

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

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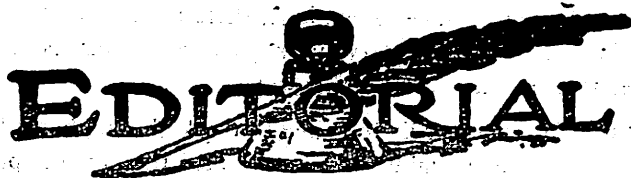
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## Examining Self Before Partaking of the Lord's Supper

While visiting with Bro. Bob Prater, a missionary in the Ivory Coast, West Africa, he told me that they had made it a practice there that before the Lord Supper was served, all were asked to examine themselves to see if they were prepared to partake of it. He said this was based on what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

Bro. Prater asked, "Why read those verses and then immediately pass the bread and the cup without giving the members an opportunity to repent of their sins, to confess their faults, and to

ask for the prayers of the church?" He went on to say that this was a perfect time to offer the Lord's invitation, to encourage the erring to correct their lives, and to prepare themselves to partake of the Lord's Supper. He also said that as a result of using this procedure that he had seen many return to the Lord who might have not done so otherwise.

After thinking about all of that, I can't help but agree with what Bro. Prater said. As we normally partake of the Lord's Supper, however, we hardly give one time to examine himself. Some member gets up, walks over to the Lord's Table, and without any explanation whatsoever, on most occasions, picks up the plate that contains the bread, offers thanks for it, and it is passed. Then the same procedure is carried out with the cup or the fruit of the vine. I don't know what the visitors would think, if they are not familiar with the Lord's Supper, why partake of it, etc. I suppose in most congregations, there are few visitors, if any, and it is assumed that everyone knows what this is all about. Besides it saves time to do it this way.

But before one hardly has time to think about what is happening, let alone to examine his own life then the bread is presented to him, and next the cup, and he either partakes of them or he doesn't. Therefore, since we don't give the members time to examine their lives, and perhaps to confess their faults and to make things right with God and the church, then many may go on and partake of the bread, and cup unworthily, and thus to damn their own souls. Of course it might be argued that they should have examined their lives, motives, etc., before they got to this point. It just so happens that some people don't always do everything like they should. On the other hand, if a talk was made before the Lord's Supper was served, and an invitation was given to encourage the members to make correction of their lives before partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, in memory of the body and blood of Christ, then this could be the very thing that would cause them to think more seriously about their situation than anything else that might be done, and it might be that some would therefore respond to the invitation, correct their lives, and be able then to proceed with the Lord's Supper as faithful children of God.

Brethren, I know of no law that says that we must proceed with the Lord's Supper in this way, but at the same time I know of no law that would forbid that we follow this procedure. It would appear that best way to handle these matters would be in the way that would be in the best interest of the spiritual welfare of those who partake of the Lord's Supper.



**associate  
editorial**

## Watch Yourself

"Be careful," often parents would instruct their children, because they don't want them to get into some trouble. Being careful means to be watchful. We need to be watchful while crossing a road or while eating, or in business or in most everything else. Christ used this important word of warning in His teaching on several occasions. After teaching the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, He said, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man is coming." (Matthew 25:13). Just prior to His death on the cross, in the garden of Gethsemane, He had instructed His disciples: "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death, stay here and watch." Then He went a little farther to pray. When He came back He found them sleeping. Then He said, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation, the spirit truly is ready but the flesh is weak." (Mark 14: 34, 38). To the church at Sardis the Lord has said, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have heard and received; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."

(Revelation 3:2, 3). Peter also wrote the Christians and said, "Be sober, be vigilant (*Or watchful*) : because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8). From these Scriptures we see the great importance of watchfulness. We need to be watchful and be ready at all times, because we do not know when the Lord is going to come in His judgment. We need to watch and pray so that we may not enter into temptation. We need to watch our lives and our works, and we need to be watchful because the old devil goes about like a dangerous lion seeking whom he may devour. Satan is God's enemy, he doesn't want any people to be reconciled with God or follow His will. The devil wants to prevent us from going into God's heaven. God is in heaven, and He wants all of us to come there and to live with Him through all eternity. But the devil wants all of us to go with him into hell and be his companions there for all eternity. So God tells us to be watchful!

Also, we need to watch our faith. Some people have very little faith, weak and doubting faith. In the New Testament James describes such a faith "like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind." (James 1:6). Peter possessed such a faith before the death and the resurrection of Christ. On one occasion when he, with other disciples, had seen the Lord walking on the sea he got very excited and wanted the Lord to command him to come to Him so that he could also walk on the sea like the Lord, which the Lord did immediately. Peter then began to walk on the water to go to Jesus. But seconds later when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14: 31). Peter had faith in Jesus that He could command him to walk and he even walked a few steps, but his faith was not strong enough to walk all the way. He doubted, he had little faith. How much we need to watch our faith. We need to have a faith strong enough to do whatever God says. We must not question God, we must not doubt His commandments. Let us watch our faith.

