

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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EDITORIAL

It Gets Easier To Be A Christian

We are often reminded of how hard it is to be a Christian, that the Christian life is not easy, and of all the temptations and hardships that we will be confronted with along the way. Is this true, or are we dealing with negatives to the point of discouraging our friends from wanting to become followers of Christ?

It is true that there is a constant warfare going on between the spirit and the flesh in an attempt for one to overcome the other. Paul said, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of the mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our

Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Romans 7:19-25).

But then Paul continues, "There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:1,2).

Paul goes on to show how the flesh is weak, and the old law could not deliver us from our sin, but Christ came to save us and to give us the strength to overcome the flesh so that we may be saved in this world and in the world to come.

True, the new Christian may go through a period of adjusting, changing habits, and growing stronger, as he learns to love, trust, and to obey the Lord; and even the older Christian who is still trying to hold on to the things of the world may find it difficult to be faithful to the Lord; but for others of us, the longer we live for the Lord, serve him, work for him, and remain faithful to him, then the more we love him, trust him, and look to him for victory over sin and the world. This, then, makes it easier for us to be Christians. We have created habits of worship, service, morals, dress, and speech that make it less difficult for us to follow Christ. Things that might have tempted us as young Christians no longer bother us. The longer we live, the more aware we become of our need for the Lord and the greater our desire becomes to be faithful to him.

Are you wondering if you can live the Christian life? My friends, it is much easier to be a Christian than not be one. The Christian life is like any profession—the longer you do it, the more you know about it, the easier it is for you to do it, and the more efficient you become in doing it. Try it—it really works that way.



associate editorial

He Lost His Grip

One of the press reporters, describing the tragic fire accident of Ansal Bhavan, New Delhi, which took place on June 29, 1987, at 10:30 A.M., wrote in Indian Express of June 30, 1987, "Two of those who were trapped inside the building, Mr. R.V. Nanda and Mr. Sudhir Malhotra, fell to their deaths. This reporter witnessed one of them leap off a sill holding on to a rope thrown from an adjacent building, which is still under construction. But he lost his grip almost immediately."

What a tragedy! He lost his grip! In all probability he would have saved his life if he hadn't lost his grip. He needed some more courage. He was probably distracted by the people who stood on the ground shouting, and he might have thought that they were asking him to jump down and that they would save him. Because of the lack of courage and concentration, and distraction the man lost his grip on the rope and with that he lost his life.

This is exactly what happens to many people who come to Christ for saving their souls. For a while they try to follow Him with all their ability, but soon they become discouraged and distracted and give up in distress. The writer of the book of Hebrews wrote: "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, Let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace

to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4 : 14-16). Again, he said, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful". (Hebrews 10 : 23). "Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward." (Hebrews 10 : 35).

Christianity is a religion of faith and trust. We have faith in God, we trust in Him, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen By faith we understand that the worlds were formed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible". After giving this definition of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven the writer points to various men of faith, such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses to show how they remained faithful to God even in most difficult circumstances, and they did not cast away their confidence. Then in chapter twelve he calls them a cloud of witnesses and exhorts Christians to remember them as their example. This is what he says in Hebrews 12 : 1-3, "Therefore, we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."

I remember a story of an Irish man who wanted to go to the U.S.A. and live there for the rest of his life. The problem was how would he take all his money and possessions there from his country? So he decided to sell all his things and with all the money he had he bought an expensive Jewel. His plan was that once he reached U.S.A. he would sell the Jewel and recover all the money and then start a business with that money. The man bought a ticket for the ship which was going to the U.S.A. and soon he was on his way to the land of his dreams. He was very happy for what he was going to do. He was much excited too. One day he came out of his cabin, he stood staring at the sea

for a few minutes, as he thought of his future plans, then he took out the Jewel from his pocket, and while he was thinking, he began to toss the Jewel up in the air, he did that for a few seconds but then, suddenly he missed the Jewel and the precious Jewel went down deep into the sea. He lost his grip.

The Bible reminds us by saying, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by traditions from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot". (1 Peter 1 : 18, 19). The price of our redemption is very dear, it cost God the blood of His Son, Christ. Before God the value of a soul is much more than all the world. According to Jesus, "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange of his soul"? (Matthew 16 : 26). Therefore, we must by all means hold fast the confession of our faith, and should not cast away our confidence which is in the Lord Jesus, which has a great reward. Let us not forget that he has promised to give the crown of life, the eternal life in heaven; to those who would be faithful to Him until death. (Revelation 2 : 10). So hold fast.

Saved From What?

T. Pierce Brown

Yesterday as I was knocking on doors and studying the Bible with those who would, a man suggested that the jailer of Acts 16 wanted to know what to do to be saved from the consequences of what had transpired. It was evident from his whole conversation that he was doing what a large number of persons do when they are faced with unanswerable arguments against their preconceived notions; he wanted to evade the issue of "What must I do to be saved?"

