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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach

"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

Some time ago, we read in the newspaper where a woman in Cairo, Egypt, sprinkled poison—thinking it to be black pepper—on food of her eighteen years old daughter, who died after consuming the food. That was surely most tragic. But such incidents abound, physically speaking. Sincerely and honestly and innocently people do make mistakes which sometimes results in disaster.

The statement above is from the book of Proverbs, chapter 14 and verse 12, and it has a spiritual application. At 1 Corinthians 1:18, the apostle Paul wrote and said: "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." The Bible reveals the message of the cross; and in the message of the cross is revealed the power of God for man's salvation. Yet, there are millions of people who ridicule the message of the cross and think it is foolishness to believe in such a message. They would rather do acts, themselves, the self-abasement, mortification, penance by cutting and bleeding members of their bodies; by depriving them of food and water; and by making long painful journeys to some "holy places." Man, through the centuries, has evolved various ways to salvation from sin; he

wants to achieve it by his own efforts and works. However, the prophet Jeremiah said, at Jeremiah 10:23: "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." As long as man seek to be guided by his own counsels and what seems good to him he is destined to destruction. Man cannot be his own saviour. No man can save another man; just as one blind cannot lead another blind. Man was created by God; man has sinned against God. There is nothing in the world that man can offer God to redeem himself from sin; since God is the creator of everything. Man need God. And, God is not far from man. His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; so that man is without excuse. But, instead of seeking God and glorifying Him; man changed the glory of incorruptible and eternal and almighty God into images of corruptible man, birds, beasts, and natural things. Instead of seeking the will of God and worshiping Him as He desires, man began to follow his own imaginations; things that are taught by man, and thus exchanged the truth of God for the lie.

God has not left man without proof. "The heavens declare the glory of God;" as the Psalmist said, at Psalm 19:1, "And the firmament shows His handiwork." He has also revealed His mind and will to man through men whom He had inspired to write His will for man in the books of the Bible. The Bible, therefore, is the book that contains the message of God for man. Man has sinned, says the Bible. (Romans 3:23). The wages of sin is death or separation from God (Romans 6:23). Man can be saved from sin and death and hell, by the grace of God, and not by his own works (Ephesians 2:1-10). The grace of God that brings salvation to man has appeared to all men (Titus 2:11). God's love for the whole humanity has been shown on the cross of Christ (John 3:16). God allowed him to die for sinners (Romans 5:8). On the cross God considered Christ to be sin for humanity, so that man through him or in him might become righteous before God (2 Corinthians 5:21). In God's account, Christ's sacrificial death on the cross was his propitiatory act for man's sin (1 John 2:2; 4:10). He was without sin. (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). But to save man from sin and its consequences, he became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross, to fulfill the will of God (Philippians 2:8). This is what God has done for man.

What should man do to accept the grace of God; to benefit by God's great sacrifice? Man must believe the Christ; that He being God's Son died for man's sin (John 3:16; 8:24). Must repent of all sin and wrong (Luke 13: 3, 5). Must be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). By obeying God's will or His plan of salvation, man can surely know that he has been forgiven and is saved from all sins (Hebrews 5:8,9). Those who are saved, Christ adds them to his Church (Acts 2:47); which is his spiritual body (Ephesians 1:22,23); and of which body he is the head (Colossians 1:18). Christ's church is the body of the people who have been called out from the world to follow his steps. (1 Peter 2:21).

While he was on earth, Christ taught; "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Matthew 7:13,14). The broad way of the wide gate is the way of man. But the difficult way of the narrow gate is the way of God. Man's way, to most people, seems right, but the end thereof is the eternal destruction. But those who love God and want to do His will, by God's grace will find themselves in the heavenly eternal home of God. As long as man lives on earth he has a choice to make. But, can we boast for tomorrow? Today is the day to make the right choice.

Being An Example

J.C. CHOATE

You and I are examples. Each of us are setting examples for those around us whether we realize it or not, whether we like it or not. It is either good or bad, but it is an example. What is an example? It is a pattern, like a set of blueprints of one's life. Others can see our lives, how we are living, hear our speech, and observe our relationships with others. They can observe our attitudes and reactions to people and things. They will be impressed for good or bad by what they see and hear. They may be influenced to do as we are doing. When we think about it like that then we can see the importance of the example we are setting.

If we are going to set a good example for others then we need a good example to follow ourselves. Again there are people all around us who may influence us for good or bad. If our lives are going to be worthwhile then we need to stay away from bad company, but who can we look to as a good pattern for our lives? To ask that question, if we are familiar with the scriptures, is to point to Jesus as being the best and greatest example of all, for me, for you, and for all people. The Apostle Peter said, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." (1 Peter 2:21). Christ came from God, but was subjected to every temptation, even as we are, yet he did not sin. Speaking of Christ, the Hebrew writer said, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15). Christ was godly, pure unselfish, humble, patient, served his Father, had love for all, and on and on we could go. At any time in our lives where we are not sure as to what we should do, it would be good to ask, what would Jesus do? If we will but ask that question, and then follow his example on that point, we will surely do the right thing.