Then, we need to watch our speech or our language. When

Peter had denied the Lord, as Jesus had already predicted that he would do so, the record tells us that those who by stood Peter they told him, "Surely you also are one of them, because your speech betrays you." (Matthew 26:73), Christ had taught that a tree is known by its fruit. (Matthew 12:33). If you are a Christian then it would be evident by your speech. A Christian would not use cursing or filthy words. Foul and abusive language is not the mark of a Christian. Ephesians 4:29 and 31 reads, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers . . . . Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice." Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." So we need to watch our language, our words that we speak. Also remember that Jesus taught: "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12:37).

Our emotions is another thing that we need to be watchful about. Many times it happens that we let our emotions out of our control and thus make us sin. Even Moses, the meekest of all men, let this happen to him, and consequently he had to pay a great price for his sin. In the book of Numbers in the Old Testament we read that when the Israelites during their journey through the wilderness faced the lack of water they became very angry and began to speak against Moses and his brother Aaron. Moses and Aaron prayed to God for a solution to the problem. Then God spoke to Moses and said, "Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron, gather the assembly together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water?" (Numbers 20:8). While Moses and Aaron were listening to God, people were still speaking against them, making them responsible for their plight. We read from the record, "So Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock; and he said to them, Hear now, you rebels: Must we bring water for you out of this rock? Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod: and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank." (Numbers 20:9-11). But then what happened? The record

tells us that God was very much displeased with the way Moses had acted in his anger. First, instead of giving credit to God he has said, "Must we bring water for you out of this rock." And then, secondly, instead of speaking to the rock, as God had asked him to do, he struck the rock twice. Obviously, what Moses did he did it in his anger, he let his emotions get out of his control. But, then, we read that the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe me, to hallow me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." (Numbers 20:12). What a tremendous price both Moses and Aaron had to pay. For forty years they had led the congregation of the people for entering into the promised land of God. But because of their sin they were not allowed to enter. This teaches us that many would not enter the heavenly city of God because they just let their emotions run out of their control and thus sin. Getting angry is not sin, but when in our anger we let our emotions run out of our control and we say and do such things which are wrong that is sin. The Bible says: "Be angry, and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath." (Ephesians 4:26). We should, therefore, watch our emotions.

When we therefore make Jesus our example and follow Him daily in our lives then He helps us to trust in God as He Himself did; He helps us to use our power of speech to glorify God and edify men; and He helps us control our emotions when we get angry. The Bible says: "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth, Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness." (1 Peter 2:21-24).

# Is Denominationalism Necessary?

V.E. Howard

Ladies and gentlemen, are you aware of how many different religious groups exist today? We are living in a highly denominationalized world. The fact of matter is that we have several hundred different and distinct religious organizations, usually referred to as denominations. These different and contradicting religious groups exist primarily because of the desire on the part of men to perpetuate some particular doctrine they have espoused.

During the first century, and immediately thereafter, only one church existed. It was neither Catholic nor Protestant. This church of Jesus Christ existed centuries before either of these religious movements began. During the early age of Christianity, there was but one church and it was not divided into sects, parties or denominations of various kinds, Paul declared that the church is the body of Christ and he affirmed that there is one body (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:24). All who obeyed the gospel of Christ were added to this church. They could not "join the church of their choice" because no other "choice" was available! The saved were added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47). The original church of Christ was a united body and all Christians, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, were members of it.

## DENOMINATIONALISM UNJUSTIFIED

People generally accept the idea of modern denominationalism, but such a divided condition is wholly unjustified. The purpose of our study is to demonstrate that denominationalism is unjustified, not only because it is unscriptural, but because it is also *unnecessary*. When we speak against denominationalism, we are referring to the system, not its persons. The Bible opposes the principles, the organizations and the aims of denominationalism. If a man is a gospel preacher he must condemn those practices which the Bible condemn. Each man should remember, however

that if a system is wrong, it is sinful to be a part of it, or to encourage it. The apostle John declared: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11).

Multitudes of people spend their time, money, work and interest in advancing denominational causes. All these efforts could be expended in promoting Christian unity instead of a useless and defenseless divisions.

### POSSIBILITY OF CHRISTIANITY

My friends, consider this vital question: Is denominationalism necessary for the *existence* of Christianity? The possibility of Christianity depends upon the existence of the seed of Christianity, the word of God. Jesus taught that the seed of the kingdom is the word of God. (Luke 8:11).

The seed of the kingdom is the teaching, or doctrine, of Christ-the gospel of Christ. The apostle Paul proudly affirmed: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation for every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

The seed of the kingdom-this gospel of salvation-is the word of truth that sanctifies a man. Hear the words of Christ as He prays to God, the Father: "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The truth of God-the inspired Scriptures-will make up the seed of the kingdom in each generation. The possibility of Christianity continuing through the centuries does not depend upon denominationalism.

On the other hand, the existence of the *seed* of Christianity also does not depend upon denominationalism. The seed of the kingdom, the word of God, existed long before the first denomination came into being. And the seed of the kingdom of Christ will continue to exist even if all the denominations crumble and vanish. Peter declared: "But the word of the Lord abideth for ever. And



this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you" (I Peter 1:25).

