

# THE BIBLE TEACHER



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	Children's class	...	
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# THE BIBLE TEACHER

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## EDITORIAL



### **LOVE MARRIAGES VS. ARRANGED MARRIAGES**

There are different arrangements for marriage in various parts of the world. Sometimes the customs and traditions pertaining to this all important part of one's life may even vary from country to country. Two types of marriage, however, that find themselves at the opposite extremes of each other is the one in the western part of the world that is referred to as a "love marriage" and the one in the east that is called an "arranged marriage." There are naturally good and bad points about both.

#### **1. Love Marriages.**

A love marriage is based on the idea that when young people grow up to a mature age, where they become interested in the opposite sex, and begin to think about choosing a companion for marriage, then it is left to the individual to choose his or her own

companion. The choice is made on the basis of acquaintance, friendship, looks, and any number of other things that might influence the final decision. The actual commitment to marriage is usual after a period of what is called courtship. That is, a person may start out by having several close friends or associates. In the case of the male, he may invite a young lady out for a meal, to go to some type of entertainment, or to call at her home for a visit. He might have casual visits with two or more over a period of time. At this point, he is not all that serious with anyone. But when he begins to like a particular person more than others, and when the one he likes begins to have the same feeling for him, they may both begin to favour the company of the other over all others. This may lead to an engagement or an announcement that they plan to be married. After some time, and if they still feel the same love for each other, and are convinced that they want to spend the rest of their lives together, then they are married. The young man is the one who most always takes the lead in the dating and courting that leads to the marriage itself. The young lady, however, can respond to the young man's attention or she can ignore and reject him and wait until the one comes calling that she is more interested in.

Now don't think for a minute that it is all left up to the young people, and that they blindly walk into marriage. While being brought up at home, they are being trained and taught to be good moral people, the kind of companion to look for, etc. Some of the things that may influence them would be religion, education, economics and profession. Sometimes the parents will make arrangements for their children to have a certain environment, to be associated with a particular group of people, send their children to a school or college to meet the kind of young people that they would want their son or daughter to marry. So, there is more to it than some people in the east may know about.

Young people of the west are generally more independent. They select their companions and then on marriage set out on their own to make their own homes. Jesus said "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife : and they shall be one flesh..." (Matthew 19 : 5).

Of course one of the weaknesses of this type of marriage is where the parents do not properly teach and train and guide their children in these matters. Young men and women in this case can make poor choices for their marriage companion, can marry too young, and their marriage can easily fail.

Because of the dating and marriage customs in the west, some people of the east think that all of these young people are very lax with their morals. Some even think that Christian young people are liberal with their morals. It is true that you will find some who are morally impure, but this can be said of young people in all parts of the world.

Usually when young people of the east, and especially here in India, try to pattern their marriage after the western customs then they run into trouble. This is the case because they have grown up in a different society with different customs and traditions and the people as a whole frown on this type of thing. The ones who do it are often thought of as modern youth, those who are copying the west, the rebellious, and so on. They are therefore thrown into a situation where they are, more or less, on their own, with little outside encouragement given, and with many waiting for it to result in failure, and so it becomes very difficult for them to survive.

## 2. Arranged Marriages.

Here in India, and other countries in the east, marriages are generally arranged by the parents. This is something that has been passed from one generation to the next for who knows how long. It is the custom and tradition for the parents to take the lead and to make all of the necessary arrangements for the son or daughter. They are older, experienced, wiser, and feel that they can handle these matters much better than young people can. The parents usually have close friends who have children about the same age of their children and so it is only natural that they would mutually agree to have their sons and daughters to marry. Sometimes these families live in the same city or village, but at other times some distance may separate them. At times arrangements

are made for distance relatives to marry. Business or religion may also influence the parents in a certain direction.

Often the young man or woman, for whom the marriage is being arranged, comes right up to the time of the marriage itself without ever having seen the one he or she is to marry and spend the rest of their life with. In this case they are putting their trust implicitly in their parents. Because of their parents, and the respect they have for them, the marriages usually stand since they would not want to bring shame and disgrace to their parents for breaking up the marriage.

This is the type of marriage where the husband and wife have to learn to love each other after they have married. Perhaps this is what Paul had in mind when he said, "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." (Titus 2 : 3-5).

While the people of this culture find it very difficult to follow the marriage patterns of the west, likewise those of the west would find it even more difficult to try to follow the eastern practice of marriage. They find it hard to understand arranged marriages but at the same time they do respect the fact that they seem to be more lasting. But they view these types of marriages as being more or less where the parents arrange for the mating of their children much as they would their animals. They see these marriages as unfair to the young people since they are thrown into these relationships without being allowed to voice their opinion one way or the other. They see them as representing selfish parents who are thinking about marrying their children off to those that would elevate their social status, would be a wise investment to their business, would be beneficial to them politically, and so on.

