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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

"Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven"

The greatest desire of almost every human being, irrespective of caste, colour, religion or nationality, has always been to achieve eternal life in God's heaven. Every religious sect or denomination that exists today on earth, exists only on this basis. Various religious ceremonies and acts are performed the world over in different ways in view of this fact alone. In many countries obituaries are published, which read, "so and so has achieved the heavenly abode." With the desire of going to heaven, people make pilgrimages of so-called "Holy Places," they do penance, inflict punishment on their bodies, and offer sacrifices and offerings. The story is told of a rich young man who came one day to Christ with the question: "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have the eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16). Of course, he too, like others, was desirous of inheriting the eternal life of heaven.

However, in the passage cited above from Matthew 7:21, Christ, the Son of God, who lived in heaven, and came down upon

earth to save man from sin and thus to make him worthy of heaven, before returning back to heaven, declared, that not everyone who says Lord, Lord, or does various things, even in His name, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who Do the will of the heavenly Father. In replying to his disciples' question: "Lord, are there few who are saved?" Christ taught, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able." (Luke 13:24). Again, at Matthew 7:13 & 14, Christ taught, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Heaven is the place where God is, and where the redeemed shall ultimately be. It is that spiritual place from where Christ had descended (John 3:13) and where He ascended again (Acts 1:11). It is the eternal spiritual realm. The Bible also describes heaven as the perfect place for the perfect people, as it says, "But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." (Revelation 21:27). The Lamb of God was the Christ, who had come on earth to take away the sin of the world. (John 1:29). To the redeemed of God, the Bible says, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last time for you." (1 Peter 1:18-20). Lambs were largely offered in sacrifices even before the promulgation of the Old Testament law of Moses. But with the Mosaic law coming into effect offering of lambs' sacrifices had become a regular feature on different occasions. Too, in every case the lamb of sacrifice had to be without blemish. All this definitely points to Christ. He resembled a lamb in His spotless purity. He was like a lamb also in His gentleness and in His submission to unmerited suffering without murmur or complaint. According to Isaiah 53:7, "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth." He, like a lamb, was sacrificed on the cross for the guilt not his own. Hence He is called the lamb of God.

There is only one thing that hinders or prevent a person from entering God's kingdom of heaven—and that one thing is: sin. Because of sin Adam and Eve were driven out of the presence of God, hence, they were pronounced, "dead." (Genesis 3). The Bible also says, "for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). If there were no sin, there was no need for the Word of God to assume flesh and come on earth in the likeness of sinful man; and too, the Bible would not have said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16).

To redeem man from sin and its consequences, God the righteous and the sinless one, had to pay a great price for man. He gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins; and shed His precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. But when or at what point is a person redeemed? When he does the will of the Father in heaven. The will of the Father in heaven is, that every person on earth must believe in Christ that He is the Son of God, who died as the lamb of God for sins of the world. (John 3:16). He commands that people every where must repent of sin and everyone must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30, 31). His will is that His redeemed people should follow the steps of His Son Christ (1 Peter 2:21), and remain faithful to Him until death. (Revelation 2:10).

But who are those, who say, Lord; Lord, to Christ, and therefore shall not enter the kingdom of heaven? Pointing toward them said Christ, "But why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). How sad it is that there are millions of people on this earth, who believe in Christ, call Him Lord, and pray in His name, yet they do not do what he has said in His book. They want to be saved from their sins by some mystical experience or by faith alone; they want to be members of denominational sectarian religious bodies of which the Bible says nothing; they worship God in ways the Lord has not authorized in His Will Book; They want to be called by names, terms and titles the Bible gives no sanction; and they want to observe religious days to honor the Lord which He has not commanded.

In view of there things, how true and precise sound the words of the Lord, as He said, "For wide is the gate and broad is

the way that leads to destruction, and there are MANY who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are FEW who find it." (Matthew 7:13,14). Who says, the majority is always right?

Answering A False Teacher

J.C. CHOATE

Recently I saw a little booklet written by a denominational preacher here in India. His main task was to attack the Church of Christ. It was obvious that he knew little about what the Bible teaches about the church and numerous other subjects. The sad part is that this man is an enemy of the Lord's church, and therefore an enemy of the Lord Himself. When Christ appeared to Saul, he asked, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). Actually, Saul was persecuting the church, but in doing that, he was also opposing the Lord Himself. This shows how close Christ is to His church. You cannot oppose one without opposing the other.