## ACTUALITY OF CHRISTIANITY

Beloved, denominationalism is not necessary for the existence of Christianity. The *actuality* of Christianity depends upon the preaching and acceptance of the Christianity, the word of God! Is the sowing of the seed dependent upon any one denomination? If so, which one? If any one denomination ceased to exist today, would Christianity cease? The answer is obvious! Christianity does not depend upon any one sect or denomination.

Ladies and gentlemen, what would happen if we multiplied this example by ten? If ten denominations became extinct today, would Christianity cease? If Christianity ceased to exist because of the ending of these ten denominations, then it would logically follow that all the others were unnecessary. Yet, if Christianity continued after the demise of ten denominations, we would be forced to conclude that those ten groups, at least, were unnecessary.

Some maintain, however, that it takes all the denominations to have Christianity. If this be true, then it must follow that if a new denomination springs up tomorrow, we did not have complete Christianity today. This is ridiculous!

Men contend that each denomination teaches some truth and that all of them together teach all the truth: and thereby we have Christianity. Yet, it must be obvious that much that is taught by the denominational world is not the truth. The seed of the kingdom, the word of truth, does not contradict itself, yet the denominational doctrines are continually at variance with each other.

Would it not be possible for a man to examine the various doctrines and accept only the true ones, rejecting all anti-scriptural teachings? If a man accepted only the truths and rejected the errors that are being preached, what denomination would he belong to then? The obvious answer is NONE! But this man would be a child of God, a Christian only! What else is necessary for the existence of Christianity?

Beloved, hear me! Are you listening? Denominationalism, then, is not necessary for the existence of Christianity! Paul and Peter, and all the faithful of the first century, were *Christians only*—they were not denominationalists. Christianity existed centuries before the first denomination was begun. If there were Christians over 1900 years ago without any denominations, why can't the same condition exist today? It can happen again! *It is happening* for hundreds of thousands throughout the world! Every Bible truth can be preached and all of it can be practiced even if the denominational world crumbles into dust. Preached and practiced by whom, you ask? By New Testament Christians!

### SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

Ladies and gentlemen, surely you realize that denominationalism is not necessary for the existence of Christianity. And if it is not necessary for the existence of Christianity, denominationalism is not necessary for any *spiritual blessings*. Just as physical blessings are vital to the body, spiritual blessings are necessary to the spirit of man. Our spiritual blessings in Christ may be said to involve three special principles.

First, spiritual blessings involve *what we receive*. When one is saved, he gains the remission of his sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the promise of eternal life.

Second, spiritual blessings involve *what we become*. When one is saved, he becomes a child of God, a Christian. He is not a certain *brand* or some *kind* of a Christian, he is simply a Christian.

Third, spiritual blessings involve *where we are*. When one is saved, he is in Christ and in covenant relationship with God. The apostle Paul wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

Beloved, denominationalism is not necessary for the enjoyment of any one of these spiritual blessings! The great majority of denominational leaders preach that a man is saved before he ever becomes a member of any denomination. When one joins a denomination, does he receive forgiveness, does he become a child

of God, a Christian? Does one have to join a denomination in order to come into covenant relationship with God? No one will affirm such a thing!

But, let us give further consideration to this matter. Are not all of these matters prerequisites to membership in a denomination? Then, if one may enjoy these spiritual blessings outside of denominations, why have denominations, division and strife?

## CHRIST'S CHURCH IS NECESSARY

Although denominations are not necessary, one must be a member of the Lord's church in order to obtain these spiritual blessings. The Lord's church is not a denomination, a part of the whole; Christ's church is His blood-bought kingdom, or body. The apostle Paul spoke of "the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Only those in the Lord's church have been redeemed by His shed blood. The Hebrew writer affirmed that "all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). The blood of Christ purchased the church of Christ! The blood and the church, the body of Christ, are inseparable.

Furthermore, membership in the Lord's church is necessary for salvation because only those in the Lord's body are saved. The church of Christ is the blood-bought institution to which the Lord adds all those who are saved. In Acts 2:47, Luke, the inspired historian, related how that "the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved." The King James Version renders this passage as follows: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Beloved, when Christ saves a man, He does so by incorporating him into the blood-washed throng, the church. The apostle Paul stated that "Christ is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body . . . Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church" (Ephesians 5:23-27). My friends, the church does not save; Christ saves! The Bible teaches, however, that the church is composed of the saved, and that Christ adds the saved to the

church, having sanctified and cleansed it—the church—by the washing of water with the word. All the saved are in the Lord's church, in His body.

Membership is necessary in the Lord's church because only those in the body of Christ are in God's family. The apostle Paul spoke of "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:15). The house, or household of God, here refers to the family of God and the fact that all those who are members of the family of God are a part of the church of the living God. Our heavenly Father has His children in His family and the Bible describes those children as the church. It is not a matter of being saved by the church, rather it is a matter of *what the church is!* The church is the saved! The church is the children of God! The church is the redeemed!

Furthermore, membership in the Lord's church is essential because the Scriptures teach that only those in the church are in Christ. Paul declared: "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). The apostle also explained that "ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26, 27). The same acts of obedience that put a man into Christ also put him into the church, the body of Christ. A man cannot be in Christ without being a member of His body, the church of the New Testament. Denominationalism is not necessary for man's salvation, but the Lord's church is essential. The Lord's church is the saved; it is composed of all who are in Christ.

