

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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EDITORIAL

The Purpose Of The Bible Teacher

Editorially writing The Bible Teacher is a unique magazine in several ways. Often people write and ask us, Why don't we create space in the pages of The Bible Teacher writing quizzes or children's stories, and such like regularly. Honestly speaking, we just cannot afford all that in this magazine of limited pages. The sole purpose of The Bible Teacher is to provide to the readers the sound teaching or doctrine of the Bible. There is so much being believed, said, and done in the name of Bible's teaching in our world today that isn't in the Bible, and, in fact, is contrary to what the Bible teaches. This is being done through public speeches; through radio and through various literature and other avenues. In the long ago, God had lamented for His people saying, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge . . ." (Hosea 4:6). This is most true today! People just don't know the truth. They don't know what the Bible teaches. The knowledge of the truth is there in the Bible. But most people don't read and study their Bible discerningly, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15). People are following traditions in the name of Christianity; they believe and do things which are doctrines of their churches, not what the Bible says. Because they don't know what the Bible says.

In the Old Testament, when God spoke through His prophets, people did the same, as we read in Isaiah 29:13; and when Christ came to teach He found the same situation, and said, "These people draw

near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15: 8,9). Notice, that Christ said that they were drawing near to Him with their mouths; and they were honouring Him with their lips! But they were worshiping Him IN VAIN, since they were teaching and doing as doctrines the commandments of men! Everything was being done in His name; to please Him, but according to the commandments of men! This reminds us of what Christ had said at Matthew 7:21, and let me quote that Scripture to you: "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven." Everything that we believe, do or say religiously, must have the authority of God behind it, otherwise it becomes commandments of men.

Let me give you some illustrations: Where in the Bible do we read of so-called "Christian festivals", such as, Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and Easter? Who is the author of these festivals? Not God! Man alone!! Again, Were any of the apostles, the disciples of Christ, the preachers of the gospel in the first century ever called by such terms or titles: "Reverend," "Priest", "Father," "Pope," "Right Reverend," "Padri," or such like? Did God give authority to people to call themselves by such titles? Where? In which book and chapter and verse of the Bible? yet again, where in the Bible do we read that little babies were taken to be baptized by the "Priest?" Where does the Bible teach that one may be sprinkled for baptism? Baptism is from the Greek word "baptizo," and means *immersion*, the Bible teaches that we are buried by baptism (Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12; Acts 8:38,39). Furthermore, where does the Bible teach that one may be saved by faith alone? Yet preachers all over the globe are telling people today to just accept Jesus Christ your personal Saviour and you will be saved! Where is the Bible authority for this? If that was true, then why did Christ teach, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved?" (Mark 16:16); why did Peter say to people, who had asked him to tell them what they ought to do to be saved, to "Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins?" (Acts 2:38). Can one be saved before receiving the remission of sins? Moreover, where in the Bible do we read about Catholicism and Protestantism? Was Peter a Catholic and Paul a Protestant? Were they not all Christians only in the first century? (Acts 11:26). We can go on, and on, to show what people have taught in the name of the Bible's teaching, and what people do and believe thinking and professing that they are doing commandments of God, when in fact they are doing the commandments of men. How

dangerous!!

Through the pages of *The Bible Teacher* we are constantly calling people's attention to what the Bible teaches on various subjects. We are calling people to return to "the old paths" of Jeremiah 6:16; to the principles of pure New Testament Christianity of the first century. Sure, we have to say many things again and again, and yet again; just as the same medicine is given to the sick, again and again, until the sick is recovered! And, this is also true that most medicines taste bitter, nevertheless, we must accept them if we want to be well!!

Today Is The Day Of Salvation

J.C. CHOATE

A question comes, "The Bible says 'today is the salvation day'. Some teach we can postpone obedience to baptism. Is this proper teaching?"

The Bible indeed teaches, "Behold, now is the accepted, time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2). One might think of the day here as meaning the literal present, or the period of time in which one lives. At the same time, the scriptures also teach that we should not neglect our salvation. (Hebrews 2:3). Jesus said concerning himself, and this principle would apply to us too: "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day, the night cometh, when no man can work." (John 9:4).

When it comes to one who is in sin, lost, and without hope, once he learns the truth of God and how he can be saved, why should he want to postpone his salvation? Would one want to delay any good thing or wait till later to accept it? One needs to believe in God and his Son, Jesus, today, right now. (John 8:24). He needs to repent of his sins, or turn away from that which is destroying him, and he needs to do that today if he really understands the seriousness of his situation. (Romans 6:23; Acts 2:38). If one believes in Christ as the Son of God, why would he want to wait till later to confess Christ? (Matthew 10:32,33). Likewise, if one has been taught the gospel, and understands that baptism is a burial in water, for the remission of his sins, then he should want to complete his obedience by being baptized at the present time, not some time later. (Mark 16:15-16). What better time could one find to obey the Lord than right now? To put it another way, who would want to delay his

baptism when he can have salvation, be forgiven of his sins, be a child of God, be added to the church or the Lord's family, and have the hope of eternal life?