Especially we who are Christians should be the best examples of all. Since people are watching what we say or do, even our attitudes toward them, and others this way very well determine how they will define Christianity. We may bring them to Christ or we may drive them away, depending mainly on our actions. We may say that we are Christians, and we may be quick to preach to those around us, but they will be more influenced by the way we live than by what we say. The question is, are we practicing what we preach?

Remember that we have a vast audience watching us every day. There are the people of the world, but also there are our friends, relatives, even our own children. What are their impressions of us? Do they see us as being honest and sincere, the Christians that we say we are. Or do they see us as fakes, imposters, actors, pretenders, or what? There are members of the church who never attend worship. Others do not bring their children to Bible Study. Still others have money for themselves but never have anything for the Lord. If you are guilty of such things, do you think that your children are going to continue to have an interest in the Lord, grow up to obey God, and to be

faithful to the Lord? If so, you are sadly mistaken. You are setting an example before them, and it is one that will not lead them to the Lord, but away from him. Think seriously about what you are doing and make the necessary corrections before it is too late for you and for them.

Paul said even to the young preacher, Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth: but be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (1 Timothy 4:12). He was saying that even as a young man, and specially as a young believer, that he should so conduct his life that no one could find fault with him on the basis of his age. He even mentions some areas to be concerned about, areas that young people often have problems with. He said that he should be serious about handling the Lord's word, his speech, that of expressing his love, humility, faith, and manner of life. A young man or woman, with these good qualities in their lives, can make a great impression for good on their young friends, and also on the older generations too. Not only will a good example have a good influence on others, but also it will bring many rich rewards. There is no life like the Christian life.

Christ said that he was the light of the world (John 8:12), but he also said of his disciples that they too were lights of the world. (Matthew 5:14). That is, they were to reflect the light of Christ, and they could do that only as they followed him and his example. Jesus illustrated the importance of one's light or example by saying they were like lights of a city set on a hill that could not be hid. In other words, that city would be seen for many miles away because of its lights. He also pointed out that the purpose of a candle is to give light, not that it should be put under something and hidden. Rather, it is lit so that all that are in the house may be able to see. Likewise, one becomes a Christian to show Christ in his life, not to hide the Lord by sin, improper attitudes, etc. he then said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16). One is not to do good works, to glory in them, but rather that others might see those good works, and know that they are produced by following Christ, and therefore to honour and glorify the Lord himself.

A good example therefore is a powerful statement for good. What kind of an example are you setting? Is it good or bad? It can be good if you will follow the greatest example of all, Jesus

Christ. And what better thing could you do in this life than to live the kind of life that others would be influenced by for good when following your example?

Especially For Women

Search For Truth

What Will He Be?

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Rachel lay on the bed beside the tiny new form, looking . . . looking . . . looking, as though her eyes could not get enough of him. Hardly could she believe that this baby actually belonged to her and Andrew, theirs to keep, to care for, to protect, to teach, to guide in all the ways of life ! Sleeping so quietly, his helplessness aroused strong feelings of motherly protection in her heart. "I'll take the *best* care of you, Timothy," Rachel whispered. "Nothing must happen to my baby!"

Her mind drifted to other children, little ones just beginning school, teen-agers facing the challenges of growing to young adulthood with all the pitfalls and decisions before them. She could imagine the day when this sweet baby of hers would grow up and marry, leaving her and Andrew to begin an independent life of his own. "But what will he be?" Rachel wondered, "not his importance or his occupation, but what will *he* be, *inside, as a person?*"

Like an alarm sounding in her head, the question came, "What will he be, *spiritually?*"

She looked again at her baby. "He's not only this little body that I see; he's a soul, and he will live *eternally*. I know," she thought, with a guilty conscience, "Andrew and I haven't been following any religion since we married. We are young and there are so many things to do, and so little time—we've been acting like we didn't need God. *God we do!* How can we help our baby to be safe eternally if we don't give him spiritual guidance? And how can we ask God to help us to take care of him if we have left God ourselves?"

Rachel was still troubled about their responsibilities toward

Timothy when Andrew came home that evening. "All right—tell me about it," Andrew encouraged, as Rachel continued to wear a sad face while they ate. "What's the problem?"

"Maybe it isn't a problem," Rachel answered. "But—oh, Andrew, what if we don't guide our baby in the right ways as he grows? What if he's lost eternally because we didn't help him to learn about God? I love him so much. I couldn't bear the thought that he would be condemned by God in the judgment because of my carelessness as a mother, or yours as a father!"

Andrew's face mirrored Rachel's troubled expression. "You're right, Rachel," he said, "we've been wrong to leave God out of our own lives since our marriage. You know, *we can't even pray for Timothy!* How could God hear our prayers when we have not worshipped or prayed or read the Bible all these months?"

