of the number of times one has been immersed, one has not had the one baptism until done for the right purpose in the name of Christ (or by His authority) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-5; Matthew 28:19).

When one hears these plain facts and still continues in his error he isn’t trying very hard to go to heaven. That is sad. But, here is something sadder. Not all of us who are Christians only and have been added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:47) are trying very hard to go to heaven. Consider the person who gets offended and forsakes the church, the one who forsakes duty for fleshly satisfaction, those who put some game or TV show before the privilege of worship, or those who miss services to entertain

and feed company. None of these are trying very hard to go to heaven. And, the cases can be multiplied.

The sad sequel is, if we don't try hard, we will be sure to miss it. "Strive to enter in."

## We Need to Put Some Wheels on our Prayers

Edsel Burleson

Someone has said "we should pray as if everything depended upon God, and then work as if everything depended upon us." There is much truth in this statement. God does not do for us what we can do for ourselves and he expects us to use the ability he has given us to glorify him. We need to put some wheels on our prayers.

Once upon a time sickness came to the family of a poorly paid preacher of a rural church. It was winter and the minister was in financial straits. A number of the members decided to meet at his house and offer prayers for the speedy recovery of the sick ones, and for material blessings upon the preacher and his family. While one of the deacons was offering a fervent prayer for blessings upon the minister's household, there was a loud knock at the door. When the door was opened, a stout farmer boy was seen, wrapped up comfortably.

"What do you want?" asked one of the elders.

"I've brought Pa's prayers," replied the boy, "and they're out in the wagon. Just help me and we'll get them in."

Investigation disclosed the fact that "Pa's prayers" consisted of potatoes, flour, bacon, cornmeal, turnips, and jellies for the sick ones.

It isn't difficult to recognize needs in the lives of those whose

lives touch ours, or even to bring ourselves to ask God that the needs may be supplied. But it is far more difficult for many of us to recognize the role we could and should play in helping supply these needs. James said, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled : notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (James 2:15, 16).

Opportunities to supply spiritual needs are even more often overlooked. There is a story of an Atlantic passenger who lay in his bunk in a storm, deathly seasick. A cry of "man overboard" was heard. "God help this poor fellow"...and then he thought, "At least I can put my lantern in the porthole," which he did.

The man was rescued, and recounting the ordeal the next day, he said, "I was going down for the last time when someone put a lantern in a porthole. It shone upon my hand, and a sailor in a nearby life boat grabbed it and pulled me in."

Let us use what we have to the glory of God. It may be just a sack of potatoes or a lantern in a porthole, but it can be used by the Lord to his honor.

Listen to these words from an unknown author :

God didn't put me on this earth

To have an easy time,

He put me here to fight a fight,

To hold a battle line.

He put me here to help the weak,

And help myself grow strong :

He put me here to lend a hand

And help others along.

He put me here to say a word

Of encouragement and cheer;

He put me here to sing a song

For someone else to hear.



He didn't put me here to whine,  
Stick out my lips, and pout;

He put me here to work,  
And Satan's evil rout.

He only asks I do my best  
To carry out his plans,

Forget rewards and starry crowns,  
And leave all in His hands.

## Nothing but the Truth

Lindell Mitchell

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." (Exodus 20:16). The Jews were terrified by lying; again and again it is condemned in the Old Testament.

The Psalmist most bitter disappointment was that false witnesses rose up against him (Psalm 27:12; 35:11). The wise man repeatedly condemned falsehood in the Proverbs. One of the six things the Lord hated was a false witness who breathed out lies (Proverbs 6:19). Not only was the false witness condemned, he was threatened. He would not go unpunished according to the wise man (Proverbs 19:15; 19:9). He was assured of destruction (Proverbs 21:8). Malachi said that God's vengeance was against those who swore falsely (Malachi 3:5).

In the New Testament, false testimony is one of the sins said to proceed from the heart of evil men (Matthew 15:19). False witnesses appeared at the trial of Stephen (Acts 6:13), and of Jesus himself (Matthew 26:59, 60).

