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"Be Not Deceived"

Time and time again in the New Testament, we read these words, "Be not deceived." That being true then it means that it is possible for us to be deceived. It also means that if we will take the necessary precautions that we do not have to be deceived. Surely no one would want to experience this kind of thing and that is why the Lord has seen fit to warn us concerning these matters.

To be deceived means that one has been lied to, misled, and brought to the point of accepting error as truth. Most people of the world fit into this category. They are often easily led since they want to believe what they are taught, they are able to have their way, and they take comfort in the fact that they are in the majority.

Some are deceived by others but many are self-deceived. The end results, however, is the same. All such people are lost. Not only are they lost but by their teaching and by their example they deceive others. Again, we can see why the scriptures warn us not to be deceived, that we should examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith, to take heed, to search the scriptures to learn the truth, and such like.

There are certain areas in particular that we want to give attention to at this time.

Be not deceived by time. Time is funny. It has a way 1. of getting away from us before we are aware of it. It is so easy to procrastinate or to put things off till tomorrow, but tomorrow never comes. Do you remember what King Agrippa told Paul after the gospel was preached to him? He said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26 28). The record says that when Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." (Acts 24:25). In both cases, neither Agrippa or Felix ever got around to obeying the Lord and therefore they died unprepared to meet God. Many make the same mistake today. Although they hear the truth of God, and know what they should do, and perhaps have the intention of obeying the Lord some day, but they let time slip by and before they know it, it is too late. How sad ! Please don't be deceived by thinking there is plenty of time. James says that we know not what shall be on the morrow. (James 4:13, 14). The Apostle Paul said, "Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2).

The Apostle Peter spoke of the time coming in which there would be "scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one things, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:3-9). Peter said there would be those who would argue that the world goes on as always and that they would use this to prove that the world would go on standing indefinitely. He then reminds them of how God had sent the flood on the wicked and that one day he will destroy the world with fire. Just because he hasn't that doesn't mean that he will not. Time means nothing to one who has always existed and who will always exist. The thing man needs to be doing then is to repent of his sins and obey the Lord that he might be prepared for that day. We would be wise then not to be deceived by time and thinking that things will go on forever as they are.

2. Be not deceived by the world. The world looks good. It appeals to the eye. It has riches to offer. There are pleasures to enjoy. This appeals to the majority. They go for these kind They are not aware of the fact that there is a price, a of things. tremendous price, to be paid when one goes after the things of the world. The other side of this should also be seen. The things of this world also bring heartaches and sorrows, tears, problems, troubles, diseases, broken homes, wars, death, and eternal destruction. Paul warned, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Galatians 6:7.8). So Paul is saying that we can take our pick. We are free to choose between the world and God. But if we do the things of the flesh or the world, such as smoking, drinking, being immoral, robbing, killing, and such like, we will have to reap the consequences. In all probability we will have to suffer for those things in this life, but for sure that kind of living will cause us to be eternally lost. It might appear to be a lot of fun to do all of those things, but in the end they will bring death. Don't be deceived into thinking that you can do those kind of things without having to suffer the consequences. On the other hand, when we obey God and put him first in our lives there are benefits to be reaped. There is salvation, a good life, God's blessings, contenment, the hope of eternal life, and that is just to name a few of the good things that will come to the righteous,

But going on, John said, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John 2:15-17). James said, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God." (James 4:4). Paul said, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived : neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9,10). Again, he says, "Be not deceived : evil communications corrupt good manners." (1 Corinthians 15:33). In all of these verses, and many others that could be given, we see how that one connot do the things of the world and become a member of the Lord's church. Next, one cannot engage in these things and remain a Christian. Some think this is possible, and even go along with the world on many things, but when you do that then you compromise and end up on the world's side. Remember the words of Christ, when he said, "No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24).

3. Be not deceived by false teachers. Christ warned the people of his day not to be deceived by false prophets. He went on to tell them that they could tell them by the kind of fruit that they produced. (Matthew 7:15-20). John said that many false prophets had gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1). Everything in the world then is being taught in the name of religion. If the Devil can't deceive us with the things of this world, then he seeks to lead us astray with false doctrines. Paul warned in Acts 20:28-31 that these false teachers will be from without and from within. Those from without represents those who are not members of the Lord's church. They work on the disgruntled, the weak, the new born Christian, and the one who is not well informed in the scriptures. They work on their sympathy, tell how much they love them, try to convince them by all of their good works, etc. But be not deceived. Look at their fruit. Paul said in Romans 16:17,18 that they cause divisions and that they serve not the Lord Jesus Christ. They are in churches that do not belong to the Lord, wear names that are man-made, worship in ways that are foreign to God's will, and preach another gospel.

In conclusion, lat me assure you that God has spoken, he has revealed his will fully to man, and it is the truth. (Hebrews 1:1,2; John 1:17; John 17:17). Furthermore, the Lord wants you to know his will and he wants you to obey him. (John 8:32; Revelation 22:14). What is left to say then? In the words of James, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1:22).

My friends, God will not deceive you or mislead you. It is Satan and his co-workers that will deceive you if you will allow them to. But you are the one that has the final say in the matter now. Should you not listen and go on and allow them to use you and misuse you then one day it will be the Lord who will have the final word and he will say to you, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:23). Again, we beg of you, be not deceived. Read and study God's word. Know the Lord's will and do what it says and be faithful to him unto death and heaven will be your home.



