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EDITORIAL

Are There Many Ways to Heaven?

Most people believe that as long as one is sincere and honest about his religious beliefs then it does not matter what one does and that all religious people will finally go to heaven.

In essence all humanity is trying to worship and please the same God who is the Creator and against whom all humanity has sinned. Yet, the world is very much religiously divided. There are many faiths and many religions of different origins. In almost every religion of earth there are many sincere and honest people too, who are trying their best to please God and thus hope that He will open the door of heaven for them when they leave their earthly existence. But the fact is that being sincere and honest does not always and necessarily mean that one is right. One may sincerely drink or swallow poison, from a wrong labelled bottle of medicine, honestly believing it to be the right medicine, and die. The poison will not save one, however sincerely it is taken.

Now and then various scams hit the world, and under whatever guise, these scams rake in millions and perhaps billions of rupees from people who believe in wrong things, though sincerely. And, it is possible religiously too, to believe in wrong, things and be lost eternally. Just think of all those people of Korea who had recently believed in the false religious propaganda that Christ was going to come on October 28,

1992 at 8.30 P.M. They were all very religious and praying people, like any other. They had sincerely and honestly believed that Jesus would appear to them on that day and that they would be "raptured." They were praying, singing and reading from their Bibles as they waited for Christ to come. But He didn't come. Yet, in their religious fervour, many of them had quit their jobs, quit sending their children to schools, gave away their properties and belongings in anticipation of Christ's coming and taking them with Him to heaven. They were sincere, but wrong!

Also, in the Bible we read of numerous instances which clearly show that people could be sincere and honest, yet wrong at the same time. In the Old Testament we have the example of Jacob who had believed with all his heart that his son Joseph was dead because he was shown the blood-soaked tunic of his son and was told by his sons that Joseph was torn to pieces and a wild beast had devoured him. (Genesis 37:31-33). The truth was that Joseph was not dead, he was alive. Jacob's sons had deceived him. In the New Testament we read about eunuch and Saul (Paul) who had thought they were doing alright religiously in whatever they were doing. But they were told to change their religious convictions, because they were wrong. Paul later wrote: "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did" (Acts 26:9-11). Again, he said, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." (1 Timothy 1:12, 13).

The Bible declares: "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 14:12).

Through the story of the wise and the foolish builder Christ taught a powerful lesson that we all need to heed. He said, "Not everyone who says Lord, Lord, to me shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness! Therefore," said Christ, "whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Now everyone who hears these sayings of mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that

house; and it fell. And great was its fall." (Matthew 7:21-27).

Through this story Christ has taught that many are living with false hope, thinking and believing that whatever they are doing in God's name is alright and that God is going to accept them anyway. But it is not going to be true on the day of judgment when many will enter the eternal hell because they were not careful in doing what the Lord had asked them to do. (Matthew 7:13).

God has appointed Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and man through whom every man and woman can be reconciled with God. (1 Timothy 2:5; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21). He is the way. (John 14:6). Through Him we learn what we must do to be saved (Mark 16:16). He taught the way we must worship God acceptably. (John 4:24). He is our example in life. (1 Peter 2:24). Our duty is to hear Him and do what He says. Only by doing that can we be sure that we are on the way which is right and which will lead us to heaven.

Getting Away From The Negatives

J.C. CHOATE

There are positives and negatives in the world and to hear most people talk you soon come to the conclusion that there are far more negatives than there are positives. These people have all kinds of problems. They are down on the government, their job is not good, prices are too high, and on and on the list goes. To be honest with ourselves, we must admit that some of these things are there, but even then, when you try to look at the positive, brighter side, there seem to be less negatives. Somehow, approaching life from a positive viewpoint seems to soften any negatives which come our way.

We must admit that there are some negatives, even in the Christian life. Certainly, there are many evil things in the world which we must shun and even condemn. The Lord tells us that that it is necessary for him to chasten the unfaithful or the ungodly, and of course one of the ways he does that is through the withdrawal of the fellowship of the faithful brethren. (Hebrews 12:1-11; Matthew 18:15-17). Such discipline is not pleasant but it must be practiced.

Then there are the negatives which sound like this: "We can't do this; we can't do that. It doesn't do any good to visit because they are

not interested. You can invite them but they won't come to the meetings. It is a waste of time," etc., and so on. Now how did we come to such conclusions? Perhaps we experienced some of it, but probably we picked up most of those attitudes from others. There are many people who don't want to do anything and they don't want others to do anything, so they pronounce that "It won't accomplish anything any way." Also, such reasoning is an easy way out. If we can convince ourselves that whatever we do won't make any real difference any way, our conscience doesn't bother us if we don't do anything. But that is where we are wrong.

