

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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What Kind Of God Do We Serve?

So many people today picture God as one who loves all and that surely in the end that he will show mercy and save all regardless of the way they lived. They point to the grace and mercy of God. They point to Jesus Christ who died for the sins of the world. And on and on they go rationalizing and reasoning that in the end that everything is going to be all right.

I wonder if many of these people have ever read the Old Testament. There we have a clear picture of God's dealings with man. He blessed man and did so much for him. He led his people through the sea to escape Egyptian bondage. He miraculously furnished them with food and water. He led them and fought their battles for them. But he also expected something of them. He asked them to obey him. He required them to worship him. He wanted them to be faithful. When they did so, he blessed them again and again. But when they doubted him, refused to obey him, and when they went off into sin and worshipped idols, then he punished them. In such cases he had

no mercy on them. Paul put it like this : "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God : on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness : otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." (Romans 11:22). For instance, because of unbelief the children of Israel were allowed to wander in the wilderness for forty years, and all of those living at the time, except for Caleb and Joshua, were allowed to die out. During the time the children of Israel were being led through the wilderness, many were destroyed because of their sins, and even Moses was not permitted to enter the promised land because of his disobedience on the occasion when he was commanded to speak to the rock that water might come forth but instead he angrily struck the rock. Later on, Achan and his family were stoned to death because of the sin that he committed when he took some of the possessions during the fall of Jericho when God had commanded that nothing be taken for self. And on and on we could go in referring to many examples to show how that God punished those who sinned against him.

Even the New Testament makes it very clear that sin brings death (Romans 6:23), that we must reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7, 8), and that even religious people will be rejected if they have not obeyed the Lord. (Matthew 7:21-23). For example, we read how Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead because they lied to the Holy Spirit concerning the selling of their land. Christ and the inspired writers of the New Testament tell us of hell and the kind of people that are going there. (Revelation 21:8; Galatians 5:19-21). Why would anyone think then that he or she can come along and live sinful lives, and even good moral lives, but failing to obey God, and escape all of that ? Surely the God of the Old Testament would not leave the impression that he will have mercy on such people, and neither does the Lord offer any comfort to those living under the law of Christ, as revealed in the New Testament, that they may escape his wrath regardless of the way they have lived.

It is true that God so loved the world that he sent his Son to die on the cross for the sins of the world. (John 3:16). But that does not mean that he will condone anyone's sins or automatically

forgive all people. To be saved then one must believe in Christ and obey his commands. Christ himself said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). Now if one refuses or fails to do that, regardless of the reason, then he cannot be saved. As Christ said, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

It is true that we are saved by the grace and mercy of God, but the Apostle Paul says that we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9). That means that God has provided salvation and there is no way for man to ever do enough or to obey enough commands so as to earn his salvation, but that does not take away from the fact that man is also saved through faith, and that means that he must do all that God has commanded of him to be saved. In other words, through grace God has made it possible for man to be saved and it is through faith that man accepts that salvation and he does that by meeting the conditions of salvation or in doing all the things that the Lord requires one to do to be saved.

It is true that good moral living and good works are highly esteemed in the scriptures, but these apart from obedience to God are not enough to save man and to give him the hope of eternal life. If that is all that one is basing his hope on, then he is without hope. The Christian must live a good moral life, and his life must be filled with good works, but he is a Christian not necessarily because of this, but he does those things because he is a Christian. A Christian is one who follows Christ, one who obeys his teaching.

It is true that one must be a religious man; but being religious only is not enough to be saved. There are many religious people all over the world who are opposed to God and who refuse to believe in Christ as the Son of God. Even among those who believe in Christ, there are many who are in churches that do not belong to Christ, that wear man-made names, that worship the Lord in strange ways, and so on. If one hopes to be saved then he must obey the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15, 16), be a member of the Lord's church (Acts 2:47), wear the name of Christ (Acts

4:12; Acts 11:26), and live the faithful Christian life. (Revelation 2:10). The Bible tells us what happens to the unfaithful and unbelieving and sinful. (Revelation 21:8).

It is true that one must be a Christian and a member of the Lord's church but again that alone is not enough. One might have become a Christian and one might be a member of the church of Christ, but still not be faithful to God. There will be many such people lost in the day of judgment. (Matthew 7:21-23). Once more it is necessary to understand that the Lord wants one not only to become a Christian but he must remain a faithful Christian, all the days of his life if he expects to go to heaven.