We have some examples in the scriptures of where one or more were taught the truth and they immediately were obedient to the Lord. They didn't say, "We'll think about it," "Maybe next week," or similar things. In Acts 8 we read where Philip taught a man from Ethiopia. He preached Christ to him, and that included what the Lord requires of one to be saved. Therefore, as they were riding along in a chariot they came to a certain water, and the eunuch said, "What doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch: and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8:36-39). Then there is Lydia and her household and the Jailer and his household in Acts 16. In Acts 16:15, after Paul had taught Lydia and her family, the record simply says that they were baptized. When? Then. Also, after Paul and Silas were miraculously released from prison, and the jailor thought they had escaped, and was about to take his life, we read, "But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all there were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his straightway." (Acts 16:28-33). Listen, there are no cases in the scriptures where one or more said that they would wait till the next day, the next week, or the next month to obey the Lord, that is, of those who heard the gospel of Christ and wanted to be saved.

It is true that if one has been taught the gospel and is thinking about obeying the Lord, he should be questioned to see if he understands what he needs to do. If he is unsure, or if you have every indication that he needs further teaching, then that should be done before baptizing that person.

When a person teaches one the gospel, and he comes to understand clearly what the gospel is, his need to obey the Lord, and wants to obey those commands that he might be saved, then that

person should take such an individual to a sufficient amount of water for the purpose of baptizing him, burying him in water in the name of Christ for the remission of his sins. But that individual should not put off his obedience until some particular person can do the baptizing. Neither should the one teaching that person ask him to wait for days, weeks, or months, until some particular preacher or person can come and baptize him. The person that wants to be saved needs to obey God today, right now, and that includes being buried in the waters of baptism to be saved as Christ taught in Mark 16:16. The Lord will not be pleased with an unnecessary delay.

Another problem in waiting is the fact that that person might wait too long. He might lose interest, be deceived by some false teacher, or might die. There are known cases of where individuals planned to be baptized at some later time, and before being able to complete their obedience, they died. What a shame to be so close to salvation but to lose it for the simple reason that one was willing to wait or to postpone his baptism for a more convenient time, which amounts to neglect and ending up in being lost. Please remember that today is the day of salvation, not tomorrow.

Understanding The Fear Of The Lord

KEN MULLAN

We begin our lives by obeying parents without always understanding their commands. We are often unlikely to understand reasons (if there are any) at first, but we shall know as we progress in knowledge and wisdom. A similar process takes place with respect to understanding the fear of the Lord, as Solomon points out in Proverbs 2:2-5.

The secret or mystery of life, which is gradually revealed, is to believe that God is your Heavenly Father, schooling and training you from cradle to grave; to seek to please and obey him in all things; to thank him constantly, entreating him to open the eyes of your soul and to give you true wisdom, which is to see things more as God himself sees them.

The real object of all study is to discipline and strengthen the

powers of the mind. Man is naturally formed for God, and if he does not give serious attention to those faculties whereby he looks toward God and apprehends him, he neglects that part of himself which is most important and influential in his life. Is there any wonder that so many people seem frustrated that something is lacking in their lives when they leave God out of their reckoning?

Reverence

Faith in and worship for God exert tremendous influences upon men as they study to learn more of their Creator and Saviour. The poet Tennyson wrote:—

"Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell."

The dictionary defines reverence as "a capacity for holding in great religious respect". This would appear to be singularly lacking in the world today, yet as Solomon grew in knowledge, understanding and wisdom, he both learned for himself and passed on to others the fruits of his own experience.

Nothing is so out of place and unsuitable to the man who desires a cultivated mind as arrogance and self-esteem. All wisdom is humble and requires that humility be shown in reverence to God and respect for one's fellow-man.

Peace and quietness are usually necessary conditions for study. Quiet, prayerful preparation is equally necessary for a study of God's Word. An inward spiritual peace and calmness is essential and grows as we study God's will for us, realizing his power and desire for our benefit. How can a religious life be sustained and grow except by an increasing knowledge of the One who is the express image of the Father (Heb. 1:3)? It certainly cannot be accomplished by seeing the church simply as a social group, organized for man's satisfaction and social convenience. Neither can we turn our religious life on and off at will, or treat it in a compartmentalized manner. Jesus Christ is God's Word made flesh to manifest his will for us. We are to *know* him, and through him to know God. The first few verses of Proverbs 2 give an insight into the way to understand a proper "fear of the Lord". The source of wisdom, knowledge and understanding is clearly indicated in the sixth verse.

Humility

If we look at the teaching of the Scriptures on the subject of Christian humility, we discern two major characteristics: (i) distrust of self and purely human wisdom; (ii) trust in, and gratitude to, God as the giver of all good gifts. When practised in our lives these qualities bring forth modesty and forbearance; consideration in our dealings with each other, a devotion to, and worship of, the God to whom we acknowledge all we have is due.

Humility is the crowning grace of every relationship in human life. It summarizes and brings sharply into focus that duty to man and his duty to God, which Jesus himself declared to be the sum total of Christian practice (Lk. 14:16). An old Jewish proverb says. "Don't make yourself so big. You are not so small." We need to apply the more earnest attention to words which the apostle Paul writes to the Galatian churches. "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other" (Gal. 5:26).

