

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL

### *Have You Heard It Said*

That there are many ways to heaven, that religiously one can believe anything, worship in any way, wear any name and join any church, but finally all will go to heaven. Most people believe this to be true. But this is not true, if we want to let God decide what is wrong and what is right. God, the Bible says, is not the author of confusion but of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33). He is the God of harmony and unity. He has given to all people of all nations His one book to follow. He expects all to do the same things and go by the same way. He has revealed only one plan of salvation for the whole world and He will save all people in the same way. The confusion of many ways exists because most people have let their priests and preachers do their religious thinking for them. They have never for themselves studied the Bible enough to know whether they are practicing the type of religion the Bible conveys. While the world religiously continue to be divided in many many sects and churches, the Bible still speaks through the apostle Paul these words: "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Corinthians 1:10). He also said, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:3-6). From all of this and many other Bible references it is evident that God desires

oneness and unity, not division.

The assertion of Christ still reads: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). Christ is the only God's authorised way to heaven. Thus He said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6). Only Christ gave Himself for the sins of the world. Only Christ is the propitiation for the sins of humanity. He is the Savior of the world. Men through the centuries have devised many ways to heaven, but God has provided to all only one way.

When Peter and John were arrested and produced before the Jewish sanhedrin for speaking in the name of Jesus, boldly they declared: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). The name of Christ was that noble and worthy name by which all His followers were called in the beginning. (James 2:7). "And the disciples", wrote Luke at Acts 11:26, "were first called Christians in Antioch". God recognises no other name by which His people should be called today religiously, and yet many people are proud to call themselves Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals, or something else. Why do I need to be a Protestant or a Catholic, when I can be a Christian according to the Bible?

Not all who worship God worship Him according to His will. Sincerity and honesty are not the only things that are needed for acceptable worship. Our worship to be acceptable to God must be done, as Christ taught, in spirit and truth. (John 4:24). Yet most people are worshipping Him today as they did when Christ spoke these words: "These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." Are not Creed books the commandments of men? Yet, they are used by men extensively in the worship of God.

We must realise the fact that God alone has all the authority. One day we will all stand before His judgment seat to be judged right or wrong. (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). By God's word, things He has revealed to us in His book, we will all be judged. (John 12:48). If men everywhere would obey God's will today Christianity would again be as it was in the first century. There will be only one church, and all congregations of Christians will be known everywhere as "The churches

of Christ," (Romans 16:16), as it was in the beginning. There is only one true God, there is only one way to heaven, and the Bible further states that "it is appointed for men to die once but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27). After this Life on earth is over, you will not come back to live here again. This is the only opportunity you have. Why not do right now.

## ***How Can I Know That I Am Right?***

**J.C. Choate**

With so many religions, and so much being taught in the name of religion, the majority of which conflicts with other teachings, then the average person is probably confused and left wondering how would one ever know the truth from error or right from wrong. That is something to think about. Of course everyone is naturally going to say that he is right and the other person is wrong. So what is the answer?

Is it possible to know the truth, to be right? If not, there is no hope for any of us, that is, if truth and right makes any difference in our lives. I am going to tell you that you can know the truth and you can know that you are right. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6). What Jesus said should be reassuring to all of us. Our goal then should be to learn what Jesus taught, to believe and obey his teaching, and then we may know that we are right, and that we have the hope of life in the world to come.

But let us go back to the basics and take it step by step if we really want to be right when it comes to religious matters.

First, we must have the desire to be right. We must have the right attitude, an open mind, and willingness to study and to listen. No, we are not talking about being gullible and accepting anything that comes along, but we are talking about having a real desire to know God's will and to be right. Most people probably fall in the other category, that is, they think they are right, that no one can tell them anything. They are not interested in listening but telling someone off. No wonder so many people are in error.

Second, get your Bible and read and study it to know God's will. Read it to learn, not to prove what you already believe. If you will put aside all previous pre-conceived ideas and prejudices and have the attitude, "Lord, you command, and I will obey," then you should not have any problem in coming to know God's will and what you should do. Remember that Christ himself said that we should search the scriptures. (John 5:39). Then you have Paul saying that we should study to show ourselves approved unto God. (2 Timothy 2:15). Again, Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you, for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." (Matthew 7:7,8). Remember that you are dealing with the Lord's word, that it is inspired of God, that it has the Lord's authority behind it, and therefore is powerful and able to save all who will believe it and obey it. It can do that because it is the Lord's word and when one obeys his word then he saves that person.