Membership in the Lord's body is essential because only those in the church of our Lord are reconciled to God. Hear the words of Paul in Ephesians 2:13-16: "But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one . . . that he might create in himself of the two one new man . . . and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross." Beloved, reconciliation to God is *through* the cross of Christ and *in* the body of Christ. In Ephesians 1:22, 23, Paul clearly defined this one body as the church of Jesus Christ. The apostle spoke of how that God "gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body".

Ladies and gentlemen, consider all these blessings mentioned in the Bible. Were these spiritual blessings available before the existence of denominationalism? Certainly they were! Therefore, all men must admit that denominationalism is unnecessary for the salvation of souls.

We have seen in this study that denominationalism is not necessary for the *existence of Christianity* or for the reception of the *spiritual blessings* in Christ. Beloved, you can be a Christian—a child of God—without ever belonging to any human religious organization. You can be a member of the New Testament church in the twentieth century—a Christian only—by obeying the gospel, the seed of the kingdom. Remember the words of I Peter 4:16: “If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name.” What religious name are YOU wearing?

## What It Means To Sleep In Jesus

Thomas Premanandam

Although the Bible speaks of a couple of instances of the dead being revived to life, we are not in possession of any knowledge of the meaning of Death and its nature. In other words human thought has failed to offer a satisfactory definition of it. However many definitions assigned to it are normally based upon individual beliefs and convictions. Some say that death is a complete end of the existence. Some define it as total cessation of life; some believe it is a release from labour and pain but a great many assert that death means separation of the spirit from the body.

The biologist affirms that there is no death as such and life persistently triumphs over death in the process of constant “Death and resurrection” which science calls Metabolism. Cells of the body must die in order that new cells may be born and life may continue. Great religious systems advocate different views as to the meaning of death. Let us examine what light they throw on the subject.

**THE HINDU VIEW:** According to this view life and death

are governed by Fate. "I die only to be reborn" is the belief of the Hindus. So for them death is not the end of life: The cycle of births and deaths continues unceasing through all eternity. In other words a Hindu believes in the transmigration of souls. Fundamentally the Hindu concept of the soul differs from the Christian concept.

**THE ISLAMIC VIEW:** The system laid down in Koran was essentially founded in the Christian doctrine inculcated in the New Testament. Muslims believe in the Resurrection of the body, the Judgment, the Rewards and Punishments. They also believe that the souls of the dead will again be united to the bodies at the time of resurrection. This leads us to the conclusion that according to Islam, death is a separation of the spirit from the body.

**THE BUDDHISTIC VIEW:** Buddha advocates the doctrine of Transmigration of souls modifying it in such details as the rest of his teaching necessitated.

**THE CHRISTIAN VIEW:** Christians believe that death is not the end of life but a separation of the immaterial spirit from the material body. The Bible says "The dust returns to the ground it came from and the spirit returns to God who gave it." (Ecc.12:7). Again in the Bible physical death is described in such euphemistic and figurative terms as Sleep, Door or Gate, Friend or Agent and so on.

When we close our eyes in natural slumber, although our bodily senses are shut off from contact with the rest of the world, our mind is still active in the body. In this sense, Sleep is metaphorically used for Death. Since death is relative, the body dies and the soul continues to exist. This idea was not foreign to the Jews. They spoke of the dead as sleeping with their fathers. (Deu. 31:16; 2 Sam. 7:12; and I Kings 2:10). Again sleep with reference to Death was used even of saints who had died before the Lord came to earth. (Matt. 27:52; Acts 13:36). Again even our Lord used the word Sleep for Death. (Jn. 11:11 & Mk. 5:39). Here it must be noted that **CHRIST DID NOT FALL ASLEEP BUT HE DIED.** (1 Cor. 15:13).

For the Greeks also, Sleep is a symbol of Death: hence their cemeteries are called, 'Sleeping Places'. We call the cemetery

'God's Acre' and the 'Silent City of God' wherein is implied the meaning that the dead would awake from sleep when the Lord comes again. The Greek word KOIMAOO means 'to fall asleep'. It pertains therefore to the body but not to the soul. As such during this period of sleep souls are active, conscious having powers of memory (Lk. 16:25) and recognition (Lk. 16:24). Apostle Paul employed the term, 'fall asleep' in his teaching on Resurrection to both the Corinthian and Thessalonica churches. (1 Cor 15:20 & I Thess. 4:13, 14). Apostle Peter too did the same in his reference to the second coming of the Lord. (2 Pet. 3:4),

Martin Luther calls Death a night's sleep. The Last Day we shall rise again as if we had slept only one night hence it is said the dead are living. They lived while they died and after they die they live on for ever. Even when the circumstances of leaving the world are painful and violent, the Bible still employs the term "falling asleep" (Acts 7:60).

The universal use of symbolism of sleep for Death in religion philosophy, poetry and literature indicates that man inherently believes and hopes that death does not end all but there will be an awakening from that sleep. This is our firm and unextinguishable Hope. it has power to hold on, to enquire and to wait. More than that, it brings its own assurance of things not seen. The heart hopes through and beyond even the valley of shadow of death and believes in the better life that is to be in the land beyond the sunset, the land of immortality and the City celestial. As the after-noon sun sinks low, FAITH shines more brightly and clearly and HOPE lifting her voice in higher key sings songs of hallelujah.