Our self-effacement should not, however, be allowed to cover a shrinking from responsibility. It should not stand in the way of every Christian's zeal for high and noble objects, particularly in bringing others to a love for and saving knowledge of Jesus. Humility does not need to be a cover for weakness and irresolution. Christians perhaps need to assert themselves more strongly sometimes upon issues and causes for good. Where we see evil we should not, under the guise of tolerance or humility, shrink from its denunciation. Missionaries are needed on our own doorsteps as well as in so-called "heathen" lands.

In Proverbs 2:9-11, Solomon points out that when understanding of what is right and just and fair comes, wisdom enters the heart, then knowledge becomes pleasant to the soul, discretion will protect you and understanding will guard you. From v. 12 to v. 17 are outlined some of the things from which spiritual wisdom will save you.

Intolerance Of Control

This is a commonly recognized feature of society today and should not be applied to young people alone. Man often sees himself as having evolved to a degree of independence which can ignore restraint of any kind with impunity.

There is, however, a season when youth seeks to become independent and intolerant of control, when gentle guidance is mistaken for mere interference and display of power. There are critical days in all

our lives when we reach the point of forming our own ideas, speaking our own will and "doing our own thing". At this stage it is relatively easy to count God out of our reckoning, seeing him as an interfering and restraining influence. David writes. "The fool says in his heart, "There is no God". (Ps. 14:1).

How easily we forget the promises of God, seeing him sometimes only as a "lawmaker", and forgetting him as a loving Father whose grace and mercy are constantly extended toward us: forgetting his love which is made manifest to the world in the gift of his only begotten Son who came to be our Saviour and Redeemer.

Education is a two-way process. There is a need not only for someone to teach but a willingness to be taught. The Word of God is our only complete and final revelation of God's will for us. It outlines his promises and the conditions for our receipt of those promises. It reveals God not only as all-wise, all-loving, all-merciful, all-gracious, but as all-just too. In Proverbs 2, Solomon is careful to point out that God's promises are to those who *seek* wisdom. The latter half of the same chapter show what advantages true wisdom will have for us and what good use we should apply that wisdom to. Restraints may, in some respects, be unpleasant to the body yet satisfying to the soul.

Grace In The Heart

A principle of grace reigning in the heart will be a powerful preservative both against corruption within and temptations from outside (Ecc. 9:16-18). Wisdom is capable of preserving us from those of corrupt principles, who would instil into minds of both young and old that there is virtue in vice and that faith in Christ is riddled with prejudices.

When the realization of God's grace reaches our hearts, rather than remaining an acceptable fact, we like God, shall come to abhor sin as a separator from the paths of righteousness.

If only Christians would learn to be as resolute in seeking to serve God and do his will as those who take pleasure in sin, they would be a mightier force for good in the world. Those who take pleasure in sin are not content to go alone, they seek others to commit it with them; they rejoice in opportunities to do evil and are happier when others can be persuaded to join them. When are Christians to show the same enthusiasm for spreading the true Gospel and seeking others to enjoy its fruits with them?

Gain Wisdom

In modern idiom Solomon is saying "Get wise to things!" Most people work not for the satisfaction of their labours but for the advantages which accrue to them. Prospect of advantage is the spring and spur of industry: Solomon therefore shows us (in Proverbs 2) how much wisdom and understanding of the fear of the Lord will be to our advantage. He implies that we must venture all for it and be willing to part with all for its gain.

The wisdom spoken of here is that of Jesus Christ and his salvation, which is preferable to anything else. Eve, in the Garden of Eden, saw that the fruit of the ". . . tree of the knowledge of good and evil . . ." was "good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom" (Gen. 2:17; 3:3-6), they that live in forbidden pleasures are dead while they live. Only in Christ can they be made alive again. They are "... dead in . . . transgressions and sins . . ." (Eph. 2:1).

It is rare for any who are caught in Satan's snare, as Eve was, to recover themselves, but thanks to be God that he has provided a way, through Jesus. Gain wisdom—get wise to his offer of full and free salvation through faith in him, leading to repentance then baptism into his name, to be followed by a life of dedication and application of his wisdom and righteousness. Wisdom is a positive thing which not only keeps us from the paths of the wicked, but leads us to the way of good.

Overcoming Temptation

JON GALLOWAY

Temptation to a sin is a problem that we all face. As the apostle Paul expressed it: "I do not the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Romans 7:19). We can all relate to this sentiment. Is there a way to stop our sinning? How can we overcome temptation?

In overcoming a problem, it is often helpful to look at how others have overcome similar problems. The Bible contains many examples of people who have faced temptations. Some overcame their temptation: others gave into the temptation. In this article, let us notice the temptation recorded for us in Matthew 4:1-11.