Another thing that comes out of this type of marriage is the fact that the wife is usually expected to go to live with the

husband's people, whereas the Bible says, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." (Ephesians 5 : 31). Still another disadvantage is that when a wife goes to live with the husband and his people then she is usually expected to go along with him on religion and all other important matters. She is therefore at his mercy. Rather, she should be allowed to make her own decisions. Certainly a Christian could not, and should not, insist that his wife become a Christian, should he be so unwise as to marry a non-Christian. She can become a Christian only through proper teaching and then by making her own decision to obey the Lord. No one can force her or pressure her into doing this.

One of the problems of arranged marriages should be very obvious to those who read the Sunday newspapers. In the classified section of each paper you will find column after column of ads for prospective husbands and wives. All kinds of concessions are made. All types of offers are made. Who would be placing these ads? Often times they represent parents who are desperately trying to find a companion for their son or daughter. For one reason or another, they have no one to turn to for help but the general public. But just imagine a son or daughter having to tell their friends, or their own children, that their companion was found through a classified want ad section of the newspaper. Surely there must be a better way.

So, to sum all of this up, there are good points and bad points to be considered in both types of marriage. Whatever type of marriage you finally settle on for your self, or for your children, you should try to eliminate as many of the bad points as possible, and approach marriage as being ordained of God, that it is something that is not to be taken lightly, and respect the principles that should govern it. May I remind you again of what the Apostle Paul said as he compares Christ and the church with the husband and the wife : "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church : and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love

your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water in the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." (Ephesians 5 : 22-33). Christ also said, "Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder." (Matthew 19 : 4-6).

The main thing is for God's law of marriage to be respected and obeyed. This applies not only to that which leads up to marriage, but to the marriage itself, and what takes place thereafter. Man can certainly improve on his side of it but when it comes to God's side there can be no improvements made.



**associate  
editorial**

## God And His Will

Before giving the story of the wise and the foolish builders, Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall



enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21). Suppose, if I tell you to do some thing and also tell you the way to do it. But you follow another way and accomplish the work. I might accept it, because I would not be so much concerned whether you had followed my instructions or not, I would rather be happy that you had done the job I gave you. I might even approve and commend the way you had chosen to accomplish the work. But certainly this is not how God looks at things He has commanded us. He means precisely what He says, and says what He precisely means. Let me show you what I mean.

In the Old Testament of the Bible, in Leviticus 10:1, 2, we have this record, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." From chapter 16 and verse 12 of the same book we learn that God had commanded that the fire was to be taken from off the altar before the Lord.

Next, when the children of Israel journeyed toward the promised land under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and when they came into the desert of Zin and there abode in a place called Kadesh, they began murmuring against Moses and Aaron because there was no water available to quench their thirst. The record in the Bible says, "And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth its water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels: must we fetch you water out of this rock?"

And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice : and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank and their beasts also. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." (Numbers 20:6-12).

In both of these cases we see that they did not refuse to do what God had commanded them to do. They were willing to do what God had asked them to do. But the fact is that they did not comply with His command, that is, they did not follow His instructions in accomplishing His will. Both Nadab and Abihu were commanded to take fire from off the altar before the Lord. But they reasoned, fire is fire, so why not take any fire. But this was a direct violation of God's will. God had specified a fire and that was the only fire acceptable to Him. Likewise, in the second instance, Moses and Aaron were told to speak to the rock. But instead Moses smote the rock twice. This also was a violation of what God had commanded. Consequently, we see that all of these people were punished by the Lord for not following His instructions in doing His will.

So when Jesus says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." He means that we should not only be content with the fact that we have obeyed a certain command of God, but rather we must be sure whether we have followed God's instructions in doing His will. For instance, God's book says, one should not only believe in Him but must also be baptized to be saved, and that baptism should be a burial or immersion in water, for the forgiveness of one's sins. (Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3,4; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:35-39). Is it true with your baptism, if you were baptized? Were you baptized after you had believed in Christ, or when you were a little baby? Was it a burial (immersion in water), or some one sprinkled water on you? Were you baptized for the forgiveness of sins, or to give your testimony? God's will must be done strictly according to His command. Man is forbidden to add into His word or to take away from His word. (Revelation 22:18, 19).

# Upside Down

Jack Coultas

Driving north into Thomaston, Georgia on Highway 19 a few years ago I noticed a billboard that advertized a certain brand of air conditioner. The caption went something like this: "Don't Sizzle-Get a Carrier Air Conditioner." There was nothing exceptional in the wording of that sign. Nor in the picture of two eggs, sunny-side up, against a black background. Neither had any special appeal to the view. The one thing that caused drivers to slow down and read the message was the fact that it was pasted on the billboard upside down. This writer does not know whether the "upside down" sign was a blunder or the result of a carefully thought out advertising scheme. I suspect the latter.