"He couldn't—He wouldn't," Rachel whispered, tears filling her eyes.

"But we can change all of that. We'll go somewhere Sunday!" Andrew declared.

"But where?" Rachel questioned. "To your church—*St. Mary's*—or to mine—*the Baptist church*, or to the one just down the street?"

"Does it make any difference?" Andrew asked. "Isn't one church as good as another? I've always heard that."

"I don't know," Rachel answered, "but since they have different names it must mean that there are differences. You know, in the Baptist church they baptize adults. In the Catholic church they sprinkle water, instead, and on babies. There must be different beliefs and different teachings, or they wouldn't be doing different things."

"You know—now that we're thinking about these things, I realize that I don't know much about the doctrines and practices in my church. And I don't know much about what the Bible says. Do you?"

"I remember the Bible stories in the Old Testament. And of course there were lots of stories about Jesus and His disciples. But I don't remember anything about all of this "church" business. When did churches start, and why are there so many different kinds?" Rachel wondered.

"I don't know the answers to your questions," Andrew admitted. "*But we want to do only the right things, spiritually, for our children. Whatever we teach them must be exactly what the*

Bible teaches. It would be useless to blindly follow something, just because it's called 'religion', and then to find at the judgment that it was all wrong."

"But how can we be sure?" Rachel asked.

"One thing—tomorrow during my lunch break, I'll go over to the Bible bookstore and buy a Bible for each of us. We know, for certain, that we have a lot of studying to do!?" Andrew laughed. "So we'll start at the beginning of the New Testament, and we'll read it as if it was the first time, and we'll see what it says."

"And I think we should visit some of the churches, including yours and mine, and try to understand what they're teaching," suggested Rachel. She looked again at Timothy, sleeping quietly. "I never knew that he would make such a difference in our lives!"

To be Continued

Becoming Christians For Wrong Motives

FRANCIS DAVID

Jesus Christ our Lord, when he was on this earth has helped a multitude of people and this is, in number of ways. He fed them with good food and healed their sick people (John 6:26). He performed a number of miracles before them and as a result many were healed and were given even new parts in their bodies, such as new hands, legs and eyes etc. When we study the life of Christ we notice on every particular thing that wherever Jesus went people were expecting some physical help from him. All over the world people think that his main purpose was to help the poor and the sick. A number of people do not stress the real purpose of Jesus coming into this world. They just see the physical side. The Bible tells us that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. (Lk. 19:10). His aim was to offer the salvation to all mankind. His salvation is full and free.

It is sad to see that a lot of people misunderstand the coming of our Lord into this world. People still think that if they follow Jesus and his way, they will be benefited physically. For them Christianity means help, food, clothing and lots of benefits. We have seen this type of thing in our country and it might be

possible in some other countries too. I think, it is not wrong if you have a genuine need to expect some help but if a person's whole motive is to get it by being a believer in Christ then it is a wrong motive. All over the world it is known that Christians are helpful people. The Bible says that the Christians are created for good deeds (Eph. 2:10), but it doesn't mean that they are telling or enticing people that if you become Christian you will get some physical help. Jesus never helped the people with the intention that they will become his followers. He helped them because he had compassion on them.

Let me tell you my friends, that this is not our aim to entice people by offering them help etc. Our Lord said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matt. 28:19). We as Christians need to obey this command and preach the gospel, the good news about Jesus. The good news is: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, (I Cor. 15:3-4).

We are preaching Christ and his gospel because the gospel has the power to save the souls of mankind. (Rom. 1:16). If a person hears the gospel of Jesus with all sincerity and then after he is convinced He wants to obey it. He has to believe in Jesus, confess him as the Son of God, repent of his sins and be baptised with the authority of Jesus and the Lord will save him. Now he has the hope of eternal life which Jesus offers to those who obey him, and are faithful to him till death. (Rev. 2:10). The salvation of Jesus is a FREE GIFT to all humanity.

Our main aim is not to provide material help to people. Some people sometime ask if we become Christians what we will get? We plainly tell them, if you want to do that then count the cost and this was what Jesus said to the people in his days. (Lk. 9:23-24). When we become Christians we get lots of spiritual gain. Christ said; I am the bread of life, water of life and when you come to him you get the real bread and the real water and you will be satisfied in him forever and ever. (Matt. 11:28). The work of the church is to preach the good news. People should come to Jesus for salvation and not for physical benefits. Please remove from your mind this misconception about Christianity. We help people but we are not helping them with the intention that they should become Christians.

What About Baptism?

W.A. HOLLEY

Many of our readers may think that baptism is a very complicated subject. In fact, it would be if we failed to "rightly divide the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). To make "scrambled eggs" of the Bible is to become more and more confused.