If he could have managed to get me to go into some lengthy discussion of the possibility of the question meaning "How can I

be saved from a damaged reputation?", or "How can I be saved from the wrath of my superiors?", it would have suited his purpose perfectly.

For a person who is honestly sincere in raising the question of what the jailer meant, I have no objection to discussing, and think I could show with a reasonable degree of certainty that he did not need to be concerned with the consequences of the situation, for he could not be charged with causing the earthquake, nor with letting his prisoners escape, for they were all there. His reputation was in no danger, for he could show that in the face of great difficulty, he had done his duty.

But now, I want to suggest what I consider an important principle in dealing with many such things. If I had spend an hour convincing him that the question REALLY was dealing with "What must I do to be saved from my sins?" we probably would not have taken time to adequately discuss the answer, which is what really counts. So I just applied what I call "spiritual jujitsu" to him. I yielded his point, in theory, and said, "I think I can prove it was not what he was talking about, but let us assume it was. With what question did Paul deal? Was Paul talking about how to be saved from the wrath of a superior officer?" And then we got back at once to the question at hand and the complete answer to it.

The principle we wish to emphasize for those who try to study with others is: try to make sure you do not get sidetracked by trivial or irrelevant matters, but stick to the things that make a difference. For example when an unsaved person raised a question about what happened at the division of the Red Sea, or whether or not the whale could swallow Jonah, or vice versa, I try to follow the principle Paul applied in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "For determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Even if I convinced him that Jonah could have swallowed the whale if the Bible said so, he is still lost until I get him to Christ.

So I say something like this to him, "I will be happy to

discuss that with you, but there is even a greater miracle than that recorded in the Bible that I want to discuss with you first if you are convinced that IT happened and then want to discuss this one, I will do so." By the time we have finished the story of the resurrection of Christ, he has either accepted or rejected that. If he accepts THAT, he will have no problem with Jonah, for Jesus confirmed that story in Matthew 12:40. If he rejects it, it is wasting time to even discuss the story of Jonah, or any other, for one can get more proof of the resurrection of Christ than he can that Napoleon fought the battle of Waterloo, and if one is not willing to accept overwhelming historical evidence, no discussion of that or any other subjects is of any value anyway.

My judgment is that we have often allowed others to get us involved in endless dispute about "questions which do gender strife." (1 Timothy 6:20; Titus 3:9; 2 Timothy 2:23.) Any such question, the answer of which (even if we could prove it) would not bring them one step closer to Christ, should be disregarded.

"What Doth Hinder Me To Be Baptized?"

R.C. Oliver

Those who have studied the story of the Ethiopian's conversion, Acts 8:26-40, are aware of the fact that it was the Ethiopian who asked the question in the title on this article, and his asking it has made it famous. Many sermons have been preached upon this question, and this article is simply a further exploration of this subject.

In the case of the Ethiopian, only one thing hindered him. It was whether or not he believed that Jesus is the Christ, for Philip had no right to baptize the man until he had assurance that the man believed. The Lord had said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16.) So Philip wanted to know if he believed and upon hearing his confession, Philip

baptized him. At this point the two men separated, perhaps never to see each other again in this world.

While hearing Jesus preached, the Ethiopian very quickly saw the importance of baptism, and he was baptized immediately, but not all experience such little difficulty with the subject. Yet while some find baptism to be, to them, a rather difficult subject, none should be hindered any longer than was the Ethiopian. Baptism is something one should obey just as soon as he finds out about it. However there are many who unfortunately allow unjustifiable hindrances to prevent them from obeying the Lord in baptism, as this study will show. Consider, for instance, the following real hindrances that have prevented individuals from obeying the Lord in baptism.

1. **Ignorance.** Ignorance is one thing that hinders many from being baptized. They do not know that it is essential to their salvation. For instance, until the Ethiopian learned about the subjects, he had no desire to be baptized. However, just as soon as one learns about it, he should be baptized the same hour. (Acts 16:33).

2. **Unbelief.** Unbelief, disbelief, or rationalism is another hindrance to baptism. Many do not believe that baptism has anything to do with forgiveness for this reason they are not baptized. They are not baptized for the same reason that others do not believe that Jesus performed miracles, or that Jesus arose from the dead, or that God spoke the universe into existence. They cannot understand why it is necessary, they cannot see any sense in it, therefore they are hindered from doing anything about it.

3. **Traditions.** A lady once told this writer that she could not be baptized, because she was on probation at her church. If she satisfied her church for the next six months, she could then be baptized. And this human tradition was hindering her. Her church had obviously made void the word of God by their traditions!

Infant baptism, which is another human tradition, also

hinders many from being baptized. This writer recalls one man who was past seventy years of age, who had lived all those years thinking that he had already been baptized. His parents had taught him that when he was a little baby they had him baptized, and he thought that was all that was necessary. Thus he and his parents had "made the commandment of God none effect by men's traditions." (Matthew 15:6.) As quickly as this man learned that baptism means a "burial in water," and that only penitent believers are proper subjects of baptism, he was baptized for the remission of his sins. (Acts 2:38.) Though he was a retired high school teacher, with a Master's degree, he did not learn the truth about baptism until he was past seventy years of age. Yet as quickly as he learned, he was baptized. So should everyone do upon learning the purpose and nature of baptism. One should allow nothing to hinder him in this obedience.