The attentions of men are obviously and naturally drawn to the unusual. When a thing is out of the ordinary or "upside down" we are curious enough to investigate it. The Christian life is like that. The one whose life is truly hidden in Christ Jesus stands out because the world does not find it normal among men to serve rather than be served. Our blessed Saviour said that by our service we would attract men to God. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your *good works*, and glorify your father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5 : 16). What a drawing power the Christian has as men and women observe the life that works to give rather than to get. Why, the whole concept of "get all you can and can all you get." The word of God is more than words on paper that we can teach or argue about in a Bible class. When translated into a life of Christian service that word works out to the saving of souls.

Let us follow the example of Jesus who came both to DO and to teach. (Acts 1 : 11). Then, when those out of Christ see us "upside down" to the world, they will be attracted to the gospel of God's dear Son. In this way souls may be turned "right side up" for Jesus Christ.

To rephrase the air conditioner ad, "Don't Sizzle-Live the Christian Life." Live to serve and serve to live. Try keeping a record of ways you serve each day and each week try to improve it. If the world cries out against us let that cry be the same as that which was voiced at the house of Jason, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." (Acts 17 : 6).

## Dishonesty

Joe L. Connell

"If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbour in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour; or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein : then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found, or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering. (Lev. 6 : 2-5).

God knew that men would behave dishonestly and he outlined a way whereby the guilty and the victim could come together again. I know of nothing that has changed under the New Testament of Christ as pertaining to dishonesty, but the means by which God is to be approached for forgiveness. Under the Old Law he was to "Bring his trespass offering unto the Lord, a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering unto the priest. And the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord ; and it shall be forgiven him for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein." (Lev. 6 : 6, 7).

Under Christ and through his advocacy we must repent and ask God for forgiveness. Paul wrote saying, "By whom also we

have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5 : 2). And again, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Eph. 2 : 13, 18).

Unfortunately many Christians do not avail themselves of the great blessing they have in Christ to seek forgiveness for their way of living.

Dishonesty is still with us today. A man's word should be his bond, but we know many times it isn't. Unscrupulous dealings can become a way of life and no doubt one may engage in dishonesty without realizing that he really is being deceitful. If you have let this manner of living slip up on you, repent now of your sins and ask God to forgive you. If you have sinned against a brother, that would call for a personal approach to him. Make that approach.

## Authority of Elders

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Not long ago I received a rather long phone call from a group of godly elders who were wrestling with a serious problem. The basic problem was a lack of respect for them as elders. Counsel was given by phone and later by letter to the effect that the pressing matter called for the elders to make a decision and for the congregation to accept it promptly without further quibbling. They were to be in the driver's seat in this matter.

Quite frequently we hear of brethren who take the position that **no authority** inheres in the eldership. Such a concept is a portion of the permissive era of which we are a part. Authority is not one of the in terms with the masses of men today and the term is not widely appreciated by some of our own brethren. Does autho-

rity inhere in the work of the eldership other than in example and example only ? That is the inquiry that prompts this article.

**That "No Authority" Problem Again...**For a number of years there have been rebels in God's church who stoutly resisted the Biblical doctrine of elders and their authority. Here are some of the positions that have been taken. (1) They say that elders have no power except as ensamples to the flock. First Peter 5:3 is their sugarstick. It forbids an eldership from being lords over Jehovah's heritage. Quite frequently they by-pass First Peter 5:2 which commands elder to feed and take the oversight of the local flock. (2) They like to quote Matthew 28:18 where Jesus laid claim to all authority both in heaven and upon earth. Then they will conclude that such leaves no authority for elders. Have they never heard of delegated authority ? There is original authority; Diety has this. There is delegated authority; apostles, prophets and elders have possessed this and current elderships still do. We have no living apostles and prophets today. (3) They like to quote Jesus in Matthew 20:25ff where he discussed the concept of service or ministering instead of the employment of authority. The Lord was not discussing the work and authority of elders here. He was speaking of how to achieve true greatness as opposed to the false standards of authority and arrogance among the power-mad Gentiles. A text taken out of its context becomes a mere pretext! (4) They claim there is an absence of all authority from the expressions that depict the elders and what they do. Such is utterly wrong; it is a baseless contention. (5) Elders have no more authority than do others and should never make decisions except as authorized to by the congregation is another part of this overall problem. This contention places the congregation into the driver's seat and the elders beome the overseen and not the overseers! This contention makes of them a rubber stamp of congregational desires. (6) That elders have any authority is just one of the man-made "church of Christ" traditions they maintain. (7) The elders are never said to have any authority over the church we are informed. (8) Elders have no more right to make a decision than do the deacons or any other group within the church it is claimed by the "no authority" rebels in God's church today. If the employment of the word rebel is offensive to any reader of this article, I ask you

to look up the definitions of rebel and rebellion and see if the designation is an improper one, an undeserved one.

