

FORM IV

1. Place of Publication

2. Periodicity of its Publication

3. Printer's Name

4. Nationality

5. Publisher's Name

6. Editor's Name

(If foreigner State the country of Origin)

7. Nane and Address of Individuals who own the Newspaper NEW DELHI MONTHLY SUNNAY DAVID INDIAN ... DO... J.C. CHOATE

AMERICAN

New Delhi Church of Christ, E-10, Defence Colony, New Delhi-24.

I Sunny David, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature of Publisher

SUNNY DAVID

Dated

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Editor :

J. C. CHOATE

688

Associate Editor : SUNNY DAVID

Published by Church of Christ, Box 3815, New Delhi-110049

Pleading for the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 13	March 1983	No. 11
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The Difficulty of Acknowledging Sin

If you will read through the Bible, you will find very few who were ever willing to confess that they had sinned. It is said that most of the people in prison today claim that they are innocent of the crime they have been charged with and for which they are serving sentences. Why is this? Perhaps it is pride. Maybe they have rationalized to the point that they think they are innocent. People can even be deceived into thinking that they have been forgiven when they have not.

Among those who are not Christians, any number of them believe that they are good enough as they are. They feel that a good moral life is sufficient to take one to heaven. Of course one must live a good moral life to please the Lord, but in addition to that he must obey the Lord's will if he expects to be saved. Christ said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). There may be any number of excuses given for not obeying Christ but Paul declares that the Lord is coming back one day to take vengeance on those who know not God and who obey not the gospel. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9), When one submits to the teaching of Christ, he is forgiven of all of his past sins. Christ says that he is saved. (Mark 16:16). Peter says that he receives the remission of his sins. (Acts 2:38). When Saul obeyed the Lord his sins were washed away. (Acts 22:16). Christ explained it as a new birth (John 3:3-5), and Paul spoke of the new Christian as being a new creature in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is a wonderful beginning but it is not the end. To continue to remain pure and free from sin, one must live the faithful Christian life. John wrote, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7).

But what if one doesn't remain faithful? What if he falls back into sin? Some would think that this would be an impossibility. If so, why is most of the New Testament written to the Christian in an effort to encourage him to be faithful? Again, listen to John, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1:8-10). Did you hear what the inspired man of God said? He said that it is not only possible to sin but that when one does, he must confess those sins if he expects the Lord to forgive him.

Christians are sinners because they are still human. Even though they may put forth every effort to be faithful to the Lord, still it is possible for them to do things they should not do or to leave things undone that they should do. These mistakes, weaknesses, or sins, are not done intentionally and are therefore covered or cleansed by the blood of Christ. But when the Christian purposely and intentionally does those things that are bad and wrong, and when those sins are known to other people, he must go before the church and publicly confess his faults, repenting of his sins, and ask the church and the Lord to forgive him. James wrote, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," (James 5:16), Some brethren think that they can miss the services of the church, have open differences with their fellow Christians, and do any number of other things that are contrary to God's will, but still go on as though nothing happened. They think that they should continue to be accepted as faithful members of the church, that they should again be used in the various phases of public worship, and so on. Such brethren are mistaken. If they have sinned, they should make the necessary corrections if they expect the Lord to forgive them and if they intend to have the full fellowship of the church. If they fail to do so and the brethren go on and fellowship them as though nothing has happened, then they are doing wrong themselves. They are also doing their brother wrong because they are encouraging him to continue in the sin that will eventually cause him to be lost eternally.

Some brethren don't like to admit that they have done wrong and they don't like it when others call their sins to their attention. Sometimes they take offence and allow this attitude to drive them further from the Lord and his church. In such cases they are hurting themselves more than anyone else. When the church calls on them to repent of their sins, this is not intended to hurt them but to help them. It is not done with ill feeling but with love. Those who cannot understand this are not only in sin but are in stubborn rebellion against the Lord and his will. Sin takes many forms and leads in many directions but the end result is spiritual death.