The Bible teaches that there is more than one baptism. What are these baptisms? We shall point them out: (1) "Baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (I Corinthians 10:1-2); (2) John's baptism (Matthew 3:1,11); (3) Baptism of suffering, (Matthew 20:22-23; Mark 10:38-39); (4) baptism of the Holy Spirit, (Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-48; 11:14-15); (5) and the baptism of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). This baptism is to continue to the end of the world.

For a period of time Holy Spirit baptism and water baptism coexisted, but by A.D. 64, when Paul wrote the Ephesian Letter, Holy Spirit baptism had ceased. How can we know? Because Paul mentioned "one baptism" . . . the baptism that was to last unto the end of the world, thus showing that Holy Spirit baptism had ended.

What was the purpose of Holy Spirit baptism? Holy Spirit baptism was given the twelve apostles that they might teach the people how to be saved under the New Testament (John 14:26; 16:7-8). Joel 2:28-32 was fulfilled on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection (Acts 2:16-21). There have been only two instances of Holy Spirit baptism in the history of the world: One on the First Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection (Acts 2:1-4), and the other at the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48; 11:14-15). What was the purpose of Holy spirit baptism at the home of Cornelius? It was to convince the Jews that the Gentiles also had a right to become Christians, children of God (Acts 11:14-17).

Living today, there are thousands of people who claim Holy Ghost baptism, but they cannot demonstrate its miraculous power (I Corinthians 2:4). Throughout a long ministry I have challenged those who claim to have been baptized in the Holy Ghost to heal me—but they have not . . . cannot . . . usually end up getting angry because I wanted proof of their claim. Why? Paul demonstrated his supernatural power. Why cannot they?

What does Bible baptism require? It requires water (Matthew 3:11). It requires "much water" (John 3:23). It requires "going down into the water and coming up out of the water" (Acts 8:38-39). Bible baptism of the Great Commission requires a "burial" and a "resurrection" (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3-4). This baptism cannot be sprinkling or pouring (Leviticus 14:15-16). We suggest that the words "pour" and "sprinkle" and "dip" be properly considered.

Why should a responsible person be baptized? We shall answer according to your Bible:

One should be baptized because Jesus Christ commanded one to be baptized (Matthew 28:18-20). One should be baptized because he believes what Jesus said. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Babies cannot believe and do not need to be baptized. They are not born sinners. They become responsible to God when they reach the age of liability for their own transgressions (Ezekiel 18:20; 28:15; Romans 4:15; I John 3:4). Those who repent of their sins should be baptized (Acts 2:36-38). Those who wish to be baptized must confess the name of Jesus (Matthew 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10).

One should be baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). Salvation is IN Christ, but one is baptized INTO Christ (II Timothy 2:10; Romans 6:3). The "new Creature" is IN Christ, but one is baptized INTO Christ (II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:26-27). Whether one likes it or not, "baptism doth also now save us" (I Peter 3:20-21). We urge our readers not to be stubborn, but yield to the Lord's commands.

Who should be baptized? To answer as simply as possible, only those who believe, repent, confess Jesus' name should be baptized (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-38; 8:37; Matthew 10:32-33).

Hence, infants and others who are incapable of knowing right from wrong should not be baptized. The doctrine of hereditary total depravity is not taught in your Bible. These are safe, thus going on to heaven when they die (II Samuel 12:22-23; Job 7:7-10). What mother can believe that her dead baby was a "little devil?" Enough said.

We humbly and sincerely urge all our readers to believe and obey the truth of God, and to do it today.

How Christians Build Respect On The Job

GLENN GOLLEY

Peter and Andrew were fishermen. Paul was a tentmaker. Lydia was a seller of purple. Demetrius was a silversmith. Jesus was a carpenter. People have always had jobs. The righteous have always known that living a godly life would not relieve them from having to work for a living. They have always had to live right while working hard.

But the day-in-day-out working world is often hard on Christians. Often fellow-workers have no respect for God. As one brother who had taken a new job said, "Their language is do bad; but everyone seems to talk like that. I think if I say anything to them they'll run me out." Sometimes co-workers are hostile to all Christian concepts. Surely Jesus thought of such times when He uttered, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of this world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil (John 17:15)."

Let's consider some practical thoughts with reference to living the Christian life on the job, and gradually gaining respect from our co-workers. These truths come from Ephesians 4:23-32.

First, Ephesians 4:25 says, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another." *To build respect on the job we must always tell the truth.*

This verse was written to the Ephesian Christians, but lying was almost a universal vice among the heathen world. One missionary said, "No confidence can be placed in their statement; and where there is the slightest temptation to falsehood, they practice it without remorse." These Ephesian Christians had recently been converted, and were working to build a good conscience.

Lying is of the devil. "... When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44)." Lying insults people and manipulates them. It destroys trust and respect. Lying on the job comes in different forms. One who says "Tell them I'm not home" when he is home; One who

says, "Tell them I'm sick." When he is not; One who intentionally colours stories to make them interesting; One who circulates flippant rumors without concern for all of the exact truth; One who is in the habit of making promises and then disregarding them, are all lying. I spoke with an elder of the church who owns an automobile dealership about his employees. He said, "I've learned about people. So many don't have any hesitation about lying. They just don't think anything of it."