An old Latin proverb says, Death is the Door of life. It is not a door out of life but into life. Again Death is not the Master but only a porter at the King's House, appointed to open the Door and lets the King's guests into the realm of eternity where they shall ever be with the King of Heaven. All skeptical thinking that casts doubt upon the soul's survival of death ignores the scriptural teaching on Resurrection which is Christ Himself. This placid certitude is the ground of our FAITH in the richer and fuller life with the Lord.

Death is also described as an Agent of God whose sole duty is to lead the souls of God's children to the Abode of the Blessed. In taking one dear to our hearts, he (Death) seems to carry off a part of our essential self and so leaves us bewildered in the midst of familiar environment. We, therefore, brand him as cruel and dreadful. But Christ conquered and made him His slave. His sting was broken and the dread was shorn off. He is now so mild as to embrace us as friend at the appropriate time.

Death is the only certainty among the uncertainties of life and it invariably knocks at the door of all in utter disregard of their age and status. We are only pilgrims and strangers in this world and we do not have a continuing city here. (1 Pet. 2:11 & Heb. 13:14). At the invitation of God, "Return to dust, O sons of man," we have to shake off the tabernacles we live in for the land of **PROMISE**. Are we therefore prepared to respond cheerfully to the inevitable call—the **CALL OF THE BEYOND**?

Once a king gave a walking stick to his fool and asked him to present it to any other whom he considered a greater fool than himself. Years passed. The king was in his death-bed and told the fool that he was going on a long journey and he would never return. The fool desired to know what provisions he made for such a long journey. The king replied, "None whatever". Forthwith the fool offered him the stick remarking, "You are greater fool than I."

Brother, what provision have we made for our journey **HOME**? While on earth, we have to learn the language of the **HOME**. Don't we realize that nothing accompanies us save the deeds we have done in this world: these deeds are only seeds and every sowing brings its harvest unfailingly and inexorably. Let us not deceive ourselves: (Gal. 6:6). Each man will be rewarded according to his own labour. (1 Cor. 3:8).

Dr. Faustus was Marlow's great creation. His infinite passion for honour and world recognition led him to seek the services of Lucifer who promised to fulfil all his ambitions and aspiration **ON CONDITION** that he should surrender his soul to him after the stipulated period of service. Faustus signed the contract in his



blood. Lucifer spared no pains to cause his dreams come true: Dr. Faustus received honours and distinctions from the kings and dignitaries of the world and he was on the crest of his glory.

At the close of the period, Lucifer came to claim the soul of Dr. Faustus—a soul that rightly belonged to God but was bartered away. His own thoughts of Hell and the consequent endless suffering tortured him while his desperate trials to escape from the clutches of Lucifer turned futile. **Faustus Lost His Soul.**

There may be some among us who quite unwittingly may have bartered away their souls to the Ruler of darkness for transient gains and pleasures of this world. If this were true, what a horrifying experience would it be on the Day of Judgment!

Our Lord hanging from the sacrificial cross committed His spirit into the hands of God, His Father and Dr. Faustus into the hands of Lucifer, the Deceiver of the world. Brother, are we with the hanging Lord, the Saviour OR with Dr. Faustus, the LOST.

## Preach the Word

**Jerry T. Bramlett**

When I was a child growing up in the forties and fifties I always heard biblical preaching each Lord's day, and when there was a gospel meeting we would always hear book, chapter and verse preaching. There was never any doubt as to what the preacher believed concerning the word of God; for the Bible was always proclaimed. But today my heart is saddened because I have heard what was supposed to be gospel preaching that which could be spoken in any civic club in town with very little scripture used at all. In many pulpits today theologians are being quoted more often than Peter and Paul. We are becoming like the people of old when it was said of them: "That we also may be like all the nations. . ." (I Samuel 8:20). We are becoming like the religionists of today without any real true biblical preaching. The

people mentioned earlier in I Samuel did not reject Samuel, they rejected God, and so are we when we cease preaching the word of God.

We have become like our religious neighbors to the extent that the statement is made that we believe in "churchianity" instead of Christianity. What this means is don't preach the church. It is impossible to preach Christ fully without preaching the church; because the church is the body of Christ, and Christ is head of the church (I Corinthians 12:12-14; Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:16, 5:22-25; Colossians 1:18). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, loved the church enough that he gave himself for it, and he shed his precious blood that the church could be purchased (Ephesians 5:25; Acts 20:28). Readers, we don't need less preaching on the subject of the church, but we need much, much more concerning the church that we may know beyond any shadow of a doubt that we are in the one body that Christ will save. (Ephesians 5:23).