Third, if you are already religious, please compare what you believe and what you have done with the scripture. If the word of God teaches one thing and you did something else, be big enough to admit that and then determine that you are going to make the necessary correction or corrections. To go on believing and doing what you are doing; in spite of the fact that it is contrary to God's will, will not make you right. You can be right only when you come to know the truth and then you accept it without reservation and obey the Lord's commands.

Fourth, use some common sense when studying the scriptures. For instance, if the Lord said that he would build his church (Matthew 16:18), then it would follow that he did that and from that point on when you read about the church it is the one that Christ said that he would build. That being the case, then it would follow that all other churches are of men and not of God. Another example would be that if the Lord said that one must believe and be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16), then it would follow that the scriptures do not teach that you can believe, be saved, and then be baptized. Still another would be, if the scriptures teach that baptism is a burial in water, and it does (Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12; Acts 8:35-39), then it would automatically follow that one cannot substitute that with something else, such as sprinkling or pouring water on one's head. Also, remember that we are not to add to God's word, subtract from it, or change it in any way (Revelation 22:18,19; Galatians 1:6-9), but rather we are to leave it like it is and do exactly what it says.

Fifth, we need to have a good understanding of the differences between the law of Moses and the law of Christ. Of course God gave Moses his law and it was binding on the Israelites till Christ died on the cross. But with the coming of the law of Christ, and it being ushered in with his death on the cross, then we are under that law, not the law of Moses. Does that mean then that the ten commandments are no longer binding? No, the ten commandments are no longer binding on people today since we are no longer under the law of Moses but the law of Christ. Let it be understood, however, that Christ in his law also teaches that one cannot kill, steal, commit adultery, etc. Well, does that mean that the Old Testament is not the word of God? Not at all since the Old Testament is the word of God. It is just the fact that it is no longer binding as a law. Then what is the purpose of it? Paul said that the things written back there have been written to serve as examples for us. (1 Corinthians 10:1-13). On another occasion he said, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4). Finally, to really see the difference in the laws and the superiority of the law of Christ, please read Hebrews 9:11-16; Hebrews 10:9, 10.

Sixth, and finally, once you learn God's will and you come to believe it to be the truth, then obey it and be faithful to it. Knowledge is good but that alone is not enough. Neither will faith alone save. You must now act on the knowledge and faith that you have. If you really believe in the Lord then surely you will do what he has asked you to do. That means then that you will repent of your sins (Luke 13:3), confess Christ as being the Son of God (Matthew 10:32), and be baptized for the remission of your sins. (Acts 2:38). Now if you will do that then the Lord will save you (Mark 16:16) and add you to his church (Acts 2:47). Then as such you will be a Christian and you will want to worship the Lord each first day of the week (Acts 20:7) and live the faithful Christian life that one day that you might have a crown of life. (Revelation 2:10). That's all there is to it. Isn't that simple and easy? But how can one know that that is right when you do that? Because you have done what the Lord asked you to do. You have his word on it.

My friend, don't do anything until you have read and studied God's word to the point that you fully understand what God wants you to do, and then, and only then, act on it. If you will do that then you can know and will know that you are right. Surely that is what we all want.

## ***"To Be a Mother"***

**Betty Burton Choate**

It isn't difficult to become a mother, physically. It happens millions of times each year, often without forethought or planning. Once the new life is conceived, it will grow and develop normally, with or without concern of the woman in whose body it is housed. Of course it has become a common thing for the woman to choose to murder the new life inside her, through abortion. This is a great sin against God, against the innocent unborn and against herself. Humanity cannot be guilty of committing such mass murders—millions each year—without having to answer to God.

But most babies are allowed to develop according to the plan of nature and they are born into the world at the appointed time. They may be born into conditions of poverty or riches, they may be surrounded by large families or small ones; they may be welcomed or resented. Each case is different, but God has provided one very vital thing for the helpless newborn human: a mother.

What does it mean to be a mother, not just a woman who gave physical birth to a child, but a real mother? What is a mother?

(1) A mother is love. Love for the new life begins to develop along with the baby, and especially does the mother feel a growing love as the baby begins to move. Then when it is born and is placed as a helpless dependent being in her arms, the bonds of love grow stronger. She watches the progress, the achievements of her child—he learns to walk, to talk, he goes to school—and her love continues to grow along with the child. Surely no human bond is stronger than a mother's love.

(2) A mother is gentleness. Whether she is caring physically for her baby, kissing a skinned knee on a playful little son, or reassuring her frightened or hurt grown-up child, a mother's care is gentle.

(3) A mother is compassion. As a young girl growing up, I remember disappointments and hurts in my life. But they were not as painful to me as watching my own children suffering some hurt. My heart reaches out to them in compassion, demanding that I do whatever

lies in my power to relieve their pain.