The blackness and seriousness about lying is sometimes hard to see when I am thinking of how I feel when I lie to someone. It is best seen when I think of how I feel when people lie to me. The truthfulness of a Christian employee will shine brightly in a world which sees so many lies.

Second, Ephesians 4:26 says, "be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." *To build respect on the job we must be in control of our anger.* All animals have the ability of protection in some way. It is true of humans too. As one man said, "Anger is a reaction to something that makes me need to protect myself. Anger is an excitement or agitation of mind produced by the reception of a real or supposed injury, and attended commonly with a desire or purpose of revenge. To a great extent the sudden excitement on the reception of an injury is involuntary, and consequently innocent." Jesus became angry at times (Mark 3:5). The secret, of course, is to control yourself when you are angry. That's hard. It is difficult to be respectful when you are angry. But only respect begets respect, and doing right when you are angry shows Christian character.

When does anger become sinful? Let's consider some times: When it is excited without sufficient cause. Some folks have a hair-trigger temper. It is easily tripped, and extreme. The outbursts of temper do not fit the size of their agitation. Anger is sinful when it transcends the cause. A couple of years ago a woman was smoking in the non-smoking section of a restaurant. Other patrons complained to the manager. The smoker left, then returned a few moments later with a shot gun and killed the chief complainer.

Anger is sinful when it is against the person rather than the offense. In anger I desire not just to rectify the problem, but I also want revenge. Romans 12:17 says, "Render to no man evil for evil." John 18:22, 23 says, "And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of

his hand, saying, 'Answerest thou the high priest so?' Jesus answered him, 'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?'" Jesus wasn't seeking revenge, but rather fairness from his accusers.

Anger is sinful when it is cherished and heightened by reflection. Anger has an interesting attraction to be kept quietly away in the inner chambers of our soul and cherished. It can be cultivated and heightened by reflection. That's dangerous. The anger can become a cancer to a person's character. What is the answer to that potential harm? Don't let the sun go down upon your wrath. Do what is rightfully within your ability to correct the problem, and then be satisfied. Don't let wrath have it's way with you. Other employees will respect a Christian who has control of his temper.

Is Willful Forsaking Of Assembly Sin?

GRADY M. MILLER

How sad it is that oftentimes this is the question that remains in the minds of many Christians. Moreover it is unfortunate that the issue of faithful attendance must be phrased in such forceful language. It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that many people do not consider willful absenteeism from Bible study and worship services to be a sin. This is the crux of the matter.

Virtually every argument advanced in favour of faithful attendance—that voluntary absence is contrary to the spirit of Christ, detrimental to self and others, dangerous, etc.—usually falls on deaf ears. Apparently, the mentality of some members is such that they do not want to do that which is *good* or *profitable*, but only that which they *have* to do. Certainly, this attitude is incompatible with Jesus' command to "seek ye first the kingdom of God. . ." (Matt. 6:33).

Therefore, to comply with the spirit of the question, we do not hesitate to affirm that willful and voluntary forsaking of the public assembly of the Lord's body is sinful. It is a sin because:

(1) **It is a transgression of a commandment of God.** The Bible definition of sin is simply a transgression (or going beyond) of God' law (1 John 3:4). It cannot be denied that one

commandment which we have received from God is the exhortation to "not forsake the assembling of ourselves together . . ." (Heb. 10:25). Notice the argument:

- A. As Christians, we are not only encouraged to attend the assembly, but we are also commanded to do so.
- B. To disobey a plain command of God is a sin.
- C. Therefore, to forsake the assembly is sin.

(2) **It is a deliberate and calloused refusal to abide by God's revealed will.** All of us occasionally stumble and fall short of God's expectations (Rom. 3:23). Sometimes we sin through ignorance; other times, we may succumb to temptation. The practice of habitually forsaking the assembly, however, does not result from either ignorance or unexpected temptation. We all know that we ought to attend; the time for worship draws near, but we are too tired, too busy, etc. At other times we may actually *plan* to attend some other activity which will keep us away from meeting with the Lord's people. It is a deliberate and calculated ruse!