Why Study The Bible ?

The Bible is the book of the word of God, that is, it contains the things God wants for us to know. To know God's will for man we must study from the Bible. Sad to say, however, in many homes there maybe more than one copy of the Bible available but they are ignorant of its teaching, because they never read and study its contents. To them the book is holy, they want to place it on an "alter", they feel insulted if someone put it on the floor or under a chair, they even go to the extent of saying that one should not mark its pages with a pencil. They want to respect the book, paper and ink, but have no concern about what it teaches. While some may think that studying the Bible is the job of a preacher or a "Pastor". Others read it occasionally or habitually, just to satisfy themselves that they have read from the Holy Book. Often we have heard people say, "I read my Bible daily." Just as some would count the beads or offer flowers or money in a temple to do a "righteous deed" or for their own satisfaction, so many read the Bible only to justify themselves or to prove to themselves and to others that they have done a holy-There are some who would read from any where, some deed. from here and some from there, but never systematically with the context. Instead of getting any benefit from their study they get confused each time they read. In such a case their desire is not to know the will of God, in fact, but to just read the Bible. They would open the Bible at any place and whatever comes before their eyes they just read it. What if a student did the same thing with his school books? We cannot expect to learn any thing if we are not serious enough to study systematically.

The Bible contains sixtysix books, written by about forty different writers by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21). It has two divisions, the There are thirtynine Old Testament and the New Testament. books in the Old Testament and twentyseven books in the New Testament. For our help in Bible study each book has chapters and verses. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament books are divided into four subjects. The first five books of the Old Testament are called the books of the law; the law God gave through Moses to the children of Israel. Next twelve books are the books of history, and provide a detailed history of the children or Israel. Then there are five books of Poetry, consisting wise proverbs or sayings and songs in the praise of God. Last seventeen books of the Old Testament are the books of prophecy. Before the birth of Christ God sent many prophets to warn people to repent and follow God's will, and those prophets also foretold the birth of Christ. The New Testament division of books also has four parts. First four books of the New Testament are the books

of the Gospel, the gospel of Christ, these books also tell us about the birth, life, works, and the death and burial and the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Following the books of the gospel is the book of the history of the church of Christ. This book of the Acts of the Apostles is also known as the book of conversion. Because not only it gives the history of the church, how it was founded, and grew, but it also tells us how different people in various places became Christians. Then follows twentyone epistles written to Christians to exhort them how they should live Christian life. The last book of the New Testament, the book of Revelation of Jesus Christ, was written to the saints of the first century, A.D., who lived at a time when many of them were being killed and put in prisons and were being persecuted by Domitian, the Roman emperor, for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Although the message of this book was particularly directed to them at that time, but the promise of this book is for all Christians of all ages, "...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10).

At 2 Timothy 2:15 it is written, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth." One must learn to rightly divide the word of God. For instance, Hebrews 1:1, 2 states, "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son..." Now here are listed three dispensations, three different ages, in which God spoke to man. First he spoke unto the fathers, he spoke at that time directly to them. just as in the case of Adam, Noah and Abraham. But then at mount Sinai, through Moses he gave his written law, this is called the Mosaic age in which God's spoke to people through Moses and the prophets who appeared during that age. But this age ended when Jesus Christ, God's Son gave us his New Testament through his apostles. Just as in the Mosaic age those things were not applicable to people which God commanded the fathers in the Patriarchal age, so in the Christian age today, when God speaks to people through His New Testament, commandments of the Old Testament law of Moses are not applicable. The Bible tells us that the Old Covenant was destined to last until Christ should come and give us his new will for the Christian age in which we

live today. (See Galatians 3:19, 16). The first covenant or the Old Testament was completed at the death of Christ when he fulfilled it and "took it out of the way", replacing it with the second New Covenant, the New Testament. (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 9:15; Ephesians 2:14-16).

So when we study the Bible we need to remember in what age or dispensation God was speaking when he gave certain commandments. If we want to know what God expected from those who lived under the Patriarchal age, the first dispensation, then we must go to the book of Genesis where we can read about it, and very little is said in the Bible on this subject. But if we want to know what God expected from the people who lived in the second dispensation, the Mosaic age, then we must read from the books of the Old Testament, for it was the will of God for the people of that time. However, to know about the Christian age, to know about God's will for us today we must go to the books of the New Testament. If we want to know about Jesus Christ. about his birth, life, works, death and resurrection, then we must read from the books of the Gospel. If we want to know the facts about the church of Christ; if we want to know what man should do to be saved from sin, then we should read from the book of the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament. What kind of life God expect from a Christian is shown in the twentyone epistles of the New Testament. To obtain the knowledge of the word of God, to know His will for us we must study the Bible "rightly dividing the word of truth", and systematically. Α student in school or college cannot learn Maths or Science if he skipp around haphazardly from one page to another or from one subject to another. The same principle holds true in the Bible study.

"His Grace . . . Was Not In Vain"

Bob Duncan

In speaking of God's making him an apostle, Paul wrote: "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (I Corinthians 15:10).