**The Revival Of Old Problem...** An illustration of this dislike for authority, and that is the basic crux of the problem, occurred in ancient Hebrew history. During the wilderness wanderings there was a rebellion staged against Moses and Aaron. It was led by Korah, Dathan and Abiram. They were joined by two hundred and fifty other disgruntled Hebrews. They said Moses and Aaron took too much on them. They took the view that every Israelite had just as much authority as did Moses and Aaron. The earth opened up and swallowed those rebels. Fire from the Lord Himself devoured the two hundred and fifty. The same sentiments expressed by those ancient rebels are expressed by these modern rebels. They say that elders have no more authority than anyone else in the congregation. All the Korahes, Dathans and Abirams did not perish thirty five centuries ago! The modern descendants of that motley crew deny that elders, acting as elders, can come to any decisions that are binding on the local congregation. They deny that elders can make decisions affecting the church without first consulting the church to see what the wishes of all are relative to the matter. This is a very serious error and has worked havoc in many congregations.

**The Negative View Of Their Authority...** Elders do not have authority to add to Christ's law or to subtract from the laws of the Bible. They do not have authority to set aside any of the commandments of Christ. They do not have the authority to dispense with any of the acts which are necessary for a person to become a Christian. For instance they could not tell a person who has just responded, "Our baptism water is cold this evening. Therefore, we believe it is more convenient for us to sprinkle you in lieu of immersion." Such is not within the realm of their authority. They do not possess the power to dispense with one of the Christian acts of worship. They cannot change the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper into a quarterly or annual observance. They could not take the cup away from a portion of the membership and leave them only with bread at each communion service. They do not have authority to move a piano into Christian

worship. They do not have the authority to put a woman before a mixed group to preach, teach, lead the prayer, officiate at the Lord's Supper, lead the singing, etc. They do not have the power to change the nature of the church or the mission Jehovah has given it to fulfil. They do not have the power to water down the preacher's gospel message or to soft soap the truth through their selected corps of Bible teachers. These are abuses of their authority when so practiced. Their authority is to see that God's word and works are preached and performed just as he desires. Within the realm of expediency and judgment they may and must employ their authority in carrying out the generics of the gospel.

**The Positive View Of Their Authority...**The authority of elders is set forth in the terms by which they are designated. Paul referred to the Ephesian eldership as being overseers, as rendered in the King James Version and as bishops in the American Standard Version. Acts 20:28 states, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost (Spirit, ASV) hath made you overseers (bishops, ASV). to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The earlier part of this context reveals that he was speaking to elders. (Acts 20:17). The elders and bishops referred to the same group of men. "Bishop" and "overseer" come from the Greek word *episcopos*. On page 243 of his *Greek-English Lexicon* Mr. Thayer defines this word as "an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent." The fact that elders are overseers portrays their authority. The fact that they are charged with a duty exhibits them as ones in whom authority is invested. The fact that elders are curators, guardians and superintendents is suggestive that authority inheres in the term of *episcopos*.

Paul enjoined the Ephesian eldership "to feed" the Lord's church. (Acts 20:28). The inspired Peter, an apostle and also an elder, told the elders of the various congregations in the five provinces of Asia Minor to "Feed the flock of God which is among you." (1 Pet. 5:2). Both of these terms are from the Greek word *poimaino*. On page 527 of his *Lexicon* Mr. Thayer says this term means, "to feed, to tend a flock, keep shape...to rule, govern."



Quite literally the word means to shepherd the flock. Does anyone think the Palestinian shepherd possessed no authority as the shepherd of his sheep? This is the very imagery from which the term is drawn. In the tending, the keeping, the ruling and the governing of spiritual sheep in a congregational setting there is authority fully set forth by Inspiration. It is not original authority; it is delegated authority. But it is authority nevertheless!

I am quite aware that Peter forbids elders to be lords or dictators over God's heritage. No godly elder of my acquaintance seeks to be a dictator. But this divine prohibition that they not be dictators does not cancel out the fact that they are to exercise the oversight of the congregation. Surely Peter did not give elders authority in 1 Peter 5:2 and then cancel every vestige of it one verse later! Again I am very much aware of Peter's inspired injunction that elders are to be ensamples to the flock. But again this does not cancel out their authority. Jesus is our great example but that does not cancel out his having all authority. (Matt. 28:18). Paul, Peter, John and the other apostles were examples to the brethren. But their being examples did not cancel out their apostolic authority. Every godly elder I know wants to be an ensample but that still does not cancel out the authority given to an eldership in the overseeing, the tending, the keeping, the ruling and the governing of the flock. As brother Roy Deaver has so well stated, "Example does not preclude authority."

The inspired penman of Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves : for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief : for that is unprofitable for you." As used there Thayer says the word obey (peitho-Greek) means "to listen to, obey, yield to, comply with." (p. 497). After giving this definition he cites Hebrews 13:17 as a place where the word has this very meaning. This is the same word James employs in James 3:3 in referring to the obedience the horse gives its rider or its driver. There is authority embedded in the bits by which the rider or driver controls the horse. And there is authority in the eldership as Paul tells us to obey them. Such a command surely reflects authority. If not, why not???