Sometimes Christians will not even confess their sins in their prayers or ask for the forgiveness of their sins because they think that this indicates weakness on their part. Again, this is a misunderstanding of what it means to be a Christian. The Christian is not perfect, but he is striving toward perfection. He cannot live in such a way as to never make a mistake; in fact, it would be a mistake to think that he is without sin. The scriptures admonish us as Christians to confess our sins, to confess our faults, to ask for the forgiveness of our debts. Anytime a Christian prays it is always in order to ask the Lord for the forgiveness of sins. On the other hand, this privilege does not mean that one should reason that, since he is subject to sin as a Christian, this gives him the excuse to go on and commit whatever sins he may choose. The Christian is to put forth every effort possible to live above sin, and as John said to the Christians of his day, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1,2).



How Does God Speak Today?

God from the beginning has spoken to man. Because God created man after his own likeness and image. He loves man and from the beginning wanted to communicate with him, to warn man about sin and to encourage him to live right before Him. The Bible reveales the fact that there has been, since the creation of man, three different ages or dispensations in which God spoke to man in different ways. Firstly, the age of the Patriarchs. In this age God spoke to man through the Patriarchs or the fathers, such as Adam, Noah and Abraham. At that time or during that age there was no Bible or a book from God available to man. God then spoke to the Patriarchs and revealed His will to them, just as in the case of the great flood of Noah's time. (Genesis 6,7).

The second age or dispensation, which is often called the Mosaic age, began when God called Moses at Sinai and gave the Ten Commandments and the rest of the commandments which are written in the Old Testament of the Bible. At Deuteronomy 5:1-3, in the Old Testament, we read, "And Moses called all israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day." So the Old Testament law of Moses was a covenant between God and Israel. This covenant was not binding on those who had lived under the Patriarchal age, and neither is it binding on those who live today under a different age, i.e., the Christian age, the third dispensation of the Bible.

Today under the Christian age God speaks by His Son Jesus Christ. At Hebrews 1:1, 2, we read, "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." The Bible declares that the Old Testament law of God has ceased to be in force since the coming of the New Testament of Christ. Notice the following verses, "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who cometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For ie is our peace, who hath made both one, and had broken down he middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his lesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so naking peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one ody by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." (Ephesians :12-16). Notice, the writer says, through his death on the cross, esus has broken down the middle wall, and abolished the enmity, nd slain the enmity, that is, the law of Moses. Again, we read, Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, hich was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to is cross." (Colossians 2:14). "Christ is become of no effect unto ou, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from race." (Galatians 5:4). "For there is verily a disannulling of ne commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitbleness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the ringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto od." "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should o place have been sought for the second." "In that he saith, A

new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." "Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." (Hebrews 7:18, 19; 8:7.13; 10:1,9).

Why have I referred to so many scriptures? The reason is very simple, that is, to show that the law of Moses or the Old Testament law of God is not binding today. Because God, as we have seen, has taken it away and have removed, and in its place He has given us a better law, the New Testament.

Whatever we want to know today concerning the will of God we must turn to the New Testament of His Son. There is no other way by which God communicate His will for man today. Even though Christ himself never wrote anything in the New Testament books. But he had promised to his disciples, the apostles, that when he would go back into heaven after his death and resurrection he would send The Holy Spirit on them Who would guide them into all the truth. At John 14:25, 26, we read, Jesus said to them, "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Again, he said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now, Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come." (John 16:12, 13). Thus the Holy Spirit, Jesus promised, would guide them to know All the truth, and would remind them correctly what he had taught them when he was on earth, and he said He would also guide them to know the things which were to come in future. Therefore, everything which is written in the New Testament is the will of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit for us today. The Holy Spirit

of God revealed His truth to them and guided them in their writing of the books of the New Testament. Thus, when we say the apostle Peter said or the apostle Paul wrote we are actually saying what God through the Holy Spirit said. Referring to the books of the Bible the apostle Paul wrote, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Again, the apostle Peter wrote, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1:20, 21).