In the sense that salvation is available to all under the terms of the New Testament of our Lord, "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." (Titus 2:11). It was by the grace of God that Jesus tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). And in the sense that most will not choose to obey the gospel that they might be saved, it may be said that the grace of God bestowed upon them is in vain.

To the Galatians, who were about to give up Christ and go back under the law of Moses, Paul wrote: "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain". (Galatians 4:11). All his labour among them would have been in vain—of no benefit to them—unless they maintained their faithfulness to Christ.

In II Corinthians 6:1, Paul urges as follows: "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." This seems to be another reference to the need for faithfulness in their service to Christ: otherwise the grace that had saved them from their past sins would be in vain, since they would be eternally lost anyway.

But the statement in I Corinthians 15:10, with which we began this discussion, does not seem to be referring merely to the grace of God which saved Paul from his sins; it seems rather to be referring to the grace of God which made Paul an apostle. The context as well as the text itself shows this to be the case. The grace of God which gave Paul his apostleship was not in vain because he "laboured more abundantly than they all."

Suppose Paul had been lackadaisical in the use of his apostleship. The grace which had made him an apostle would then have been bestowed on him in vain. We would say it would have been better had some other been given the apostleship.

There is an important principle involved here. We certainly do not say that it is through an arbitrary decision on the part of God that some enjoy certain blessings while others are not as richly blessed. But most of us would readily agree that all our blessings are from God. Is it not sad that some upon whom God's blessings have been more abundantly bestowed are those who are unappreciative and lackadaisical toward those blessings? These blessings have been largely bestowed in vain on such. It would be better, in many cases, if blessings had been withheld from some to whom they have been given, and bestowed upon some from whom they have been withheld.

What of the man who has been blessed with a good personality and the ability to "win friends and influence people," and yet who neglects to use this blessing to influence people to serve the Lord? Instead he uses it to entice people to engage in evil, or to lure people into some business arrangement which will further his own selfish interests. So far as the cause of truth and righteousness is concerned, God's blessings have been bestowed in vain upon such an one.

Or what of the young man who has been blessed with a good mind and a large measure of natural ability to speak to an audience of people, and who chooses not to use these blessings in a way that will further the cause of Christ? Instead he chooses to use them for selfish reasons only. Would we not say that, so far as the cause of Christ is concerned, the blessings of God have been bestowed upon this young man in vain?

Think of the person in the kingdom of God who has been blessed with a great amount of wealth, but who fails to use such wealth to accomplish the will of God. So very often it is the case that those with great wealth seem to think the Lord has no claim upon their possessions. They forget that it is the Lord who gives one the power to get wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18). The grace of God in connection with their wealth has been bestowed upon them in vain.

When the grace of God made Paul an apostle it imposed upon him a responsibility peculiar to the apostles. Paul admirably discharged that responsibility, and was able to say that the grace of God was not bestowed upon him in vain. Does not every blessing impose upon one a responsibility peculiarly related to that blessing? What about the grace of God bestowed upon you? Was it in Vain?

The Purity Of The Church

W.A. Holley

The word "pure" means "unmixed with any other matter ... free from what vitiates, weakens, or pollutes ... containing nothing that does not properly belong ..." (Merriam-Webster : New Collegiate Dictionary). Pure coffee is unmixed with another substance; pure gold is gold not mixed with brass or some other metal. Pure love or pure water would mean the absence of anything that would obscure its ideal character.

When we speak of the purity of the church, we have reference to the church of the New Testament—the church which Jesus had in mind in Matthew 16:18-19. In the New Testament we are instructed of the facts regarding the identity of the Lord's church. Jesus is its builder, its head, and its Saviour (Mat. 16:18-19; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23). Furthermore, Jesus purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28). Hence, if one wishes to share in the benefits of Jesus' precious blood, one will have to be in that which was purchased by the blood, the church.

There are four areas of purity regarding the Lord's church which we wish to discuss :

(1) Its doctrine must be kept pure. All doctrines and commandments of men must be rejected. (Mat. 15:9; Mk. 7:6-13). "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Ps. 12:6). The truth of God has "once for all time been delivered to the saints." It therefore is not to be superceded, emended or modified (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19; Jude 3). No human doctrines are ever to be taught. We must speak as the oracles of God, and "preach the word," in all seasons (I Pet. 4:11; II Tim. 4:2-3). To preach joining the church of one's choice, praying through to salvation, salvation by faith only and the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in conviction and conversion is to adulterate God's word.

(2) The organization of the church must be kept pure. In the Sacred Writings we read of elders and deacons and evangelists (Phil. 1:1; II Tim. 4:5). It is corruption of the teaching of the word of God for one to add presiding elders, cardinals, archbishops, popes and the like. No New Testament church ever had such! Moreover, no New Testament church ever was a part of a religious conference, synod, association, diocese, council or convention. In apostolic times each local church was an independent entity, responsible for its own activities, bound to no other congregation except by the bonds of love and faith. It contaminates, pollutes and defiles God's divine institution when men insist on adding their own wisdom and arrangements.

We should keep the organization of the church pure; for, in this manner, we can keep the church apostolic.

(3) The worship of God must be kept pure. When our worship is polluted with human additions, our worship becomes vain (Mat. 15:9). Israel, the northern kingdom. mixed their worship. It is said, "They feared the Lord, and served their graven images ..." (II Kings 17:33, 41). Many are like them today; they "worship God" and add what they please and do as they please.