Why obey them? They have the rule over us! Authority inheres in that term rule also. We are commanded to submit ourselves to them. The Greek term for submit is *hupeiko* and means, "to resist no longer, but to give way, yield, to yield to authority and admonition, to submit." (Thayer p. 638). How can there be a yielding to authority if there is no authority within the eldership? Obey, submit and rule are indicative of authority. It is a strange handling of these terms that can miss what is so very, very obvious. It requires a lot of help to misunderstand these clear, these crystal clear, terms.

In Titus 1:7 Paul refers to a bishop as being God's steward. This word refers to one who is a manager, a superintendent, an overseer. There is authority here. If not, why not?

**Conclusion...** Surely there is authority in the eldership. This does not mean they have the same authority that God has; they do not. It does not mean they have original authority; they do not. It does not mean they have dictatorial authority; they do not. But they do have the authority that God has given them. That authority is to carry out his will. In the execution of his will there are obligations. These obligations involve an element of expediency or human judgment. In this realm they have authority. This is God's arrangement; it is God's plan. We had better respect it. Those who contend there is no authority in the eldership need to learn the truth about this matter and cease to teach false doctrines relative to such.

It seems the height of ingratitude though when a local gospel preacher spends years elevating the eldership in his preaching and defending their authority against all who would usurp it and then for that eldership to think so little of him and his work as to allow a worldly element to pressure them into moving that same preacher because his preaching was too strong for their lukewarmness, their worldly dispositions. But it has happened time and time again that very way. But when it does happen it is an abuse of their authority and not a righteous discharge of the same.

## HAVE YOU WONDERED ABOUT FALLING FROM GRACE

W.N. JACKSON

We've all sung, down through the years, "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound!" We all should rejoice that the grace of God, one of the truly great themes of the Bible, is a reality. As we think of the grace of our God, and the fact that this grace is provided for man, there are two considerations worthy of our serious attention : (1) How man can enter into that grace, and (2) Is it possible for man, once entering into it, to fall from it and to be eternally lost ?

Here is the basis of some of the division in the religious world. A sizeable portion of the world believes that man, once entering into God's grace, cannot ever so sin as to be lost. This is sometimes called the doctrine of "impossibility of apostasy," and at other times put in these terms : "Once saved, Always Saved." But, on the other hand, another large portion of sincere religious people believes and teaches that man, even after having entered into God's grace, can sin and, at that, to the degree that he falls from God's grace and can be lost forever. It should be very obvious to all that both of these positions cannot be right! As with resolving all religious questions, since the Bible is the complete standard (2 Tim. 3 : 16, 17), we must consult that volume for the answers to our questions.

### THE WORD "CONDITION" IS IMPORTANT

In looking into the division that exists over this matter, it is clear that those who teach that man cannot fall from God's grace hold this position : that man enters into God's favour and his remaining within God's grace is **not conditioned** at all on man's will, action or response to God's teaching. He has entered into a saved state, into a relationship of grace, and there he will always abide, regardless! Since all know that man is a creature of flesh, and subject to all the frailty common to man, and since God plainly

says that we do sin (1 John 1 : 8, 10), then those who teach that man cannot fall from grace must teach that remaining in grace is without man having to meet any conditions of God at all!

Again, those who believe and teach that man can fall from grace point out that man, having entered into God's favour, must meet the conditions laid down by God for that state of grace to continue. They hold that man was created a free-moral agent, having always the right of choice and freedom of will, and that he does not have that will taken from him upon his obedience. He is as safe and secure in God's grace as he wants to be, inasmuch as his remaining in God's favour is conditioned on his own will to remain there. Now, which of these two positions is true ?

### IN THE BEGINNING...

#### "CONDITIONS"

At the outset of God's dealings with man, conditions were laid down. The Lord told the first couple that "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it : for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2 : 16, 17). God told this original couple what they could and could not do, thus indicating that their continuing in His favour was conditioned on their obeying Him. If that is not so, then they could not fall, and hence. His warning was needless. On the other hand, they did fall, and it becomes God's fault, if entering into God's grace, one cannot fall from it!

The language of condition runs throughout the Bible, and often the little word "if" is the signal of condition. For example, in speaking of the graces or virtues to be in the lives of Christians, the apostle Peter says that "if ye do these things, ye shall never fall!" (2 Pet. 1 : 10). Notice, "never fall" is conditioned on the "IF".

### POSITIVE PROOFS AMONG CHRISTIANS

Simon, who had formerly been a false teacher in Samaria, had believed and was baptized into Christ (Acts 8 : 13), meeting the

conditions upon which God had promised salvation in the Great Commission (Mark 16 : 15, 16). The gospel he obeyed is said to be "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20 : 24). But notice Simon : after entering into God's grace, he so sinned as to have been marked as (1) doomed to perish, (2) having a heart not right with God, (3) needing to repent, (4) being guilty of wickedness, (5) in need of God's forgiveness, (6) being in the gall of bitterness, and (7) bound by iniquity (vs. 20-23). Here is a picture of a man who entered into the grace of God, and then turned by his own will to engage in sin, refusing to abide by the conditions of the Lord, and was in a lost state! Either that, or one with all these seven things against him, **still goes to heaven!** The "once saved, always saved" folks would have Simon entering into Heaven, even though we're plainly told that no defilement is there! (Rev. 21 : 27).