Jesus Was Tempted

Most of us are familiar with this passage. Following Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:13-17), "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted by the Devil" (Matthew 4:1). Mark and Luke record that Jesus was "forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil" (Luke 4:2; Mark 1:13). For forty days Jesus was without food (Matthew 4:2), facing the various temptations placed before Him by the devil. Yet, He was able to come through the ordeal without once giving in to the temptation. In fact, Jesus continued to overcome the temptations He faced, and lived a perfectly sinless life (1 Peter 2:22).

We might be tempted to think, "of course He didn't sin: He was the Son of God—He was Deity and could not sin." It is true that Jesus was (and is) Deity (John 1:1). But sometimes we forget that Jesus was also human. Paul records in Philippians 2:5 that Jesus was in the form of God (He was Deity), but He emptied Himself of this to take on the form of a servant (He became human). This might be a difficult concept to grasp: Jesus was 100% human and also 100% Deity. By being human, He "has suffered and been tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). He has experienced what we experience when we are tempted, and can sympathize with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15). The difference is that He overcame temptation. He "in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus faced temptation the same as we do. Because He was Deity did not give Him immunity from temptation while He lived on earth, but because He can help us when we are tempted (Hebrews 2:18). One way He can help us is by our studying and imitating how He overcame temptation.

Where The Temptation Came From

We found that in Matthew 4:1 it records that Jesus was "tempted by the devil". In verse 3 it refers to the devil as "the tempter". From this we can learn the source of temptation. Often we want to blame God for tempting us to sin. God does not tempt us to do evil. "God cannot be tempted with evil and He Himself tempts no one" (James 1:13). God does not want us to sin. He instead wants us to repent and live faithfully for Him (II Peter 3:9). Temptation comes from the devil.

The Temptation

Let us notice the three temptations that the devil used in trying to get Jesus to sin. In I John 2:16, we find sin listed under three categories:

"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life". The temptations that Jesus faced fit into these categories.

The Lust of the Flesh: "And the tempter came and said to Him, if you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread" (4:3). Jesus fasted the forty days He was in the wilderness. It is not recorded for us when during this time the devil came and tempted Him to use His power to turn stones into bread. It doesn't take long for a person to feel hunger. If you have been several days without food, then you know what it is like to want to eat. Satan, realizing a human weakness in this area, used this as a basis to tempt Jesus.

The Pride of Life: Then the devil took Him to the holy city, and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him. "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down . . ." (4:5-6). Satan even quoted a few verses from the Old Testament in his attempt to get Jesus to sin. God had promised to protect Jesus. But, Jesus did not need to test God's promise. In fact, as He proceeds to point out, succumbing to this temptation would be a violation of God's Word.

The Lust of the Eyes: Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them: and he said to Him. "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me" (4:9). Who doesn't dream of being powerful, wealthy, or famous? Jesus could have all of these by performing a very simple task. Jesus could have reasoned that this might be a shortcut to fulfilling God's plan. Satan realized that the desire of having more is a very powerful temptation.

Satan may not use the exact temptations Jesus faced when tempting us, but he does use similar ones. We each have different weaknesses. Satan realizes this, and capitalizes on our individual weaknesses. Sin occurs when we give in to the temptation (see James 1:13-15). We can see that Jesus truly was tempted in every way like we are yet without sin. How did He do it?

How Jesus Overcame Temptation

Jesus had a powerful weapon to use against temptation. Notice how He faced each temptation placed before Him: "But he answered, 'It is written . . . ' Jesus said to him, 'Again, it is written . . . ' Then Jesus said to him, 'Be gone Satan! for it is written . . . ' " (4:4, 7, 10). Jesus' powerful weapon was the Word of God. One of the parts of the Christian armour to enable us to withstand the temptations around us is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:10-17). The Bible, God's

World, is truly a powerful weapon in helping us to overcome sin and temptation. This power comes not from having a Bible, but from knowing what it contains. When these temptations were placed before Jesus. He was able to instantly see them for what they really were—temptations to sin—and then use the Word of God to combat and overcome them.

How well do we know our Bible? Are we able to distinguish right from wrong? Can we use our Bible knowledge to help us overcome temptation? It is interesting to notice that Jesus did not use any supernatural force or power to overcome temptation. He didn't use any complicated logic. He didn't use anything that we couldn't use. He simply used His knowledge of the Word. We need to know God's Word to be able to use it. Bible study is therefore very important. It is important to have time set aside daily to learn God's Word. It is important to be at Bible classes and worship periods that we might learn more. But, not only do we need the knowledge, we also need to be able to apply it, as Jesus did.

The Devil Left Him

Jesus overcame each and every temptation the devil placed before Him. He answered each temptation by quoting from God's Word. What happened next is very interesting: "Then the devil left him" (Luke 4:11). Luke records that "when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13). Sometime it may seem that the temptations we face are too numerous to overcome. It may look like the only way out is to give in to temptation. But, we need to hang in there. We need to continue resisting the temptations placed before us. Jesus did, and the devil left for a time. We are given that same promise: "Resist the Devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). The implication from Luke is that the devil left Jesus, but that he was not giving up—he would be back. We will face other temptations, but we can overcome them. With each victory over temptation, we will be strengthened to overcome.