As I read this man's false charges, I couldn't help but think that those who would read his booklet, not knowing fully what the Bible teaches themselves concerning these matters, will no doubt praise this man for his writings; but in doing so they too are opposing the Lord as they oppose His church and His teachings.

The writer referred again and again to "what the church of Christ teaches." He doesn't understand that the church has no doctrine! The Lord's church is made up of human beings who have obeyed the gospel; the Lord Himself has added them to His church. (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:47). Therefore whatever "the church teaches" originated with the Lord, not with the church. We speak only as the Bible speaks and we remain silent where the Bible is silent. The church, itself, does not have "teachings" of its own.

Another thing that this gentleman discussed at length was baptism. He quoted Ephesians 2:8,9 which says we are saved by grace through faith, and not by works, lest any man should boast. He seems to think that if one is baptized, and expects the Lord to save as a result, he is trying to be saved by works and to

boast about it. My, how he has misapplied this passage of scripture. God does save us by his grace (His part) through faith (man's part). God commands and we obey. Christ said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). The Lord nowhere says that baptism *only* saves, and neither does He say anywhere that we are saved by faith *only*. When we comply with the Lord's will, which includes faith in God, repentance of one's sins, confession of Christ as the Son of God, and baptism for the remission of sins then the Lord saves us. Even after we do all of that, salvation is still by grace, with nothing for us to boast about. But you can be sure that we cannot be saved by God's grace if we refuse to obey His commands. God cannot save people in disobedience.

Our friend also says that we of the church of Christ will take those who have been baptized in other churches and re-baptize them, but the Bible says there is only one baptism. The Bible does teach that there is one baptism. We agree fully. The point is that if one hasn't been baptized scripturally, he has not been *baptized* at all, regardless of how many times he may have been *immersed*. So it is impossible for one to be "re-baptized." There is no such thing as re-baptism taught in the scriptures. If one has been scripturally baptized, he cannot be scripturally baptized again. But if one has been immersed in water for the wrong purpose, he needs to be baptized properly, according to the teaching of the Lord's word. Scriptural baptism is based on the fact that one believes in Christ, has repented of his sins, has confessed that Christ is the Son of God, and then he is immersed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of his sins—not as a testimony of having been saved already before baptism. (Hebrews 11:6; Luke 13:3; Romans 10:10; Acts 2:38). Scriptural baptism is a burial in water (Colossians 2:12; Acts 8), it puts one into Christ (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27), and it puts one into the church. (I Corinthians 12:13). Those who are scripturally baptized are saved by the Lord at that point (Mark 16:16) and he adds them to his church. (Acts 2:47). Since it is impossible for us to be saved outside of Christ, and it is through baptism that we put on Christ (Galatians 3:26,27), then no one is saved *before* his baptism. Furthermore, if one is in a denominational church, this indicates that he is not saved, since Christ adds the saved to his church, but never to a

denominational church.

Our friend also teaches error on the subject of the kingdom, not realizing that it is another word for the church (Matthew 16:18,19; Hebrews 12:28)—both are the same organisation. This kingdom, or church, is in the world today and on the Lord's return it will be delivered up to God. (1 Corinthians 15:24). The scriptures nowhere teach premillinealism or that the Lord will return and set up His kingdom and it will reign supreme on the earth for one thousand years. How can Christ be "King of kings" if he has no kingdom yet?

The writer also said a lot about the name of the church. He doesn't like the idea of us calling ourselves the church of Christ. He admits that on one occasion Paul spoke of the churches of Christ (Romans 16:16), but he says that Paul wrote more often to the church of God. Doesn't our friend realize that what belongs to Christ belongs to God or what belongs to God belongs to Christ? Furthermore, the Bible speaks of the church as the body of Christ, the house of God, the church of the Firstborn, etc., but no where does the Bible mention the name of our friend's church and all of the other man-made names in the denominational world. Yes, the Bible speaks of "the church at Corinth," "the church at Ephesus," and so on, but *which* church was at Corinth, Ephesus, etc.? It was the Lord's church, of course. Why would anyone want to be a member of a church which doesn't even wear the Lord's name?

Well, the fact is, in this little pamphlet our friend has taught enough error that it would take hundreds of pages to cover completely. I doubt very seriously if anything said might help this man to ever come to a knowledge of the truth. When one has spent his life teaching error, he is not likely to change his mind. Rather, he is set in his ways and will no doubt go on teaching his error and deceiving the hearts of his hearers. (Romans 16:17,18).