Another warning is seen in Hebrews 6 : 4-6. Writing to those who needed to go beyond the first principles of Christ (v. 1), we know that the alien sinner is not being spoken of, for the alien needs to obey the first principles, not go beyond them! Then, describing those who **fall away** to the extent that it is impossible to get them to repent, the writer says he's speaking of those (1) once enlightened, (2) who tasted the heavenly gift, (3) partook of the Holy Ghost, (4) tasted the good word of God, and (5) tasted the powers of the world to come, and **not one of these** can apply to the alien sinner, for he hasn't tasted or partook of any of these, and certainly has not been enlightened, since his state throughout the Bible is said to be "darkness." Rather, the child of God, who has received these good blessings from God (v. 7) and then has not borne the proper fruit is described, with the warning that he can fall away and to the extent that he'll never repent!

One other, from the apostle Peter, and it is a clear picture : Peter addresses those who have the same faith as that of the apostles (2 Pet. 1 : 1), through the righteousness of God and His Son. After saying that they can pursue the course that will cause them to **never fall** (as we've earlier seen), he points out that they need to be warned lest they "be carried away with the error of the wicked, and fall from their own steadfastness!" (3 : 17) Surely, it is

clear that remaining in God's grace is conditioned on man's responding obediently to God! Either these could fall, as Peter says, or else Heaven will have some who have left faithfulness and embraced the error of the wicked—who can believe the latter?

## THE TWO CLEAREST PASSAGES

Here are two passages which speak to the point directly—in terms that cannot be denied by any except those who wish to reject the Bible completely :

(1) 1 Timothy 4 : 1-2 : The Holy Spirit expressly said that some will depart from the faith, and to such extent that they abide not in the spirit of Christ nor His doctrine, and no longer speak truth, no longer are sincere, and are hardened in conscience. Yet, these were in the faith; Paul says the Spirit of God plainly foretold that they would depart from the faith! Dare any man say that one cannot fall, when God so plainly and in so many ways says that man can fall?

(2) Galatians 5 : 4 : To those who were in the grace of Christ (Galatians 1 : 6), Paul gives warning that they dare not follow the demands of the law of Moses, else "Christ is become of no effect upon you...ye are fallen from grace!" Friends, could it be any plainer? The God of Heaven knew how man would tend to tamper with His Will, and He anticipated this in providing clear statements to disprove these man-made theories. Man can fall from grace, and we've seen it clearly from a number of stand-points!

## WHAT OF "SECURITY" PASSAGES ?

The forces of error use many passages as their "security" texts, ignoring what we've already seen from the Bible, and refusing even to see that their own texts usually include conditions. Let's notice an example :

(1) John 10 : 28, 29 : This passage is as true as can be, for no man, no force—No, not even Satan himself—can forcibly remove a child

of God from God's care! But in this context, note v. 27, the Lord speaks of His sheep hearing his voice and following Him! No one who hears the voice of the Lord, and follows Him, is going to fall, and no power can remove such from God's hands. But God's Word, in the points we've made, speaks of those who decide to refuse to hear, refuse to follow, and willfully persist in entering into a sinful way. No one plucked them from the Lord's hand; they willingly departed! Even these verses speak of conditions—the condition of hearing and following. That's the guarantee against falling!

(2) John 3 : 16 and Rom. 8 : 1 : The believer shall not perish, or one in Christ comes not into condemnation. Again, note that the conditions are found in the verses : one is to continue in believing, continue in Christ, and "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." No question that one who thus continues is saved and will be saved eternally. But we have noted the warnings given as to those who cease to believe, cease to abide in Christ, and return to walk on the fleshly level—and these fall from grace!

### CONCLUSION

Dear reader, we plead with you to study the matter of falling from grace most carefully; reverently reading these passages cited herein. See the grace of God now available for all men (Tit. 2 : 11). See that that grace is made known in the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1 : 6,) by which men are called to God's favour (2 Thess. 2 : 14). The grace is bestowed upon those who believe the gospel, repent of their sins, confess their Lord, and are baptized into Him for the remission of past sins. (Acts 2: 38) Man continues in that grace as he lives obediently to God's will. That is his wonderful assurance. He is secure—as secure as he wants to be—as Peter said, "IF" he does the things God desires of him!

\* \* \* \* \*

### IS IT A SIN TO MISS JUST ONE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH?

The above question is often asked by church members. It is one which deserves some very careful consideration by all of us, but especially by those who occasionally absent themselves from

the assemblies. The question emanates from a false attitude, the attitude that one is going to try to get by with a minimum of service rather than the maximum. Certainly, we would not say it is a sin to miss one or many services due to providential hindrances, but we are not talking of such absences in this article. We have in mind the fellow who misses JUST ONE service because he doesn't care to go; he had rather do something else.