(4) If there is not enough money for everyone in the family to have new clothes, who quiteily does without? Or if there is not enough of the choice food for everyone, who insists that she isn't really hungry or she'd rather take something else? Whatever sacrifice may be necessary in a family, the mother is willing to make it, not because someone forces her but because of her love.

(5) The mother is a disciplinarian. Yes, if the mother really loves her children she will be strong for their sakes and will discipline them when they need correction. Children can only know the allowable and right behaviour as they are checked when they go beyond those proper limits. The father is not usually at home closely enough to provide this disciplinary guidance, so the mother who loves her children will correct them when they are wrong.

(6) A mother will train her children. We women have minds. We don't have to depend on our husbands or others to provide all the guidance for our children. By our example and in words we can train them in moral and social behavior. We can help them with the scholastic studies. But most important of all, we can train them spiritually, to grow to be children of God.

(7) A mother knows her children. She quietly studies their personalities. She knows their feelings, their weaknesses, their strengths. Through this deeper knowledge, she is able to give better guidance when they need her help.

(8) A mother is prayerful. She realizes that she can't be with her children all the time. And she is aware also that often she is powerless to provide the help they really need. So she does for them everything she can do, and then prayerfully commits them to God's hands.

All of these things form a part of the make-up of a true mother. What kind of a mother are you?

## ***Why the Resurrection?***

**David Wade**

Doubters and scoffers have disputed the fact of the resurrection

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of the dead in every age (Acts 17:32; I Corinthians 15:12). The New Testament clearly attests to the resurrection of Christ from the grave (Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:1-6; Luke 24:1-7; John 20:1-9). In that the "hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29). The fact that Jesus raised the widow's son (Luke 7), Jairus' daughter (Luke 8), and Lazarus (John 11) underscores the power of God to raise all the dead as Jesus has promised.

While much preaching and writing concerns itself with the reality of the resurrection, we seem to fall short in sharing the "why" of the resurrection. Why was Christ raised from the dead? Why are our bodies to be raised from the dead? Let me share with you five reasons for the resurrection.

(1) The resurrection of Christ establishes Jesus as the Son of God with power (Romans 1:4). Someone may say, "According to John 20:30-31, didn't Jesus' sign and miracles prove him to be the Son of God?" Yes, but these signs, separate from his own resurrection, did not; for indeed, others performed similar signs. It is by his own resurrection from the grave that God declares Jesus to be the "Son of God with Power" (Romans 1:4).

His death, burial and resurrection are essential elements of the gospel fulfilling the scriptures (I Corinthians 15:1-4). By his resurrection, Jesus is distinguished from all pagan deities and self-proclaimed Messiah. Without his resurrection, there would be no "good news." Lost humanity would still be awaiting a saviour from heaven. The resurrection of Christ is unique. He has been raised to never to die again (Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 7:25). By his resurrection, he is declared to be the "Son of God with power."

(2) The resurrection of Christ is a sign verifying the promise that there is life beyond the grave. Without the resurrection of Christ, the promise of life beyond the grave would seem somewhat empty and hollow. It was the purpose of signs to confirm the word (Mark 16:20). Before raising Lazarus, Jesus declared, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet he shall live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). Jesus promised "abundant living" (John 10:10), and "everlasting life" (John 3:16). He said, "I am he that liveth an was dead; and behold, I am



alive for evermore" (Revelation 1:18). John declares "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). God's word, which promises life beyond the grave, is ultimately confirmed by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

(3) By the resurrection of Christ, God is able to reclaim his holy temple. In ancient times, God's glory resided in the temple at Jerusalem (Ezekiel 1). By the time of Christ, God's glory had long since departed from the temple (Ezekiel 11), and faithless Israel's house was left desolate (Matthew 23:38). In the context of the New Testament age, Paul declared that God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24). Speaking of his body, Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19-21). Likewise, Paul declares that "your body is the temple of Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 6:19), and that the church is "the temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

The human body is the only physical substance that awaits transformation and reclamation. By the resurrection, God will transform and reclaim his temple, both the good and the bad (1 Corinthians 15:50-58). Jesus refers to this great event as "the resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29). The fact that "God raised up Christ" is the assurance that we will also be "raised in glory" (1 Corinthians 15:15, 43).

(4) The resurrection of Christ gives power to the gospel. Jesus is "declared to be the Son of God with power. . . by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16).

If Christ were not raised, the New Testament would be a false witness, we would yet be in our sins, and would be most miserable (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). Because Christ has risen from the grave, the gospel is empowered to transform our lives into God's new creation (II Corinthians 5:17).