Jewish law went to great length to insure the reliability of all testimony. The law insisted that no one could be condemned on the evidence of one witness. There had to be two or three witnesses and their stories had to agree (Deuteronomy 19:16-19; Numbers 35:30). In the event that a witness was found to be lying, the

penalty he sought to inflict on another, was to be inflicted upon him (Deuteronomy 19:16-19).

It is not easy to tell the truth. Two people can give an account of the same incident, and the accounts turn out quite differently. Things like malice can make it difficult to be truthful. Malicious gossip is repeatedly condemned in Scripture (Proverbs 20:19; Romans 1:29; I Timothy 5:13). Many people who gossip would be shocked to be called a malicious liar, but that is exactly what he is. Other men lie out of fear. They depart from the truth to escape the consequences of something they have said or done. The problem with this is that, like all sin, it is sure to catch up with you (Numbers 32:23). Sometimes men lie for profit. This is seen daily in advertising. This kind of lying is so common that few informed people believe the claims made by salesmen and producers. Men are also guilty of lying at times by their silence. When you have information that would establish the truth and withhold it, you are taking the coward's refuge and in effect lying. Even half-truth constitutes a whole lie. We must tell the truth and nothing but the truth!

The question arises, however, must we always tell the truth bluntly without regard for the feelings of others? Three questions should govern our speech. First, is it true? If you are not absolutely sure, keep quiet. Second, is it helpful? If what you are going to say will not help establish truth and help your fellow man, then keep silent. Third, is it kind? It is possible to be Truthful and kind if one's speech comes from a heart of love. Always remember the old verse :

There is so much bad in the best of us, And so much good in  
the worst of us, That is hardly behooves any of us To talk about  
the rest of us.

The Lord said every man shall give an account of the careless speech he utters (Matthew 12:36).

# When to Thank God

In I Thess. 5:18, the scripture says: "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

In everything give thanks! It is so common to hear thanks and praise to God for his many blessings, and this is good. But have you ever thanked God for trouble? In trouble, more than blessing, I believe we come to know God better and appreciate Him more deeply.

An author wrote one time: "The best things of life are the results of wounds." Too many times we are ready to complain about trials and problems instead of searching with anticipation to find the hidden lesson behind our suffering with problems. When we suffer in our lives, we are going to allow it to influence us, in one of two directions. Our suffering will either make us stronger in Christ or weaker in Christ. It is up to us to choose our own reaction toward problems. Let us thank God for all things in our lives as Christians.

## Does It All End Here ?

Grady L. Scott

The graveyard is a place of sadness for all of us. On most occasions we go there to lay to rest the mortal remains of some loved one. It is also a place where all of us will be taken after we draw our last breath. But is the grave the final resting place for the dead? Does it all end here?

The Bible gives a clear and resounding No to this question. The grave is not the final home for our departed friends and loved ones. The Scriptures teach two great truths concerning death. First, the spirits of the dead go on to a place of waiting for judgment. Second, all the dead will be raised to face judgment on the final day.

The basic definition of death is separation. Physical death takes place when the spirit is separated from the body. The body goes to the grave. Where does the spirit go? Happily, the Bible tells us. In LK. 16:19-31 Jesus tells us that two individuals died. One was righteous and one was wicked. The righteous man died and was carried to a place called "Abraham's bosom." The wicked man died and lifted up his eyes in torment. Here were the spirits of a good man and a wicked man that had been separated from their bodies. The bodies were buried but the spirits went on to a place of waiting.

When Jesus was on the cross he promised the penitent thief that he would be with Christ in Paradise that very day (Lk. 23:43). Christ was not to return to heaven until over forty days later. To what place were Jesus and the thief going on the day of the crucifixion? They were going to that intermediate place of the dead that Jesus spoke of as "Abraham's bosom" (Lk. 16:22).

Secondly, we know that the graveyard is not the end of our existence because the Bible promises that someday we will be raised up to possess a new incorruptible body that will live forever. Jesus tells us that there will be a day in which all the dead will be raised up to be judged (Jn. 5:28-29). This theme is repeated in Rev. 20:12-15. All will live on either in heaven or in eternal punishment (Matt. 25:46).