Conclusion

One of the clear messages for us from Matthew's account of Jesus' temptation is that we do not have to give in to temptation. As a follower of Jesus, we need to imitate the way He overcame temptation. Jesus was tempted but He met each temptation with the sword of the Spirit. This may seem so simple. But, God's ways are not complicated. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 10:13 that with every temptation the devil

puts before us, God puts a way of escape. Knowing God's Word enables us to recognize sin for what it is and also to be aware of the way of escape that God provided. We need to know God's Word. Let us continually be learners—learning and applying God's Word, so that we like Jesus can overcome temptation.

Eyes Of Compassion

PHILIP W. THOMPSON

"O help me, help me!" The agonized cry could barely be heard. Beaten into a semi-conscious state by robbers, the victim could utter no more than this forlorn plea. He hoped it would be loud enough to capture the attention of anyone passing by. But would anyone pass by? The fear that he would be left to die alone overwhelmed him.

When suddenly, he heard footsteps along the rocky path, a horrifying thought gripped him. The robbers were returning to finish him off! No! Out of the corner of his bloodied eyes the victim saw a man who possessed the distinctive appearance of a priest. Hope filled his heart. At last he would be rescued. Or would he?

Yes, he would be rescued, but not by the priest, nor by the Levite who passed by also. Instead he would be saved by the least likely rescuer of all, a Samaritan. That unnamed Samaritan still helps us to understand the meaning of an attribute that is seen too rarely in our world today—compassion.

Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) in response to a question which a lawyer raised in order to test the Teacher. The first question which the lawyer raised was, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (v. 25). Jesus answered the lawyer's question with another question: "What is written in the Law?" (v. 26). Thus Jesus forced the lawyer to answer his own question which, according to Jesus, he did correctly: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and your neighbour as yourself" (v 27, NKJV). Embarrassed that Jesus had turned the tables on him, the lawyer attempted to save face by posing a second question that he hoped would trap Jesus and vindicate himself: "And who is my neighbour?" (v. 29).

By asking this question the lawyer revealed his belief that some people were not his "neighbours" and, therefore, not worthy of his

compassion. Jesus parable of the Good Samaritan exposed his false and dispassionate belief. In fact, Jesus completely shifted the issue. At the end of his parable, Jesus asked the lawyer, "Which of these do you think proved to be a neighbour?" (v. 36).

According to Jesus, therefore, the question was not, "Who is my neighbour?", but "Am I a neighbour?"; not "Who is worthy of my compassion?", but "Am I compassionate?". The parable compels us to consider whether we, measured by the standard of compassion demonstrated by the Samaritan, are compassionate.

There were four travellers in Jesus parable. The first traveller, who probably was a Jew, fell victim to criminals. Robbed even of his clothes and severely beaten, he was left to die. A priest was the second traveller and a Levite the third. Presumably, they were journeying to or from Jerusalem in connection with their duties at the Temple. When they saw the battered victim, each in his own turn passed by on the other side.

At this point in the story, the original hearers were filled with expectation, wondering who the next traveller would be. If they were anticipating an anti-clerical ending, they would have expected an Israelite layman to come next. "A certain Samaritan." Jesus continued.

Disbelief must have overwhelmed the hearers when Jesus named the fourth traveller. No one would have expected that a Samaritan would help the Jewish victim, because there was nothing but bad blood between the Jew and Samaritan (John 4:9; 8:48; Luke 9:51-56). Yet, a Samaritan was the hero of Jesus parable. After giving the victim first aid, the compassionate Samaritan, at great expense to himself, also arranged for his continuing care (vv. 34, 35).

Jesus then drove home the main point of his parable by asking, "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbour?" (v. 36). Certainly, it could have been the priest and the Levite. Instead of passing by on the other side, they should have acted on God's Word, which prescribed compassion (e.g. Micah 6:8; see also Matthew 9:13; 12:7; 23:23).

We will never know the reasons why the priest and the Levite did not help the victim. Were they afraid they would arrive too late for their service in the temple? Were they concerned about becoming ceremonially defiled? Did they feel the victim was unworthy of their compassion? we are only certain that they could have helped but did not.

Instead, it was the Samaritan who went the second mile in meeting

the needs of the victim. Why? The structure of the text highlights the answer. The words Jesus used to describe the reactions of the travellers follow a pattern. All three "saw" the victim (vv. 31-33). When the priest and the Levite "saw" the victim, they both "passed by on the other side" (vv. 31-32). In contrast, when the Samaritan "saw" the victim, "he felt compassion" (v. 33). Though all three "saw" the victim, only the Samaritan felt compassion for him. Again, why? The priest and the Levite "saw" the victim with their eyes, but the Samaritan "saw" him with his heart!

The word pattern that Jesus used to describe the reaction of the Samaritan appears elsewhere in the New Testament to describe the compassionate actions of two other figures. One figure is Christ himself: "And when the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her" (Luke 7:13; see also Matthew 9:36; 14:14). The other figure is the father in the parable of the prodigal son: "his father saw him and felt compassion for him" (Luke 15:20). The father, of course, represents God himself.

Thus the heart of the Samaritan was filled with the kind of compassion that is characteristic of the Father and the Son, while the hearts of the priest and the Levite were devoid of such compassion. What was the difference?