There are some preachers today who ridicule and mock other preachers for preaching the plan of salvation. We have some who do not believe that we should preach the plan of salvation of faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, but just leave the plan alone and preach the man. It is impossible to preach the man, Jesus Christ, without preaching the plan; because Jesus himself taught faith (John 8:24), repentance (Luke 13:3, 5), confession (Matthew 10:32-33), and baptism (Mark 16:16). Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch and he must have preached baptism since "the eunuch said, see here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36). How could the eunuch know he should be baptized if Philip had not preached baptism when he preached Jesus? In the conversion of the eunuch, we see his faith when he confessed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and was baptized. Yet preachers reject this plan and won't preach it. Preacher, brethren, if this preaching Jesus was good enough for Philip to preach the plan, how can we refuse to do it?

It is now believed by some that the Lord's church is not *walking* fully after the New Testament. I now quote from a brother-hood paper: "I am convinced that we are *walking closer* to the New Testament pattern than anyone else." The writer uses the

term "closer," and my friends, if that is true, we are not fully walking in the truth but only closer to the New Testament. This quote would deny the prophecy of Daniel when he said, "... but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44). If we are only Closer, then the kingdom has not been set up or we are not going by the seed which is "The word of God" (Luke 8:11). I maintain that the kingdom has been set up, that we are going by the seed, the word of God, and those who obey and live by the gospel can be saved. Closeness may count in horseshoes, but not in religion. In Mark 12:34, there was a scribe who was near the kingdom, but being near did not make him in the kingdom. Therefore, he was lost, being on the outside. The Lord's church has been built, and one can become a member of it by believing, repenting, confessing and being baptized. One can worship according to the divine pattern by having teaching from God's Word, by partaking of the Lord's Supper, by giving as prospered, by praying and by singing without the accompaniment of an instrument of music. One can be "faithful unto death," and the Lord will "give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). This is not near it, but is it.

People today are saying, "I wish you would preach like Jesus." This statement is intended to mean preach a positive gospel and never preach about the negative. In many places the members are being soothed and satisfied as they never hear subjects such as giving, attendance, adultery, sin or immodesty. In Matthew chapter twenty-three Jesus used the following statement seven times: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." If people want preachers to preach like Jesus, they can expect strong rebuke. The illustration above shows that Jesus did preach to the needs of the people and not only did he preach things of a positive nature but also things of a negative nature. "Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. See I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to *root out*, and to *pull down*, and to *destroy*, and to *throw down*, to build and plant" (Jeremiah 1:9-10). The instruction here is much more negative than positive. It is time NOW to preach what God wants rather than man. "Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season,"

reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (I Timothy 4:2).

Many preachers today are advocating that elders do not have any authority. This is one form of liberalism: to break down in the Lord's church any form of restraint or discipline. If we can get the doctrine over that elders have no authority, then we can do what we want to do when we want to do it and preach any and everything that we want to preach. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof" (I Peter 5:2). Elders have authority to feed, which means that the congregation that they are over is their responsibility, to see that they are fed according to God's divine truth. One qualification of an elder is: "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). Elders are to feed, exhort, convince, and take the oversight thereof. Members have an obligation to the elders "to know them, esteem them, honour and obey the elders" (I Thessalonians 5:12-13; I Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17).

I end this article by giving you my attitude in writing and in preaching. "Through thy precepts I get understanding: Therefore, I hate every false way. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104, 128).

## The Intercession of the Spirit

Bobby Duncan

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought but the Spirit itself 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" (Romans 8:26, 27).

This passage is urged in support of a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and is interpreted to mean that the unutterable desires or groanings of the Christian are by the Holy Spirit received and translated into language the Father can understand, and then presented to Him. While we freely confess that this is a difficult passage, we do not believe the foregoing to be an accurate exposition. The reasons are as follows : (1) This exposition is inconsistent with what we know of the work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the scheme of redemption, i.e., revealing the mind of God to man. Instead of the Spirit's revealing the mind of God to man, this interpretation of the passage has the Spirit revealing the mind of man to God. (2) It suggests an inability or weakness on the part of the Father to understand our prayers without the Holy Spirit's translating them. How can this be reconciled with such statements as the one recorded in Matthew 6:8? "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." (3) It is most assuredly inconsistent with the view that this is a work accomplished by the personal indwelling of the Spirit, and that such is a special benefit peculiar to Christianity and not enjoyed by the faithful in previous dispensation. If this is accomplished through the personal indwelling of the Spirit, and if the personal indwelling of the Spirit is a blessing peculiar to the Christian age, then how could Abraham, or Elijah, or any of the Old Testament characters pray, with no Holy Spirit to intercede for them? We believe these three things are enough to cause serious doubt about the view that the Holy Spirit receives our prayers, translates them into acceptable language, and then presents them to the Father.