This, therefore, teaches us that whatever we want to know concerning the will of God for man today, we must turn to the New Testament of Christ in the Bible. In its pages God had revealed for man what he must do to be saved from sin, and how to remain in that saving state to enter into the kingdom of God finally for the eternity. Everything that man must know, believe and practice is written therein. And we are warned in no uncertain words that even if an angel from heaven appears and preaches something else we must not accept it. (Galatians 1:8, 9).

The blood of Christ which he shed in his propitiating death has sealed the New Testament of God. (Matthew 26:28). The New Testament of the Bible, the new covenant of God, His will for us today, became effective since the death of Christ, His Son, on the cross. (Hebrews 9:15-17). The last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation in the New Testament ends with this solemn warning: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, 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 this 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).

The Beginning of Wisdom

Glenn Colley

There are a multiplicity of events in our lives that bear record to the weakness of man. One has only to behold the stars of our galaxy to realize this fact. Life is so magnificently huge, and we are so finite. James asks such a heart-searching question: "What is your life?" He then explains, "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4:14). Think about it. No matter what one does or accomplishes during the course of this life, he is only making a journey that, at best, will probably not last over three-score and ten years.

There are three major occurances in every man's life that are inevitable. First, he obviously *must* be born. Secondly, unless the Lord comes before it, he *must* die. (Heb. 9:27). And thirdly, he *must* make a decision to either obey or disobey God.

We will all pass over into the timeless side of eternity. We need therefore to understand that the same God that set the laws of nature in order that cause our unruly storms also set in order the laws of judgment. No one has the strength to over power either of them.

As E.A. Hoffman asks in a song written many years ago, "Is thy heart right with God?" What does it mean to be right with God? Note these God-breathed instructions:

- 1. Hear—(Rom. 10:14) "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"
- 2. Believe—(Rom. 10:10) "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness..."
- 3. Repent—(Acts 2:38) "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."
- 4. Confess—(Rom. 10:10) "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

- 5. Be Baptized—(Acts 2:38) "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."
- 6. Live faithfully—(Rev. 2:10) "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

In short, to be "right with God," or pleasing to Him, you must "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." (Matt. 6:33). Have you been wise in your decision to be faithful to God? If you are passively avoiding making the decision, in essence you have already made it.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Psa. 110:10).

Abounding Iniquity

Raymond Kelcy

Somewhere recently I saw a statement to the effect that there are more young women serving as barmaids in America than are in college. I do not know how accurate the statistics are. But we would have to shut our eyes if we failed to see the increase of immorality in our land. Increase of the use of drugs, increase of drunkenness, increase of illegitimate children, and on and on according to the newspapers and the television.

Jesus said, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." (*Matthew 24:12*). He is here giving a cause for desertion on the part of many disciples. They see iniquity increasing to the extent that they themselves lose heart and quit. They see crime and immorality on the increase and feel so helpless. They think "What's the use?" They are tempted to think that the little they are capable of doing won't count for much in our big world. So, they quit.

God's people have never constituted the majority. Think of the days of Noah and of Abraham. What if Noah had quit because the world refused to hear? What if Abraham had let the wickedness of Sodom deter him from serving God? What if Jesus had quit because "His own received him not"? Or because Had a traitor in His group?

It remains true that Christians are the salt of the earth and it may be that they are the reason God lets the earth continue. What if every Christian gave up? Then there would be no salt. There would be no leavening influence for society. If you are a loyal Christian be sure of the fact that God takes pride in you. He points to you as one of his own as He did in the case of Job. His eye is upon you and He appreciates you. He will take care of ' y ou and will see you through your trials.

Clay In The Potter's Hands Glen Walton

"And when the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." (Jeremiah 18:4).

Jeremiah observed the potter and noticed that the vessel he was making was marred. The artisan rolled the clay into another lump and then shaped it to meet his approval. The lesson was apparent. Israel was but clay in the hands of God. But because of a refusal to submit to His will, flaws had occurred. So, the Potter started again to mold a vessel free of the imperfections that made the first unacceptable.