The business man doesn't look at life like that. The salesman doesn't reason that way. Our religious neighbors are not convinced of that. No, they are not able to sell their product to every one, but that doesn't stop them. They just continue to try, and they are able to sell enough to stay in business and to make a living. If they gave up, they would be out of business and then they would not be able to eat. And our religious neighbors go on convincing people of their religious beliefs, even though they are not found in the Bible, because they themselves believe in them and are sincere in what they are doing, so they keep working at it.

My brother and sister in Christ, we can get down and out with our work for the Lord just as it is possible with anything else, although we probably would not be as quick to give up on our jobs and other secular activities because our very lives, and the lives of our family members, depend on us staying on the job and being successful at it. Maybe when it comes to the spiritual side of things, because we are not depending on that for the next meal, it is easy to give up and quit. But whether we realize it or not, our spiritual service and the success we have with it are far more important in the long run than our physical successes.

Anyway, as Christians we must reject the negatives and think in term of the positives. Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13). Listen, we have the Lord's promise to be with us, we have the word of God which is the sword of the Spirit to pierce the hearts and souls of men, and we have the gospel which has the power to save all who will believe and obey the Lord. And you say we can't reach people, that they are not interested? Maybe we had better take account of *our own livés*, *our* goals, and *our* initiatives. Maybe the lack of interest lies there!

It could be that sometimes brethren are too down on people, too suspicious of them, questioning their motives and doubting their sincerity. True, some may be disappointing, but others will make it all

worthwhile. The point is, Christ invited all to come to him and we must do likewise.

We can do what we want to do. We can go as far as we want to go. If one method doesn't work in evangelizing, we should try another method. As Christians we can't give up and quit. There is only one way to go and that is forward and upward. Think positively and act positively and there will be positive results. Try it! It works!

The Worth Of A Woman . . .

Especially For Women

. . . When She Calls Her Husband "Lord"

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Sarah was an unusually beautiful young woman in the land of Ur, in what is Iraq today. She was pledged in marriage to Abraham, her half-brother.

What type of woman was Sarah? Was beauty her only asset? What can we learn of her from the Scriptures?

She loved and respected her husband. 1 Peter 3:6 says, ". . . **Sarah Obeyed Abraham, Calling him Lord . . .**" Obviously the word was used sincerely, because Sarah's life showed her dedication to her husband. When God called Abraham, telling him to leave his home and his people, Sarah accompanied him willingly. Such travels, in places of heat and famine, living in tents, would have been difficult for a woman but Sarah followed wherever her husband led. Throughout the remainder of her life she had no settled home, yet the Scriptures record no complaint.

With the same attitude, Christian women are encouraged to be submissive to their husbands. (1 Peter 3:5) Though Sarah was extremely beautiful, she was an example of modesty. The earlier verses in 1 Peter 3 admonish Christian women to conduct themselves in a godly manner:

"Likewise you wives, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your

chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” (1 Peter 3:1-4).

But was Sarah an oppressed wife, forced to submit to her husband's wishes? No. On two occasions, while living as foreigners in countries strange to them, Abraham was afraid that Sarah's great beauty would cause his own death. **“He said to Sarai his wife, ‘Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance, therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you that they will say, “This is his wife;” and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say that you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.” (Genesis 12:11-13).**

Admittedly, Abraham's solution to his fear was cowardly. It showed a lack of character and a lack of faith in the God who had brought him there. But his approach to Sarah was that of a husband who was pleading for help in preserving his own life, not that of a master giving orders to an inferior.

As a godly woman, willing to risk herself to protect her husband, Sarah obeyed Abraham's request.

In one point, though, Sarah made a mistake common to humanity, of not waiting patiently on God. God had promised Abraham a son through Sarah, but ten years passed and still there was no child. Genesis 16 tells the story of Sarah's decision to solve the problem herself. Having passed the age of child-bearing, Sarah adopted the custom of the land and gave her servant to Abraham, saying that any child born would thus become her own. The handmaid conceived, and haughty competition was the fruit in her heart. The son, Ishmael, was born and he grew up to mock the promised son that God did eventually give to Abraham and Sarah. Ishmael's descendants became the enemies of Isaac's descendants, an enmity which continues 3500 years later between Arabs and Israelites.

Sometimes even godly women waver in faith or grow impatient as they “wait on God”. When we try to step in and do God's work for Him as Sarah did, we create many problems. How much wiser we would be to **“Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!” (Psalm 27:14).**

Hebrews 11 speaks of the faith of people of old. Abraham is named in the list, but so is Sarah. **“By faith Sarah also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past**

the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised." (Hebrews 11:11) This passage helps us to realize that *It was as vital for Sarah to have full faith in God as it was for Abraham.* A woman today is not saved or counted faithful because of the obedience of her husband. She must live and die by *Her own faith and her own relationship to God.* May we learn from Sarah's faithful example.