The addition of the most expensive pianos and organs, choirs and brass bands, banjos and guitars, and however played, are outlawed by the word of God. Our purpose in worship is to please God, not ourselves. The instrument upon which melody is to be made is the human heart; not a piano or an organ (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). "God is a Spirit : and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jno. 4:23-24). There is a special day (the Lord's day) and special items of worship which characterize true worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2). We should worship the Lord's way, if we wish to enter heaven.

(4) The lives of Christians must be kept pure. Dirty, sinful lives on the part of those who claim to be Christians brings shame and reproach upon the church of our Lord. "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." (Ps. 29:2). Those church members who swear, or curse or commit adultery, or do any of the sins of the flesh hurt the church of Christ.

What kind of a life should a member of the church live? Well, he/she should follow the exhortations found in James 1:27; Tit. 2:11-12; Matthew 5:16; Romans 12:1-2: and I John 2:15-17. "Keep thyself pure," is the admonition of the apostle Paul. (I Tim. 5:22).

Jesus, Lord and Master

John Waddey

"Jesus Christ is Lord" is the heart song of every child of God. Confession of his Lordship is essential to a sinner's salvation. (Rom. 10:9).

The Lordship of Chirst is the central theme of the entire New Testament. John wrote his gospel to establish this fact (John 20:30-31). John carefully recorded those activities of Christ which demonstrated his Lordship over every realm of life and death. He changed water into the best wine; he was master of quality. (John 2:1-12). He healed the son of a nobleman at Capernaum while at Cana (John 4:46-54); he had mastery over distance. He healed the impotent man at Bethesda on a sabbath day (John 5:1-8); he was lord of the sabbath and had power over disease. He fed five thousand with a boy's sack lunch and had many times more left than he started with (John 6:4-14); he was master of quantity. He healed the man blind from birth (John 9:1-34); he was master of time. Lazarus he raised from the dead on the fourth day, after the body was decaying (John 11:1-44); he was Lord over death. The last and greatest of his miracles was his own resurrection on the third day (John 20:1-9). In these and other miracles Jesus established himself as supreme over every realm and relationship of life.

Lordship means to have dominion, rule and authority over others. It is used of Jesus as of the Father. His Lordship implies our servanthood, Paul often spoke of himself as a bondservant of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1). As servants we obey Christ in all things. (Heb. 5:8-9).

Notice the extent of his Lordship. Because Christ was willing to humble himself even unto death on the cross, God highly exalted him and gave him a name above every name, that every knee should bow to him in earth, heaven and hades and confess him as sovereign Lord (Phil. 2:5-11). His Lordship extends over all earthly rulers and judges (I Tim. 6:15). His authority and power are unlimited. (Matt. 28:18). He is head over all things to the church. (Eph. 1:22).

He is eminently qualified. Of all men, he alone was God in the flesh. (Matt. 1:23). He is deity, i.e., God in his nature (John 1:1-3,14). He alone was without sin (I Pet. 2:22). No man has equaled the extent of his wisdom (John 2:24-25). His power was and is unlimited. His administration is one of justice and righteousness (Is. 9:6-7).

Christ is Lord of all because he created all (Col. 1:16). He is Lord because he sustains the entire cosmos in its existence (Col. 1:17). He is Lord by reason of his prior existence and his station of priority over all things (Col. 1:17). He rules over all by divine appointment. The Father hath given all judgment into Christ's hands. (John 5:22). He hath highly exalted him, above all created things. (Phil. 2:9-10).

Look at the consequences of his Lordship. Because he is now Lord of all, God has given him power to raise the dead. (John 5:21). He will one day raise both the righteous and the wicked with a command from his mouth. (John 5:28). Having raised them he will then judge them one and all. (John 5:27). As Lord he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw nigh unto him (Heb. 7:25). He also has the power and authority to punish the wicked in eternal torment. (Matt. 25:40-41).

To honor the Lord, since he is Lord and we the bondservants, we must be obedient to his will. Jesus asked certain Jews, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say ?" (Lk. 6:46). We can only know Christ's will by looking into his New Testament. Jesus, said, "The words that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Paul reminds us that the words he wrote down by inspiration are the commandments of the Lord. (I Cor. 14:37). He saves those that honor him by faithful obedience. (Heb. 5:8-9). Among the commands of Christ are the following :

"Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved ..." (Acts 16:31). "He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent" (Acts 17:30).

"He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus" (Acts 10:48).

If you have confessed Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9) you will gladly comply with these simple ordinances.

The duration of Christ's dominion is revealed in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. "For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet... and when all things have been subjected to him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him, that did subject all things unto him..." (I Cor. 15:25-28).

Is Christ your Lord? Have you fully obeyed him?

We Must Die In Order To Live

Romans 6:1-6

Martel Pace

I would like to help you think as a converted Jew of the first century. The things Paul wrote in Romans were startling to him. To us they may seem common-place. What startled him was (1) that salvation by grace was through faith in Christ's death; (2) that salvation was not through the law or human achievement (3:20). (3) Most startling was what Paul wrote at 5:20b—"But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (New King James Bible).