Perhaps the Samaritan knew, in a way that the priest and the Levite would never know, what it was like to need compassion. Throughout his life, the Samaritan had been oppressed in various ways. He could easily picture himself in need of help—beaten and wounded—just like the victim whom he saw beside the road.

On the other hand, the priest and the Levite could never see themselves in place of the victim—helpless and hopeless, in need of compassion. Because they were unaware of their own need of compassion, they were not motivated to respond to the needs of others (Luke 7:36-50; Matthew 18:23-35).

As the Samaritan came to the rescue of the hapless victim, we must come to the aid of many victims today. The victims are everywhere about us, in our communities and congregations. They are the boys and girls, the teenagers, the divorced, the widowed, the orphans, the unwed mothers, the alcoholics and the drug addicts who are crying for help. Without purpose and unfulfilled, they feel alone and rejected. They long for genuine relationships. They are sick and dying. They are crying out—sometimes with words and sometimes through the shadow of their shattered lives—"have compassion on me!" Will we hear their cry? Will we see with our hearts and not just with our eyes?

Deciding to hear their pleas will present untold challenges to us. Being compassionate is inconvenient. It was "by chance" that the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan happened by the victim (v. 31). Opportunities for us to show compassion will be just as unexpected. We cannot make appointments to show compassion because people seldom schedule their own hurts and heartaches. If we choose to be compassionate, be sure it will interrupt our best laid plans.

Being compassionate is costly. It cost the Samaritan an entire day from his journey, as well as two denarii, roughly equivalent to two days' wages. It cost Jesus His life. In energy, emotion, money and time, being compassionate will cost us also.

Being compassionate involves action. Passing by on the other side required no effort on the part of the priest or the Levite. The Samaritan extended great effort caring for the helpless victim. If we choose to be compassionate, be sure that we will find ourselves in the trenches, battling with all our heart to help meet the needs of others.

Do we have eyes of compassion? Those tender eyes that see from the heart. Those honest eyes that see right through prejudice and pride to the hurts of people who are in need of compassion just as we are. Those merciful eyes that compel us to be less concerned with the question, "Who is my neighbour?" and more concerned with the one, "Have I proved myself to be a neighbour?"

Membership In The Lord's Church

ANDREW GARDINER

Many people who are sincerely religious are very mistaken about becoming and remaining members of the Church. Denominational practices and beliefs have made the matter very confusing. Yet the New Testament is very clear in its teaching. Nowhere in it do we read anything about "joining the church" or about "the church of your choice". In Acts 2:41 we are told that on the first day of Pentecost, after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, "they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

In verse 47 of the same chapter we read that these people were "Praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved". We are aware that in

many of the manuscripts of the New Testament, the Greek word for church does not appear in this passage, however there is the suggestion among scholars that even without the actual word the passage suggests the idea of being added to the fellowship. Thus it becomes evident that it is something that we cannot join, but is something to which the Lord does the adding. The question then is, "How is this effected?"

Conversion To Christ

The answer begins with our conversion to Christ. During his lifetime Jesus made the terms of discipleship very clear. In Matthew 16:24-26 Jesus is recorded as saying. "If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever will save his life shall lose it: and whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Jesus makes it clear that discipleship is not something superficial and formal, but is something to be taken seriously. It demands the denial of self, the death of the old self, and the total dedication of the new self to Jesus for time and eternity.

After His resurrection he appeared to the apostles and commanded them to spread his message. Putting together the ideas in the different records of the great commission, we have certain commands:

1. Go therefore and teach (R.V. make disciples of) all nations or preach the gospel.
2. He that believeth . . .
3. Repentance . . . to be preached to all nations.
4. Baptizing them in (R.V. into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (A.S.R.V.)
5. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you

Included in this commission were certain promises that would be fulfilled on obedience. These were the remission of sins and salvation. The references are Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; and Luke 24:47.

In response to this commission "they went forth and preached everywhere the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). A careful study of their preaching as

recorded in the Book of Acts shows how they carried out His will and what happened. Examples of conversion are found in Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, 16; from these passages it is evident:

1. They preached about Jesus, that He lived, was put to death, rose again, and ascended to the Father.
2. People believed the message which was sometimes referred to as "the good news".
3. Those who believed gave evidence of a great change in their lives.
4. They confessed Jesus as the Son of God and Lord of their lives.
5. They were immersed in water as an act of commitment to Jesus.

On this basis they accepted the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

6. From that time on they were accepted as members of the Lord's church. However, that was not the end of the matter. What followed showed their . . .

Commitment To Christ

This was shown firstly by their meeting together each first day of the week to worship God, to remember what Christ had done for them, and have fellowship with one another (Acts 2:42). When they met together their activities included singing praise to God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12), partaking of the Lord's supper (I Corinthians 11:17-34), contributing money to the work of the Lord (I Corinthians 16:1-2), praying (I Thessalonians 5:17; I Timothy 2:1-6), and receiving instruction from the Word of the Lord (Acts 20:7).