4. Fear. Fear also hinders some. Some are afraid of the water, and this hinders them. These people simply need more trust in the Lord. If they truly believe the Lord, they will not allow the fear of water to hinder them.

Others are afraid they "cannot hold out." They question their spiritual strength, but their weakness can be turned into strength, if they will only put their trust in the Lord. (2 Corinthians 12:10.) To know one is weak, will cause him to depend more upon the Lord, and this, in turn, will make him strong.

Some are afraid to what people might think about them. One lady, past sixty-three, thought the people might judge her to have been a very wicked person, and while it was pointed out to her that she was a sinner, and needed to be saved, she was also assured that Christians, as well as angels, would rejoice with her instead of criticizing her. Though she had lived a good moral life, she still needed to be baptized into Christ. (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27.) She was baptized that same night.

5. Opposition of family and friends. Some are hindered from being baptized because their family members or friends threaten them in some manner. Perhaps they will say they will have no

more to do with them, and this writer has known of some instances where the individual was actually put out of the home. This would be a hard test of one's faith, yet Jesus says. : "If any man comes to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple". (Luke 14:26.) "Hate" in this passage means "love less". There comes a time in every person's life when he has to decide either for or against the Lord, and this may be that time for some men.

6. **Irrational vows.** Some people have allowed their irrational vows to hinder them from being baptized. One man promised his mother, upon her deathbed, that he would never be baptized and become a member of the church of Christ. Long after he had become convinced that he should be baptized, he delayed, because of his promise to his mother. While he should have never made such a promise, yet having made it, he should not have allowed that irrational promise to hinder him from doing what the Lord had commanded him to do. It is better for one to break an irrational promise, and ask the Lord to forgive him for having made such a promise, than it would be for one to break one of the Lord's commandments and be lost forever!

7. **Goodness.** Some think they are good enough as they are, and they do not need to be baptized. Such a person should consider the record of Cornelius, in Acts chapter 10, and be baptized as he was, for the remission of sins. No one is so good that he does not need the Lord. No one is so good that he does not need to be baptized!

8. **Wickedness.** Others think they have sinned so much that the Lord would not be willing to save them. However, Paul who judged himself to be chief of sinners, trusted the Lord and was baptized into Christ for the remission of his sins (Romans 6:3-4). The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9) He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto him. (Hebrews 7:25.)

9. **Age.** There are those who think themselves too old,

and there are others who think themselves too young, to be baptized. And while much could be said here, it is sufficient to say that age is no factor to one who is capable of becoming a penitent believer. Such an one should not allow age to hinder him from being baptized for the remission of his sins.

10. A love of the world. The allurements of the world have very definitely hindered some from being baptized. They know what the Lord requires of them, but they are not ready to give up the pleasures of this world. They, like Felix, are waiting for a more convenient season, but as it was with Felix, so it very likely will be with them, no convenient season will ever come. (Acts 24:25). How sad it is to have to realize that some are willing to sacrifice an eternal blessing for a transient pleasure, but each must give an account of himself to God. (Romans 14:12).

In conclusion, one should realize that neither the above nor any other hindrance can be made a justifiable cause for one's not being baptized into Christ. Jesus said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved". (Mark 16:16.) "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:17).

Three Salvations Taught In The New Testament !

Basil Overton

Some people think that when one is saved he is saved in such a way that he can never be lost. However, the New Testament teaches three salvations.

1. One is saved from past, or alien sins when he by faith does what God requires of him. That is the salvation Jesus was talking about when he said : "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16.) It is the same salvation that the Holy Spirit by the mouth of the apostles referred to when he told believers, to, repent and be baptized for the remission of sins.

(Acts 2:38.) It is the salvation of Acts 22:16 where Saul was told to "arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins." The New Testament plainly teaches that in being saved this way from his alien state and sins, one becomes a child of God or a Christian. This means he enters into Christ, and in the New Testament this means he enters into the body of Christ which is the church, Jesus, purchased with his blood. (Colossians 1:2, 18; 3:15; Acts 20:28.) After one thus becomes a Christian he can still sin.

2. When a child of God sins, he should ask his Father in heaven to forgive him. A child of God who sinned was told by the apostle Peter to repent and pray that he might be forgiven. (Acts 8:22.) Of Christians the New Testament says: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9.)

Some preachers tell alien sinners to confess their sins and ask God to forgive them, and then quote 1 John 1:9 as a proof text for such instruction. But this passage sums up the responsibility of erring children of God. Alien sinners were told by inspired preachers to believe the gospel, repent of their sins, and be baptized for the remission of their sins.