Death is only the beginning for us all. If we die "in the Lord" death is a blessed event (Rev. 14:13). Death is not an escape but is instead the sealing of our fates if we are unprepared (Heb. 9:27). Are you ready for death?

## Hypocrites

Lindell Doty

Hypocrites are pretenders. They are not what they seem. Jesus said hypocrites were like some cups, clean on the outside, but dirty on the inside. They are painted tombs, pretty on the outside, but full of dead men's bones.

Jesus was rough on the hypocrites, calling them blind guides and serpents!

I do not suppose anybody likes a hypocrite no matter what his field. We do not like hypocritical politicians, entertainers, neighbors, or community or club leaders.

I suppose those who receive the most attention, and abuse, are the religious hypocrites. Now, do not get me wrong, I am not for, or in favor of, religious hypocrites, but I sure believe they get more attention than they deserve!

Some outside the church use "hypocrites in the church" as the reason for not coming to worship, or becoming Christians.

Unfaithful members use "hypocrites in the church," as the "reason" to not worship the Lord anymore.

Those engaged in sinful activities complain about the "hypocrites in the church do what I'm doing or just as bad, so I'm going to continue to do what I'm doing!" As if that would justify their sinning!

Those poor old hypocrites get it from all directions, don't they?

Should hypocrites repent and stop being hypocrites? Absolutely! But, you know what? Most of the time those referred to as hypocrites are trying to do better, to change or get the strength to do so. They are not really hypocrites, but weak sinful Christians who recognize their need and do not try to justify themselves.

It makes me wonder just who the hypocrites are; just who is pretending? Just who is trying to fool whom?

What we all need to do is examine ourselves and seek to draw closer to God, and not allow anyone or anything to keep us from being right with God. May be the old saying is true, "If a hypocrite stands between you and the Lord, he is closer to the Lord than you are!"

# The Importance of Correct Bible Interpretation

Gary C. Hampton

Untold numbers of people have tried to explain a Bible passage in a simple manner only to be told, "That's just your interpretation." Such a statement implies we cannot and really should not try to understand the Bible. People who say such things would have us to believe we need only apply the Bible to our own lives as we see fit and not really worry about what God meant since he meant something different for each man. We believe the Bible can be understood alike by all and, in fact, must be. A proper interpretation of the Bible is vital to our salvation.

Ezra set his heart on seeking the law of the Lord, doing it and teaching those of Israel to do the same. (Ezra 7:10.) Some things remain hidden, or secret (Deuteronomy 29:29), but those things which are revealed are uncovered so that man can do God's will. Scripture is not the product of man's imagination but is God's spoken word as revealed by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17.) To understand this revealed will, man must study. (Nehemiah 8:1-8; 2 Timothy 2:15.) We should especially notice the careful, respectful attention given to the study of God's word during Nehemiah's and Ezra's day, David describes, in Psalm 1:1-2, the blessed man as one who meditated on the law of God day and night.

The importance of knowing and obeying God's will is vividly portrayed in Abraham's conversation with the rich man in Luke 16. After realizing there was nothing that could be done to ease his own torment, the rich man asked that Lazarus be sent back to earth to warn his five brothers lest they join him in torments. "Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

The rich man evidently did not think they would pay attention to the written word, but did think they would heed the words of one returned from the dead. Abraham said, "If they

hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." (Luke 16:19-31.) Friends, we must learn to get out of a passage all that God put into it so that we do not join the rich man in eternal suffering. God only speaks to us through his word.

A proper interpretation of the Bible could heal many of the divisions in the religious world. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. They tried to place Jesus on the horns of a dilemma by telling of a woman who had married a man and then each of his six brethren, after her previous husband died. They asked Jesus whose wife she would be after the resurrection. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." (Matthew 22:23-29). The ridiculous nature of their question would have been obvious to them had they been better Bible students.