Identifying False Teachers

DUB McCLISH

As our Lord drew the Sermon on the Mount to a close, He gave the following warning: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:15-16). Do we still need this warning?

It is presently easier to find protectors of wolves among the sheep than to find those who will expose them. In fact, it is the common thing nowadays for the false teacher to be praised, endorsed, supported, and welcomed, while one who would correctly identify him as a wolf is treated as the wolf should be treated. How different from the Lord's is the attitude of many brethren on this matter! We are not left to wonder how the apostolic church dealt with false teachers: They were watched for and, when discovered, they were marked, avoided, silenced, shunned, rejected, refused endorsement, and delivered to Satan (Acts 20:29-31; Romans 16:17-18; I Timothy 19-20; Titus 1:10-11, 14; 3:10; II John 9-11).

Now there may be some "witch-hunters" "alarmists," and those who "play God" among us, but I doubt it. (If there are, the wolves greatly outnumber them!) These and similar appellations are smokescreen words designed to mitigate the exposures of the false teachers without their having to answer for or repent of their errors. Such terms are designed to intimidate and silence the one who exposes the false teacher. They are employed to create prejudice against those who stand for the TRUTH and they are a favorite ploy of the liberals. (Ironically, false teachers who claim to abhor "name-calling" and "labeling" don't mind doing it themselves when they are being exposed!)

I know of no one who enjoys exposing sin or error in a brother or sister. I certainly do not. I would much rather always be able to commend and praise and never have to criticize or reprove. However,

one is not really a Gospel preacher (or a true follower, of Christ, whatever his work in the kingdom) who shrinks in cowardice from this necessary task.

If it makes me a "witch-hunter" or an "alarmist" to warn brethren of a "wolf" among the "flock" (or "flocks"), then I am such with Heaven's blessing. If I am such a one, then what shall we call the Lord and His apostles who commanded and practiced this responsibility? If exposing false teachers is "playing God," I would rather do that than "play the devil" by refusing the Lord's mandate to do so. If one would be great in the Master's eyes, he must be faithful to the charge to identify and expose false teachers, even if they are dear friends or even relatives.

Weightier Matters

DEAN FUGETT

I remember reading about a conversation between an old man whose job it was to swing the hammer to drive railroad spikes and a young man who had just hired on to be his helper. The helper asked, "What shall I do?" "Just hold the spike while I drive it" replied the old hammer-swinger. "Which hand shall I hold it with?" asked the young worker. "Whichever one you can do without!" answered the man swinging the hammer. The young helper stood upright, placed both hands into his pockets, and slowly walked away. I don't blame him.

I sometimes think about "whichever one you can do without" whenever I hear brethren beginning to argue over their perceived conflict between "law" and "grace" or "faith" and "baptism." These brethren seem to have no problem setting one scripture against another. They have forgotten that "there is one lawgiver" (James 4:12). Whatever we find in the scripture is there by the authority of God. If they have no problem in serving a God of conflict and contradiction, I do! Therefore, I know that any conflict or contradiction (?) of scriptures is the fault of man, not of God.

Men who prefer "faith" as opposed to "obedience" or "grace" as opposed to "law" have created for themselves a credibility problem in their religion in the view of anyone who is just slightly acquainted with the Bible. Passages that teach us that we are under the "law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:21) and also saved by grace (Ephesians 2:5-9); that teach we are saved by faith (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:8-9) and also saved by baptism (1 Peter 3:21) hold no threat to the person

who realizes that we can't "do without" any of those things prescribed by God as necessary elements in our salvation.

How foolish for men to pick and choose that which fits into their particular lifestyle as that which is required by God for justification, then proceed to attempt to prove that other things are not necessary. Who will set himself up as God's judge to determine as unnecessary any element that God has placed in the process by which man is able to be justified before Him? Who would dare be so foolish?

It seems that some have not stopped to think how serious is their behavior, how dangerous their doctrine. Brethren, let us be sure that we "speak as the oracles of God" (I Peter 4:11). And let us be very careful in what we "loose" and/or "bind" to see that it has truly first been loosed or bound by Heaven.

The Master Teacher and His Sermons!

DILLARD THURMAN

The Lord's "Sermon on the Mount" is rated a great sermon; and by many, the greatest sermon ever delivered on earth. This sermon was delivered soon after His temptation, and His choosing the twelve disciples. He had been preaching in Galilee in the synagogues, and healing divers diseases, and His fame had spread. He now faced a multitude of disciples on the mountain as they had assembled to hear Him! Many times I've visited the place at the north end of the sea of Galilee, and visualized the multitude seated on the slope, listening as the Master Teacher gave this address.