God does not arbitrarily mold people without consideration of the human will. Man is not a passive lump in His hand. People have hearts. They can think and choose. They can rebel or obey. When they lovingly submit to God, He makes vessels of honour fit for His use (*II Timothy 2:21*). He can do marvelous things with clay, more marvelous than most dare to expect. But rebellion causes it to become blemished, and there is danger of rejection.

We are clay in the Master's hands. Let us so yield to Him that He can make of us vessels of honour.

How To Overcome Satan (No. 1)

John Stacy

The word "gospel" means "good news." The great and good news for man today is, that we can overcome Satan. Satan is the archenemy of our souls. He wants us to spend an eternity in hell with him. He is waging an all out spiritual war designed to damn every human being from Adam and Eve to the end of time.

Thank God, we can declare that the Devil is a loser! We do not have to give unto Satan! We can defeat him! We can overcome! It shall be the purpose of this lesson to look at some ways, that we can overcome our fiercest foe.

By Christ Jesus

First of all let us be aware that Jesus has overcome the Devill Rejoice. Jesus won the ultimate victory through His death, burial, and resurrection. This was a fulfillment of the Bible's first prophecy found in Genesis 3:15 which says, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Let us now examine several verses to show Christ's victory over the evil one.

In Matthew twelve Jesus cast out a demon. His critics charged that He did it by the power of Beelzebub. Jesus then said in Matthew 12:25-28, "...every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself cannot stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons 'by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I Cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is 'come upon you.'' Jesus has bound, restricted, placed under control, the strong man, the Devil! The cross and the resurrection made it possible,

In Ephesians 4:8 Paul wrote, "...when he ascended upon high, he led captivity captive..." This verse teaches that Jesus took captive the things that kept man in captivity. Sin captures or enslaves men. John 8:34 says, "...whosoever committeth sin is the bondservant of sin." Death and Satan had imprisoned man before Christ. Hebrews 2:14-15, tells us, "That through death, he might destroy him that had the power over death, that is, the Devil. And delivered them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Jesus through the cross, despoiled the principalities. He made a show of them openly. He triumphed over them in it (Col. 2:14-15). The word "despoil-ed" means, "to strip or disarm." The word "show" refers to "example." The term "openly" of course means, "publicly." "Triumphed" is a word used to depict a general, who lead his captives behind him, after fighting a victorious war against his enemies. Truly, John was right when he penned, "...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4). The ultimate end of Satan is spelled out by Jesus in Matthew 25:41, "Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me ye cursed into the everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." John says the same things in Revelation 21:10, "The Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone..."

My friends, Satan is a defeated enemy! Calvary was his Waterloo! Therefore, it is our solemn responsibility to claim the victory provided by the cross. By faithful obedience, we must appropriate all that Christ has secured for us. The Lord of lords and King of kings has not left us defenseless against the source of all evil.

By Christ's Word

Secondly, filling our hearts with God's word will help us overcome the Devil. David wrote in Psalm 119:9, "wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." Three times during the temptation of Christ, our Lord put the Devil to fight with a "thus saith the Lord" (Matthew 4:1-11). John wrote these words to fathers and young men, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." (I John 2:13-14). John also penned I John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." This is a verse long debated because of the apostasy question. Some think that Christ is the seed in this verse (Gal. 3:19-29). The seed here is the word of God (Lk. 8:11). God's word, the sword of the Spirit, can be used to defeat the Devil (Ephesians 6:10-17).