If a child of God errs from the truth he must turn from the error of his way back to the Lord if he expects to be saved in heaven. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth and one converts him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (James 5:19,20).

3. Jesus said: "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." (Matthew 10:22.) Being saved in heaven is the third kind of salvation under consideration. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:10,11).

The Truth About REPENTANCE

Shan Jackson

One of the most used and yet most misunderstood words in the church today is the word "repentance." Repentance, we know, is a part of obedience to the primary principles of the gospel message of Jesus Christ, but what is the Biblical usage of the word?

Repentance means to "be sorry for," but the Biblical usage of the word does not stop there. Repentance means to "turn away from something." Turning away from sin has long been a problem with God's children. "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

Repentance is as serious a matter as anything in the New Testament. The exhortation of Luke 13:1-5 should prove this but the thing that too many Christians forget is that forgiveness is only possible with repentance. How many times have we used Acts 2:38 to prove the essentiality of baptism and neglected to also use it to prove the essentiality of repentance? (In fact, repentance is seen as a prerequisite to baptism.) Peter further urged in chapter 3:19 to "repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out"

As a preacher friend so often says, "repenting is quite different than reporting. "Often we are willing to report on our sins but sometimes it is with no desire or feeling of need to change.

A lack of needed repentance on the part of a Christian simply serves to ever increase the hardness of his heart. Romans 2:5 says, "but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Unless we repent and truly turn away from our sins and mistakes

we are storing up God's wrath against us and this wrath will be made evident on the day of judgment. At the ignorance of the Athenians God winked but now he commands all men to turn away from their sins. (Acts 17:30-31).

So what then is our repentance? Biblically speaking, repentance is a five-fold action. 1. Repentance must bring about genuine and heartfelt sorrow. 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 says, "for godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation" Unless and until our feelings toward sins change our repentance will not be able to do its specific task. 2. Repentance also shows a deep conviction about the sins. When Peter preached repentance to the Jews on the day of Pentecost their heartfelt repentance brought about their much needed change because they were then truly convicted of their sins. At his sermon the Bible says they were "pricked in their heart," and then they asked Peter and the other apostles "what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). 3. Repentance requires a change in the outward appearance of our life as well as the change of our heart, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Repentance is not only felt but also seen. 4. The required repentance is also pictured as a commitment to our victory over sin. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). 5. Finally, repentance is tested. "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8). God's use of repentance is not to bring temporary or lasting sorrow nearly as much as it is to bring lasting joy. Let's finish the previous verse used in Acts 3:19. The speaker continues by saying, "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Repentance is a part of his plan. Repentance changes us so that we can fully appreciate the spiritual blessings that are in Christ (Eph. 1:3ff).

The life of a sinner may be full of pleasure because of sin but it is also devoid of Christ and his blessings. With repentance we can change our lives from full of sin and empty of Christ to full of Christ with no room for anything else. As Christians we need to always remember that we were not bought with

temporary treasures like silver and gold but "with the precious blood of Christ . . ." (1 Pet. 1:19).

One of Man's Oldest and Greatest Enemies

John P. Weekly

In Proverbs 16:18 the Scripture says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Pride has been the swinging blade for many persons and kingdoms. The wrong kind of pride lifts a man completely out of his moral and spiritual habitation. Not only has such pride caused many men to overstep the proper boundaries of life, but it also caused the once-holy angels in Jude 6 to leave their proper place and fall under the condemnation of God.

In the New Testament there are three different words for the word "pride." Note the following passages: 1. Mark 7:21-23, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." 2. I Timothy 3:6, "Not a novice, let being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." 3. 1 John 2:16, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

In Mark 7:22 the word "Pride" has reference to the lifting up of oneself in relation to others. In 1 Timothy 3:6 the word "pride" has reference to the lifting up of oneself in relation to himself: And the "pride" in 1 John 2:15 has reference to the lifting up of oneself in relation to God.

The concept of pride in Mark 7:22 is condemning the vain pride of the Pharisee in Luke 18:11 when he thanked God that he was not as other men. This sinful pride was characteristic of the

brethren in James 2:1-6 when they had respect to the rich and contempt for the poor. This evil disposition of pride caused Peter to look down on his Gentile brethren (Gal. 2:12). No wonder that Jesus said that such pride defiles a man. The word "defile" means to be unclean. Thus, when a child of God takes on such pride he becomes unclean before God. This is, of course, one reason that James told the Christians to whom he wrote, "... Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded".

Note that Jesus classified this sin with some of the worst immoralities. This proves to us that God places as much emphasis on one's attitude as he does on one's actions. The Christian who "puffs" himself up or vaunts himself is not walking in love, for Paul said that love, "... vaunteth not itself..." (1 Cor. 13:4). The Christian, who is likened unto a priest (1 Pet. 2:5), stains himself with such pride and is no longer holy and without spot in the service of God (Eph. 5:26-27). As someone has well pointed out that vain pride causes the Christian to hold up his nose, rather than his chin. The reason that a man's nose is in the air is because his heart is in the air; as goes the heart, so goes the nose.