THE GREATNESS OF THE "SERMON ON THE MOUNT"

This sermon is recorded in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. It is a simple declaration of truth, yet profoundly spoken. Jesus taught spiritual lessons from the ordinary, bringing them alive! Jesus presented the beatitudes to enrich lives, and bolster moral resolution. He referred to His disciples as salt and light; and they received the application! He took laws that had bound Israel, and then gave principles that were much greater, higher and nobler, saying, "*Ye have heard that it was said—but I say unto you.*" And with each such statement. He elevated their code of religious morals, so they should turn from retaliation, love enemies,

and strive for perfection (see Mt. 5). He taught religious deeds should be done to God, and not to the men! This meant doing alms to be seen of God, praying to be heard of God, forgiving others, and laying up treasures above. He said, "*No man can serve two masters . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*" (Mt. 6:24). He taught man should take no thought for life, or things seemingly important thereto, for God knows our needs! *seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*" (Mt. 6:33). In Chap. 7 He tells us to stop judging, but to leave that to God. Then another promise: "*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*" (Mt. 7:7-8). Read the three chapters for a great sermon; and now the conclusion: "*And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.*" (Mt. 7:28-29). It was and is a great sermon, and time has not diminished it!

JESUS WAS THE MASTER TEACHER AND PREACHER!

Jesus stood apart from all other teachers of Israel. Religious leaders sent officers to apprehend Him, but they returned without Him, and were asked, "*Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.*" (Jno. 7:45-46). He was also performing mighty deeds that stirred the people. "*There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*" (Jno. 3:1-2). Nicodemus was a Jewish ruler, but recognized Jesus as a "*teacher come from God*!" It was His teaching that was still attracting attention; not merely the miracles and mighty works! "*He taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?*" (Mt. 13:54). Jesus was able to stop the mouths of gainsayers; and was never engaged in long winded arguments over minor differences! He asked of the Pharisees, "*What think ye of Christ, whose son is he?*" They replied, "*The son of David*". Jesus answered, "*If David then calls him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.*" (Mt. 22:45-46). Jesus showed how to close down vain arguments!

On another occasion, Jesus asked if it was lawful to heal on the

sabbath; He then healed the man—but to squelch criticism, He asked if a man would pull an ox out of a pit on the sabbath? *"And they could not answer him again to these things."* (Lk. 14:2-6). The summation of His encounters with critics is found in this statement: *"Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. And after that they durst not ask him any question at all."* (Lk 20:29-40). He left us a pattern for *"handling aright the word of truth."* The results were sure and final!

JESUS SAID, "TAKE HEED HOW YOU HEAR!"

Jesus intended that all should be discerning hearers! Therefore He charged His disciples, *"Take heed how you hear."* (Lk. 8:18). Some, in half-hearted disinterest are lulled to sleep by false teaching, and destroyed by damnable doctrines. But just as forcefully, Jesus taught: *"Take heed what you hear."* (Mk. 4:24). It is neither hateful nor unkind to warn against hearing and accepting false doctrine from false teachers. The loving apostle John wrote: *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."* (I Jno. 4:1). Jude just as staunchly bolstered the ramparts of faith in his defence: *"Beloved . . . it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."* (Jude 3).

False teaching was also a primary concern of Paul, as shown in His writing: *"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."* (Eph. 4:14-15). Even much later we are admonished. *"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines."* (Heb. 13:9). Rather, we are admonished, *"Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."* (I Cor. 15:58). To be stedfast, unmoveable and abounding in the work of the Lord, we must defend God's truth!

IMPORTANCE OF HEARING THE PREACHER'S MESSAGE!

Solomon said: *"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."* (Prov. 28:9). Weigh this against the warning: *"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was*

sanctified, on unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:28-29). How soberly we should follow His Great Commission; for before ascending to heaven, He gathered His disciples, *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."* Do you think they gave heed to this charge? *"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."* (Mk. 16:15-16). They did not do it alone; the Lord worked with them! Another record reads, *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."* (Mt. 28:19-20).

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITHFUL GOSPEL PREACHING!

You find the work of the apostles, beginning on Pentecost: *"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."* (Acts 2:4). They were Spirit filled and directed, as prophecy decreed, and Jesus promised! Peter preached Christ crucified and risen, and how men could be saved! *"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."* (See Acts 2:14-41). The Lord, working in His disciples, had established His church, *"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."* (Acts 2:47).