It is true that God loves man, but he does not love his sin. Therefore, if one is in sin, and dies in sin, then he will be lost. (Romans 6:23). There is no comfort found in the Bible, either the Old Testament, or the New Testament, to indicate that in the end that the Lord will save one in spite of his sin. He will not. The Hebrew writer says, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." (Hebrews 2:1-3). He also reminds us, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31). Finally, he says, "For our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29).

With the foregoing being true, then the Lord is asking that we repent of our sins and obey him that we might be saved. It is only through our obedience to him, our faithfulness to him, in living in accordance to his will, that we can expect to be saved now and in the hereafter. If we go on in sin, and die in our sin, then all of God's love, grace, and mercy combined, as shown in the sacrifice of Christ for our sins, cannot save us. The Lord is able to be our saviour now but at the judgment he will be our judge. As long as we live we have the time and the opportunity

to be saved, but if we die in our sin then there will be no second chance. (Hebrews 9:27).



**associate
editorial**

The Case Of An Uubaptized Believer

The Bible declares, man is saved by the grace of God, (Ephesians 2:8) and the grace of God's salvation has appeared to all men everywhere. (Titus 2:11). This is God's part in man's salvation. He let His Word become flesh, the Man Jesus Christ, and allowed him to die on the cross for the salvation of every human being. The Bible further says that Christ became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. (Hebrews 5:9). I want you to note here that even though God has done His part through Jesus Christ in the plan of Salvation, yet man must obey Christ or do what he says, to be saved. Because the Bible says that Christ has become the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. This within itself shows that man must do some-thing to be saved. Christ, who must be obeyed, commands man to believe in him as saviour (John 3:16; 8:24); confess him to be the Son of God (Matthew 10:32); repent of sins (Luke 13:3); and be baptized (immersed in water) (Mark 16:16). Not only do we read these specific commands of salvation in the New Testament of the Bible, but there are also examples where various ones who wanted to be saved obeyed these commands of Christ. For instance, the three thousand men who believed in Christ and were baptized for the forgiveness of sins on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 2:38,41,47). Then the Eunuch who believed in Christ and confessed with his mouth that Jesus is the

Son of God and was baptized (Acts 8:35-39). Also in the same chapter we read of many men and women who believed in Christ and were baptized (Acts 8:12). On and on we could go for such examples in the New Testament. God has not changed His will in this matter. He still requires men to obey Christ for salvation. He has revealed both by commands and examples what man should obey to be saved. God's word still reads the same.

The question is often repeated, what if a man died in an accident in the believing state but unbaptized? What if a man was travelling in an automobile or in a train or plane, and he on his way became a believer in Christ, he also had the opportunity to make the confession and to repent. But before reaching his destination he died in the accident and thus was unable to be baptised. Would he be saved or lost?

In the first place, there is no such case mentioned in the New Testament. In all the examples of conversion after the death and resurrection of Christ, found in the Bible, all who wanted to be saved were baptized immediately or the same day. Secondly, what if a person died without believing in Christ? Surely, he was lost, and will be lost. Because Christ commands man to believe in him to be saved. But the same Christ also commands man to be baptized. He said, listen, "He that believeth AND is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16). So if faith is necessary in salvation baptism is also necessary. Therefore if one could be saved without baptism then he could be saved without faith also. If not, why not? Belief is not baptism and neither baptism is belief. The word AND distinctly separates these two commands, and salvation is offered after both faith and baptism. Thirdly, God has not changed his will. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away". (Matthew 24:35). "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48). The apostle Paul speaking of the gospel said, "Which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say

I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:7-9). Again, Christ warns us, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book, and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." (Revelation 22:18,19).

Faith, repentance, confession and baptism are steps into Christ like steps into a building. To get into the building one must walk all the steps. One can die near the last step of the building, or before taking the last step, he would die near the building or outside of the building but not in the building. The final step of salvation is baptism. The Apostle Paul said, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27).

Lydia And Her Open Heart

Curtis Dowdy

A most interesting study is found in the sixteenth chapter of Acts beginning with a vision which appeared to Paul by night. In the vision there was a man of Macedonia pleading, "Come over into Macedonia and help us."

Now Macedonia was on the continent of Europe and there was a need that the "Goodnews" spread to the lost there. In fact, the man said "Come...help us." Those who are in sin are in need of help and the gospel is the only thing powerful enough to help.