The second Scripture concerning pride is 1 Timothy 3:6. Just as a man must keep himself in proper balance with others, so must he stay in balance with himself. "No man is an island, but every man is a piece of the continent".

What we think about ourselves is very important and needs to be biblically based. In Matthew 22:39 Jesus teaches that we are to have a healthy love for ourselves, not a selfish love. He also teaches that we are to have confidence in ourselves, but not over-confidence (Matt. 25:25; Phil. 4:13; 1 Cor. 10:12). The key to being confident, but not over-confident, is to look at the example of Christ (1 Pet. 2:21). Among many of the things associated with his flawless character, obedience is emphasized in Philippians 2:5-8. Along with obedience, his attitude of willingness to play second fiddle is also brought out. It takes humility before a man will obey God. Jesus was on an equality with God, but it wasn't

difficult or impossible for him to debase himself. Jesus willingly stepped down.

Those who have too many "I's" in their lives will not be able to serve God (Rom. 6:12-17) because they are self-centered rather than Christ-centered. One of the major things that keeps them from being Christ-centered is pride. The Holy Spirit knew that a young convert would be tempted (James 1:12-15) to think too highly of himself. Being put up too soon in any field or institution has ruined many men.

When a man has over-confidence in himself, he will not seek the aid and help of the only one who can really help him. A man with vain pride in his life will begin seeing himself in a light that is not true of any man. He will begin to think that he has all the answers, or he will begin to think that if he cannot do it, then no one can. His view of God will become very narrow simply because his view of himself becomes very broad. He no longer denies himself, but exalts himself. There are many things that can blind a man from the will of God, but nothing blinds him any more effectively than himself. To see God (Matt. 5:8) one must look beyond himself, not to himself. To see God, one must look away from himself and look to God (Heb. 12:2).

In Matthew 5:3 the formula is given for one to stay away from the kind of pride mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:6. It reads, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." A commentary passage on Matthew 5:8 is Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise". The word "poor" in Matthew 5:8 means not only a poverty-stricken spirit (one feels like he has lost it all on the inside), but the word means to be "beggary" poor (one knows that he has lost it all on the inside and his spirit is yearning and begging for help).

The last word for pride is in John 2:16. This is the kind of pride that puts one at odds with God. This is the man who thinks that his will is superior to God's will. This is the man who thinks that his system of righteousness (such as a good moral life) is

better than God's plan for redeeming man. This man may not be proud or arrogant with other people and he might not be over-sold on himself. But his kind of pride is just as deadly as the other two.

The chances for success for those who want to succeed, are very good. But we must not let this success go to our heads. When this happens people begin reading things into the Bible, rather than getting out of the Bible that which they need, the truth (John 8:32). Man is not to be arrogant with life itself or the possessions of life (Luke 12:15). Life on this planet, like its many possessions, is only temporal. A man becomes puffed up against God because he believes that his security is within himself. In Luke 12:16-21 is an example of a man who was "rich" toward himself rather than being rich toward God. The pride of life caused his downfall, and so it will for one who walks its path.

We need to keep in mind what Peter said in 1 Peter 5:6, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

The Sin of Ananias

Don Jackson

The story of Ananias' sin and immediate punishment recalls stories such as Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1,2) and Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:6,7). Everyone must respect and obey God's law, and punishment awaits the transgressor. But is the offense of Ananias the "minor," inadvertent act of Uzzah or the willful deliberate act of Nadab and Abihu? The following analysis will show far more involved in Ananias' sin than a "little white lie".

From Luke's account one learns that Ananias (and Sapphira, although she is not under discussion in this article) sold a piece of land, kept back for himself some of the money, and brought the remaining amount to the apostles as a donation. Peter responds that Satan has led Ananias to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep part

of the money. He further says that the property and money were the possession of Ananias to do as he pleased, but he chose to lie to God. Immediately Ananias fell down and died.

The story raises many questions: Why such drastic punishment for such a "minor offense?" How does the implication of donating the full amount become a lie to the Holy Spirit and God? If Ananias could have done what he wished with the money, why couldn't he keep back some of it for himself?

The key to a full understanding and appreciation of the story lies in the word translated "kept back" (*nosphizo*). This rare term is found only in this account and in Titus 2:10 in the New Testament. It is translated "purloin" (KJV, ASV), "steal," (NIV or "pilar" (NASB). The Greek lexicon defines it as "misappropriate" (Bauer, Gingrich, Danker). Therefore, the term involves more than simple holding back but of taking that which rightfully belongs to another.

The usage in the story of Achan's sin (LXX, Joshua 7:1; 19-26) gives further clarification. In the case of Achan, he "misappropriated" some of the spoils of Jericho that had been declared "devoted" or "accursed" by Joshua (6:15-19; 7:1). All the spoils of Jericho had been irrevocably dedicated to God in a vow (Leviticus 27:28,29). Under this vow the "devoted things" could not be redeemed or reversed in any way. Achan's end comes by his death and the death of his family and the destruction of his possessions (Joshua 7:24-26).