What I have written has not been for him but for the benefit of you who still have an open mind and are willing to go to the Scripture to see what it teaches on these matters. Forget about what this man teaches and ignore what I have said, if you wish, but please read and study the Scripture with an open mind. If you will, you can understand it, believe it, and obey it. In so doing, the Lord will save you and add you to His church. You

don't have to be a member of my church, or any man's church. You can simply be a member of Christ's church, the one that belongs to Him, and the one which wears His name. You can also be just a Christian, you can worship and serve the Lord, and one day you can go to heaven. How simple and easy, when we are willing to follow the teaching of the Lord's word! Try it and see for yourself. It works! It really does.

A Sad And Tragic Condition

YARBROUGH LEIGH

Tragedy is somewhat commonplace in the world. If it happens to us, or to someone occupying a vital place in our life, it tends to blot from our view whatever else of good there might be, learning us to magnify our suffering. But, there is a kind of tragedy that is exceedingly commonplace, and, as a rule, it dwells in our midst almost, if not altogether, unnoticed. And this is true in spite of the fact that this tragedy is so devastating and, often, is so irremediable as to make any and all other tragedies to be insignificantly by comparison.

Of what kind of tragedy do I write? Listen to an inspired account of it as written by the prophet Isaiah some 2,700+ years ago:

"Also, I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed" (Isaiah 6:8-10).

There it is: it is the tragedy of developing a mind-set—an attitude and disposition of mind and heart which makes it impossible to acknowledge any truth against which we hold deep prejudice, or which would cost us dearly in terms of our past commitments, beliefs, and actions; or which would cut painfully across what we want to believe to be the truth.

This prophecy was dramatically fulfilled in the Jewish people in the days of Christ's earthly ministry. In Matthew 13:14-15, following the parable of The Sower, when his disciples asked why he spoke to the people in parables, he quoted this prophecy as having been fulfilled in that generation, thus making it necessary to "help" and to "illustrate" the truth by simple parables so that, if possible, they might see the truth of the gospel (parallel accounts in Mark 4:12 and Luke 8:10). Again, as Jesus taught his Jewish brethren and saw their unbelief, in spite of his many miracles done before them, he cited Isaiah's description of their tragic condition (John 12:40). While imprisoned in Rome, the apostle Paul talked with some of the Jewish leaders there, reminding them of this same prophecy, and urging them not to fall into that tragic disposition and be irrevocably lost through unbelief (Acts 28:27-28). Again, Paul used that prophecy to explain the unbelief of the Jews of his day (Romans 11:8).

What a great tragedy is herein described? It is one that seems not to inflict any physical evil, but instead, dulls the mind and heart so as to destroy the love of truth. It crushes truth, and in its place substitutes the imaginations of the hearts of men; as Isaiah prophesied in another place: "forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men" (Isaiah 29:13). In fact, our Lord Christ applied this last prophesy to the Jews of his day (see Matthew 15:7-9)—"Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men."

The wise writer of Proverbs wrote, "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Proverbs 23:23). What a precious commodity is truth! There is no substitute for it, no matter in what field of activity it is considered. And it is this unique characteristic of truth that makes the impossibility of discerning it to be such a tragedy! how deadly is the disease which masks the truth and hides it from our eyes and ears and minds and hearts so that we can neither see nor hear nor understand it!

It is the truth of God's word (John 17:17) which "sanctifies" men, and which "sets men free" (John 8:31-32). It is that word,

and that word alone, of which our Lord spoke, saying: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Therefore, how tragic it is when I have so dulled my hearing and perception so as to be incapable of seeing or hearing or perceiving and understanding the truth because of the hardness and blindness of my own heart (see Ephesians 4:17-19)!

Gentle reader, is your heart prepared to receive the word of God as it is, indeed, the word of God and not of men? (I Thessalonians 2:13)! This cannot be until you have acknowledged in your conscience the absolute authority of that word, above and beyond the power and authority of any other word known to man! Ezra "had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7:10). Ezra had repented of all rebellion against God and of all resistance to his will, He had prepared his heart to seek, that is, to search and find out and to understand and to apply the will of God: not that he might debate it, or talk about it learnedly, or argumentatively; but that he might do it, and teach in Israel statutes and judgments!

Hear me, dear reader: you and I are not prepared in heart to see, or to hear, or to understand God's will until we are ready and anxious to seek the will of the Lord, that we might do it, and show it to others, both by precept and example. This is true, because otherwise (whether I admit it or not) I really do not want to know the truth! In his conversation with Nicodemus, our Lord, having said to him that those who refuse belief in him are "condemned already;" went on to say, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:19-21).