For this study we will pass over the trip, come directly to Philippi, and to a river side on the Sabbath where women have come together for prayer. Here we pick up Acts 16:14, "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of

Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

Some have asserted that Lydia's heart was opened by a direct intervention either by the Lord or the Holy Spirit. There can be no doubt that her heart was opened nor that it was opened by the Lord, so says the text. However the question is, was there a direct intervention separate and apart from the speaking done by Paul? (16:13). We can be certain of what Paul was speaking! Verse fourteen says she gave heed to that spoken by Paul, and verse fifteen says she was baptized. So it was the gospel that Paul was speaking, and the gospel is the power (Romans 1:16) and the means (Ephesians 6:14-17) unto salvation. By giving heed to the gospel, Lydia's heart was opened by the Lord THROUGH His word spoken by Paul.

Upon obedience to the gospel command to be baptized, Lydia said, "If you have judged ME to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us" (Acts 16:15). Evidently Paul judged HER faithful as he and his company used Lydia's house as a mission point in Europe.

With this background I raise the question, if the Lord intervened directly to open Lydia's heart how could Paul judge HER to be faithful? In short, it would have been the faithfulness of the Lord not Lydia about which Paul would have judged. Too, if the Lord had acted directly to open Lydia's heart why the vision with the man pleading for Paul to come over and "help us"?

Had the Lord intervened directly to open Lydia's heart would he not be committed to intervene directly to open everyone else's heart? In view of the fact that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), I think we can so agree. Since God is no respecter of persons, since we read of others who heard the gospel but did not obey it, we can know that God did not intervene to act directly upon Lydia's heart. This point is proved by something that took place in Corinth.

Paul departed from Athens, came to Corinth "reasoning" and "persuading." He testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ and the result is recorded : "And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean : from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6).

Please mark where Paul placed the responsibility for the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. Look at the words "they opposed themselves" and "your blood be upon your own heads." Had the Lord been in the business of intervening directly to open hearts, as some allege, Paul would have reasoned the Lord opposed them and their blood be upon his head. But no ! Paul was aware of the fact that each individual is responsible before God for how he will respond to the gospel.

Lydia heard the gospel, gave heed to the truth taught, and the Lord opened her heart. The Jews at Corinth heard the gospel rejected the truth taught and the Lord closed their hearts. In neither case was the Lord intervening directly but through the preaching of his word.

If our heart is opened or closed to the truth it will be because of a faith response, or the lack of it, on our part to God's Holy Will.

The Judgment of God

The judgment of God is sure : a sure reality which all are to face at the end of this age. God "hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained," even the Christ (Acts 17:31). All nations and peoples, from the beginning with Adam to the last creature of the final generation of man, will stand before the Righteous Judge and hear His pronouncement of condemnation or sàlvation. None shall escape. We must accept and prepare for this inevitable

appointment in judgment. Moreover, we must be wise and know the standards of that judgment that we might prepare for it and live in view of it.

The judgment of God has been given unto His Son. The integrity of God demands that the judgment be committed unto His Son "because he is the Son of man" (John 5:22, 27). Christ wore the robe of flesh, was tempted in the flesh, God having sent "his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). The Christ has experienced life in the flesh, consequently He shares a common ground as judge with those that are judged. God has chosen a judge that is perfectly qualified for the work.

The judgment of God will be a righteous judgment (Acts 17:31). Paul expressed confidence and appreciation for the expectation that he would stand before "the righteous judge" in judgment (2 Tim. 4:8). Judgment will not be according to the prejudices, partyism and injustices of that associated with the judgment by men. His righteousness demands that due consideration be given each person and each deed of life whether it be good or bad.

For judgment to be righteous it must be according to standard. The standard of righteous judgment is truth. "He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth" (Psa. 96:13). Hebrew parallelism equates righteousness and truth. "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth" (Rom. 2:2). Truth is determined to be the word of God, "thy word is truth" (John 17:17); it is the gospel, the word given by the Holy Apostles by which men will be judged (Rom. 2:16). Salvation at the judgment is determined according to one's obedience or disobedience to that gospel. "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish..." (Rom. 2:8, 9). Fire and vengeance awaits those who "obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:7-9). Those who have lived a life of obedience to the gospel of Christ shall be saved for the Lord

has declared Himself to be Savior of "all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9).