Of course, a proper understanding of the Bible is absolutely necessary for my salvation. Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6). Faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Romans 10:17). It is the truth that must be known if a man would be set free. (John 8:32). That truth is found in God's word. (John 17:17). Writers like John wrote that we might know we have eternal life and Peter assured his readers that if they developed the virtues he had listed they would never fall. (1 John 5:13; 2 Peter 1:10). Plainly, we need to learn how to better understand God's word.

## The Church of Christ

Rod Rutherford

The church of Christ is not a denomination founded by man nor a part of any religious organization founded by man. It originated in Heaven in the mind of God and was set up on earth in the city of Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lord (Eph. 3:8-11; Acts 2). Instead of working with denominations, members of the church

of Christ plead that all believers in Jesus Christ heed His prayer for unity and become one in His blood-bought body, the church (Jn. 17:20-21; Eph. 4:4-6; Acts 20:28).

The foundation of the church of Christ is Jesus Himself. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). A building is only as strong as its foundation. The same is true of a church. If a church is built upon a man or a human creed, it will fall. Only Jesus Christ has a right to build a church for He alone is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:13-19).

The belief or creed of the church of Christ is based upon the great truth that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Just before Jesus returned to Heaven, He commanded His apostles to "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Apostles and evangelists of the first century, under the direction of the Holy Ghost, wrote the teachings of Jesus. This we have in the New Testament. We have no other law, guide, or standard of authority. This is truly a creed that needs no revision. It is perfectly suited to the changing conditions of man in all countries, cultures, and climates of the world in all the centuries until Jesus comes again!

The designation used by the church of Christ are only those which are found in the New Testament for the church and its members. In Acts 11:26 we read that the "disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." Members of the church honor Christ by wearing this divinely given name. In Romans 16:16 we read : "The churches of Christ salute you." Christ said, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). The name "church of Christ" simply means that the church belongs to Christ for He is its purchaser and builder. Salvation is found only in the name of Christ (Acts 4:11-12).

The worship of the church of Christ is plainly given in the New Testament. Jesus said: "God is a Spirit : and they that



worship Him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). The day Christians worship is Sunday, the first day of the week, the "Lord's Day" (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10). The acts of worship which are specified by God are : singing, preaching, praying, giving and the Lord's Supper (Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:1; 2; Acts 20:7; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Cor. 16: 1-2).

The music of the church of Christ is singing. This is the only kind of music which is authorized by God in His word for the worship of His church (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). Singing is commanded of all Christians, not just a favored few. Choirs, quartets, solos, and choral groups are not mentioned in the New Testament. There is no authority for such! Instruments of music such as pianos, organs, drums, guitars, etc., are not mentioned in the New Testament either. To use such is to go beyond what God has written. It is sinful! (2 Jn. 9-11; Rev. 22:18, 19).

The finances of the church of Christ are free-will offerings of the members as God has prospered them. They are given upon the first day of the week when the Christians meet to worship. (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7). They are to be used for the work of the church in preaching the gospel of Christ and helping the needy (Mk. 16:15; 2 Tim. 2:2; Gal. 6:10). Other means of raising money for the work of the church such as sales, auctions, suppers, festivals, taxes, and tithes are not commanded in the New Testament. Therefore, they are done without the authority of Christ.

The membership of the church of Christ is made up of all those who hear the gospel of Christ; believe in Jesus Christ, God's Son; repent of all their past sins; confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; and are baptized (buried) in water for the remission of sins (Rom. 10:17; Jn. 8:24; Acts 17:30, 31; Acts 8: 37; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:4). Members who remain faithful unto death will receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10; Gal. 6:7-9).

The Bible speaks of but one church, the church of Christ (Eph. 4:4; Col. 1:18). Christ has promised to save His church at the last day (Eph. 5:2). No salvation is promised to those out of Christ but instead they "shall be punished with everlasting

destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Why not become a member of the church of Christ today that the hope of eternal life may be yours?

## The Holy Spirit Baptism

John Waddey

Can one receive Holy Spirit Baptism today? Most Holiness groups say, yes. What does the Bible say?