Spiritual Alertness

In the third place we can overcome the old serpent by not being ignorant of his devices. The Devil has and uses power (Acts 26:18). He is wily (Eph. 6:10-12). He used reproach and a snare (I Tim. 3:7; II Tim. 2:26). He works through the lust of the flesh, eyes, and the pride of life (Gen. 3:1-8; Matt. 4:1-11; I Jno. 2:15-17). He uses temptation (Matt. 6:13). He utilizes the lie very well (John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:3; Gen. 3:5). Murder is a tool used by Satan (Rom. 5:12; Heb. 2:14; John 8:44). Materialism was used by Satan to destroy Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10), (See also Acts 16:16-21). Hypocrisy is also a part of Satan's devices (See 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Rev. 2:9). Satan works through false prophets (II Cor. 11:14-15; II Thess. 2:7-12). Jealousy is one of the Devil's favourite tools (James 3:15). The old dragon destroys many men through anger (Eph. 4:26-27). Literally, in this text, we are commanded to stop giving into the Devil. We are told here to not have the habit of allowing Satan to control our action, and opportunities. This verse tells us not to allow the Devil to get a foothold in our lives.

Gospel Armour

Fourthly, we must put on the gospel armour. Paul in Ephesians 6:10-18 wrote, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints."

We must arm ourselves for we are soldiers in the army of the Lord.We are to war a good warfare and fight the good fight of faith (I Tim. 1:18; 6:12). Paul put it this way in II Tim. 2:3-4, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." Yes, we need the gospel armour of Ephesians six, because the weapons of our warfare are not carnal and the war that we wage is not fleshly in nature.

Resistence

Furthermore, we can overcome the prince of the powers of the air by resisting him. Jesus said in James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." The word "resist" is a military. term meaning, "to stand against." James puts this verb in the command mood. We then should yield nothing to Satan. We should oppose him at every point. We should always be against him. If we hesitate we lose. If we talk with him we yield. If we give him an inch, he will take all! Peter also said, "Whom resist stedfast, in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." Don't forget, faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

On Guard

Sixthly, we can overcome Satan by being on guard, on alert, vigilant. I Pet. 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." The word "vigilant" means, "watchful, awake, alert, and on guard." We must then give strict attention to ourselves and the Devil. Caution should be the watch-word. The word "sober" means, "self-controlled, free from intoxicants that cloud and bewilder." This means that we should maintain a sound mind and that we should be calm and collected.

We should be watching for a way out. Paul wrote, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (I Cor. 10:13). Again, Peter declares that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation. (II Peter 2:9).

To Be Saved

"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Three times, from three sources, the question is asked, "what must I do for my soul's salvation?" (Acts 2:37; 9:6; 16:30). Holy Spirit inspired men gave an answer to the question. God's salvation is by grace on God's part; by blood on Christ's part. The Holy Spirit communicated His plan to "apostles and prophets" (Eph. 3:5). Man as well has a part in his salvation. His part is briefly stated: he must believe in Jesus (John 8:24), he must repent (Lk. 13:5), he must confess faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9, 10; Acts 2:37), furthermore, he must be baptized into Christ for the remission of his sins (Rom. 6:3, 4; Acts 2:38). At this point one is saved. (I Pet. 3:21). Multitudes have read of God's scheme of redemption from the pages of the Bible, yet they are not saved, others have heard that glorious plan preached over and over, yet they remain unsaved. Many souls are lost today, not that they do not know God's will for them, but for other reasons. What must these people do in order to be saved?

Realize He Is A Sinner

"All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way." (Isa. 53:6). "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." (Eccl. 7:20). "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (I John 1:10). All have to their charge sin and transgression. Wasted days and even years, opportunities to serve God, all contribute to the sins of omission (James 4:17). Acts of transgression weigh heavy on the ledger of God. "There is none righteous...all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:10, 23). When one realizes he is a sinner, hopelessly lost and undone the has made a giant step toward his responsibility of salvation.

Humble Himself

Godly men exemplify humility that we might learn how to be humble in the presence of God. Isaiah said, realizing he stood in the presence of the Almighty as one unworthy. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5). Ancient John on lonely Patmos saw the Redeemer and "fell at his feet as dead" (Rev. 1:17:). Peter, at times brazen, yet in the presence of the miracle-working Jesus "fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke 5:8).