(3) **It serves to weaken the church of God and strengthen the influence of Satan.** Surely, anything that serves to strengthen the Devil and weaken the influence of righteousness is sinful. And, willful neglect of the assembly does precisely this! It may be that some have not really considered the effect that their spasmodic attendance has on their fellow Christians; if they did, perhaps they would reconsider their actions. How discouraging it is to continually note the empty pews which should be filled at every service. This one act alone can undermine the attitude and work of the faithful; it does far greater harm than any assault the world could launch against the church. It is only an excuse—and a pitiful one at that—to claim that we are not missed when we stay away, or that no one notices or cares. As the late W.A. Bradfield often observed, **unfaithfulness is a more public sin than adultery!** Make no mistake about it: **Anyone and everyone is missed when he or she stays home!**

We are certainly not suggesting that attendance is everything. Faithfulness in attendance will not cover over a life spent in sin outside the meeting house. Our presence at the worship service is not an automatic guarantee that we are worshipping our Lord in spirit and in truth. Faithfulness in

assembling, however, is for openers; a mark of the sincere and faithful. Those who are truly converted to the Lord and are striving to please Him just will not want to be absent from a single service! Those weak in faith, or not fully committed to the Lord will never see the need for faithfulness in assembling, or in prayer, giving, etc.

When we voluntarily forsake the assembling of ourselves together, we tell the world, the church, and the Lord that we consider worship and Bible study secondary in importance to whatever we are doing at that moment, whether it be ball game, work, family function or just "sleeping in"; it is a public confession that we are not putting the kingdom of God first in our lives. Such an attitude is not a characteristic of the faithful child of God!

What Does Bible Say About True Worship?

WILLIAM S. CLINE

What does the Bible say about true worship? The question is indeed an important one and deserves a biblical answer. The very question implies that there is such a thing as false worship. And since it is our responsibility to not go beyond the things written (1 Cor. 4:6), we shall examine the Bible and see what it says about true worship.

There are passages that imply false worship. For example in Matt. 4:10 Jesus said, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve." Thus, the *necessity* to worship and the *object* to worship. Therefore, to fail to worship (the necessity) the God of heaven (the object) is false worship. Again, in John 4:24 Jesus said, "God is Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." Here we have the object and the manner. Therefore, to fail to worship Jehovah (the object) in the right attitude and according to the proper avenues of worship (the manner) is false worship. In 1 Kings 12:25ff we learn that Jereboam changed the *place* of worship, the *object* of worship, the *time* of worship and the *access* to worship. he greatly sinned and led all Israel to sin by his changes. Surely we understand that to bow down to a pole or a stone and call such "God" or "Father" is not true worship. Likewise to worship

Jehovah in the *wrong manner* or with the *wrong attitude* is likewise sin.

The Bible identifies *false worship*. There is *ignorant worship* (Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:1-3); there is *will worship* (where people do what they want to do, (Col. 2:18-23; Amos 4:4-5); and, there is *vain worship* (Matt. 15:7-9).

The Bible identifies *true worship*. There are correct avenues of true worship. This is the "what" or what we are to do the worship in truth; and there are correct attitudes or "how" we are to worship in truth. *Bible study* is one of the avenues of true worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; 1 Peter 4:11). *Prayer* is another avenue, or item of true worship (Acts 2:42; James 4:3; 1 Tim. 2:8). According to 1 Timothy 2:8 it is godly men who lead the prayers and never the woman when in the presence of a man. *Giving* as God has prospered us is another avenue of worship (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8 and 9). The fourth item of true worship is *singing* (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Please notice that the only thing we have authority for is to sing. Nor do we have authority to hum as some do. We are to sing. The final act of worship which we have authority to engage in today is eating the *Lord's Supper*. Jesus instituted the supper the night He was betrayed and New Testament Christians in the first century ate the supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7, 11; 1 Cor. 11:23-30).

Bible study, prayer, giving, singing and eating the Lord's Supper are the five avenues of worship authorized in the New Testament. And since we are not to go beyond the things written (1 Cor. 4:6), we cannot Scripturally add to or take away from those things that are authorized. To change God's word is soul damning (Gal. 1:6-9). Even if an angel from heaven changed one part of God's law, that angel would be anathema. Ours is not to question or change. Ours is to obey.

Someone may say, "You have gone through several books of the New Testament to find the five items of worship. I think you should not do that." I know of no verse that contains all five avenues of worship though Acts 2:42 does contain four of the five. There is the apostles doctrine (Bible study), the breaking of bread (the Lord's Supper) the prayers and fellowship (contribution or giving). Permit me to carry this point a bit further. If one should object to several passages being used to point out what is true and acceptable worship he should note the following. Under the Mosical system a lamb had to be offered at

the Passover feast. There were numerous rules or laws regarding such listed. In Deuteronomy 16:1-8 we find instructions of Abib, but the passage does not say which day. And to have been on the wrong day would have been as much in error as to have been in the wrong month. We have to go elsewhere to find out the day of the month. Again, the passage cited says that the victim should be of the flock or the herd, but it does not say that it must be a lamb (thus a goat could have been from the flock or herd), and the passage does not say that the lamb must be without spot and blemish nor does it state that it must be of the first year. We must go to other passages to learn these tremendously important points. To have offered anything other than a lamb of the first year without blemish would have been sin. But again, the passage does not say that the animal should be roasted whole, that bitter herbs were to be eaten with it as well as unleavened bread, nor does it prescribe that no bone of its body should be broken. The passage says nothing at all about the burnt-offerings which were to be offered every day of the Passover week. Not nearly half of the legal requirements for the feast are mentioned in Deuteronomy. To learn all of what must be done to please Jehovah one must search out other passages which deal with the feast of the Passover. Therefore, one should not pause for even a moment when he learns that God, likewise, did not list every item of worship for the New Testament church in a single passage.