The objector would retort : "We should continue in sin if that is true just to make grace abound to us more. And if that is true sin doesn't really matter; it just gives God a chance to show his mercy." Rasputin, the famous Russian monk who had such a great influence over the Romanov Family in Czarist Russia's last days, actually taught that through repeated experience with sin one could enjoy more of God's grace than any ordinary sinner ! The Corinthians may have felt something of this as they actually boasted in what the adulterer was getting away with. (I Cor. 5:6). This reasoning was a slander and blasphemy against God's grace. Paul responded, "Certainly not !" (6:2). It was not "God forbid" (KJV), for Paul would hardly attempt to tell God what to forbid and there is no "God" in the Greek text. The remainder of chapter 6 gives his detailed reasons for not continuing in sin after conversion. They are : (1) 6:2-14, "No, because we're dead to sin", and (2) 6:15-23, "No, because we would again be its slave."

Nothing was more serious to Paul than quitting sin. The reasoning of the objector may appear trite to us, but it had to be dealt with or the whole framework of Christianity would fall. Why not continue in sin? Because...

SOMETHING HAPPENED AT BAPTISM

What do you think of when one says, "Romans 6." Is it baptism? The New Testament never discusses baptism. It was too plain for all to see that this act of obedience was a simple picture of Christ's death and burial. There was just no need to discuss the subject in writing to an audience of first century believers.

Paul therefore almost insults the Romans, asking, "Are you ignorant...? "Do you not know...?" I think they understood they had been baptized into Christ, but were not cognizant that this also involved becoming in union with Christ's death and the meaning of that great event.

How would you explain, "How I died to sin"? I would think of saying, "Why, I believed and repented of my sins. My life was then given to the Lord and I suppose that was the point when my death to sin occurred." This would be true from the human standpoint. I might add, "My proof that I am dead to sin is my new life, and my aversion to my old sins." But many have never come to the point of despising their old sins. McGarvey said that such should have been left under the water if they had no real intention of giving up sin. - Such a one "...has no right to be lifted up from the waters of baptism" unless he is "fully resolved to live as having died unto sin" (Commentary on Romans, p. 343). A sectarian might say, "I died to sin when I trusted the Lord for my salvation." But Paul says neither !

HOW PAUL EXPLAINED THE DEATH EVENT

Those who argued, "Let's keep sinning" had to be answered. Otherwise there would be no distinct line between the world and church. It is clear that in Paul's estimation there was a definite distinction between "Sinners" and "Saints". I think we have made too much of I Timothy 1:15 and Paul's estimation that he was "the chief of sinners." Was he the worst sinner when he penned those words? I hardly think so. He judged himself harshly because of what he had been. He still counted himself the "least of the apostles" (I Cor. 15:9), but knew that "by the grace of God" he had achieved more than they all (15:10).

Though we may sin in weakness, saints are not sinners ! Romans 5:8 tells us that is what we were and not what we are. Stumbling into a mistake out of weakness is quickly taken care of by the blood of Christ (I John 1:7) and does not make us the sinners we once were. Because of this I no longer preach. "There are two categories—saved sinners and lost sinners." We are either saved or sinners. When Paul was crucified with Christ a sinner died as much as if his body had been killed and buried in Damascus.

This is what Paul says in Romans 6.6: "Knowing this that our old man was crucified with him..." If men could only see that a death occurred when they were baptized into Christ it would help greatly to provide motivation not to continue in sin.

What is the best way to motivate men to stop sinning? Five men were once discussing how to get men to stop sinning. One suggested, "Get them to meditate on death." Another suggested, "Point out to them the certainty of Judgment." Another, "Help them to understand the joys of heaven." Still another, "No, I think the best way is to preach hell to them forcefully." A fifth ordered, "Tell them of the death and sufferings of Christ." This latter method seems to be the one chosen by Paul as the best. He draws us back to the point when we re-enacted that death in baptism: it was then that we joined with Christ in his death.

There are two simple, yet profound expressions Paul uses : (1) baptized into Christ, and (2) baptized into his death. Paul

explained that from God's standpoint we died to sin at baptism. We may have preached baptism for the remission of sins. But I am increasingly convinced we have not emphasized sufficiently what actually occurs in an act of penitent baptism. We have not seen, how important baptism is because we have not seen it as God's act.

Paul declared to the Colossians that from baptism we "were raised through faith in the working of God" (2:12). Baptism is God's act ! It is at that point he killed our sinful life and we accept that truth by faith that he acted then !

Evangelizo Manifesto

Barry Fike

Probably the single most important issue in the church today is evangelism methods. Knowing that Christ came to evangelize the world (Luke 19:10) it is of utmost importance to understand the motive behind the message and not necessarily the method.

The word evangelizo is always used of the good news concerning the Son of God as proclaimed in the Gospel. This word emphasizes the message not the method. Since each Christian is commissioned, like the apostles (Mark 16:15, 16), to let the good news be made known, what should we each realize that will allow us to become as zealous in our evangelism as Christ and the apostles were ?