Without diminishing in the least the lesson of Ananias' swift punishment, this background gives a more complete understanding of his sin. Ananias did not merely imply or suggest that the gift was all the money for the property. He had declared in a public way a complete commitment of the land and its price as a "devoted thing" to God. This irrevocable vow gave "title" of the land to God so that keeping back any of the money was "embezzlement" or "misappropriation" of that which belongs to God.

A vow to God is a serious matter. One should not take

lightly the commitment to serve God as a Christian, the commitment to give as prospered, the commitment to live together as husband and wife until death, or any other commitment one makes to God. The sin and punishment of Ananias stand as an example of how seriously God takes such commitment.

A Lesson from King Asa

Weldon Langfield

Asa, the third king of Judah, was a godly man. He began his reign by deposing his own grandmother, an avowed idolator. He destroyed his father's idols, eliminated male prostitutes from the land, and commanded Judah to worship God. A life generally characterized by faith, however, came to a rather surprising end.

"And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa became diseased in his feet. His disease was severe, yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians. So Asa slept with his fathers, having died in the forty-first year of his reign" (2 Chronicles 16:12,13). These two verses suggest some powerful lessons.

First, Asa was the kind of man whose prayers were heard. Once, when under attack by the Ethiopians, "Asa called to the Lord his God" (2 Chronicles 14:11). The result? "So the Lord routed the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled" (2 Chronicles 14:12). Are you the kind of person whom God hears? "For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears attend to their prayer" (1 Peter 3:12). Let us live so that when emergencies arise, the line of communication between God and us is open.

Second, note that Asa didn't consider God at this life and death juncture. The Bible indicates that this good King suffered from a severe ailment that apparently lasted at least several months, perhaps more than a year. Yet he failed to ask for God's help—he trusted only in human physicians. The result was death.

James wrote, "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2), and King Asa provides a painfully vivid inspired commentary. God knew what Asa needed just as He knows what we need (Matthew 6:8). To receive His blessings, however, we're commanded, "Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7).

God has the power to bless us beyond our "wildest dreams." Paul wrote, "Now to him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" (Ephesians 3:20). The Bible suggests that King Asa robbed himself of the blessing of a cure because he didn't request God's help. How many blessings has God been willing to give us that we have never received simply because we haven't asked? And how many blessings are now only a fervent prayer away?

Jealousy

Thomas Premanandam

Jealousy and Envy are synonymous. Although a fine distinction can be drawn between these two words, the word Envy can be identified with Jealousy.

Feelings of disappointment and resentment at the success or better fortune of another; displeasure or ill will aroused by the superior position of a neighbour are given as general meanings of this word. Naturally therefore Jealousy gloats over or feels elated when a multitude of misfortunes stare into the face of the envied person.

It may be noted however that this word, Jealousy, acquire different meaning when used to qualify God. It means then requiring exclusive loyalty or whole-hearted worship and service to the Lord; solicitous for preservation of the rights of God and intolerant of unfaithfulness on the part of His people. The use of this word in this sense is common in the Old Testament.

Now to advert again to this word—Socrates defines it as the daughter of pride and author of murder and revenge. Some deem it as one of the most subtle, common and deadly forms of hatred,

A proud man can enjoy his pride : a covetous man can enjoy his hoardings : but a jealous man can enjoy nothing out of jealousy save the sufferings of mental torture. Although jealousy as a weed, does germinate in every soil and clime, there are certain areas where its fruit is abundant. Jealousy does not usually exist between one class and another. A famous wrestler does not envy a reputed philosopher : a poet does not envy a noted film actor : again a great painter does not feel jealousy of a popular sculptor, It grows and yields plenty of wild fruit among the persons of the same class. A well known cricketer may be jealous of another aspiring cricketer of the same team: again local footballer is not jealous of a nationally recognised professional player: he modestly admits the latter's superiority but feels jealous if one from the same team is admired or any one to whom he has matched himself in his mind. In other words competition within the same class or circle arouses jealousy which cannot brook praises showered on the opponent.

The Bible is not silent on the horrifying consequences of jealousy. Saul's jealousy of David must have already been a spark in his heart, a spark occasioned by the divine choice of David as his (Saul's) successor to the throne of Israel and this smouldering spark blazed into consuming flame at the song and shouts of praise from the Hebrew women. "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands". This spontaneous tribute to David from the fair sex aroused bitter hatred in the heart of Saul who, from that time on, was obviously obsessed with jealousy and was awaiting a chance to spear him to death.

That Envy is powerful enough even to smother brotherly love can be illustrated from the story of the first brother-Cain and Abel. The divine acceptance of Abel's offering and the rejection of Cain's planted a seed of jealousy in the latter's heart which could dissolve even the ties of consanguinity giving birth to vengeance and murder—the first in the human history. The story of the prodigal son is also a case in point. On learning the news of his brother's arrival, the elder brother was badly moved

with jealousy and refused to go in even at the request of his father. The door of jealousy separated them as the elder's hatred for his prodigal brother totally blinded him to the divine virtue of forgiveness.