(5) The resurrection of Christ fills our hearts with hope. Paul said, "of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (Acts 23:6). Because of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, Paul urges Christians to "sorrow not even as others which have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Peter declares, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ

from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4).

# ***The Ear That Blesses***

**Jerrie Barber**

**"When the ear heard me, then it blessed me" (Job 29:11).**

I have heard that one of the greatest fears of the American citizen is the fear of speaking to a group of people. That may be true. Surveys support it.

However, it is my unscholarly observation that there are thousands more excellent speakers than there are outstanding listeners. Both talking and listening are essential for a complete communication cycle. Both are scriptural when done in a good manner, at the right time, and for the right purpose.

## **Listening Suggestions**

1. People need some one to listen. It is amazing and encouraging in the last few years, since I have been working on listening as well as talking, how more than one person has said, "The answer to the problem is clear now that I have talked about it. No one had let me explain the whole thing before. Thank you for listening."

2. People will check to see if I am a compassionate listener. Many have told me what horrible problems a friend was having and asked for my suggestions for that friend. When I have been kind in dealing with that "friend," they have later told me that the "friend" was themselves, and then they were ready to really talk.

3. People will determine if I am sensitive. Sensitivity hears more than just words that are spoken. "My mother is a widow now" also says, "My father has died." My ignoring or responding to that will communicate whether I have the time, concern, or inclination to "weep with them that weep" (Romans 12:15).

4. Listening is hard work. My experience has been that it takes preparation, dedication, and concentration to be effective in listening.

5. Listening is a rewarding service. When I really listen to a person with a hurt, with a tough decision, with a complicated problem, or with a joy to celebrate, I am putting into practice what I preach about one soul being worth more than all the world. In fact, this person is worth an hour of my focused attention! Also, I have found the same blessing returned to me: Listen, and you will be listened to: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will blessings be put into your life. For with the same measure that you value other people, that value will be measured back to you.

Let's work on having a blessed ear as Job described, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me."

His thoughts were slow

His words were few, and never formed to glisten

But he was a joy to all his friends--

You should have heard him listen.

## ***Who Intercedes And Mediates for Us?***

**T. Pierce Brown**

The question is sometimes asked, "Since 1 Timothy 2:5 says that there is one mediator between God and man--Christ Jesus who intercedes on our behalf (Romans 8:24), how is it that Romans 8:26 indicates that the Holy Spirit also intercedes for us?" The basic question is, "If there is one, and only one mediator, how can there be two?" Possibly a related problem would be, "If we can discover that there is more than one mediator, may be some man, such as a preacher, priest, or pope might also be one."

One key to the problem is the failure to distinguish between things that differ. "Intercession" is from the Greek word "enteuxis" and means "a petition with respect to." The verb "entugchano," translated "deal with" once and "make intercession" four times means "make petition or intercession either for or against a person" (See Acts 25:24, where the Jews made intercession against Paul). The Spirit makes intercession (Romans 8:26), Christ makes intercession (Romans 8:24; Hebrews 7:25), and we are to make intercession for each other (1 Timothy 2:1; 4:5). God in no way, at no time, limited the number of persons who are

allowed to intercede for another.

However, the word "mediator" is from the Greek word "mesites," and literally means "a gobetween"--one who mediates between two parties to produce a reconciliation of differences. Christ is a mediator in a way that no one else is or can be. The peculiar nature of man's relationship with God demanded a special mediator. Man was estranged from God by sin, and there needed to be a price paid, an offer made and accepted before man could be reconciled to God. Although Moses could be a mediator of the law (Galatians 3:19), he could not accomplish what Christ needed to and did accomplish as a mediator.

In a dispute between labourer and management, a federal mediator may be able to offer certain things to management on behalf of labourer, and to offer certain other things to labourer on behalf of management. He may or may not intercede, but if he does, it is a different function than that of mediation.

As a Mediator of the New Testament (Hebrews 9:15), Christ entered once (for all) into the Holy place to make possible this reconciliation of man to God (Hebrews 9:24-28), but one can intercede to God on behalf of man without doing that.

Although this is a slightly different aspect of the same subject, it is my considered judgment that the intercession of the Holy Spirit spoken of in Romans 8:26 is done through the prayers of the individual who does not know what to pray for as he ought, so he makes inarticulate groans in the spirit, and the Spirit by which he lives knows and "interprets" these groanings to God who searches the hearts. One would need to have an unusual concept of the Holy Spirit to conclude that the Holy Spirit Himself had to express his mind by inarticulate groanings.