What a tragic illness this is that will, unless cured, forever bar me from saving faith in the Lord of grace and mercy and truth! And, the tragedy of this illness is compounded by the fact that it is self induced! Let me ponder this truth prayerfully, and search my heart to know my own response to God's word! His mercy and grace are mine if I humbly receive his word in

obedient faith, subjecting my will to his every command. But, if I rebel and harden my heart to the truth, my condemnation is sure and certain, by my own hand!

The Christian's Duty Toward The Church

W.A. HOLLEY

The word DUTY is an important word. Solomon wrote of "the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Jesus said, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). In Romans 1:14, Paul writes of being a "debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise."

A "debtor" is a person who owes a debt. Are we willing and ready to pay our debts? As a child of God, you owe a debt which must be paid, if you wish to be saved eternally. What debt do we owe?

Our Duty In General

(1) We should be boosters of the church . . . not knockers; builders, not wreckers; fault fixers, not faultfinders (Ephesians 4:1-6).

(2) All Christians should speak with the same voice, promising no division, no discord; but always urging peace and harmony among all members of the church (I Peter 3:1-12). A busybody or a tattler can do untold harm (Exodus 23:1-2; II Thessalonians 3:11; I Peter 4:15).

(3) Christian conduct is very important. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). "But the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18). All Christians should endeavor to make the church the most beautiful institution possible (Romans 2:24; Titus 2:5; Philippians 1:27).

Out Duty In Particular

Christian, do your best to respect and obey the elders (Hebrews 13:7, 17; Acts 20:17, 18). Help the deacons accomplish their God-given duties. Do your best to support the preachers, and all teachers as they seek to spread the word (Mark 16:15-16; Romans 1:16). Do not develop a rebellious attitude, but ever be willing to cooperate in all good works (I Corinthians 3:9; II Corinthians 6:1-8).

Duty Demands

The proper use of our time, talent, and money. How much time do you give to the support of the church? Thirty minutes on Sunday? An hour per week? An hour per month? Or perhaps, no time at all? How do you use your talents? For the Lord? or, against him? What about the use of your money? (Ephesians 5:16; Matthew 25:14-30; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Hebrews 10:24-25).

We are obligated to help teach and defend the truth of God (Jude 3; I Timothy 3:14-15; Philippians 1:17). If members of the Lord's church refuse to support the work of the Lord, who will support it? If we wish for the church to cease to exist, just sit back and do nothing. "If every member of the church were just like me, what kind of a church would this church be?" (Answer honestly)!

What are you worth to the church? Are you a "profitable," or an "unprofitable," member? (Matthew 25:14-30).

Individual Duty

Listen to this statement: About all the world knows of the church is what it sees in YOU! What does the world see in you? Does it see an honest, dependable, courteous person, who tries to be helpful to others? Or, does it see a person who stands aloof, refusing to become involved in the church and its activities? Usually, such members make very good critics; but, somehow they cannot seem to see themselves. Some church members have walked so as to become enemies of the cross of Christ: "Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk, even as ye have us for an example. For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that

they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Philippians 3:17-19, AVS). Those church members who drink, commit adultery, and who otherwise set bad examples, bring shame and reproach upon that church for which Jesus Christ died (Ephesians 5:22-32).

Each individual member of the church should be a good example of what Christianity truly is: Paul instructed Timothy to be an example of the believers in several areas: We shall note I Timothy

(1) Be an example in word, or speech. Would Jesus use such speech?

(2) Be an example in conversation, or conduct. Would Jesus live as you live?

(3) Be an example in charity, or love. Jesus loved his enemies; could you?

(4) Be an example in spirit, or attitude (or disposition) (Philippians 2:1-5). All selfish ambition and vain conceit must be restrained. To have "the mind of Christ" is to have that inner disposition toward one another which characterized Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:1-5).

(5) Be an example in faith. Is your faith weak? or, strong? (Hebrews 11:1, 3, 6).

(6) Ever strive to be an example in purity—of mind, heart, and soul (Matthew 5:8; I Timothy 5:22).

Christian Friend, will you truly commit yourself to the will and way of the Lord?