When man realizes that he is nothing in the presence of the Almighty Christ, knowing the terror of falling "into the hands of the living God—for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 10:31; 12:28), that man has furthered his progress of saving himself. (Acts 2:40).

Surrender All

A self-surrender is essential to one's salvation. One cannot hold one thing, one person, not even his own self above his Lord. Many know God's will for them, know the love Christ has for them—but they will not surrender that which stands between them and Christ. "He that loveth father or mother,...son or daughter, more than me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 10:37-39). Whatever it is that keeps Christ from first place in one's life is that which must be set aside. (Matt. 19: 16-22).

Submit to Lordship of Christ

Chirst Jesus is worthy of our crowning Him Lord and Master n our heart. God has made Him Lord and Christ...there by Jod's right hand exalted (Acts 2:33, 36). He is the "brightness of Jod's glory, and the express image of his person." He sits "on he right hand of the majesty on high." (Heb. 1:3).

Crown Him Lord for He is "the way, the truth, and the life" John 14:6). It is by faith in His blood that one is freely justified y God's grace (Rom. 3:24-26). It is by His plan and one's bedience thereto one is saved. He said, "He that believeth and baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be amned." (Mark 16:16). Worship Him. (Rev. 5:2-13).

One may look upon salvation purely as a doctrinal matter, nd so it is. Doctrine is teaching; salvation is a teaching of the ible. Yet, salvation is more than a doctrinal matter. One, in bedience to the teaching, finds it the sweetest joy of the soul.

Perhaps you know the teaching but are unsaved because you ill not realize the presence of sin in your life, will not humble ourself in the presence of God, will not surrender self and crown im Lord of your life. But to be saved—you must.

For What Saith The Scripture?

Romans 4:3

Melvin Hampton

In order for believers to have unity, the unity that Christ prayed for before His death, they should seriously consider His will for them. Jesus prayed to His Father saying, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one." (John 17:20-22).

There must be a rule to go by. The Bible is the rule book. The Lord never intended for us to be divided religiously as we are today. Paul to Timothy said that God our Saviour "...will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2:3, 4). Peter relates, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9). So, the divine will is for men, all men everywhere, to be saved. God provided the way (way, singular, not many ways) of salvation. That way is revealed in the gospel of Christ. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith." (Rom. 1:16, 17). All are saved by the same system, that is, "the system of faith." "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay but by the law of faith (Rom. 3:27).

Not only does the Bible reveal the system of faith, by which the believer is to be saved, but the Scripture produces the proper faith in God that one must have in order to be saved, only if i obeyed. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. (John 20:30, 31). We all must be governed by the same rule if we are to be saved. The Bible is that rule or standard all must go by in order to get to heaven. Paul in his letter to the church of Christ at Philippi reminds them of how they were to walk: "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." (Phil. 3:16).

Man's way is not the rule, but God's divine rule will suffice. Never let anyone or anything hinder you from obeying the truth, the Gospel of Christ. God's way is Jesus Christ His Son. (John 14:6). His way of salvation is here below briefly stated.

Firstly, one must have FAITH in Christ as the Son of God. One must believe the facts of the gospel concerning Him. (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Faith is a noun; believe a verb. Belief is faith in action. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6).

Secondly, one must **REPENT** of his sins. Repentance is a change of will brought about by godly sorrow resulting in a reformation of one's life. Jesus said, "I tell you, nay but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lk 13:3, 5).

Thirdly, one must CONFESS Jesus to be the Son of God. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead that shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Rom. 10:9, 10; cf. Acts 8:37).

Fourthly, one must be **BAPTIZED**. "Therefore we are **buried** with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:3, 4). Baptism is for (in order to obtain) the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38). Baptism washes away sin. (Acts 22:16).

The Precious Privilege Of Priesthood

Curtis Dowdy

All Bible students are aware of the value placed upon the priesthood under the arrangement of Moses. There was a high priest who performed certain functions not open to another (the day of atonement in the most holy place), and there were other priests who performed the day to day sacrifices at the altar first for himself and then for others. However, with the coming of the new covenant of our Lord Jesus Christ some very important changes took place regarding the priesthood.