After phenomenal growth, opposition arose. Persecution drove the disciples from Jerusalem, *"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."* (Acts 8:4). Jesus Christ was working with them as promised! When and where the gospel was proclaimed, great results followed! *"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them . . . But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."* (Acts 8:5-12).

HOW THE WORD OF GOD WAS EVALUATED!

Paul wrote, *"So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one*

that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:15-16). Paul, a devout preacher of the gospel, recognized the source of the power: *"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 Cor. 15:10). As an apostle, he could recall the words of Christ, saying, *"for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."* (Mt. 10:20). He knew that he was an earthen vessel to carry this soul-saving message! To saints he wrote, *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* (Phil. 2:13). Then in like figure we hear James: *"Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."* (Jas. 1:21). This result comes from hearing (Rom. 10:17); *"And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."* (Acts 18:8). Friends, it works that way even yet!

The Holy Spirit And The Christian

STEVE HALE

INTRODUCTION

The Holy Spirit is as much God as the Father or the Son (Acts 5:3, 4). Yet, He is the least studied member of the Godhead.

He was significant in creation (Gen. 1:2), the providence of God's guidance for us (Jn. 16:13, 14), the ministry of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17), the miracles performed in the first century (Acts 2:1-4ff.; 10-11), and as a gift given to Christians at conversion (Acts 2:38).

When preaching on the Holy Spirit, one can almost see members of the church bracing themselves. It's as if this is a subject that is uncomfortable, mysterious, and taboo.

This ought not to be! In fact, the New Testament has much to say about the relationship of the Holy Spirit and the Christian. Such a study is not the same as sanctioning charismaticism or Neo-Pentecostalism.

Rather, it is a positive and encouraging study! These are matters the New Testament says the Holy Spirit does for us and not to us. With this significant distinction in mind, the author is making the following assumptions as he writes this:

1. the reader understands that the age of miracles as performed by human hands has passed (I Cor. 13:8ff.).
2. The Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3, 4).
3. The reader distinguishes the significant difference in what the Holy Spirit does for us, and not to us.
4. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian (Rom. 8:9). While we may disagree how He dwells in us, we may not disagree with the fact that He **Does dwell in us!**

Having made these assumptions; let us engage in a study of **The Holy Spirit And The Christian**. May the Lord bless you in this study.

EARNEST

The word found in the Greek New Testament for "earnest" is **arrabon**. This term is used to designate a downpayment given on the receipt of merchandise to guarantee the rest will be forthcoming.

In our day, we understand it as a title given to the bank as collateral on a car in borrowing the money to pay for it. An engagement ring serves as an earnest (pledge) via a marriage proposal.

Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit is God's "earnest" to us of eternal salvation. He tells the brethren at Ephesus that they: "... were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:13).

The gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 5:32) is significant as this guarantee. Paul tells the factious Corinthians they should remember this "earnest" from the Lord (2 Cor. 5:4, 5).

SEAL

In ancient times, a seal was often used to legitimize a document or an object. This seal would indicate ownership.

For example, a ruler might press his seal into soft wax at the bottom of a decree to authenticate it. Artists sign their portraits, or put their seal into a sculpture. Modern corporations have their logos and trademarks.

Spiritually, how are Christians distinguished from non-Christians? God, in His omniscience, knows the difference. What sort of signal or seal is given so others, including Satan, will know.

Paul said: "in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom, having also believed, ye were

sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13).

He warned the Ephesians to remain faithful lest they grieve "... the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

ASSISTS IN PRAYER

Christians should be prayerful people (I Thess. 5:17; Lk. 22:41). Our lives should be saturated in prayer (Lk. 18:13).

Sometimes, in a particularly traumatic situation, we may struggle with our prayers. The eloquence and smoothness may be blocked out with emotions too deep to relate verbally.

Not only so, but perhaps we pray, and do not even fully understand what to ask for, or if so, how to ask for it. Is there any hope in such situations?

Yes! Paul said: "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth *our* infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for *us* with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*" (Rom. 8:26, 27).

Note: this is not what the Spirit does to us, but for us! This is not Neo-Pentecostalism or charismaticism. This is biblical! Praise the Spirit for His help in situations where we need His help!

STRENGTHENS

Christians are not to live after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 6:16-18; 8:12-13). Paul tells the brethren in Rome: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

As we grow in the faith, the Lord makes us this promise: "... that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man" (Eph. 3:16).

Growing demands we be filled "... with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:19). This growth comes from the nurturing and maturity found only in the Lord.

Of Jesus, Paul said: "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). In other words, the Father, Son, and Spirit, dwelt fully in Jesus.

In the Christian dwells God (I Jn. 4:12), Christ (Gal. 2:20), and the Spirit (Rom. 8:9-11). The more we mature in Christ, and the fruit of the Spirit develops, the less we will be prone to do the works of the flesh

(Gal. 5:16-23). Thus, the Spirit strengthens us against sin!