Sometimes Envy destroys the mansion in which it is harboured and nourished. Out of jealousy, Haman conspired the death of Mordecai and the complete annihilation of the Jewish community but the conspiracy was uncovered and Haman was himself executed on the same gallows which he had contrived for Mordecai. The act of jealousy, like a boomrang, recoiled on Haman (Nu. 32 : 23. Rom 6:23) Are we aware that misery is the aftermath of jealousy ? (Gal. 6 : 7).

Again, innocent and misunderstood love may occasionally give birth to jealousy. Joseph was the centre of Jacob's love which provoked bitter jealousy among his other sons who could not bear the presence of the dreamer and so got rid of him by selling him away to the Ishmaelites.

Instances are not wanting where envy prompts scandal. Two friendly girls admired a handsome youth and harboured love for him. One of them was fortunate to get him. It was not easy for the other lovelorn girl to swallow the bitter pill of disappointment. Jealousy the offspring of frustrated love overwhelmed her and she started a vituperative tirade against her one time lover, her old friend.

Jealousy is one among the deities which we Christians worship unawares. The exercise of it has often been manifest in our activities of the church. Unscrupulous competition in the election of the church officers is a common feature. The defeat that one suffers at the election renders him jealous of the elected person and the group that supports him. And jealousy when uncontrolled drives one out of reason. He is tempted to unsheath the sword of his tongue and use it at character assassination. Again on the plea that his rival's election was not constitutional, he sues him and his group in a Court of Law. Because of the jealous rancour, churches have been split and congregations have been

disrupted. Jealousy has thus defiled the holy institution and brought disgrace to the community as a whole. Aren't the non-Christians who say, "We want Christ but not Christianity!" justified in their observation?

Even preachers and Evangelists are seduced into this perilous snares of jealousy. The unwarranted use of the pulpit to preach at another brother of recognised ability in preaching is an uncharitable and baneful practice. The sooner it is given up, the better for the health of the church.

The work of jealousy is rather subtle : its mischievous play is varied and destructive; turns friends into foes; breaks the bands of love between brothers, snaps family ties; interferes with conjugal love and turns family life sour; robs peace and fosters hostilities among nations. Again it stains character deadens Christian virtues and witness and sows seeds of discord into the loving fellowship and vitiates the environs of social and religious life of man. In the word of God, jealousy is counted as SIN along with other sins—malice, fornication, idolatry, sedition, murder, perverse dealings, deception, diverse lusts, wickedness, covetousness and so on. As such a man of jealousy is bound to share the reward reserved for him. (Rom. 1 : 32; Gal. 5 : 21).

"Who can stand before jealousy"? says King Solomon. This affirmation hints at the vast dimensions of the devilish acts that jealousy can work upon humanity. In other words, the power of jealousy in perpetuating evil preponderates over the power of all the good in man.

Good education, moral culture, noble birth, cultivation of social etiquette and other graces that arouse admiration of the folk around us—all these at some time or the other may fall victims of jealousy. In a word it can invade even the bosoms of the best. How then can we escape its clutches?

Are we to continue to be the victims of jealousy which attacks the very fabric of Christian living and corrupts spiritual growth? Let us remind ourselves that we all are members of the Lord's

Body. (1 Cor. 12:12-26). The heart that beats throughout one's life does not envy the other members of the body which will enjoy intervals of rest. In the like manner, as members of the Body of Christ, I am not to envy the prosperity or superiority or the good fortune of another member of the same Body. If the truth implied in this is understood in its right perspective, we realise the good fortune of our brother is ours too because it edifies the same Body. Should we grow to this height of understanding and wisdom, we hardly make our hearts a home for jealousy.

Again the herd instinct in man naturally urges one towards friendly and amicable social life which by degrees contributes to spiritual growth. Sound relations based on mutual LOVE override all traces of jealousy. When the Lord said, Love your neighbours as yourself, THAT LOVE includes the totality of man's multitudinous relations with his fellowman. In other words the three-fold conduct-saying, being and doing-of one man should be in total harmony with the three-fold conduct of his neighbour in which case neither of them would yield to jealousy. We then can sing along with the Miller of the Dee "I envy no body and no body envies me".

The cheer in a home, the sanctity in a church and the healthy fellowship in social life can be assured only when Love prevails in those areas. **BROTHERLY LOVE AS SUCH IS THE SOLE CURE FOR A HEART SMARTING WITH JEALOUSY.**

The Lord Jesus Christ, Peter and Paul and John were never tired of exhorting that we should love one another.

Love and Jealousy cannot coexist. Love alone can successfully ward off jealousy and its corroding influence. Such being the case should we not zealously invite that LOVE—the love that is greater than FAITH and HOPE to abide in us and govern our community life? Then what a joy of heaven will there be in our homes and churches!