But this intercession of the Spirit, however it may be done, is not the same as the mediatorial office or function of Jesus as spoken of in I Timothy 2:5.

I realize that a far more scholarly and definitive article could be written about this profound subject, answering far more questions, and dealing with it in more depth, but perhaps this is at least enough to help make us more aware of the difference between intercession and mediation, and that the particular kind of mediation Christ does for us is unique.

# ***Many Are Missing The Real Joys of Life***

**Edsel Burleson**

that  
remember  
The apostle Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus to obey the words of Jesus, "how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35.) Many members of the church become disinterested, inactive, and finally quit because they have never learned the truthfulness of the Master's words. The "give me" attitude has blinded multitudes to the numerous opportunities to help other.

Someone told the story of a man who went to the preacher and said that he wanted his name removed from the church roll. The preacher agreed to remove his name, but asked the man to first take a box of groceries over to a needy family. The man did this and upon "returning said, "Leave me on, I have had more real joy today than ever before."

Another writes of being so worry of life that he was hurrying along the street to the river to take his own life, when a little boy took hold of his coat and in his anxiety to solicit aid, said, "Please sir, there are six of us and we are dying for want of food." The man said to himself, "I'll do this much before I leave the world. It will delay me only a few minutes." In relating the experience, he said, "The scene of misery he conducted me to I cannot describe. I threw them my purse and their burst of gratitude overcame me. It filled my eyes, and rent the cords of my heart. 'I'll call again tomorrow,' I cried. Fool that I was to think of leaving a world where such pleasure was to be had, and so cheaply."

When Jesus portrayed the scene at the judgment, he emphasized the joy for those on the right hand to whom the King would say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." They will ask, when did we thus do? And the King will reply, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:34-40.)

Too often we do not want to be bothered. After all, we have our own schedules and our own responsibilities. Stanley Teffertiller told of a

man who moved into a new neighborhood, into a house beside an older couple. Very soon after moving, before he had even a chance to meet his neighbors, he was awakened in the middle of the night with a phone call from the couple, "Please come over and help us," they began. "Water is pouring into our house and we can't find where it is coming from."

Somewhat angrily he dressed and went next door. As he went through the yard he thought to himself. "How foolish. I wonder if the persons who lived here were always bothered like this. I'll have to make sure they don't make this a habit." He stepped up and knocked on the door. The lady let him into a dark room. With displeasure in his voice he asked, "What's wrong with the lights?" The lady answered, "Oh I'm sorry. I forgot to turn them on. That's the reason we had to call you for help in finding the leak. We're both blind."

We would avoid much shame and embarrassment if we were more alert to opportunities to help another. An unknown poet said it this way in a verse he called.

#### **"THE HELPING HAND":**

"If when climbing up life's ladder  
You can reach a hand below,  
Just to help the other fellow  
Up another run, or so;  
It may be that in the future,  
When you're growing weary, too,  
You'll be glad to find there's someone  
Who will lend a hand to you?"

## ***The Source of True, Lasting Joy!***

**Dillard Thurman**

This pleasure mad, thrill seeking, egocentric society grovels at the feet of the god of worldly enjoyment. An example is seen in the TV schedule of programming. The lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life are its regular "bill of fare." But every facet of worldly entertainment is geared to promotion of giving JOY to the people! Yet

the glitter of the movies, and the "bright lights of Broadway," have been the stage for more blasted dreams, broken homes, bitter disappointments and suicides than any other place! How oft it is said, "All that glitters is not gold!" All the frenzied activities, stellar performances and fantastic shows still have not brought joy and contentment, even to those who produced them! In search of "joy and happiness" many have turned to alcohol and other drugs, only to ruin their lives and blast their hopes, as they destroy their health, home and life!

Joy is more than "kicks," fun and frolics. Revelry and hilarity are but for the moment, while JOY offers lasting satisfaction and contentment. Proper evaluation of blessings and privileges holds far greater reward than present exhilarations! Self-gratification cannot be compared with the pleasure and delight of a life of worthwhile service. But to obtain such JOY, there must be this arrangement: Jesus first; Others second; Yourself last! This call for self-denunciation is not unreasonable when we consider what Jesus did for us; "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God." (Heb. 12:2).

### **JESUS FIRST IN YOUR LIFE!**

Jesus came to bring JOY to all mankind. Even at His birth, it was announced by an angel: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring thee tidings of great joy that will be to all people." (Lk. 2:10). Long before, the Psalmist exulted: "My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." (Psa 13:5). To produce the joy of salvation was the motive for His Coming (Mt. 1:21; Lk. 19:10). Unto his chosen He said. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (Jno. 15:11). Before leaving them He consoled them, saying, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." (Jno. 16:22). That is the joy that can be ours, if we are truly spiritual.