CONCLUSION

The Spirit is the earnest of our salvation. He seals us in showing the Lord's ownership of us. He assists us in prayer. He strengthens us against sin.

Does His Spirit dwell in you? Paul said: ". . . If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9).

The Great Physician

T. PIERCE BROWN

In Isaiah 6:1-6, there is a graphic description of the nation of Israel. In verse 6 is a summary of that description, which fits not only Israel, but all mankind. "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and fresh stripes: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil." Mankind is cursed with the disease of sin. Sin is an epidemic of tremendous significance. It is extremely contagious. Man has not been able to provide a cure for it. It is always fatal, if one does not appropriate the cure that has been provided and offered free by The Great Physician.

There are some conditions which make it easy to catch this disease. This is why we have such warnings as "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (I Corinthians 10:12.) "Shun every form of evil." (1 Thessalonians 3:22.) "Evil communications corrupt good manners." (I Corinthians 15:33.) There are also some ailments which are the aftermath of this disease.

Let us examine some conditions that come before it and make it more easily caught, or that are produced to which I shall refer are used with a spiritual significance rather than a physical one.

ELEPHANTIASIS

There is a disease called elephantiasis. It basically means "thick skinned." This is characteristic of a person who has heard preaching all of his life, much of which should have been applied to his condition, but none of it penetrated. The only known cure is for the Great Physician to pierce him with the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:17), until his heart is touched. It is a sort of spiritual open-

heart surgery.

MYOPIA

Then there is myopia, or nearsightedness. This is the disease mentioned in 2 Peter 1:9. "For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins." The expression "seeing only what is near" comes from the Greek word "muopazon." Peter is specifically referring to those who have escaped the corruption of the world and been saved from their past sins, but forget that from which they were delivered and what they should grow to be, so are very near-sighted.

There are many in the church today who forget what compromise with the world will do, or what compromise with the false doctrines and practices of denominationalism has done and is doing. They have myopia, and need the touch of the hand of the Great Physician.

ENCEPHALITIS LETHARGICA

Then some have encephalitis lethargica, commonly known as sleeping sickness. Paul warns against this in 1 Thessalonians 5:6, "So then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober." Each of us needs to apply the remedy which Paul gave Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16, "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." Some need to take more heed to themselves; others need to take more heed to their teaching. But all of us need to do both.

Then there is the itch. When I was a boy, there were three things that would occasionally sweep through the little country schools. I was fortunate to escape all of them unscathed, but they were seven year itch, lice, and whooping cough. Paul wrote about itch in 2 Timothy 4:3. "For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts." We see a lot of evidence of that today. There are those who are tired of sermons that let people know what sin is and the consequences of it. They have heard enough of "that old negative preaching" to do them a lifetime, and want a good inspiring sermon on "I'm O.K.; you're O.K." Their ears itch until they get it, and probably afterwards.

ITCHING EARS

I have discovered that itching ears sometimes develop until a person becomes practically a deaf-mute. (We called it deaf and dumb.)

He cannot bear to hear the truth, and is therefore too dumb to tell it to others.

Then I have found many persons with hydrophobia which means fear of water. At least they had the symptoms. They seemed to fear water so badly that when and if baptism happened to be mentioned, they would almost froth at the mouth, like a hydrophobia dog at sight of water.

CORONARY SCLEROSIS

Coronary sclerosis is a frequent illness that contributes to the general disease of the world and to the specific disease of sin. Any sort of hardening of the arteries is bad, but the actual hardening of the heart is worse, for it has many side effects, such as darkening of the understanding, which leads to all sorts of complications. Note Ephesians 4:17-18, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the hardening of their heart."

MANY CAUSES

There are all sorts of causes for these diseases. Ignorance, weakness of the flesh, pleasures of sin, willful rejection of the truth are probably among some of the leading causes. But regardless of what the cause may be, the only cure is found in the Great Physician. He always makes the correct diagnosis and prescribes the correct cure.

One does not need to be on Medicare or have supplementary insurance to get that cure. It is free. But one must take it in accordance with the prescription. There must be faith in the Physician before one is willing to take his medicine as prescribed. There must be a turning away from every quack doctor of Divinity which might appear, as well as turning away from that which caused the disease.

UNDERSTAND THE DIRECTIONS

There must be an understanding of the directions. I heard of a man who went to his doctor with a stomach disorder. The doctor gave him some pills and said, "See if you can keep these on your stomach tonight, and come back tomorrow." When he went back and the doctor asked how he was doing, he replied, "I tried to keep those pills on my stomach, but every time I would turn over and they would roll doze off, I would off." When the Great Physician tells us to be baptized for the

remission of sins, and a person says, "I was baptized for remission of sins, but I was saved before I was baptized," it is evident that he does not understand the prescription and therefore can not properly appropriate the cure.