Their commitment was also shown in the pattern of living to which they were exhorted. There are many passages in the Epistles of the New Testament which made application to the Church of the principles of Holy living that Jesus taught during his lifetime. They were constantly exhorted to holiness (I Peter 1:13-16), purity (Ephesians 5:3-20) love (I Corinthians 13:1 ff.), unity (Ephesians 4:1-16), self-control (Galatians 5:22-26), and growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18). Being a member of the Church was to demand a complete change in their lives which was to last as long as they lived.

Being a member of the church also demanded a life spent in service. As Christians they were to help one another. Paul speaks of the

example of the brethren in Macedonia (II Corinthians 8:1-7). The grace of liberality was to be manifest among them, and not to themselves only but also to those outside the Church (Galatians 6:9-10). They were to work for the edification of one another (Romans 15:1-4). The major mission of their lives was to spread the GOOD NEWS that Jesus had come into the world to bring salvation to all mankind (I Corinthians 9:16-23). Membership of the church was . . .

A Continuing Fellowship

There were boundaries to this fellowship. In writing to the Corinthians Paul made it clear that the incestuous man was to be put away from them (I Corinthians 5:13). This is always a painful process, but there are clear guidelines for it in the New Testament. Those who cause division and offences are to be marked and avoided (Romans 16:17). The church is to withdraw from those who walk disorderly (II Thessalonians 3:6, 11-14). The apostle Peter speaks of those "who have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled therein and overcome 'that' the latter end is worse with them than the beginning" (II Peter 2:20). In I Cor. 6:9-10, and Gal. 5:19-21, Paul lists those things which he describes as unrighteous, and works of the flesh and says that those who live in them shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

However, even in such passages there is hope. In I Corinthians he wrote, "And such were some of you; but you were washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." It is because of the power of such a message that Paul could write of the Church, "that He [Christ] might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

How Sin Deceives US

CLEM THURMAN

If we really knew what sin does—if we really believed what sin does—we would not so readily engage in it. Scripture tells us, "*Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today; lest any one of you be*

hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:12-13). This is both a warning and an exhortation to the children of God. To become hardened means to become calloused, morally obstinate and stubborn. It indicates an unwillingness, or a developed inability, to listen to the instructions of God. Sin is "*deceitful*," which means it fools us. Sin never presents itself in its true light, but gives a false impression by appearance or statement or influence.

The warning about what sin does should make us aware of how important it is to listen to God and mold our lives accordingly. Each of us is tempted (James 1:14), and we cannot avoid that entirely. But we must prayerfully consider the deceitfulness of sin when temptation comes. The picture is seldom what it appears to be. Sin is deceitful because it presents itself as something other than what it really is.

Sin Pretends to Be Our Servant

History abounds with accounts of kings who made alliances with other kings, believing that they could make the other their servant. Often the reverse was true. The apostle Peter wrote, "*For, uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice in the lust of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error; promising them liberty, while they themselves are the bond-servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage*" (2 Pet. 2: 18-19). Jesus pointed out the same truth when He said, "*Everyone that doeth sin is the bond-servant of sin*" (John 8:34). Sin enslaves. But it doesn't picture itself that way in temptation.

One takes up the habit of drinking liquor, for it helps him to "have a good time" and he is convinced he can control it. Another alcoholic is born! Another takes up drugs, and is quickly enslaved by them. Instead of the man controlling the habit the habit controls the man. The Chinese had a saying, "First, the man takes a drink. Then the drink takes a drink. Then the drink takes the man." That is really the way all sin progresses—whether it is liquor, drugs, sex, lying, gossip or whatever. The only solution is that found in the attitude of Jesus, "*Father, not my will, but thine, be done*" (Luke 22:42). We should know that, "*Ye are the servants of him whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness*" (Rom. 6:16). No man can control sin. The only solution is to leave it and avoid it.

Sin Offers Us Special "Benefits"

Sin always promises more than it gives, and gives much different from what it promises. Satan, in the form of a serpent, deceived Eve. Enticing her to eat the fruit God had forbidden, he said, "*Ye shall not surely die . . . ye shall be as gods*" (Gen. 3:4-5). Notice the reaction of Eve, "*When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat*" (v. 6). Eve wanted to be wise, the fruit was beautiful, it appeared to be good. She ate. Simple. But the results were not that simple, for Satan never told Eve the rest of the story. Sin presents itself as good and wholesome, bringing desired benefits if we will but partake. But sin lies.

Sin says, "If you want to be popular, if you want power and wealth, then do this." But, regardless of what "this" is, sin deceives. The beer commercials tell where the real gusto is, what a real mountain man does, what brings real pleasure. But they don't tell of the millions who become alcoholics from drinking beer, and even lie by saying that beer drinking alone cannot make one an alcoholic. All kinds of sex are paraded across the TV screen as "the normal way of life" and the way to achieve real happiness in life. We even hear much today about "safe sex." But they don't play up the effects of extramarital sex—venereal diseases. AIDS, broken marriages, lack of self esteem, weakened moral fiber and lack of ability to trust others. The truth is, God's way is still best—monogamous relationship within marriage.