To get at the heart of the question, consider the following : if one doesn't sin when he INDIFFERENTLY misses JUST ONE service, how many does he have to miss before he sins ? Two, four, six, or one hundred ? At which absence does he become a sinner in need of repentance, and by what authority do you answer ? The truth of the matter is that if it is a sin to miss a hundred assemblies, it is a sin to miss JUST ONE service, if not, why not ?

Take this imaginary situation for an example : Bro. John misses an assembly, but no one takes any notice of it; he misses eight or ten, and the church begins to wonder. Finally, he is absent for a whole year, and the elders go out to talk to him about his condition. When he asked the nature of his offense, the reply was that he had forsaken the assembling with the saints. What if he should ask for the specific time at which he became a sinner, what could they say ? Could they rebuke him for missing the first, third, or one hundredth service ? And if they should rebuke him for forsaking the assembling for one year, why shouldn't they rebuke him for forsaking it for one week ? Why should it be wrong to miss a year, but alright to miss one week ?

One can wrestle with this question for days, and he will be forced to the conclusion that missing one service is a sin, if his reasoning is governed by common sense and scripture. Many have never really seriously considered their duty to attend the assemblies; and hence, they feel no guilt to speak of, regardless of how often they are absent.

We should all compare what we do for the Lord with what he has done for us, and hang our heads in shame for our lack of



sacrifice for him. We need to repent while we still have time. One day we shall stand before the Great Judge of all with unbearable disappointment for our **LUKEWARM** and **HALF-HEARTED** service.

—Selected

## THE SIN OF SILENCE

Johnny Ramsey

God's real servants must never close their mouths when Satan parades before the world spouting error of every sordid form. Here are eight great examples of men who did not seal their lips.

1. *Nathan*, the bold prophet, who, plainly said unto King David: "Thou art the man." (II Sam. 12: 7). What courage! David should be eternally grateful for Nathan.

2. *Micajah*, the prophet who withstood Ahab and his 400 wise men, used these words worthy of emulation: "As the Lord liveth and speaketh unto me that will I say." (I Kings 22: 14.) Even punishment failed to seal his lips!

3. *John*, the Immerser, severely warned the corrupt Pharisees who would have made mockery of Divine truths. Matthew chapter three is a tribute to fearless preaching.

4. *Jesus* was uncompromising with a prospective follower when he told the rich young ruler the challenge of kingdom service. Some of us try to ease prospects in and then teach them duty. Not so with the Master-teacher. (Luke 18: 18-30).

5. *Peter*, in Acts 5: 29, before an aroused Jewish council frankly informed them that the apostles would "obey God rather than men." This is refreshing change from our halting speech. (I Kings 18: 21.)

6. *Stephen*, nearer to death with each sentence, nonetheless spoke clearly of the debauchery and shame of the Jewish leaders.

His courage has served us all with the spark we need in opposing error. Read Acts 7 carefully.

7. *Philip*, after running to his mission of importance, seized his opportune moment, opened his mouth and preached Jesus to the Ethiopian. (Acts 8 : 26-39). Why do we open our mouths ? How can we seal our lips when the world so desperately needs to hear about the Son of God.

8. *Paul*, before Felix, chose the three most unpopular themes in his repertoire in preaching to his captor—righteousness, temperance and judgment to come. Plain preaching is powerful; even Felix trembled and considered the plea. (Acts 24 : 25).

Brethren, heaven will be too sweet to miss. Yet, we shall miss its glory if we seal our lips when God's truth is burning within our soul. Sinners need it, the world will die and go to hell without it and our own soul will perish unless we open our mouths and speak forth the message of God's resplendent glory.

Preaching brethren, let determine we shall become bolder in our proclamation of the Word. Let us heed Psalms 40 : 9 : "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation : lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest." May the words of the song be our constant desire : "Till then, I would Thy love proclaim with every fleeting breath; And may the music of Thy name refresh my soul in death!"

## Discipline

Joe L. Connell

God's Word is filled with instruction on discipline. Immediately most of you reading this will think of the church disfellowshipping a fellow member. This should not always be the only action the word discipline conveys to us. Discipline may mean training, cultivation, teaching, to prepare, qualify, to correct, punish or

penalize. So we see that if we understand the word correctly, it may mean various degrees of intensity in its administration.

To discipline a child may mean teaching or spanking. It should always be done with the aim of improving behaviour and saving the child from his own destruction. This is true with discipline in the church.

Weekly the church teaches and makes available learning. When this teaching is applied the result is good. If teaching is not applied, it may be necessary to admonish. Paul wrote: "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." (Rom. 15 : 14) Oftentimes Paul writes of brethren admonishing those whose lives are not consistent with truth. Through singing, every Christian is admonished. (Col. 3 : 16).

Withdrawal is not the only kind of discipline given to erring Christians. Paul writes in I. Thess. 5 : 14 : "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." Faithful brethren are to be engaged all the time in restoring a fallen brother. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Gal. 6 : 1). Until this is done by spiritual brethren, it isn't the time to disfellowship the erring.