The righteous judgment of God will be according to each person's work. No one who reads with understanding can deny that judgment will be according to one's works. Denominationalists have convinced masses that one has no responsible life to live in order to be saved. They have placed salvation altogether on the responsibility of God, relieving man of his responsibility in the matter. Righteous judgment will not be partial to some for "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34), "who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work" (I Pet. 1:17). John, in vision of judgment "saw the dead, small and great, stand before God...and the dead were judged..., according to their works" (Rev. 20:12, 13). Not only the deeds of man but He "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (I Cor. 4:5). Be not deceived, every man's evil will be brought forth in judgment; neither should the righteous despair in judgment "For God is not unrighteous to forget your works and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name..." (Heb. 6:10).

The judgment should not be an encounter of fear. God has revealed to us the sure certainty of the judgment, that we might prepare for it. He has also revealed the standard of the judgment, His truth, that we might obey it. We should have no fear of an unjust judgment but even rejoice that the judgment of God is tempered with grace and mercy.

The Greatest Thing In The World

John Stacy

The Apostle to the Gentiles wrote in I Corinthians 13:7-13, "Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be tongues, they shall

cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face : Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." The theme of this text is that love never fails. This central idea is stated through a contrast between that which is temporal and that which is eternal.

Love never faileth ! (v. 8). It never ends, collapses, or passes away. It is the one thing still standing when all else fails. Love is eternal !

Our text gives us four reasons why love never fails (v. 7). First, love beareth all things. That is, love supports at all times and under all circumstances. Love that bears all things, protects, preserves, covers, and keeps off that which threatens. Love conceals that which is displeasing to another. Those characterized by a forbearing love will overlook the faults of others. Isn't this what Solomon wrote about in Proverbs 10:12 which teaches us that love covereth all transgressions ? Paul the Apostle of love wrote in Galatians 6:2. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (See Romans 15:1; 1 Peter 4:8).

Secondly, love never faileth because love believeth all things. Love is not naive but it does look for the best in man. Love gives the benefit of the doubt. Love puts the best possible interpretation on the words and deeds of others. Jesus and Stephen are good examples of this. Jesus prayed in Luke 23:34. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do..." Stephen petitioned the Father by saying, "...Lord lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60).

Thirdly, love hopeth all things. Love is always optimistic. Love is always full of joyful, confident expectation. Love is always hopeful, because, it knows that all things work out for the

good of God's people (Rom. 8:28). Love knows that though we must go down into the valley of depression and death, we will not remain there (Psm. 23:4).

In the fourth place, love is eternal because love endureth all things. Love bears up courageously under ill treatment and persecution. Love can outlast anything. Jesus said in Matthew 24:12-13, "...the love of many shall wax cold, but he that shall endure to the end shall be saved." Men who endure to the end are those who have a love that will not grow cold. The great reward that awaits us in heaven will help to motivate men to endure (Matthew 5:10-12).

Next, let us learn that though love never faileth, there are some things that will fail. Prophecy will be done away. Prophecy, a miraculous gift (I Cor. 12:10) will be terminated. Secondly, tongues will cease. The miraculous ability to speak in other languages (I Cor. 12:10) will stop completely. Supernatural knowledge (I Cor. 12:8) will be done away. Some versions of the Bible say it will be terminated or vanish. The words **done away** and **cease** denote the fact that these gifts are not only to be taken away, but that they will also be superseded. In other words, something else will be put in their place. What will that be?

In answer to the previous question let us discuss why spiritual gifts will cease. Our text tells us that the knowledge and teaching of the Corinthians was only fragmentary or incomplete (v. 9). It was imperfect, because God was in the process of revealing all of His will. All of the books of the New Testament had not been written. Miraculous gifts were temporary aids needed by an infant church.

When will these miracles cease? When that which is perfect is come (v. 10). Other translations render this phrase, "when that which is complete, finished, mature, or full grown is come." The phrase "that which is perfect" in the Greek language is "**to teleion**." In the original language the phrase is, "neuter in gender and singular in number." Thus, it refers to a thing, or a process.

What does the phrase, "that which is perfect" point to ? First there are those who believe it refers to the coming of Christ. If that were so, then the masculine and not neuter gender would have been used. There is not one place in the Greek New Testament where "to teleion" is ever used of Jesus. Secondly, there are those who believe that these Greek words refer to heaven. If so, Paul's argument would have been an insult to their intelligence, for they all understood that there will be no need of miracles in heaven !

The comparison which Paul at once made, contrasted the childhood age of the church with the maturity of the church (v. 11-12), not the present age with the ultimate condition of the saints in heaven. This demands that the expression "that which is perfect" must be associated, not with conditions of heaven, but with the maturity of the church; and that condition is met only by referring the words to God's completed revelation of the Bible.