Jesus must be put first to have joy! It was He who said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." (Mt. 6:33). To put it into proper perspective, He taught: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Mt. 10:37). If Jesus is not first in the heart, He does not abide there at all! He assured His disciples: "If ye

keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love. . . These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain with you, and that your joy might be full." (Jno. 15:10-11). When our love for the Lord prompts faithful obedience to the terms of His will, then the joy of salvation is ours, and is full!

**True joy is found in service to God!** When Israel turned back to God after captivity in Babylon, a new life awaited: "Also that day they offered sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them to rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off." (Neh. 12:42). It was a time of happiness and delight as they reunited with God in their own land! That same joy awaits all who will turn back to God as His people! Working for the Lord brings a joy that will never fade! "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." (Psa. 126:5). In this vein of thought our Lord said, "And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." (Jno. 4:36). What greater joy can be found than in the knowledge that we are workers together with God in saving lost men!

### **OTHERS MUST BE PUT SECOND!**

**Our next obligation is unto others!** "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." (Phil. 2:3-4). This is the love, care and consideration of other which Jesus enjoined on His people! "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." (Jno. 15:12). Peter amplified on this by writing: "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." (1 Pet. 5:5). You will never know real, true joy until you demonstrate love and kindness to others. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another." (Rom. 12:10). Again Paul said it simply: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." (1 Cor. 10:24). This calls on us to be sincerely concerned and careful for the welfare of our neighbor. This is the true source of joy!

**We must especially care for those in Christ.** "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10). Paul commended those saints in Thessalonica for the "love of every one of you all toward each other



aboundeth." (2 Thes. 1:3). Surely, without this care and concern for others, we could not claim great love for God! "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 Jno. 4:20). By loving and serving others, we reflect God's love, and find true joy! Put Jesus first; but others second!

## **YOU MUST BE PUT LAST!**

**Selfishness is an enemy of true Joy!** Any man wrapped up in himself makes a very small package! The self-centered, greedy, covetous man is always unhappy, seeking vainly for joy and gladness! We should have the attitude of Paul, who said, "I am the least of all the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God," and yet he still could say, "but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Cor. 15:9-10). Paul had put to death the "old man with his evil deeds," and braggadocio spirit. He stated: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20). The old man must be crucified that the new man in Christ might live in joy with Him! Paul called on saints to cultivate this attitude of commitment: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3:1-3). You are last because of your love for Jesus and Others!

**There is reason for this self-renunciation!** This is spiritual self-preservation, as well! "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mk. 8:35-37). The selfish struggle for this world and its pleasures destroys the joy of salvation to be found in Christ! For this cause we are told: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 Jno. 2:15). Forget the lures of tinsel the world dangles before your eyes: "but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." (Lk. 10:20). Only that which is spiritual endures forever!

**There is no rejoicing in selfish achievements! The garlands thrown by the crowd, and the plaudits of the throng, are empty and vain, They fade instantly and are soon forgotten! But for eternity the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," will bring eternal joy and gladness! So we are told, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4). On the other hand, some were warned: "Ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil." (Jas. 4:16). Don't seek joy in bragging of personal worth or works! Rather, we are to rejoice in Christ! To those in Christ, Peter wrote: "yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Pet. 1:8). This unspeakable joy and happiness is found by stepping out of self, and stepping into Christ!**

### **A BETTER CONCEPT OF TRUE JOY!**

**We can cause joy in heaven by our lives! Our acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour brings joy here and also hereafter; it produces joy on earth, and also causes rejoicing above! "Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (Lk. 15:10). There are those who read this article that could cause rejoicing in heaven if they would only believe in Christ, repent, and be baptized for remission of sins! And there are saints on earth who would also rejoice to know of their salvation!**

**There can be joy, even in suffering! Even in the midst of trials and tribulation. Christians can find joy! "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." (Mt. 5:11-12). This was put to the test when the apostles were beaten publicly; "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame of his name." (Acts 5:41). Those early Christians rejoiced in such trials; and Paul wrote: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Phil. 1:29). Peter's benediction is stated: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Pet. 4:16). There should be joy and gladness when we can suffer for our Lord who suffered so much for us. But to obtain this true JOY you must maintain the proper order: Jesus first; Others second; and Yourself last!**

# **Miracles**

**Alstone L. Tabor**

Do miracles occur today? If they do, who performs them? Perhaps most important, what is a miracle?