Note that although the prescription is free to us, it was purchased by the blood of Christ, and, though given by grace, it must be taken according to directions. It is amazing that this seems hard for anyone to understand.

When Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," he did not mean "He that believeth just anything, and is baptized in some way, for some reason, shall be saved." The context shows that he means, "He that trusts in the Lord as One who has complete authority, and is baptized in accordance with his directions, by his authority, shall be saved from his past sins."

If you have not yourself come to the Great Physician, and then pointing others to him, we urge you to do so. If you need help in finding him, write the editor of this paper.

"Their Heart Is Far From Me."

TOM MCLEMORE

INTRODUCTION

Please read Mark 7:1-23. This story presents the fundamental issues of man's relationship with God—the difference between obedience and disobedience of the commands of God! As Jesus confronts the Pharisees and scribes, he strips back the layers of man's attempts to conceal his sin. He does spiritual exploratory surgery on them and, at the same time, on you and me. He opens us up, so to speak, and asks, "Where is the heart?" But the answer which comes to the Divine Surgeon's mind is Isaiah 29:13 which says, "This people honors me with their lips, but THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME." We are told to love the Lord with all our heart. We are encouraged to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts. So it should be no surprise that "at the heart" of disobedience is a heart not in tune with God! Let us examine this story in light of this diagnosis and try to learn the remedy for disobedience. Hopefully, by understanding the "why and wherefore"

of disobedience, we may learn how to be more obedient to God.

"THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME"—BUT WHERE DID IT GO?

When Christ says that our hearts are far from him, he means they go to the far country of disrespect for the commandments of God! In the story, there are at least four things which the Pharisees and scribes did with the commands of God. First, they substituted something human for them. "In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." As all students of the gospel know, the Pharisees and scribes put the emphasis upon externals. The traditions which they had inherited from the elders specified many meticulous rituals for them to perform. But Jesus continually diagnosed their hypocrisy. "You leave the commandment of God and hold fast the tradition of men." Third, they rejected them. "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition." And finally, they relaxed them. "... thus making void the word of God through your tradition which you hand on, and many such things you do."

How could they do such things? How could they simply substitute for, leave, reject, and make the word of God void? Jesus said it, "Their heart is far from me!" Sometimes we say, "Have a heart!" What we mean is that when others have us in a tight spot, we want them to have pity and compassion, to empathize, to understand, to change their mind and help us. "Have a heart!" Well, the Pharisees and scribes didn't "have a heart." I am convinced that they were applying the law of God in such a way as to use it as an excuse for not "having a heart."

Jesus mentioned the case of the man who vowed to give his estate to God. Corban means "given to God." He might have been moved to do this at a young age, thinking that he was doing a noble thing. But then later, his parents get old, or sick, and he would like to help them, but he remembers this vow he made. He knows that God commanded, "Honor your father and your mother." They now need his help, and he has vowed his estate to God. So he asks one of the scribes or a Pharisee. "No, God's law says to honor your vows. You can do nothing for your parents." Jesus says that this is how they traditionally handled such matters since the days of the elders!

I ask you, would a person with 'heart,' with feelings, with sympathy for someone whose parents need help, handle the word of God like that? Put one command of God against another and thus cancel it out? Jesus said, "And many such things you do." Remember, these are the ones who would frown upon a sick person's being healed on the

sabbath! Now we can see what the problem is. "Their heart is far from me."

But what of us? Are we guilty of excusing ourselves from "having a heart?" Do we make excuses for not feeling, for not helping, for not loving! Do we emphasize only those commands which we are keeping and relax the rest? It may not be tradition we use as an excuse, but do we make excuses to cover up our disobedience? So we see that in disobedience, our hearts are far from God, out in the far country of disregard for the commands of God.

"THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME"—BUT WHAT LED IT THERE?

You might find it strange that the Divine Surgeon identifies the heart itself as the origin of disobedience! Those who read the Bible know that after the flood, God said, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth . . ." (Genesis 8:21.) Jeremiah the prophet observed, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9.) So it is no wonder that the Divine Physician says that ". . . from within, out of the heart of man come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness." How it gets corrupted is a mystery. (Perhaps if we take into account all the stimuli which goes into the heart from the moment of birth, we might begin to understand.) But first come evil thoughts, Jesus says, which lead to disobedience and the sinful acts which he mentioned. But how does this happen? Paul describes at least one aspect of the process in Romans 7:7, 8: "What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness . . ." What Paul seems to be saying here is that the commandment of the law (which he elsewhere describes as promising life, holy, good, just, spiritual, vv. 10-12, 14) was given as what one writer called "a merciful limitation." It was intended to help man have fellowship with God by showing him where the line was that he should not cross.