Faith

HILTON ROYSTER

Among the "things that become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1), the subject of FAITH demands attention. In the study of this important subject we should find the answer to three questions, namely: (1) What is FAITH? "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:6 A.V.). "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of

things not seen" (A.S.V.). "Now faith is confidence of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen" (Living Oracles). The latter is clear: faith is confidence as to the future, including blessings in this life, and also the hope of heaven as an everlasting home. It is also conviction regarding these, coupled with a conviction regarding the truthfulness of testimony concerning the past—including the creation of the world, and of man. A beautiful expression of faith is in Romans 4:20-21. It is stated regarding Abraham: "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able to perform." (2) How is faith obtained? We request that you read and consider the first ten verses of Hebrews 11, and observe how Abraham and Noah received their faith. God told them what to do, and what he would do, and they believed him. Then turn to Romans 10:17, and read the answer to our question in plain words: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." People too often say, "I BELIEVE," when they should say, "It is my OPINION," in religious matters. If God has not spoken in the Bible concerning a subject, it is not a subject of FAITH.

(3) How do we profit by faith? It is doubtful that anyone except an atheist, an infidel, or a heathen would deny that people who are saved are saved by faith. That, however, is a far different thing to being saved by faith ONLY. The latter is a popular doctrine; yet the Bible plainly states exactly the opposite: "So then, we see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). Study again the great faith chapter (Hebrews 11) and see if you can determine how the men of old profited by faith. It is clearly set forth that they did so by exercising their faith by obedience. "By faith Abraham . . . obeyed," "By faith Abel offered . . ." "By faith Noah . . . prepared an ark . . ."; and other statements prove that the faith that saves is the faith that obeys. We do not have the same commands in this (the Christian) age; but the principle of faith and obedience is the same. Now Jesus says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). one who stops short of baptism now does not have the faith that saves from past sins; and one who refuses to obey commands of God addressed to Christians, does not have the faith that saves eternally. "Be thou faithful

unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

The Two Talent Man

DAVID COURINGTON

The parable of the talents is found in Matthew 25:14-30. Many lessons have been taught from this pointed parable. Usually the one talent man is emphasized. He was given less than the other stewards, and he failed to use the little that he had. The five talent man was given the most, and he used it to make the most. However it is the two talent man that we will consider here.

First, note that he pleased his Lord just as much as the five talent man. The Lord told him the same thing that he did the five talent man: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (verse 23). This should be comforting to those of us who do not have the ability, means, or money that others do. One can please God just as much as if he had more, by using what he has. One does not have to be the biggest, or best, to please God. Our society puts great emphasis on being "Number One," yet God was in this case just as pleased with "Number Two"—because he used what he had to the best of his ability.

Also, the two talent man could have done just what the one talent man did. There were some who had more than he did. There probably was no way that he could have gained as much as the five talent man, no matter how hard he tried. He could have said, "I cannot, because there are others who can do so much better." It may be that one elder can never, no matter how hard he tries, do as much as another elder. This does not mean that he should not be an elder, nor that he must be ashamed. The same can be said of teachers, song leaders, parents, Bible students, personal workers, etc. One must do what he can rather than bemoan what he cannot do. Paul warned against measuring oneself against others and commending oneself because he does more than someone else (II Corinthians 10:12). God does

not judge us according to what others do, but rather according to what we do with what he has given us. Runners often talk about running their "personal best" time in a race. Christians would do well to strive for their "personal best," and not become discouraged and quit because they do not do as well as others.

On the other side of the coin, the two talent man did not look at the one talent man and say, "I already have twice as much as he does; so I will do nothing." One must exercise caution lest he become self-satisfied with little, and not try to do more and/or better. The church at Laodicea made God sick because they said. "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). The child of God has not learned enough, worked enough or become good enough. Likewise the church must never become self-satisfied. Not until the whole world is converted to Christ, will our work be done.

Two talent folks must be diligent that they not lose their reward.

Do It Yourself

BOB PLUNKET

In 1865 in Yorkshire, England, Sabine Baring Gould, who was a minister in a 'Christian school,' needed a song for a religious festival that the school could march to. He looked everywhere to find a suitable hymn. There was none available. he sat up all night to compose a hymn for the occasion. As day began to break he had written the great hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers." It is a moving hymn. The first verse says:

Onward Christian soldiers marching as to war
With the cross of Jesus going on before.
Christ the royal Master leads against the foe.
Forward into battle see his banner go.