Then what is the meaning of the passage? It is the conviction of this writer that the passage refers to the fact that during the miraculous age Christians were inspired in their praying, particularly those who led the prayers in the public assemblies. Before this idea is rejected outright, please give consideration to the following facts: In the first place, we know that there was such a thing during the miraculous age as inspired praying. In I Corinthians 14:14 Paul spoke of praying in an unknown tongue. But

the only way one could pray in an unknown tongue would be to pray by inspiration. If one prayed by inspiration in an unknown tongue, one might also pray by inspiration in such a way as to be understood. This is precisely what is meant by the very next statement in the chapter: "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." "With the spirit" in this passage means by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The next verse will bear out this fact. "Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" This is another clear reference to praying in an unknown tongue, and it is referred to as blessing "with the spirit." The preceding verse makes it plain that it is not enough to pray by inspiration ("with the spirit"), but the public prayers must also be uttered in a language that can be apprehended by those in the assembly ("with the understanding"). Ephesians 6:18 mentions praying "in the Spirit," and Jude 20 refers to "praying in the Holy Ghost." Incidentally, Thayer says to be *en pneumati* 'in the Spirit' means "to be in the power of, be actuated by, inspired by, the Holy Spirit." He then cites Romans 8:9 as an example of this usage (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Page 211). Could it just be that the prince of lexicographers is correct in his observations on this verse? This is in the same chapter with the passage we are discussing in this article.

In the second place, such an understanding of this passage would be in harmony with what we know about the work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the scheme of redemption. It is a matter that has to do with confirmation and revelation of the will of God. Have we not often labored the point that miraculous endowments of the Holy Spirit did for Christians during that age what the written word of God does for us today? How could a man lead a public prayer who had never seen a copy of the New Testament? Would you call on a man to lead prayer in a public assembly who had never seen a copy of the New Testament? But during the first century there were inspired men, whereas today we have an inspired book, the Bible, to enable us to know how to

pray. Those people in the early days of Christianity literally did not know how to pray, for it had not been recorded in book for them to learn. Inspiration directed their praying just as it directed their preaching.

It may be objected that the verses under consideration simply do not say that. The truth is, whatever the verses say, they do not say it simply; the language is somewhat obscure, and even the translators of the King James Version were not absolutely sure about the translation, as is evidenced by the marginal note in verse 27. And after all, do you really believe the Holy Spirit speaks to the Father "with *groanings* which cannot be uttered"? You see, it is not a simple passage.

Please read the following paraphrase of Romans 8:26, 27: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities—the weakness of having longings which we know not how to express to God in prayer. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us. And the Holy Spirit who searches the hearts knows what the longings of the spirit of man are, so that he is able to give us the words whereby to express these longings in a manner pleasing to God." Please be assured that we are not trying to prove a position by a paraphrase we have made ourselves. But look at these verses as they are quoted from the King James Version in the beginning of this article, and see how we arrived at this paraphrase. Let the phrase "with groanings which cannot be uttered" describe "our infirmities." That makes more sense than having the Holy Spirit "groaning." In verse 27 let "he that searcheth the hearts" refer to the Holy Spirit, and let "Spirit" refer to the spirit of man. Then substitute the marginal reading, "that" for "because," and the above paraphrase becomes at least possible.

We say again that our own paraphrase certainly does not prove the validity of our argument. It really does nothing more than present our view of what the passage is saying. It has the advantage, however, of being in perfect harmony with what we believe the Bible teaches throughout.

Please note this closing statement: The things we have

discussed here in are things that are profitable and should be of interest to Christians. All who are sincere desire fuller and deeper understandings in these areas, as well as in all areas of revealed truth. But we may disagree over these matters, and still work together in peace and harmony; our view of these matters does not affect our obedience to God, so long as we are committed to the proposition that the written word is God's one and only means of speaking to us.

## Be Thankful

Dalton Key

Matthew Henry, the well-known Bible commentator, was a busy, cheerful man. Once, when he discovered someone had stolen his purse, he turned to his diary and entered this unique observation: "Let me be thankful first, because he never robbed me before; second, because although he took my purse he did not take my life; third, because although he took all I possessed, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed." How many of us would have been as thankful in such a situation?

A radiant heart of thanksgiving is a blessing both to the one reflecting it and to those touched by it. Conversely, nothing is more repugnant to many than a selfish spirit of ingratitude. No one likes a grouch, not even the grouch himself.

Cicero, the renowned orator of ancient Rome, said, "A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue, but the parent of all other virtues." Listen to the inspired apostle Paul: "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18). Again he admonishes, "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6).

What a pity to see only the dark side of sorrows and suffering. As Milton, in substance, said, "Every cloud has a silver lining." We should not, we must not waste our precious time moping over



our troubles; we must rise up and rejoice because of our abundant blessings!

Let us "praise the bridge that carried us over." Let us be ever thankful to God, especially, for the good things he has done and continues to do in our behalf.

## What Price Apathy?

David M. Erfman

In our world today, many exhibit the attitude of "let someone else do it." Their thinking is that "everything will work out for the best." but will it? It's true that God's word says that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord. (Rom. 8:28). But do we love the Lord truly if we exhibit that terrible trait of apathy.

Webster defines apathy as: "without emotion, lack of interest, listless condition, and indifference." "This definition fits some of our congregations and individual Christians just as it was applied to the church of Christ at Laodicea which made God sick to his stomach. We must not, however, confuse the use of various promotional gimmicks now being advocated in some places with anti-apathy. Many, not all, are almost worse than apathy.

When Christians refuse to recognize and preach against such things as social drinking, when they sit through services in a bored state, sometimes sleeping, and when they refuse to attend all of the services of the church, they are apathetic!