That miracles were to last only till the church could grow up and mature can be seen from Ephesians 4:11-14 which reads, "and he gave some to be apostles, some prophets; some evangelists; some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of saints, for the work of the ministry; and for the building of the body of Christ : Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ : that we henceforth be no more tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Furthermore, we know that miracles have ceased because gifts were passed on by the laying on of the Apostles' hands (Acts 8:14-18; 19:6). When the last Apostles died and when the last person died on whom the Apostles had laid their hands, gifts ceased. If gifts exist today, Apostles exist ! This is consistent with the New Testament.

Yes, "That which is perfect" refers to the full or complete revelation of God's word. Again, remember that the New

Testament had not been completed when Paul wrote to the Corinthians around 54-55 A.D. The last book of the Bible. Revelation, was written around 95-96 A.D.

Certainly both the Old and New Testament refer to the Bible as perfect and to the Bible's working as that of perfecting. In Psm. 19:7 David wrote, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." James called the word of God, "the perfect law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25). Paul summed it all up in II Timothy 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Finally, let us look at the things that remain. They are faith, hope, and love. Here are three keys to happiness and success.

First of all there is faith which gives foundation to our hope. Faith is being convinced that things exist that cannot be perceived with the senses (Heb. 11:1). We must have faith to please God (Heb. 11:6). We must walk or live by faith (II Cor. 5:7). True faith expresses itself in action (Heb. 11:1-40; Jas. 2:14-26).

Secondly, there is hope, that confident, favorable, desire or expectation, that happy anticipation of that which is to come. Oh, how we need hope! Tennyson in his *In Memoriam* wrote of the, "mighty hopes that make us men." Hope is our anchor (Heb. 6:19). Hope purifies and motivates (I Jno. 3:2-3, I Cor. 9:7-14). Dr. Samuel Johnson, that brilliant Englishman of letters, was right when he said, "A bright, hopeful outlook on life is worth more than a thousand pounds." It is worth more than just money, for hope will save our souls! (Rom. 8:24).

The greatest thing in the world then is love. It is greater than miraculous gifts because they were only temporary. It is greater than faith which will one day become sight. It is greater than hope, for one day we will see God. Paul said, "who hopeth for that which he seeth?" (Rom. 8:24).

The supremacy of love can be seen in these verses. Love is better than the miraculous (I Cor. 12:31). Love is greater than faith (I Cor. 13:1-4). The two greatest commandments in all the Bible are to love God and neighbour (Mk. 12:28-31). Above all things is love (Col. 3:14; I Pet. 4:8). Love is the greatest thing in the world, for he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love (I Jn. 4:8).

Should Women Be Allowed In The Clergy?

Ivie Powell

A few years ago, a news reporter, was interviewing folks at random on the streets in Memphis, Tenn. His question was, "Should women be allowed to be in the clergy?" Some of the answers were, "Sure, I think women should be in everything." Another said, "Women are just as smart as men."

The careful student will quickly note that the question was not correctly or Scripturally stated. For the Bible no where teaches a distinction in the body of Christ between the members and the preacher. All who obeyed the gospel in the first century were called. "Saints" (Rom. 1:7), "Christians" (Acts 11:26), "Disciples" (Acts 11:26) and "Brethren" (Heb. 2:11). Some may say, "Why quibble over words?" Because we are to "...speak as the oracles of God..." (I pet. 4:11). And no where are the terms "laity" or "clergy" used in any sense in the Scriptures!

Does the Bible teach that women can be preachers? In I Timothy 1:12 divine instruction sets forth a rule that never changes. "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." The A.S.V. 1901 renders I Timothy 1:12 as follows: "But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness."

Furthermore, we have no example, command or inference to allow women to preach. As one scholar expressed it, "The only time we find a woman preaching in the New Testament is in Acts 16:17. Here it is a woman filled with **THE DEVIL** rather than the Holy Spirit! Perhaps that is just as true today. The Spirit would not have a woman do today what he forbid her to do in the first century. If so, God would be a God of confusion. I Corinthians 14:33. He is not! Therefore, he forbids women today to preach."

There are many things that Christian women can and must do, but preaching is not one of them. There is in a sense in which all are ministers, yet in the classic term only men are given the authority and responsibility of publically proclaiming God's Word!

Is Salvation in Church?