The children marched proudly in their festival—and thousands of Christians have "marched" since then to this great

hymn. We need this man's great spirit today. Many complain that there are no songs to sing, and no good books to read, and no poems to inspire. Then write one! Many would have said, "well, we don't have a song for our festival this year, so we won't march." Our Father was the master of all creation, and we are made in his image. Why should not we be creative? Interdependence can be a good thing, but we need some individuality as well. Many many people today are becoming mentally paralyzed. We let others think for us, and write for us, and sing for us. Not all the great songs, nor all the great books, nor all the great sermons have yet been written!

Sabine found (along with many others) that necessity is the 'mother' of discovery and invention. How many have said, "I am not pleased with my country?" Then make it better. Still others say, "I am not pleased with my community." Then make it better. How many great songs, and great books, and great poems have been buried in a cemetery because he or she never tried. I admire our sister Beulah Hand who made the world a little richer by writing some beautiful hymns herself. We must not lose confidence in our individual abilities. So you don't know Sabine Gould who lived over a hundred years ago, but you have sung his song and that is what counts. Jesus admired and praised creativity. He said, "Well done, good and faithful servant" to the men who had used their talents. To the man who had buried his talent, he said, "You wicked and lazy servant . . . you should have invested my money . . . Take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents" (Matthew 25). If what you see and what you hear is not suitable, then do it yourself!

Does He Really Expect So Much?

DEAN FUGETT

After all, what did he do? He just died for us, that's all. So just go ahead and do as you please. Go ahead and hold malice in your heart! Go ahead and keep that chip on your shoulder! Go ahead and divide his church. Go ahead and be deceitful! Go ahead and forsake the assembling! Go ahead . . . GO AHEAD!

But remember, That was Jehovah's ONLY BEGOTTEN SON who died there on that cross. He cannot be expected to look so lightly on our infractions as we look upon them. He will not deal so lightly with our failure to follow that SON who died there for us.

How hard it is to get people to see that the Bible is not just so many suggestions that we may or may not follow, as suits our fancy. That is actually God's Word for us to follow, every precept, every principle!

Assurance

KEN TYLER

Paul said in II Corinthians 5:1, "For we KNOW that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Please notice the word 'know.'" Paul said we know if we die we are going to heaven. This is the kind of assurance God intends for every Christian to have.

Paul, while suffering in prison, put it this way in Philippians 1:21, 23, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." Paul in these statements recognizes the difference between living on earth and being in heaven. We should never forget that we are going to a far better place.

There is a very meaningful statement in Psalm 116:15. Listen carefully, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Do you mean that something as horrible as death can be "precious?" Yes, that is what the verse says. The Lord views death as "precious" when his saints die. Why? Because we have loved him and he has a special place prepared for us.

We all need the assurance of heaven to sustain us through the difficulties of life. David said in Psalm 27:13, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." The assurance of heaven is what kept David going. Life is tough, but if we have the assurance, that God is with us,

we are going to heaven, and it will make the difference.

Today, if you are not headed for heaven, you should take a sober look at your life. Can't you see that your life needs the assurance of heaven?

The Songs We Sing

CHARLES E. McDONALD

When you lift your voice in worship with song, what do you understand the words to be conveying? Singing in worship is not optional, for the Lord instructs: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;" (Ephesians 5:19). Through the inspired pen of the apostle Paul (Colossians 3:16) he further says: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." In I Corinthians 14:15 it is stated, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."

So singing in worship is not just a "filler," but is intended to have substance and to be a part of the instruction and exhortation so important to the spiritual health and well-being of each Christian.

Sometimes a song will take on renewed meaning when you know something of how and why it came to be written. I came upon the following little essay from the pen of Bob Hampton concerning that great hymn "Just As I Am." I share it with you here in hopes it will make the song mean even more to you in the future.

Back in 1822 Caesar Malan was visiting in the home of a friend in Brighton, England, one day he said to the daughter of his host, "I wish you were a Christian, Charlotte." This statement did not receive a very favourable response and so he dropped the subject. However, the next day she admitted to being disturbed by what he said, and told him she would like to be a Christian, but didn't know how. He explained to her, but noted that she thought her life must be cleaned up first, before

obeying. So, finally, he said, "Charlotte, Charlotte, you must give yourself to the Saviour just as you are! **JUST AS YOU ARE.**" Not long after, her response was forthcoming—and she wrote her famous hymn,

"Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to Thee.
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!"