### WHAT OF WITHDRAWAL OF FELLOWSHIP ?

The Bible clearly shows there will be a need to withdraw from fellowshiping a brother or sister. This is not taught nor practiced as it should be. Some erroneously believe this is done by the elders in business meetings or is practiced as a personal matter on the part of other members of the church. The Bible does not leave us in doubt about what is to be done. In I Corinthians 5 : 4, Paul states it clearly. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan..." According to the word of II Thess. 3, this action is to be applied to any who "walk among you disorderly." Certain sins are specified. "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and

have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." (II Thess. 3: 14).

Hopefully, this action on the part of the church will bring the sinning child of God to awaken to his lost condition and also prevent others from following in his steps. It should never be the aim of any to hurt. "... count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." (II Thess. 3 : 15).

## **THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE**

**Joe David Neely**

Probably no other Bible truth is so sadly abused as the statement, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8 : 32). It is made to seem an endorsement of the idea that salvation comes from the mere knowledge of scientific truth and that scientists are safe guides in spiritual matters.

Of course, knowledge of the truth gives one freedom in the field of that truth, but only in that field. The man who is an authority on electricity is not necessarily an authority on agriculture or morals or spiritual matters.

The context shows that the truth Jesus was here speaking of was the truth of spiritual affairs; that is, Himself, who was the true manifestation of God. It was because they would not accept him for what he claimed to be and demonstrated himself to be—the revelation of God—that they were enslaved in sin. He was so severe with them on this matter precisely because of their refusal to accept him not because of lack of evidence, but because of their unwillingness to be sincere and accept the evidence. This was under the sway of Satan, the father of all insincerity and lies.

But they would only pile up evidence against themselves, for their stubbornness would finally lead them to put Jesus to death. This would eventually bring about not only the demonstration of

God's grace but also His power in the resurrection. "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man," Jesus said, "then ye shall know."

Only as men yield to the truth in any field do they get freedom from the truth, but freedom in that field. Only as men yield to the truth in Jesus Christ can they have freedom in the spiritual realm. It is never freedom from the truth, but freedom in the truth. It is not license, but power to use the truth to accomplish great things.

Freedom from the shackles of sin comes when men hear the truth (Matt. 17 : 5), believe it with all their hearts (Heb. 11 : 6), repent of all sins (Acts 17 : 30-31), confess faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Rom. 10 : 10), and submit to baptism in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2 : 38; 22 : 16). Freedom does not come the very instant one believes, but when one's belief leads to obedience. A believer has the right to become a child of God (John 1 : 12), but must exercise the right in order to actually become one (Jas. 2 : 14-26). The faith that saves and frees from sin is the faith that "works through love" (Gal. 5 : 6).

Jesus Christ is the "Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him" (Heb. 5 : 8, 9). Friend, let the truth free you from sin. Obey the Lord and enjoy freedom that is freedom indeed.

## Forgiving One Another

Basil Overton

Remember, the Bible teaches many things regarding our relationship to one another, and all it teaches is mighty important. One is preaching an important phase of the gospel when he preaches what the Lord has revealed about our responsibilities to one another.

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice : and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God also in Christ forgave you." (Eph. 4 : 31-32).

In teaching God's children to forgive one another, the Holy Spirit in the foregoing passage presented the highest example of forgiveness when he commanded them to forgive each other "even as God also in Christ forgave you." Jesus taught: For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6 : 14-15).

"And when they came unto the place which is called the Skull, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And parting his garments among them, they cast lots." (Luke 23 : 33-34). "Said" in this text is from a Greek verb that is in the imperfect tense, which is the tense of continuing action in the past. The verse literally means that "Jesus *kept on saying*, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." This may mean that each time an insult or abuse was hurled at him, he said: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Jesus wanted even Caesar's soldiers to be forgiven; he wanted the Jews to be forgiven who instigated his crucifixion. On the Pentecost following his crucifixion, the Holy Spirit announced God's conditions of forgiveness for those who crucified his Son. (Acts 2 : 36-38).

Jesus the innocent one was buffeted, beaten and betrayed; he was tried, denied, and crucified, and yet his first words on the cross were a prayer to his Father that his offenders be forgiven! His first words on the cross were not a complaint registered against his persecutors; they were not a plea of his own pure and perfect innocence; they were not a cry for vengeance, but they were a prayer for the forgiveness of those who so brutally abused him. It is reported that a Zulu chief beat his wife for accepting Jesus. He left her, thinking she was dead. When he returned and found her alive and asking Jesus for help, he asked her what Jesus could possibly do for her. She replied: "He can help me forgive you."

A child of God may be unstained by immoral sensual practices; he may be regular in worship service; he may be held in high esteem by men, and yet he may have an unforgiving heart! Perhaps one's heart is never heavier than when it is an unforgiving heart. Someone has said: "Forgiveness is the odor of the rose you crush beneath your clumsy feet." Remember, God commands us to forgive each other as he has forgiven us in Christ.

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