Sin Proclaims Itself as God's Way

The wise man stated, "*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*" (Prov. 14:12). For many people, if a thing seems right, that makes it right for them. But God says that isn't true. Saul of Tarsus, a leader among the Jews, persecuted Christians. He even helped to put them to death, simply because they believed Jesus to be the Christ. He later said, "*I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which I did*" (Acts 26:9). But he also called himself "*the chief of sinners*" (1 Tim. 1:15) because he did it. He thought he was right, but thinking it didn't make it so.

The Bible says that we are justified by faith (Rom. 3:23-26; 5:1). One looks at that and concludes, "We are justified by faith only." But that is NOT what the Bible says. In fact, "*Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*" (James 2:24). The sin of rebellion and

stubbornness against God often comes disguised as, "It seems to me." A man once told me, "John 3:16 is all the truth I need to be saved." Now, I firmly believe that verse: *"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."* But I also believe Mark 16:16, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,"* Both passages are God's truth, and if one wants to please God, he will not try to array one against the other. He will accept both, for both are God's word. The apostle Paul writes of *"the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved"* (2. Thes. 2:9-10).

The people of Berea were commended, *"They received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily whether these things be so"* (Acts 17:11). That is the course God recommends to each of us. Listen to His word, and examine every teaching we hear by what God says in His word. Sin will deceive, and false teaching is one of Satan's favorite tactics. In fact, Satan has *"ministers"* in the world to further his cause and oppose God's teaching. Because they disguise themselves as *"servants of Christ"* (2 Cor. 11:13-15), they deceive many and lead them from the Lord. The only way you can be sure you are right is to study the Bible for yourself to find what God says.

Sin Promises Escape from the Consequences

There is a simple rule in life, but many refuse to learn it. *"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"* (Gal. 6:7). People who sow *"violence"* will reap it: *"All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword"* (Matt. 26:52). When you sow love and courtesy and kindness, you will find it coming back to you. But if we sow *"sin"* in this life? *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die . . . The wages of sin is death"* (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23). The progression to that result is given clearly, *"Each man is tempted when he is led away by his own lust and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin; and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death"* (James 1:14-15). We need to learn that we will reap what we sow. When we engage in sin, the results are certain.

Sin would try to persuade us that God will not really punish our disobedience. Some will even contend that there is no *"hell."* And the idea of God punishing in fire those who don't obey Him, *"Well, a God of love just wouldn't do that."* But what does God say? *"The Son of man*

shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:41-42). Hear Jesus as He describes the judgment-scene: "He shall say to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels . . . These shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:41-46). The apostle John describes the scene shown to him, "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. . . This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10, 14-15). The same God who promised heaven to those who serve Him also promised hell to those who do not.

Most of us don't really have a problem with recognizing sin. We know what it is. But it deceives us with false promises. We must learn to look upon sin as God does, that which separates us from Him and will condemn us. Sin lies by promising unlimited pleasure without consequences. Let us learn with Moses to reject *"the pleasures of sin for a season"* (Heb. 11:24) in order to enjoy the pleasures of heaven forever.

Why Should We Give?

JOHNNY RAMSEY

I often have people ask, "Why should we give?" Proper consideration of this question should cause all Christians to cease their opposition to sermons on the subject of giving. An honest, scriptural answer to the question will rebuke us for our indifference toward giving to the Lord, and it will admonish us to be more liberal and sacrificial in our monetary output to the cause of Christ.

First of all, we should give of our best to the Master in view of what He did for us. The song writer has pictured Jesus as saying, *"I gave my life for thee—what hast thou given for me?"* In 2 Cor. 8:9 we read, *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that though he were rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might become rich."* That passage alone should cause us to think

soberly in regard to that which we return to our blessed Redeemer. Jehovah was willing to send His Son (John 3:16) "*As a ransom for many*" (1 Tim. 2:6) to die on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24) for "*the sins of the whole world*" (1 John 2:4). Jesus was willing to leave the ivory palaces to enter a world of woe in order to "*redeem unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*" (Titus 2:14).

The willingness of Jesus to give Himself for us is pictured in these beautiful words, "*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man*" (Heb. 2:9). When we realize that God was willing and Christ submission to that purpose (Phil. 2:5-8), for the sweetest gem of heaven to leave such a blissful place to enter the sin-cursed world just to die for us, we must exclaim "*Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift*" (2 Cor. 9:15). Beloved brethren, we should give liberally of our time, talent and money to show our appreciation for all that God and Christ have done for us.

Why should we give? Because the Father still has some unfinished business that can be taken care of only by His servants. We should be extremely flattered and constantly challenged when we realize that "*we have this treasure in earthen vessels*" (2 Cor. 4:7). Jesus said that we were stewards of His house (1 Cor. 4:1) and workers in His field. The church belonging to Christ cannot fulfill its mission with money, men and talent. Unless we are willing to surrender our wills to the divine purpose and be used by Jehovah to spread the gospel over the world, even as the waters cover the sea, we just have not grasped the spirit of giving.

Why should we give? Because Jesus said, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35).