Billy Bland

While there is much confusion in the religious world on the subject of the church, the Bible is as plain as it has always been. It is God's will that we understand His word. Paul said, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). Thus He clearly affirms that we can understand the will of God.

Perhaps one thing more than anything else that has contributed to the confusion on the subject of the church is present day denominationalism. Denominations came about as the results of a departure from the word of God. The people in the first century were not familiar with present day denominationalism. Today, if we go back to the Bible, it will do away with the denominations. Therefore, when we ask the question, "Is salvation in the church?" we are not speaking with reference to a denomination. But rather, we are asking, is salvation in the Lord's church? I believe if people

will honestly study the Bible and see what the church is, they will readily agree that salvation is in the church, NOT out of it. Therefore to help clarify this matter, let's notice some things that people can be saved without if we can be saved out of the church.

If one can be saved out of the church, he can be saved without being called out. The word "church" means the "called out," thereby signifying they have been called out of the world. Thus if one can be saved without being called out, he can be saved while he is still in the world. But Paul made it plain that those who are in the world are without God (Eph. 2:12). Also, if one can be saved without being called out, it naturally follows that he can be saved without that which calls him out of the world. Paul said that the gospel is God's instrument to call people out of the world: "Whereunto He called you by our gospel" (II Thess. 2:14). Therefore if one can be saved without being in the "called-out" (church), he can be saved without the gospel.

Next, let us notice that if one can be saved outside of the church, he can be saved without the blood of Christ. Surely, every reader of these lines believes that the blood of Christ is necessary unto salvation! Yet we read that He (Christ) purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28). Jesus did not shed His blood for something which is a non-essential! We also read that Christians "are bought with a price" (I Cor. 6:19). The price is the blood of Christ (I Pet. 1:18-19). The blood of Christ did not purchase two separate things. Christians are the church, they are the "called-out." Therefore, if one can be saved without the church, he can be saved without the blood of Christ!

Again, if one can be saved out of the church, he can be saved without being reconciled to God. The word "reconciled" means "to change from enmity to friendship." Thus it means to be at peace with God. When a person sins he is separated from God and needs to be reconciled to God. The Bible says that reconciliation unto God is in the "one body" (Eph. 2:16). Paul explains that the "body" is the "church" (Eph. 1:22-23). Therefore reconciliation unto God is in the church or body of Christ. To

strengthen this affirmation even more Paul said that Christ is the Saviour of the body (Eph. 5:23). But remember that the body is the church. Therefore Christ is the Saviour of the church.

Again if one can be saved out of the church, he can be saved outside the family (house) of God. When writing unto Timothy, Paul said; "But if I tarry long, That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). Paul says the "house" of God is the "church" but note, if one can be saved out of the house (family) of God, he will be saved in the family of Satan (Jn. 8:44).

Finally, if one can be saved outside the church, he can be saved without being married unto Christ. The church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5; Rev. 21:9, 22:17). Christians are married to Christ. Paul said that Christians are "dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7:4).

Reader friend, are you in the bride of Christ, the one body, the family of God, the called out? All of these are descriptive terms of the Lord's church. If you are not in the church of our Lord, why not obey the gospel this very day by repenting and being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and the Lord will add you to "the church" (Acts 2:47), of which He is the Saviour (Eph. 5:23).

God, The Source

Ron Bryant

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" (Hebrews 2:3).

"Salvation" is a majestic word. The Hebrew author exalts the concept and queries about so "great salvation." If salvation were a river and one were to trace it to its source, not only would one be at the throne of the majesty on high but would also be beyond time to time before the world began. The majestic and eternal purpose of God is embodied in a word too often belittled and too quickly pushed aside : Salvation.

God's saving purpose was not arbitrary, but full of grace. Consider :

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ : even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love; having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace which is freely bestowed on us in the beloved. In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence." (Eph. 1:3-8).

In this Paul repeatedly declares the fact of salvation. God's "good pleasure," "grace," "choosing," "foreordaining" are its source. "In Christ" its location. Christ, the accessible Saviour, is then the means. For God has chosen the Son to be the means of Man's Salvation. It is Salvation "In, through, by, of Christ. He is the personification of God's grace. He is the well spring of ope. He the proclamation, and He first proclaimed the "great Salvation."