Most of us believe that God performs "miracles" daily as we consider the worlds in orbit and development of a tiny seed into a great plant. But this usage of the word "miracle" means "an unfathomable wonder" not a direct sign from God given as some special confirmation of His will. Our bodies are a miraculous creation! In this sense God continues miracles, and "miracles" is used, in this sense, by many writers in a poetic way. "To me, every hour of the day and night is an unspeakable, perfect miracle" (Walt Whitman).

A speaker recently declared that he believed in miracles. He told of his heart transplant and that his heart stopped beating twice and that the doctors and nurses started it again with electrical shocks. He said that he had died twice and came back to life.

The event was, understandably, a miracle to the speaker. By this definition, nearly everyone believes in miracles. But his wonderful experience is in no way comparable to the miracles of the New Testament. Those miracles were signs of a special sort which God used to confirm the inspired word. Marvelous medical advancements are different; they do not defy explanation, as do Biblical miracles, but are merely wonderful examples of human achievement.

Biblical miracles were real miracles. When Christ healed the sick, raised the dead, and gave sight to the blind. He never declared. "I will perform this miracle provided you go to the hospital and let the surgeons operate on you." His miracles did not depend, even in part on the skill of earthly physicians or technology.

Miracles, such as the restarting of a stopped heart, do depend upon man and his skills. Such "miracles" do not have the same force upon those who witness them. When Jesus performed a miracle, no one could doubt that God had intervened in the natural world. God may, or may not have intervened in the heart transplant case, but doubt exists. Jesus' signs left no doubt, to the observer, that God had suspended natural laws to do His will.

One denominational Houston preacher who has a large following

declares that he believes miracles happen today in the same way as Christ and the Apostles performed them. He says that he prayed for his young daughter, and she was healed. The daughter is now grown, and a few weeks ago was opening the mail for him when a bomb went off in her lap. Does he rush in and pray that God will heal her? He claims his prayer was answered before. Does he rely on a miracle now? No Sir! He rushed her to the emergency hospital and implored the surgeons to do their work. If God miraculously heals today, why not pray for her right there in the office and let God do the healing, without benefit of surgeon or nurse?

Would this sort of "miracle," say the rushing of Bartimaeus to the emergency room in Jericho, have confirmed Christ or his word? Certainly not! Christ did not perform miracles in this fashion.

God is all powerful and one day will perform the miracle of miracles by resurrecting all that are in the grave (John 5:28-29). He will also instantaneously change those then living (1 Cor. 15:51-52). But today He does not give the spiritual gifts of healing, tongues, prophecy, miraculous knowledge or any of the other gifts mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:6-10. God Himself told us that miraculous gifts would cease. "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

He tells us plainly that faith, hope and love (these three shall abide or continue) not the eleven gifts which included the miraculous and healing gifts of the twelfth chapter. Only three were to abide! "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13).

What is that which is perfect? David declared in Psalm 19:7, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." James calls the New Testament "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). So when the law of God was completed (made perfect), then miraculous gifts ceased. God said they would fail, cease, vanish away! I believe God rather than Oral Roberts. Pat Robinson or John Osteen. God no longer performs miraculous feats such as raising the dead, walking on water, the gift of prophecy, healing or speaking in tongues.

We believe in prayer, but we do not believe prayer will cause God to grant us the miracle-working power that He gave in the first century.

Some people believe that God has to perform a miracle for prayer to be answered. That position is not supported by scripture. God's hands are not tied, nor his power limited. God does move in our world. God provides many things in answer to prayer. Prayer accomplishes much, but God has not promised miracles in our age of the same kind that He performed through Christ and the inspired apostles.

Consider Heb. 2:3-4:

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?"

Consider also Mark 16:17, 20:

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; And if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Did this occur? Read verse 20. "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."

The miracles or signs described in the preceding passages were to confirm the word. In that time without a written New Testament early Christians could know that God inspired certain messages because God confirmed the word by His miracles. He has confirmed His words; He does not need to continue the confirmation.

"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men . . . And he gave some Apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man. . . That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. . . " The first century church needed all these miraculously inspired people as they had no written New Testament then. Later the word was committed to writing. Obviously we no longer have Apostles or Prophets, nor do we have inspired evangelists, pastors or teachers. The inspired people were to continue "Till we all come in the unity of the Faith" (Eph. 4:8).

We now have that faith, in unified form, in the New Testament. Jude declared that we should "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). This is not our personal faith, but the system of faith which had been revealed in God's Holy Word. Miraculously endowed gifts were to last "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God. . . " (Eph. 4:8). This unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God was completed, made perfect, when the last word of inspiration was written.