Bob Hampton continued: "Each must come to grips with the fact that I cannot save myself (Acts 4:12). Saying we will not come to Jesus until we are good enough is like saying, "I'll go to school when I know enough." Jesus wants me to come just as I am! **JUST AS I AM!** It is his power that can make me what I ought to be; it is his blood that can cleanse my heart and make me free. With joy we give thanks "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

Courage

DEMAR ELAM

Courage is needed, if the church is to meet the challenges facing her in the latter years of the twentieth century. Peter informs Christians that they are to add to their faith virtue (II Peter 1:5). According to Barnes' Notes, the common meaning of the Greek word for virtue is: "manliness, courage, vigor, energy; and the sense is, that he wished them to evince whatever firmness of courage might be necessary in maintaining the principles of their religion, and in enduring the trials to which their faith might be subjected."

Don't you want to be tougher spiritually? Would you not like to be courageous for Christ? Paul, the aged servant of God, instructed the young evangelist Timothy to "preach the word" (II Timothy 4:2), "... to endure afflictions" (II Timothy 4:5), to "... endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Timothy 2:3), and to "flee also youthful lusts" (II Timothy 2:22). Timothy is being

called upon to live courageously, to stand up and be a hero!

How is courage developed? Mary Tyler Moore is quoted as saying, "Pain nourishes courage. You can't be brave if you've only had wonderful things happen to you." Courage is exemplified in the face of opposition, danger, and stress. Our courage is bolstered when we remember what Paul wrote to the Philippians. He said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). This passage calls for courageousness. Attitudes must often be changed, if the Christian life is to be lived courageously. Courage demands a mind-set that says, ". . . Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

One of the crying needs of our time, on the part of Christians, is courage! Courage is needed to avoid conformity with the masses of humanity today (Romans 12:2). Twentieth century Christians need courage like Noah, Joseph, Abraham, Daniel, Rahab, Gideon, Samson, David, Peter, Paul and James. Remember, the difference in their lives was courage!

An article on "Courage" in a 1976 "Gospel Advocate" had an excellent definition, as well as an illustration, of courage. Courage was defined as, "fighting with the handle after the sword has been broken." The illustration was about Napoleon's battle at Marengo. "After the battle of Marengo had been lost, Napoleon came to his drummer boy and said, "Beat a retreat!" The boy replied, 'Sir, I can beat a charge. My master taught me to beat a charge, but not a retreat. I do not know to beat a retreat. I can beat a charge that will wake up the dead. I beat the charge at Lodi and the Pyramids. Shall I beat a charge?' Napoleon was so impressed that he said, 'Beat a charge!' The boy beat a charge, which rallied a defeated army to renew the battle with such courage and determination that Marengo is numbered among the outstanding victories of the 'Little Corsican.'

Brethren, which of us will be courageous, and 'beat a charge' for the Lord's army in the closing years of the twentieth century? We shall not surrender to Satan, if we know only how to die for the Lord.

God's Abounding Grace

GEORGE W. DEHOFF

Paul stated an eternal principle in Ephesians 2:5 when he said, "By grace are ye saved." No person has ever been saved except by the grace of God, nor shall any person ever be saved except by grace. Ignorance abounds among the denominations about "Grace," and apparently some of "our" preachers know but little about what the Bible teaches regarding being saved by grace.

Reality of God's Grace

Peter refers to our Father as "the God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10). To the Corinthians Paul said, God is able "to make all grace abound toward you."

"Grace" means "favor," kindness, affection, pleasure, good will, love. We learned as children in Vacation Bible School that grace means "unmerited favor" though the word "unmerited" is rather gratuitous. Not one of us deserves the favor, grace, love, and kindness of God. If we got what we deserved, we would all be lost. When Adam and Eve sinned and were cast out of the Garden of Eden, God, by his grace, made it possible for them to be saved. He instituted a system of religion—"re-" meaning to do again, and '-ligio" meaning to tie or bind; hence religion means to bind us back to God, to restore what was lost.

John 1:17 tells us "The law given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Certainly there was "grace" and "truth" in the Old Testament. All that God did for his children was a matter of "grace" and every word he spoke was the "truth." "Grace" and "truth" existed from the beginning. They existed before Christ came on earth; but they did not exist in the quality and quantity that Christ brought. "Grace" and "truth" became available to man in Christ as they had never been available before. When our Lord spoke concerning John the Baptist he said that a greater man had never been born of woman, but that the least in the kingdom is greater. He certainly did not mean that those in the kingdom do greater works, or that they are more faithful, than John; but that we enjoy greater blessings and

privileges in Christ. In the same way, “grace” and “truth” existed before the coming of Christ—even from the beginning,—but not to the extent that they exist in Christ.

Why Teach on Grace?