In II Timothy 1:8-10 Paul urged Timothy, "Be not ashamed Therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner but suffer hardship of the gospel according to the power of God; who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to on a works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but hath now

been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." In this Paul declares "God saved us... Not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace." He affirms God's purpose was settled before the world began. He affirms that it was "Manifested" (made known) by Christ. He affirms "life and immortality" (Salvation from past sins and acceptance by God, and life eternal) have been brought to light by the gospel. In all of this, Salvation is the subject. God is the source. Christ is the means. The reclamation and transformation of man is its character. And, all of this is brought to light through the gospel.

The Gospel : The greatest message. The greatest need. The light of life. The word of heaven. The delight of saints. Proclaim it : Love it. Defend it. Live it.

It is God's message for all men.

The Shallow Heart (Rocky Soil)

Bill Dillon

Have you ever wondered why only a few are truly interested in spiritual concerns? Have you ever asked why worship assemblies seem to dwindle to a precious handful at times? These are questions that bear directly upon the parable of the sower. On the occasion of the speaking of this parable great multitudes followed the Lord but winnowing time was soon to come and the trivial many would be reduced to the vital few. A correct understanding and proper application of the parable of the sower would help the disciples see why the crowds would diminish. By means of this parable, the Saviour would illustrate the different effects produced by the presentation of the gospel underscoring how that growth of the seed (gospel) depends on the quality of soil (the human heart).

The Lord described some hearers as having hearts like rocky soil who, (1) hear the word, (2) receive it with joy, (3) endure for a while, but (4) stumble in time of persecution. A closer look at this group will yield many good lessons.

They had faith, but not strong faith; hope, but not bright hope; and love, but not fervent love. With such people, Christianity can change overnight from a burning fever to a morbid drudgery. The seed was sown in a shallow layer of soil but beneath the soil was a bed of rock. The seed was allowed to flourish for a while and enjoyed the warmth of the rock but began to falter as the heat of trial and bitter persecutions came. The phrase used to describe this group might well be "easy come-easy go." At the first sign of difficulty adversity is transformed into apostasy and we hear "How long, O Lord, How long?" Thus, those who were all eagerness and enthusiasm eventually prove to be miserable disappointments to themselves as well as to the Lord.

But, what went wrong? Was it too much zeal? No, we can never get enough of that. Was it responding too quickly? No, you can't obey the Lord too quickly. Was it the character of the sower? No, for the emphasis is on the character of the hearer. Was it the fault of the seed? No, it is incorruptible (I Peter 1:23). What was it then? The trouble rested with the hearers—or the audience! They had substituted excitement for religion; interest for commitment; and shallow impulsiveness for steady conviction. When Satan moved in with distracting influences the veneer of faith was as easily shattered as it was put on. Oh, the vast importance of the right kind of hearing!

Some observations are in order:

1. Peter and John Mark represent well the rocky soil hearts in Mark 14:66-72; Acts 12:25; 13:13; 15:36-41.
2. The Word of God (Luke 8:14) is essential to conversion.
3. The reception depends on the receiver. Compare this to the "dynamic young evangelist," "winsome personality" tactics used by some today.

4. The number of fruitless hearers is great (if so with Christ, then certainly are with us today).

5. We may be better than others yet come short of what the Lord expects. The rocky soil hearts went further than wayside soil hearts.

6. A pound of illustration is worth a ton of explanation. We would do well to imitate the Master Teacher's methods.

7. If we slacken our efforts in steadfastness the cross can become offensive (Galatians 5:11).

8. It is wise to prepare for persecution.

9. It is not enough to merely hold fast that which is good but we must hold it long enough (I Thess. 5:21). It's always too soon to quit!

10. Danger of emotionalism in religion. Someone has said, "What Boogie-woogie is to music... emotionalism is to religion." Never let ballyhoo be a substitute for the Bible.

A look at the parable of the sower tells us much about ourselves. Some who read this article may possess hearts likened to the rocky soil...how about you?

Are You Procrastinating?

John Mays

To procrastinate means to put off something to the future. There is an old saying worthy of all acceptance, and that is, "Never put off until tomorrow, that which can and needs to be done today." No doubt, all of us have put things off until a future time and then never got around to taking care of the matter.

Probably more people procrastinate in religion than in any other thing. Most people do not plan to go to the judgment bar of God unprepared. Sometime before they die they plan to make things right with God, but somehow the majority of people put it off until a future time, in fact, until it is too late. I talk to both young, middle age and older people about their being obedient to the Lord's Word and being saved. Never do I remember a person saying, "I don't want to be saved I'm looking forward to going to hell." If they make any comment at all and they usually do they will state their intentions of someday obeying the Lord and being then in the proper relationship with God. Yet, often times we can talk to these same people ten years later and they are still putting off till a later date.