Now instead of all these miraculously endowed individuals, we have the "perfect law of liberty" completely given to mankind. God said supernatural things were to cease (1 Cor. 13:8), so His word being true, we have none of these today.

## ***Matters Controversial***

**G.H.P. Showalter**

Some very good-meaning people dislike any and all forms of controversy--specially religious controversy. Not infrequently some of those fine people write the editors of religious periodicals and decry the fact that all writers and especially all preachers do not agree. They think it a terrible tragedy that there is religious disagreement and specially that it should be made known--that it should "get out" on them. They think the background--in fact, so to speak, should be kept secret--that "all should agree to disagree" and make others believe they are united.

It is doubtless far better for good people to be united--specially for Christians to be united--to be "of one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32). All faithful Christians surely desire this most earnestly. But people may differ as to the most effective, and at the same time scriptural way of bringing it about. Is Unity promoted by ignoring differences? And is it quite safe to disregard all points wherein we may not be in full accord with some other religious people? And if we do, is there nay probability that we will ever get together? Where there is religious difference surely no one will contend that both sides are right. Does the way toward harmony and unity, then, lie along the line of a soothing, palliative persuasion that there is no difference--no lack of harmony--when such is notoriously untrue? Are we to undertake to deceive ourselves and to be led into a sort of spiritual somnambulism--walking about, we know not

where--victims of every wind of doctrine? Are we, as eternity bound souls, to chase shadows and pursue delusive phantoms as an acceptable, spiritual exercise--one that will offer dependable guarantees of a safe passage to the everlasting realities and fruitions of the upper world?

There is but one infallible standard--God's divine truth. When two persons are not agreed religiously, it is nothing but the part of wisdom to find out the real points of difference and then go to the word of the Lord to settle the whole matter. Neither is there any value in striving to keep secret the positions held by each or either. On the supposition that if both are honest they will accept the Bible, no matter which is thereby favored--or, as to that, if neither side is sustained by the Bible. The word of God is the divine measuring reed--the faultless, unerring, infallible test.

The trouble is with those who become offended--who stumble--because of religious discussion. There is no good reason in this. No one should object to having his teaching carefully scrutinized by others. He should not only not oppose but should even welcome such close analysis and investigation. The reason for this must be apparent to all. If one is right, the correctness of his position is not jeopardized by close and careful examination and investigation. On the contrary it becomes manifest and apparent to others who are honest who accept and receive the benefit of its correctness and truthfulness. But if a careful test shows that we are wrong--and not right--in our contention, then the examination has been of untold value and blessing to us. We have learned that we are wrong, and, before it is too late, have the opportunity of turning from the wrong in which there is no hope, and adopting what is right in the sight of God where alone there is hope, promise and life. And who can object to this? In the spiritual realm there are blessings innumerable and unutterable in the discovery of truth--and this discovery is made possible and practicable through religious discussion.

People--that is if they are good, honest people--have the wrong idea if they object to religious discussions. They are assuming that there is nothing vital involved. They would presume that the settlement amounts to nothing--that one might, or might not hold to a given position that is wrong, with safety. But such is very far from true. It would be true in regard to matters of mere opinion, such as where to build a meeting house, what particular hymn book to buy, or at what particular body of water a baptismal service should be performed. But such questions are

seldom raised to the dignity of oral or written discussion. Such an objection might also consistently be raised against the discussion of "foolish and unlearned questions" such as Paul said to "avoid." But surely no one would claim that when some public teacher is teaching and preaching both by tongue and pen what can easily be shown to be contrary to the sound doctrine of Jesus Christ, it becomes a "foolish question" when we examine such teaching in the light of God's word and expose it.

John said: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God" (2 John 9). Shall we just "agree to disagree" and move along with a feigned harmony? Shall we cry, "Peace! Peace!" when there is no peace, like the unfaithful Jews in the days of Jeremiah? Shall we expose them in our papers and in our sermons? Or shall we refuse to do so and get our "feelings hurt" if others do oppose and expose them? Where can there be any harm anyhow in opposing false doctrine and those who bring it? John quoted above is good authority and he continues and tells us exactly what to do: "If any 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." I am sorry that some of my brethren (very few) give such fellows "a greeting," pat them on the back, "receive them into their homes," and even murmur and complain when faithful, courageous gospel preachers and writers oppose and denounce both them and their doctrine. May the mercy of the Lord rest upon weakened brethren, and may the power of truth through the stronger brethren who have confidence in God and his truth strengthen their "feeble knees."

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