First, we need to 'realize that people are lost. People are going to hell without the saving grace of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:5)! It is so easy to look at "good" people in the world that "go to church", rear their children properly, don't drink, smoke, or deal in any other wordly pleasure and think that God will surely allow them entrance into heaven because they are such "a good ole' boy." It just isn't so! Both Christ and his apostles realized that all men were lost, and so they were very sensitive to their mission (Matthew 17:5; Luke 4:43; 19:10; Ephesians 3:10). They felt an urgency to go and teach all men (Romans 3:10, 23; Matthew 9:36; 23:37) because of the interior survey they always took of people. This survey led the gospel to people like the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-26); Cornelius (Acts 10:34, 35); and the Proconsul (Acts 13:12).

How many times do we feel a *real* obligation to others ? How many times do we feel we are indeed a "debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise" (Romans 1:14)? Don't we often withdraw from the "Gentiles" and separate ourselves, "fearing them which were of the circumcision" (Galatians 2:12)? Do we really want none to perish (I Timothy 2:4; II Peter 3:2) or do we just not care ? When was the last time we compelled the lame, the blind, the poor, the crippled, the prostitute, the homosexual, the thief to attend a service or to study the Bible ?

"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts" (James 2:1-4)?

Knowing that all men were lost compelled them to go and teach (Luke 14:23). Because of this urge they persuaded men to accept or reject the gospel truth (II Corintbians 5:11; Acts 26:28). This attitude caused the message of God to be buried in the minds of men regardless of whether they accepted it or not.

This sense of obligation led to dedication in the work of evangelism (Acts 21:13; II Corinthians 15:17-19; Romans 6:3-5; Luke 9:23, 24). Such dedication can be gotton today if we possess the feeling of obligation to the word. Are you concerned about the lost? If so prove it by going to all men everywhere urging them to repent and live the correct life as the gospel demands it. "like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4).

Facts Concerning Churches Of Christ

W. Douglass Harris

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

In Old Testament times, Christ's church existed only in promise and prophecy, the Old Testament prophets foretelling that when Christ should come He would establish His Church. (Isa. 2:2-4; Dan. 2:44; Micah 4:1-4).

John the Immerser, the twelve apostles and the seventy sent out under the limited commission, preached "the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matt. 10:7; Lk. 10:9). In Matt. 16:18 Jesus said, "I will build (future tense) my church." In the next verse. He promised to give Peter the "keys of the kingdom." The terms "church" and "kingdom" are here used interchangeably to refer to the same thing. In A.D. 32 Jesus told some that they would live to see the kingdom, or church, established. (Mk. 9:1).

Christ's Church was established on Pentecost day, A.D. 33, when the power came with the Spirit. (Acts 1:8) and the kingdom with power. (Mk. 9:1), as we read in Acts 2. Its members were called "Christians first at Antioch". (Acts 11:26). The Lord gave them this name. (Isa. 62:2). Jesus called it "MY church" (Matt. 16:18), hence it is the church of Christ. It belongs to him by virtue of His being the the founder and purchaser. (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). A plurality of congregations is called "churches of Christ." (Rom. 16:16). It is sinful to wear human names in religion. (I Cor. 1:12, 13). The church is the bride of Christ and as a faithful bride must wear the name of her husband. (Eph. 5:22-32).

"The word of God is the seed of the kingdom". (Matt. 13:19; Lk. 8:11). Each seed produces after its kind. (Gen. 1:11, 12). This seed produced Christians when planted by the apostles in the first century. If we plant the same seed today, we will have the same product. The germ of life is in the seed. If there were not a Christian on earth today, you might become one by believing, repenting and being baptized, as they did under the preaching of the apostles. (Acts 2:36-47). If there were not a church of Christ on earth, we might start one immediately by obeying the same gospel which the apostles preached.

Churches of Christ are neither Catholic nor Protestant in the denominational sense. They are undenominational in nature, having no human creed, no universal organization and no earthly headquarters. Each congregation is an independent unit of Christians with no denominational affiliation whatsoever, taking the New Testament as its sole and only guide of faith and practice and trying in this twentieth century to produce the church of the first century.

Are you tired of conflicting doctrines and warring sects, of the creeds, names and churches of men? If so, why not take the New Testament as your only guide: believe it, obey it and become a Christian and be just a Christian?

AIM OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Churches of Christ are identified with the great movement to restore the New Testament Church. They aim to do this in the following ways:

By Wearing A New Testament Name.

"The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16).

"The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." (Acts 11:26).

"Feed the church of the Lord, which he purchased with his own blood". (Acts 20:28).

By Believing A New Testament Creed.

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God... Upon this rock (this truth) I will build my church." (Matt. 16:16, 18).

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11).

"These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." (Jno. 20:31).

By Obeying A New Testament Baptism.

- "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mk. 16:16).
- "We are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4).
- "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." (Acts 2:38).

By Observing A New Testament Communion.

- "Upon the first day of the week when the disciples were gathered together to break bread." (Acts 20:7).
- "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." (I Cor. 11:26).

"Let every man examine himself." (I Cor. 11:28).

By Practicing A New Testament Stewardship.

- "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35).
 - "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him. (I Cor. 16:2).
 - "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give." (II Cor. 9:7).

By Living A New Testament Life.

- "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer." (Acts 2:42).
- "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (Rev. 2:10).

OUR PLEA-The unity of all those who believe in Christ.

OUR PURPOSE -- "That the world may believe."

OUR PLAN-The restoration of the New Testament Church.

WHY NO INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC?