Instrumental Music in Psalms 156

Lanis Lindsey

Does Psalms 150 give the Christian Bible authority to worship God with an instrument? There are several interesting points concerning instrumental music in worship to God.

1. Psalm 150 was written about 1,000 years before the church was established.

2. If we could find no other authority other than Psalm 150 we would have to agree that the apostles knew about the passage but chose not to use any instrument but the voice and heart in worship to God. (Ephesians 5:19; Hebrews 13:15; Colossians 3:16.)

3. In Psalm 149:6-9 notice they were to execute vengeance upon the people with a two edged sword and that was the honour of all his saints. But 2 Corinthians 10:4 says our weapons are not of the flesh. Micah 4:3 prophecies that God's people would learn war no more. Matthew 11:14 states that the prophets prophesied until John. Also in Luke it is written, "... all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." (Luke 24:44.) Therefore, we must rightly divide the word distinguishing the Old Testament authority from the New Testament authority. (2 Timothy 2:15.)

4. It is strange that not one instrument was ever in a church assembly until the 5th century and the organ not until the 8th century even though they had access to them.

Instrumental music in worship was a cause of division in 1054 A.D. in the church that came into being by a falliag away from the truth. (1 Timothy 4:1-6; 2 Timothy 4:1-6.) I agree the piano sounds good to me, but something more important than what sounds good to me or to you is, what sounds good to God! We assemble to worship God, in spirit and truth.(John 4:24.) The

Bible says "Prove all things. . . (1 Thessalonians 5:21.) The Bible also says the scriptures are profitable for reproof. (2 Timothy 3:16.) We can not prove by the scriptures that instrumental music in Christian worship is authorized by God. 2 Peter says we have all things that pertain to life and godliness. If we worship God with the instrument because it sounds good we have forgotten what sounds good to him which is the fruit of the lips coming from the heart.

I doubt whether you offer a ram for your sins or observe the feast of the tabernacles. If we do one part of the law we are subject to do the whole law. (Galatians 5:3.) Psalm 150 says praise God with trimbles, cymbals, and trumpets, but where are these?

There just is not any authority for worship with instrumental Music. We are in danger of the judgment when we use things unauthorized in the service to God. (Galatians 1:6-9; Jude 3; Leviticus (10:1-3.) If there be anything else it is summed up in "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." (John 14:15.) "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate. . . ." (2 Corinthians 6:17.)

You Cannot be on the Mid-Way

Shyamsalam

Our society has usually three groups of people: upper group, middle group and the lower group. The middle group is the most privileged group. It can go and mix with either group easily. When we come to the spiritual way, too many are looking for the mid-way. Here, the Bible is plainly going to answer that there is no such mid-way harbour.

Jesus spoke, there are only two ways. The way which leads to life is entered through a narrow gate and is very hard to walk while the other way has a wide gate and easy to walk but it leads to destruction. So one has to choose either of the way to get the eternal life or destruction. (Matt. 7:13, 14).

Following this teaching of Jesus we can read of two kinds of persons. The first kind are the ones who hear the words and commandments of Jesus and do what is said to do are called wise persons. The other kind are the ones who hear the words but do not obey fully or *partly*. They were called foolish persons. There is no mid-way persen. (Matt. 7: 24-27).

In another occasion Jesus permitted out that whether they were Jews or Gentiles, all have sinned and need repentance. Unless they repent all likewise will perish (Lk. 13: 1-5) one has to decide whether he would repent to be saved from perishing or go on perishing. There is no mid-way to stop perishing except repentance. So on the day of Pentecost Peter urged everyone who heard his preaching to repent (Acts 2:38) It is a part of the commission Jesus gave. (Lk. 24:47).

That night while Jesus was talking with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, Jesus told him straight that “. Unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (Jn. 3:1-3) As every one is needed to repent, everyone is to be born anew of water and the spirit otherwise he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Apostles later on taught people how they should be born again and what is born again mean. (Acts 2: 37, 38; Rom 6: 3-5). Here also the only alternative one has to do the needfuls to be born again in order to enter the kingdom of God or go away without testing the kingdom of God.

Another thing Jesus mentioned in his sermon on the mount that no one can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon”. (Matt. 6:24). One has to worship God or worship the mammon at a time. One cannot worship both at a time and enjoy the benefit from both sides. One cannot be partly of God and partly of world.

God has given to man a way to come to Him to live and die as a child of God. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3: 16). “—he who does not obey God shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him”. (John 3:36) “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mk. 16: 16). God has put forward his only begotten son as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. That, one may be justified by God’s grace as a gift through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. (Rom 6:35). So one need to get into contact with the blood of Christ even in water baptism. “—Who have been baptized into Christ even in baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the death by the glory of the father; we too might walk in newness of life”. If one wishes to enjoy the privileges offered, he has to go through this way only without any exception. There is no mid-way which can put under consideration.