1. Only two cases of Holy Spirit Baptism are recorded in the Bible.
  - a. The Apostles received it on Pentecost, Acts 2:1-4. This enabled them to speak in foreign languages they had not studied, Acts 2:4. It gave them power and authority to speak on Jesus' behalf, Acts 1:8. They could perform miracles to confirm their testimony, Mark 16:17-20.
  - b. Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit Baptism, Acts 10:44-48. This was an unusual demonstration. It was to convince the believing Jews that God would accept Gentiles just as He had them. When Peter related this event he said, "the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning" Acts 11:15. This indicated it was a unique happening not common to general conversions.
2. Holy Spirit Baptism is a fulfilment of promise, Acts 1:8. The apostles and their chosen helpers were empowered to reveal and confirm God's word. God's acceptance of the Gentiles was demonstrated. Thus Paul wrote in 63 A.D., "there is ONE baptism," Eph. 4:5, This was a burial (Rom. 6:4) in water (John 3:23). Jesus commands this in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Matt.

28:19. God says there is ONE baptism. Holy Spirit baptism would make two. God is right, man's teaching is wrong. If one claims he has Holy Spirit Baptism, he should speak in unstudied foreign languages. He should be able to raise the dead, heal the sick, take up serpents and drink deadly poison, Mark 16:17-18. Failure to do this is sure proof one has not received Holy Spirit Baptism.

A careful study of the New Testament will convince you that modern day demonstrations of "Spirit Baptism" are not at all the Biblical ones. There was no shouting, cataleptic fits, jabbering and general confusion such as is connected with it today, I Cor. 14:33.

Believe in Christ and be baptized in water and you shall be saved, Mark 16:16. Do not look for a Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

## Things We Must Not Take

Lindell Mitchell

"Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15). This basic commandment is not only an essential element of the Christian Ethic; it is a necessary part of any agreement to live together. Without strict obedience of this principle, civilized society becomes impossible.

Jewish law not only condemned stealing, but much was said about the penalty for it; restitution was always demanded. The Law of Moses was just as eager to see that the victim was compensated as it was to see that the criminal was punished.

If a sheep or an ox was stolen, butchered, and the meat sold; the thief had to repay with five oxen or four sheep. If he was unable to do so, the thief himself was to be sold to pay the debt. If the animal could be recovered alive, the thief had to repay double (Exodus 22:1-4). If a thing was taken fraudulently it had to be repaid in full plus one-fifth of its value (Numbers 5:7). The Greeks and Romans exacted the death penalty for common forms of stealing.

If the principle of restitution were made a vital part of our penal code a reduction in crime would likely be the result. At the very least the criminal would pay for his offense and not the taxpayer. If thieves were required to repay their victims fourfold, instead of lounging around to the Jail, we would have a credible deterrent to crime.

Everyone agrees that stealing is wrong. Most of you are not going to steal money, or burgle a store, or rob a bank. There are forms of stealing, however, which are considered clever by many people.

There are people who feel that it is smart to withhold taxes, but God considers it thievery (Matthew 22:17-21). There is stealing in the supermarket, where goods are openly displayed. Here, otherwise respectable people, who are by no means poor, are guilty of shoplifting. Other individuals write checks for goods knowing they do not have funds to cover the purchase. This is stealing. Pilfering at work is a major expense to businessmen. It seems that large numbers of workers think it is alright to rob the boss, but God doesn't think so.

Closely related to the problem of pilfering at work is the practice of stealing time. When we enter a job we agree to provide so much work for so much money. To be idle when we should be working is to steal time for which we have been paid. A great many industrial problems would be solved if employer and employee alike kept the bargain which they had made with one another.

One may also steal another's good name by repeating reckless gossip. Three things never return: the spent arrow, the missed opportunity and the spoken word. There is no more serious theft than to steal a man's good name.

Perhaps you regarded the commandment which forbids stealing as having no relevance to us in our respectability. Now maybe we can see that it applies to us too.