When attending services of churches of Christ for the first time, no one can fail to observe the absence of mechanical instruments of music. As a result, many think it is strange and often make inquiries. We stand ready always to give a reason for our practices. (I Pet. 3:15). Instruments are not used for the reasons that many suppose.

I. Not Simply To Be Different.

There is no virtue in merely being different. Such does not prove one to be right. Mechanical instruments are not rejected because we like to be different, for it would be pleasant to go along with, and be like others. They are rejected because of a deep conviction based upon God's word.

II. Not the Purpose of Worship To Entertain.

Instrumental music may please and attract the crowd, but that is far from the purpose of true worship. We are striving to please God and not man in worship; if we seek to please men, we are not servants of Christ. (Gal. 1:10). God desires true worship (John 4:24).

III. Not To Follow Old Testament Pattern,

Because David or other Old Testament characters used instrumental music in their worship does not prove that we can use such in the Christian dispensation with God's approval. Many things practiced in the Jewish age are admitted by all to have been excluded from New Testament worship, such as burning incense, animal sacrifices, etc. The same rule that excludes one of them excludes all, including instrument music in worship, for the Old Covenant has given way to the New. (Eph. 2:11-19; Col. 2:14).

IV. Not Our Right To Provide for God's House.

Man has a right to use anything he desires, not morally wrong, in his own house, but he has no right to put something in another man's house without his consent. The church is God's house (I Tim. 3:15), and Christ is the head of this house. (Eph. 1:22,23; Heb. 3:5,6). Therefore, we have no right to put anything in the church without His instruction, and He has not given his consent for instrumental music in worship.

V. Not Authorized in the New Testament.

In the New Testament the kind of music to be used in worship is specified, without exception, as singing (vocal music) and this excludes every other kind. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). To contend that we are authorized to have anything not specifically condemned is to open the flood gates for many things—ham on the Lord's table, burning incense, counting beads, offering of animal sacrifices, etc., for it nowhere says thou shalt not do these —recognized by nearly all to be wrong. We must abide by what the New Testament SAYS instead of what it does NOT say. We must be silent where the Bible is silent. (II John 9-11).

Sinners Are Expensive

Roger Jackson

At Matthew 20:28 the Bible records that Jesus said, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." A ransom is a purchase price used in buying back something that is lost or in the possession of another. From this passage it is clear that our Lord wanted us to understand that he was buying every sinner who obeys the gospel. (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 6:1-6). The purchase price does not avail unless the sinner wants to come home. (Matt. 11:28-30). The one thing that we do know about it all is that sinners are expensive.

However, there is another way in which sinners are expensive, and this is the way I propose to discuss in the following lines, and I solicit your undivided attention.

Those who remain among God's people after they have evidently decided to forsake the Lord (II Tim. 4:10) are extremely expensive to the congregation where they are still in fellowship, undisciplined and constantly used in a leadership role in the worship services. How expensive are they?

They cost local brethren the esteem of unbelievers. The reputation and good standing of the Lord's church in any given locality is of extreme importance and Paul cited that factor in his rebuke to the Corinthians for their protection of the adulterer of I Corinthians 5. Every faithful gospel preacher who has ever laboured under such a handicap knows what I am trying to get across. How can you go to people's homes and teach them the gospel and encourage them to obey the gospel and worship with a congregation that not only harbors but also sanctions the conduct of one even the ungodly community will not overlook? We are so afraid that we are going to hurt somebody's feelings (and I do not advocate that) or move too quickly that we drag it out over months and months until we think time and poor memories have rendered effective action invalid and we keep on paying the price. It is no great wonder to me that some little congregations never grow. Fuming, fussing and fighting have consumed their energies and ruined their good name in the community and cost them far, far more in the long run than any loss of attendance and contribution would have cost them if they had acted lovingly, scripturally and expeditiously. We are so afraid we are going to hurt ourselves that we have hurt ourselves most in our fear.

Wilful and rebellious sinners in a congregation cost it its zeal and enthusiasm. God wants his people to be zealous (Acts 2:41-47; Tit. 2:11-14). Sinners unrebuked sap the strength of good people and break the spirit of the congregation. Those hurt the most are usually the new converts and young people. Evangelism is at a stand still. Missionaries might as well go somewhere else. The ones who are being supported will soon have to come home because the contribution will drop and cutback will be the order for the future instead of vision and challenge. Brethren will stop speaking or associating with each other or else they will greet each other with harsh words and ugly attitudes that lead to separation. Instead of a warm and friendly group of redeemed Christians the congregation becomes cold and unloving. This is a part of the cost of retaining in our fellowship even one who sins and refuses to repent. Christ died for him and that means his soul is worth more than all the gold in the world (Matt. 16:26), but he is not worth more than the church in his sinful condition.

A third thing such sinners cost a congregation is usually its preacher. Gospel preachers are a conscientious lot if they are true gospel preachers at all. They know they are not personally responsibe for impenitent sinners after they have done all they can to warn them (Ez. 3:17-19; Acts 20:26-27), but a good man's concern does not stop there. His conscience will not allow him to stay where open sinfulness is either condoned or unchecked because its cure is dragged out and haggled over for moths. Many has been the case that as brethren watched the moving van disappear over the horizon they in perpetual perplexity turned one to another and asked, "wonder why he left ?"