Some people have heard enough Gospel to convert half the world, but yet they have not obeyed. They plan to some day, but so many times the "grim reaper's day" comes before their day of obedience. The procrastinator doesn't have everything in the right perspective.

The procrastinator does not see sin as it really is. Sin is transgression of God's laws; therefore, wickedness against God (I John 3:4). Sin is iniquity (Psa. 51:2). Sin separates man from God (Isa. 59:1, 2). God is not going to allow man to live in sin and at the same time live with Him. Man living in sin is living in filth. In II Peter 2:22, Peter said of the ones who are cleansed from their sins and then go back into them, "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." To live in sin is insanity. Of that son who had left his father's house and went into a far country and lived in the depths of sin, it is said while he was in the pig pen of sin, "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy own: make me one of thy hired servants" (Lk. 15:17-19). The procrastinator has not yet come to himself and does not see his sin as it is.

The procrastinator is not truly appreciative of what God has done in order for him to be saved. He is not thankful for the great love and mercy of God that sent His only begotten Son to this in-cursed earth that he might die in the sinner's stead (John 3:16). He is not thankful that Jesus was willing to take his place on the cross and die for his sins (Heb. 2:9). Peter said, "Who himself bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (I Pet. 2:24).

Procrastinators do not seem to feel their own helplessness and unworthiness. They seem to think that somehow God will save them anyway. They usually do not think of themselves as being so bad. But in the Bible we find "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23): that only those who obey the Lord will be saved. "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9). Paul said, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit. 3:5). Peter said, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Pet. 1:18, 19).

God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34, 35). He saves all who are saved alike. All must hear the Gospel of Christ (Mk. 16:15, 16; Rom. 10:17). All must believe the Gospel, in which the very heart is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (John 8:24; I Cor. 15:1-4). All must repent of sins (Acts 2:38; Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30). All must confess Christ as the Lord, as the Son of God (Rom. 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37). All then must be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-6; Gal. 3:26, 27). The procrastinator often puts off obeying these commands of God until he no longer has the opportunity.

The procrastinator thinks he has a lease on life. He thinks he

has plenty of time. The person who has never obeyed the first principles of the Gospel plans to do so, but tomorrow or next week will be the time. The erring child of God knows he or she needs to be restored to the fold and serve God faithfully but puts off doing so. They think they have plenty of time.

James says, "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow, For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:13, 14). Today is the day of salvation. The procrastinator is one of the most deceived persons in the world. Reader, have you been procrastinating in your obedience to God?

Is Willful Forsaking of Assembly Sin?

Grady M. Miller

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

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

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

(1) **It is a transgression of a commandment of God.** The Bible definition of sin is simple a transgression (or going beyond) of God's law (I John 3:4). It cannot be denied that one commandment which we have received from God is the exhortation to "not forsake the assembling of ourselves together..." (Heb. 10:25). Notice the argument.

A. As Christians, we are not only encouraged to attend the assembly, but we are also commanded to do so.

B. To disobey a pl. in command of God is a sin.

C. Therefore, to forsake the assembly is sin.

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

(3) **It serves to weaken the church of God and strengthen the influence of Satan.** Surely, anything that serves to strengthen the Devil and weaken the influence of righteousness is sinful. And, willful neglect of the assembly does precisely this! It may be that some have not really considered the effect that their spasmodic attendance has on their fellow Christians; if they did, perhaps they would reconsider their actions. How discouraging it is to continually note the empty pews which should be filled at every service. This one act alone can undermine the attitude and work of the faithful; it does far greater harm than any assault the world could

launch against the church. It is only an excuse—and a pitiful one at that—to claim that we are not missed when we stay away, or that no one notices or cares. As the late W.A. Bradfield often observed, unfaithfulness is a more public sin than adultery! Make no mistake about it: **Anyone and everyone is missed when he or she stays home!**

We are certainly not suggesting that attendance is every thing. Faithfulness in attendance will not cover over a life spent in sin outside the meeting house. Our presence at the worship service is no meeting house. Our presence is an automatic guarantee that we are worshipping our Lord in spirit and in truth. Faithfulness in assembling, however, is for openers: a mark of the sincere and faithful. Those who are truly converted to the Lord and are striving to please Him just will not want to be absent from a single service! Those weak in faith, or not fully committed to the Lord will never see the need for faithfulness in assembling, or in prayer, giving, etc.

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

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