Just as important as the avenues are so are the attitudes. Much of worship is mental and it must be participated in a correct manner. To simply listen to a preacher, to bow the head during prayer, to give some money, to eat the Lord's Supper with your thoughts elsewhere, to sing without thinking and understanding what you are singing (1 Cor. 14-15) is to fail to worship in the proper spirit and even though the mechanics are right, the worship is still wrong. Worship is an attitude of reverence, adoration, submission, honour and praise. To go through the motions without proper consideration and concern is to fail to worship in truth.

I am thankful that the Bible identifies both false and true worship. I am thankful that we are told what we must do and how we must do it. May we have the courage and the conviction to avoid the false and seek after and follow the truth.

The Church That Jesus Built

CLEM THURMAN

Jesus once asked the apostles about how He was perceived by the people of His day. They replied, "Some say *John the Baptist; some Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.*" he then asked them, "*But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 16:13-19).

That promise of the Lord, "*I will build my church,*" stands as a monument today, testifying to the folly of men. According to His promise, Jesus was to build a church. Men, although most with good intentions, have "built" many other churches that are added to the one He built. In spite of the promise of the Lord "*Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*" (Matt. 15:13), there are many who are perfectly willing to enter into competition with the Lord in the matter of building churches.

DENOMINATIONS COMPETE WITH CHRIST

The last I heard, there are about four hundred denominations in the United States, all claiming to follow Christ but each distinct from the others in matters of teaching, organization, worship, etc. These denominations make many different kinds of claims: some claim to be the only true church, others claim that each denomination is part of the one true church, still others teach that there is no one true church! In the face of such claims, folk tend to forget what the Lord said about the subject. He prayed to the Father, "*Neither for these [apostles] only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me*" (John 17:20-21). Jesus never intended that there be four hundred denominations. He never intended that there be even one! His purpose and His

prayer was (and is) that all be united in the church which He built.

The apostle Paul wrote about the need for unity of all believers: *"Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all"* (Eph. 4:3-6). How many Gods? The Bible says, "One." How many Lords? The Book says, "One." How many faiths? The Bible answers, "One." How many bodies? Again the Bible says, "One." What is that one body? *"He is the head of the body, the church . . . Head over all things to the church, which is his body"* (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). It is evident from this passage that every denomination is really in competition with the church which Jesus promised to build.

Many claim that the various denominations "compose" the church which Jesus built, that the church Jesus built is divided into these denominations. But when that same situation was found in the church at Corinth, the Lord (through the inspired apostle Paul) condemned it: *"I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you . . . Is Christ divided?"* (1 Cor. 1:10,13). Jesus prayed for unity. He commanded unity. Denominations were wrong in Corinth 1900 years ago, they are wrong today. But, in the face of so many claims, how can we know who is right? But that is the wrong question! Not "who" is right, but "what" is right is correct. The Bible is right. Let us go there and find there the church which Jesus built.

PROMISES OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The prophets of old, in more than a hundred separate prophecies, foretold the church which Jesus promised to build. *"In the days of these [Roman] kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed"* (Dan. 2:44). Another wrote, *"I will return to Jerusalem with mercies, my house shall be built in it"* (Zech. 1:16). Again, *"It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"* (Isa.

2:2-3). This "house of God" is later identified in the writing of the inspired apostle Paul, "*The house of God, which is the church of the living God*" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Jesus also made many other promises about His church. First, He identified the church as the kingdom: "*I will build my church . . . I will give you the keys of the kingdom*" (Matt. 16:18-19). This is confirmed also later in the Scriptures (Heb. 12:23, 28; Col. 1:13, 18). The Lord promised the apostles, "*There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power*" (Mark 9:1). Now notice the promise just before Jesus left the apostles to return to heaven: "*That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high*" (Luke 24:47-49). Finally, in His last meeting with the apostles, Jesus told them, "*Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts 1:8).

Look carefully, now at all those promises, and you will find these points clearly made. The church (house of God, kingdom) was to begin "*in the last days,*" in the times of the Roman kings. It was to begin in Jerusalem, but was to spread to all the world, to be composed of "*all nations.*" It was to begin during the lifetime of the apostles, "*with power,*" which was to come when the Holy Spirit came upon them. Let us look further in the Scriptures and find where all these promises find fulfillment.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LORD'S CHURCH

As directed by the Lord, the apostles waited in Jerusalem (Acts 1:12). In Acts 2, we read of the events that describe the establishment of the church which Jesus built. When the day of Pentecost came, "*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*" (v. 4). As the apostles preached, Peter said, "*This is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel: And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh*" (v. 16-17). As he used the prophecy of Joel, he concluded, "*it shall be that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (v. 21). The apostles then preached that Jesus, having been crucified some seven weeks before, had

been raised from the dead: *"Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified"* (v. 36).