We need teaching on the grace of God now as never before. Many people, including preachers, have been so influenced by denominational seminaries and denominational commentaries that they teach error on the grace of God. One has written a book in which he says, “We are not now under any kind of law. We are under grace.” Another said, “The church is not under any law at all.” Still another said, “Christians are not ruled by codes, rules, ‘church laws’ . . . there ain’t no such thing as ‘church laws, rules and regulations.” Another wrote a book, “Free in Christ,” in which he teaches that we do not have to obey any laws at all. Another says, “There are no steps into Christ.” Solomon must have been walking among these people when he wrote Song of Solomon 6:11 and stated that he has walked in the valley of “nuts.”

I grew up among the common people. Most had not been to high school and only a few had attended college; but they knew that God loves us, and they knew what to do to be saved. They had read: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15). They knew the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, between the law of Moses and the law of Christ. They read that we are saved by God, by Christ, by the Holy Spirit, by the word of God, by faith, by repentance, by confession, by baptism (I Peter 3:21). When they read that we are saved by about twenty different things, they believed all of it. They believed that God’s grace has appeared, teaching us what to do (Titus 2:11-12). They believed that all these things work in harmony, that they are all necessary. But, Presto! Along comes young preachers, telling us that we do not even know what the-grace of God means! One lady (the wife of an elder) told a preacher who questioned her “umbrella-of-grace” theory, that he needed to learn some lessons on the grace of God from Baptist preachers! (Someone needed to remind her that gospel preachers were preaching the truth on the grace of God sixteen hundred years—before any Baptist church

was started)!

When I was growing up I heard Leonard H. Fielder, Joe H. Blue, John L. Fry, W. Curtis Porter, G.C. Brewer, N.B. Hardeman, H. Leo Boles, J.D. Tant, C.R. Nichol, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Joe S. Warlick, B.C. Goodpasure, Gus Nichols and others preach. They had not graduated from denominational seminaries and did not have a wide acquaintance with all that the sectarian scholars had to say; but they knew the Bible! They quoted so much scripture that many thought they had the whole Bible memorized. They knew the grace of God, and they knew what men had to do to be saved. When I was five years old I was hearing some of these men say, "If it is in the Bible, it is the truth. If it is not in the Bible, it is false." I believed them then; I believe them now!

In every age and in every generation no one has pleased God without being under God's law. This was true during the patriarchial dispensation, during the Mosaic dispensation and during the Christian dispensation. Different people in different ages were told different things to do; but all had to do what God said for them to do.

Grace and Gospel

God's grace works through his gospel, through his word. Everything which the Bible says God's GRACE does for people on earth, it also says the GOSPEL does the same thing. We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:5); but we are saved by the gospel (I Corinthians 15:2). We stand in the grace of God; but we stand in the gospel (I Corinthians 15:1-2). In Galatians 1 Paul used the word "grace" and "gospel" interchangeably and synonymously. "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the GRACE of Christ unto another GOSPEL." Everything which grace does for us, the gospel does for us. That simply means that God's grace operates through his gospel, through his teaching, through his word. There is no truth which we know about the grace of God (or about anything else) unless we can read it in the written word of God. "These things are written that you might believe" (John 20:30-31). God's grace has given us the gospel plan of salvation; he has told us the steps to take to get into Christ.

Are We Under Any Law?

No one would contend that we are under the law of Moses, or any law which man has made; but we are under the law of Christ. It is amazing that anyone who even claims to preach the gospel would claim that we are not under the law which Christ died to establish!

When Paul stated that he became all things to all men "as without law," he promptly stated "(being not without law to God but under the law of Christ)" (I Corinthians 9:21).

Again he said, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). Would some of these "no-law" brethren today kindly explain this verse for me? I read it, and get the idea that we are under the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

And did not Paul say, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ?" (Galatians 6:2). Would some of these "no-law" brethren explain that to me?

And the whole book of Hebrews teaches that we are not under the law of Moses but the law of Christ. Try Hebrews 7:12, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." A change of what, Paul? Did you not know that some of our preachers have now learned that we are not under any law at all?

And try James 1:25: "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty . . ."

Yes, we are under the New Testament law, the law of Christ, the perfect law of liberty. To teach otherwise is to deny the word of God. Our Lord said, "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17).

Our pioneer preachers who preached hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized were preaching the "grace" of God. They knew the grace of God and did not need any denominational seminary to tell them what it is. "The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared . . . teaching us . . ." (Titus 2:11-12).