A final cost that undisciplined sinners are to a congregation is the congregation. Many preachers have been accused of splitting a congregation when they left when the blame is to be placed upon the brethren for, not standing together on God's Word against wrong. Even the Lord said he would remove his favor from such congregations. (Rev. 2, 3). We will never find a perfect congregation. I know, I am not looking for one, and if I ever accidentally come across one it will be imperfect the day I am added to the church roll. We are talking about congregations who ignore and even approve of sinfulness in its ranks. From our mouths there cannot proceed blessings to God and cursings toward our brethren (Jas. 3:9, 10). How can we commune with Him who died for us and at the same time hate one for whom he died? (I Jn. 4:20)?

Retaining sinners who will not repent in our fellowship costs the Lord's people far more than the effort to withdraw our fellowship. We may either learn the lesson or pay the cost.

Crucified With Christ

R.W. Gray

The importance of scriptural baptism is underscored in Paul's affirmation that "the body of sin" is destroyed when we contact Christ's death through obedient faith. (Romans 6:1-7). In verse six of the sixth division of Romans he emphasizes that in contacting Christ's death the believer is rid of the "old man." The former man with his dedication to sinful living is rendered powerless. A servant of sin's passion has now become a slave to righteousness. (Romans 6:16-19. This "new man" is dedicated to a life of sobriety, righteousness and Godliness. (Titus 2:11, 12; Remans 6:22).

While the Bible clearly teaches that God reckons us dead to sin when our souls have been cleaned through Jesus' blood at baptism, it is likewise forcefully implied that one receiving immersion has prior to this act of faith, undergone such a change of heart and purpose that he is ready to walk after a radically new life style (Colossians 2:12,14; 3:1-6; I John 2:6; Galatians 2:20). It is obvious that the act of immersion itself does not effect such a radical change of mind and heart. If so, then baptismal regeneration is a true doctrine. It follows, then, that one coming to be baptized must understand that he is "putting off" the old man that he might "put on" a new man (Colossians 2:11, 12; Romans 6:5-14; Colossians 3:9-10).

"Repent", commanded Peter, "and be baptized... for the remission of sins ..." (Acts 2:38). The baptizer challenged those who would be immersed at his hands to "bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8). His was indeed a baptism of repentance (Mark 1:4). This radical change of heart that precedes baptism, and the radical change of conduct that follows baptism, is what brother E.R. Harper has in mind in his powerful sermon, "Did Your Baptism Take?"

Because of our failure to give proper emphasis to repentance, to a revolutionary change of moral and spiritual behaviour, some have found their way into "our" fellowship who are yet unregenerated children of the devil. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and has not "added" the unsaved to his family (II Timothy 2:19a; Acts 2:47). But it is frequently the case that one coming to baptism is not prepared to "depart from iniquity". (II Timothy 2:19b). As a result elders often find themselves guarding the goats rather than feeding God's sheep. Surely the Lord is not pleased with our tacit approval of the unregenerated enjoying full fellowship among the saints.

We are not required to be the judges of the thoughts and intentions of others, to be sure, but we can observe by some of the fruit that is borne, or not borne, that some who are unsaved meet with us around the table of the Lord. (Matthew 7:16-20; John 7:24). It is because of this very thing that we suffer so many family problems, divisions, and embarrasments. The name of God is blasphemed because of the shameful conduct of those who were "immersed" but who did not "put away sin" (Romans 2:24).

It is an intolerable error that would impose socalled "Lordship baptism" upon the church, but it is time we give more thought to the complaints that precipitated this and related errors. Seeing that many enter the church without any apparent knowledge of the cost of discipleship some felt a stop gap was needed. The answer does not lie, obviously, in the formation of a human creed, an appointed spiritual father, and the like. But an answer is needed. And it is not that difficult to find. We just must give greater emphasis to the fact that in baptism we are "crucified with Christ," and that we well be expected to "walk in newness of life" as a consequence of that death and resurrection. The candidate must understand that baptism is not a substitute for repentance, and genuine, heart-felt change of attitude, prompted by Godly sorrow, must precede immersion. Think on these things. (See Acts 19:18-20).

Behold The Birds

Brodie Crouch

"Behold the birds of the heavens, that they sow not neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin and I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Matt. 6:26-29.

What a challenging lesson in our lack of faith the Lord Jesus presents to us in these words. The birds soar the heavens in fair weather and foul, make their long pilgrimages and migrations north and south, or hang precariously to a tiny nest in a tree top surging back and forth during violent gales. Yet, they sow no crops, till no fields and we are assured that God both makes provisions for them and knows their fall when their short stay on earth is ended.

The beauty of the lily giving of its sweet fragrance in the well-kept garden does not surpass that of its cousin which blooms far out in the open field or in the deep woods. God clothes each with a beauty and blessing for the earth as if it were being prepared to grace the palace of God himself.

But we human creatures set our minds upon the host of conveniences about us, fret and worry over a thousand things we could so easily do without and then refuse to serve God and do his bidding because we do not have time. How great should be our shame as we show the weakness of our faith and our unwillingness to truly put God's kingdom first. Even the birds and the flowers of God's great world put us to shame because of our weak faith, our false sense of values and our vain pursuit of things rather than of God.

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