But human beings, by nature it seems, are annoyed when someone—even God—tells us we cannot do something. It is not merely a fascination with things forbidden. No, it is a matter of defiance, pride, and arrogance. Sin uses the commandment which is intended to help us to get us to defy God. That is at least part of what I believe Jesus means

when he says, "for from within, out of the heart of man, come . . . all these evil things . . ." So, if our hearts are far from God in disobedience, it is our hearts themselves which lead us there! But now, the most important question of all . . .

"THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME"— IS THERE A WAY BACK?

Yes! There is a way back from the far country of disregard for God's commandments! The gospel tells of Jesus' death and blood which cleanses us. When we obey the gospel, our hearts are cleansed. (1 Peter 1:22.) In Acts 15:9 the Jerusalem conference was informed that God had made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles in the matter of salvation "but cleansed their hearts by faith." We are told in Scripture that part of pure and undefiled religion is to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. So after this initial cleansing, since we fail to perfectly obey all the commands of Christ in our daily lives, there is the need for continual cleansing from our disobedience. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness . . . My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins . . . Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God . . ." (1 John 1:9, 2:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 7:1.)

But in addition to this cleansing, there must be a renewed respect for the commandment of God. Paul reminds us of this important feature of our lives before God when he says, "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed." (Romans 6:17.) Are you willing to commit yourself to obedience? It is the only way we can overcome our tendency to disregard God's word and make excuses for it!

CONCLUSION

"There is a place of quiet a rest, near to the heart of God. A place where sin cannot molest, near to the heart of God. O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God, hold us, who wait before Thee, near to the heart of God." (Cleland B. McAfee, "Near to the Heart of God," stanza 2.)

It seems that those who would be obedient to God must pray such

a prayer. The "heart" of the matter, the conclusion to the whole is the love and respect of God. "Thou shall love the Lord your God with all your heart . . . Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man . . . And this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. (Mark 12:28; Ecclesiastes 12:13; 1 John 5:3.) May we so live, that should the Divine Surgeon look deep within us, he would not say, "Their heart is far from me!"

The Restoration Plea

JIM LAWS

Early in the 1800's various voices were being heard in America regarding the religious beliefs and convictions in this country. These voices were calling for a restoration of New Testament Christianity. The reformation movement in Europe had failed. It began as an attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church. Luther, as well as others, attempted to reform, purify, and to restructure the Roman Church, but these efforts resulted in the beginning of many denominations, parties, and sects. So, reformationism had simply compounded the problems of religious division.

ALL THE WAY BACK

Greatly distressed over the divided state of religious people, various ones began pleading for something more than a reformation of the apostate Roman Church. They wanted to bypass both Protestantism and Catholicism and go all the way back to the church established by Christ. So, the restoration movement in America was begun. The appeal of the movement was for men to "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent." Such a statement emphasized the necessity of having scriptural authority, a "thus saith the Lord," for what is done in religion. It is fundamentally an appeal to go back to the Bible and to abandon all human names, creeds, and practices in order to be one body in Christ.

Be certain of one thing; the leaders of the restoration movement were determined not to make the same mistake made in the reformation movement of the sixteenth century. They were not advocating the

establishment of another denomination, but rather a return to the church of Christ as it is described in the New Testament. That is why members of the church of Christ today do not consider themselves to be members of a denomination. We simply are members of the church spoken of in the scriptures.

CHRIST BUILT HIS CHURCH

Christ came into this world for the purpose of establishing his own church. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus says, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He did not come into the world to simply start another "man-made" organization for men to become members of, nor to pull off from a religious organization which had already been established. He died for the church, purchasing it with his own blood. (Acts 20:28.) Paul speaking of Christ in Ephesians 1:23, says "And gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." I do not know anyone who claims that this church was a denomination, and yet it existed on earth in a visible form and was free from all man-made laws, denominational names, and denominational machinery. The growth of this church which Christ established was unparalleled in the history of man. Thousands upon thousands obeyed the gospel as it was preached by the apostles and other inspired men and were added by God to his church.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, the plea of the church of Christ is a particular plea. It is a unique plea in the religious world today. It pleads for the complete restoration of the church, which was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ in the city of Jerusalem. (Acts 2.) To worship in the same way, to have the same organization, to wear the same name, to have the same constitution (the New Testament) is to be the same as they were—New Testament Christians. Can this be said of the church of which you are a member?