What can we do about apathy? The admonition to . . . Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season" (II Tim. 4:2) would go a long way to combat apathy. The admonition to "Study to shew thyself approved" (II Tim 2:15) would go a long way toward combating apathy. The command to "withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly" (II Thes. 3:6) would go a long way to combat apathy.

Let us not be deceived; it won't all work out unless we work at it. Let us put on the whole armor of God and fight with all our might the terrible enemy of APATHY.

# Ear Tickling Doctrines

Gary McDade

Apostasy was foretold in the writings of Paul. Timothy would be able to identify it from the following description: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Tim. 4:3, 4.) The desire would be present for the ears to be tickled, as one version puts it, and the false teacher would be capable of producing just the right amount of spicy information to do it. A few expressions of apostasy current today are given below in order to present the relevance and timeliness of the apostle's doctrine.

One error faced by lovers of truth is that in the conversion of a sinner to Christ the Holy Spirit may exert an influence on the sinner in any of a myriad number of ways which are separate and apart from the actual word of God to convict the sinner of his need for salvation. This is referred to as the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine is false as Peter's words to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem concerning the admission of the Gentiles into the church proves, "Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe." (Acts 15:7.) God is the one who chose that the means by which believers are made is by hearing the word. Peter's further statements show that the Holy Spirit operates in every case of conversion the same way He did in regard to the Gentiles, "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:9.) Jews and Gentiles alike, and everyone in the world falls into one of those two categories, are influenced in conversion by the Holy Spirit as he operates only through the word of the gospel. This fully accords with every other statement in the Bible where the conversion of the sinner is considered.

Another error which tickles the ears of many is called "once saved always saved." The doctrine holds that instead of the believer beginning upon reaching heaven as Revelation 3:12

teaches, the believer's eternal security is realized the moment he believes. The idea is false because following one's belief in Christ he must repent (Acts 17:30), confess Christ (Rom. 10:9, 10) and be baptized (Mk. 16:16). Baptism places a person into Christ. (Gal. 3:27, Rom. 6:3.) How could a person's salvation be eternally secure at the point of belief when he is outside of Christ until he is baptized? One isn't saved until he is baptized according to I Peter 3:21. And after his baptism he has hope of eternal life or eternal security. (Tit. 1:2.) Paul wrote, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for?" (Rom. 8:24.) Christians are "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Tit. 3:7.) Christians will be saved eternally provided they remain faithful to God. (Rev. 2:10.)

Further, a teaching of regrettable influence lies couched within the saying, "We're all going to the same place but by different routes." Another way to put it is "one church is as good as another." However, Jesus made it clear that he is the only way. (Jn. 14:6.) His way is strait and narrow. (Mt. 7:13, 14.) He built only one church. (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 4:4.) All of the saved are in Christ's one body, the church. (Eph. 5:23.) The teaching of Scripture is "let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same rule, let us mind the same thing." (Phil. 3:16.) Those who do not want the route Jesus charted are definitely on a different route, but sadly it leads to destruction.

A final example of ear tickling doctrines is the notion of a second chance to consider and obey the gospel when this present life has ended. The Catholics teach about purgatory and the Protestants urge that a special seven years of Tribulation at the end of time will cause some who were formerly disobedient to submit to the demands of the gospel. Actually purgatory is defined as "a place or state of punishment wherein. . . the souls of those who die in God's grace may make satisfaction for past sins and so become fit for heaven." It is not an attractive second chance, but compared to eternal torment in hell it isn't bad. The defeat of these false doctrines, however pleasant they may be to some, is unmistakable when Hebrews 9:27 is studied. The cited passage reads, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

Since the Bible is the inspired word of God and completely furnishes unto every good work, then religious teachers should be characterized by expounding its messages, illustrations and examples. Those who enjoy sharing the interesting tidbits of information which are disassociated with or abuses of the sacred Scriptures have erred from the faith and are piercing them selves through with many sorrows

## You May Have Quit Already

An elder who was quite wise and who loved deeply the souls of men went one day to visit a member who did not attend anymore. He asked the member why he had quit the church. The surprised reply was, "I haven't quit!" The elder then asked gently, "What would you be doing differently if you did quit?"

Many quit who will not admit they have. "The people aren't friendly enough so, let's go elsewhere," is a common excuse. These people don't do well at other churches either. People who would rather be at home than Bible Study or Worship have already quit! They have quit loving Jesus. Those who love Jesus love his people. They are friendly and involved themselves and do not depend on others to keep them happy. Jesus keeps them happy. (Phil. 4:13).

People are unfaithful who fail to attend services, who will not give moral support to the church, who fail to give to carry on the work of the local congregation, etc. They have quit Christ, because the love of Christ makes us want to do and to love (II Cor. 5:14) Those who would dare blame the faithful for their own unfaithfulness should consider that God will judge them severely for this (Mt. 7:1-5). The next time you are tempted to make the excuse that "they" (the church) aren't friendly, or "they" don't please me, consider that you have quit Christ. Otherwise, you wouldn't be talking in terms of "they" but rather "us" (Gal. 3:28).

If you have quit, why not repent and come back? God awaits (Lk. 15), and the church loves. Otherwise, we wouldn't be concerned about your soul and write this article.

—Selected