Compare carefully the prophecies and promises above with the account in Acts 2. The **place** is right: Jerusalem. The **time** is right: lifetime of the apostles, days of the Roman kings and *"the last days."* The **power** is right: endowed by the Holy Spirit. The **result** is right: salvation is preached. We should be able, therefore, to see that the church which Jesus built was established on that Pentecost of Acts 2.

As Peter preached, people *"were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins"* (Acts 2:37-38). The result? *"They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls"* (v. 41) To what were they added? *"And the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved"* (v. 47). There you have it! The church began, just as the prophets and Jesus had foretold. It began in Jerusalem, with power, in *"the last days"* when *"repentance and remission of sins"* was preached (Luke 24:47). From this time the church was not spoken of as future, but as reality (Acts 5:11; 9:31; etc.).

Friends, in all honesty, any "church" that began at some other place than Jerusalem is not the church which Jesus built. Likewise, any "church" that began at some other time than during the lifetime of the apostles is not the church of the Lord. Any "church" that did not begin *"with power,"* as described in Acts 2, is not the Lord's church. And any "church" that does not teach the same salvation as that found in Acts 2 is not the church of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, explaining the parable of the sower, said, *"The seed is the word of God"* (Luke 8:11). The apostle Peter wrote, *"Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth . . . the word of the Lord abideth forever. And this is the word of the gospel that was preached to you"* (1 Pet. 1:23-25). That seed hasn't changed. When planted in good and honest hearts nearly 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem, it produced the church which Jesus built. When planted in the same kind of hearts today, it will produce the same product!

If you will receive the same seed, the word of God, that those people in Jerusalem received, and obey it in the same way

those people did, you will be just what they were: the church of Christ. Doing what Acts 2 teaches will not make you a member of a denomination, but it will make you a member of the church which Jesus built. Don't you want to be in that church?

I Just Wish I Could Die

ALLEN WEBSTER

Most Christians are interested in spiritual growth (2 Peter. 3:18), but a few appear only interested in spiritual death. So, if you are numbered among those who "just wish they could die," there are four certain ways to commit spiritual suicide.

DO NOT STUDY

"For when the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Hebrews 5:11-14).

God once declared, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge . . ." (Hosea 4:6) and the same, if you wish, can be said of you! You will die spiritually if you do not regularly read, study and meditate upon the Divine precepts (Psalm 119:9-11). There are far more interesting things to do each night than to get out the old Bible and read. Further, you probably could not understand the archaic language anyway. So, just let it wait until Sunday.

It would also be best for you to find something else to do on Sunday Mornings and evenings. Oh, and certainly your physical rest is better for you than spiritual exercise during the Sunday morning Bible class! By so doing, you can be assured that you will never be numbered among the blessed for their "delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law" do they "meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2; cf. Matthew 5:6).

LOVE THE WORLD

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15-17).

Those in Corinth had been able to remain babes in Christ for years because they were carnally minded (1 Corinthians 3:1-3) and if you continue to long for worldly pleasures, you can also remain a "spiritual baby!"

But, "know ye not the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend to the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). This friendship can be observed by the way one acts, talks, and dresses.

NEVER COMMIT YOURSELF

"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16).

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine . . ." (Ephesians 4:14). If you do not want to grow, it is imperative to lose any moral convictions you may have. You should just "go along" with the crowd and you will "get along" with them easily. Laugh at their dirty jokes, dress in their skimpy fashions, go with them to their places of sinful recreation, drink their drinks and speak their language, but, "be no deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners" (I Corinthians 15:33).

Further, do not stand strong on any doctrinal point. Baptism is not really necessary for the forgiveness of sins; instrumental music does not really corrupt worship sprinkling is just as good as immersion; a loving God would never keep anyone from heaven; baptizing babies is not very much different from praying for them; and, it is not actually important how often a person partakes of the Lord's Supper.

Do not look to Paul for your example in this, for he was "set for the defense of the gospel" (Philippians 1:17). Try to forget, also that Christ will not bless those who abide not in His doctrine (2 John 9-11).

FORGET TO PRAY

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke. 18:1).

You are a busy person! Prayer really seems useless, anyway. I mean, when is the last time you actually saw a prayer answered anyway? Leave the praying to the old folks and preachers. This "without ceasing" business takes too much commitment (1 Thess. 5:17).

These four things will help stunt your growth as much as anything you can do. What cancer is to the body, ignorance is to the soul; what poison is to the bloodstream, worldliness is to the spirit; and what cataracts are to the eyes, lukewarmness is to the Christian life. So, if you just wish that you could die, these ideas will help you! But, pardon the rest of us if we don't join you, we're trying to live forever.