The book of Hebrews gives much information and records many details about the priesthood of Christ. Christ was the fulfillment of the shadow cast by the high priest under the Levitical system. In contrasting the two the record says, "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priest, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself." (Hebrews 7:26, 27). In short, Jesus is now our high priest.

But who are the priests who take care of those-daily sacrifices which must be offered unto God for sins of the people? The answer to that question is given by the apostles Peter and Paul. First, Peter's answer, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (I Peter 2:5). Second, Paul's answer, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1). Only priests have the right to offer up sacrifices, but Peter says that even "newborn babes" (spiritual babes) have that privilege now. (I Peter 2:2). Paul makes known to all the brethren at Rome (not just some select few) that they have the sacred privilege of offering a "living sacrifice," and assures them that God will accept it. Thus all the brethren, from spiritual babes to spiritual giants, have the precious privilege of priesthood.

But what does this mean to me?

First, it means I can come directly to God through my high priest with no one else between (I Timothy 2:5). I don't have to stand in line and wait my turn. I can offer praise and thanksgiving, confess my sins and ask His forgiveness day and night. Oh, how thankful I am for my priesthood!

Second, it means that I have been clothed with the priestly garment. (Galatians 3:27). I don't have to worry about all the ritual of ceremonial cleansing as did my counterpart under the Law, for the blood of Christ keeps me cleansed at all times. (I John 2:7). Oh, how thankful I am for my priesthood!

Third, it means that I don't have to worry about my daily needs being taken care of (Matthew 6:24-34). Just as my counterpart, who served God faithfully, was cared for under the Law, so I need not be anxious over things others are, as God's priest I have his word on that. Oh, how thankful I am for my priesthood!

Acts chapter eight illustrates the precious privilege of priesthood. Here was a babe who wished to purchase apostolic power, but since he had neither part nor lot in the matter of apostleship he was guilty of sin. In fact, Peter informed him, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God" (Acts 8:21). This rebuke was important, but what could Simon do about it? "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). Right here Peter is telling Simon to exercise his precious privilege of priesthood. I believe it is commendable that Simon was humble enough to ask Peter to pray for him, but it must be understood that as a priest Simon could have done his own **praying.** However, because of Simon's immaturity and without access to the New Testament we can easily understand why he would ask Peter to pray for him.

There are times when every Christian feels the need to ask brethren to exercise their priesthood on his behalf, but one should never lose sight of his own precious priesthood.

Why not pause right now and exercise your priesthood before God.

But Ye Have An Unction

Grady Miller

In 1 John chapter 2 the aged apostle issued a warning concerning certain false teachers, whom John called "anti-Christs" (verse 18). He declared that these ungodly deniers of the Lord Jesus Christ did not share the same faith nor the same spirit of the loyal disciples of Christ (verse 19), and that they sought to seduce the loyal away from the true gospel (verse 26). John encouraged the faithful to "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). To this end, the apostle assured his readers that they had the ability to examine in the truth. Note verses 20 and 27—"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things...But the annointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you..."

This ability to examine all teachers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is called the gift of "discerning of spirits" by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:10, where he catalogued the gifts of the Spirit. It was a most important gift and monumental aid to the cause of Christ in the first century A.D. During the era when God's revelation was yet incomplete and while the various letters penned under inspiration had not yet been gathered and distributed, it would have been relatively easy for a false prophet to claim to be an apostle and to lead sincere men and women into darkness. To insure against this threat and to protect His children, the Lord bestowed this gift of discernment of spirits-an unction or annointing upon certain ones to enable them to try the various teachers and determine whether or not they were proclaiming the "whole counsel of God." (cf. Acts 20:27).

Oftentimes it is asserted that this gift of inspiration has continued into our own age; that God's children are led by the Spirit as they read the Bible; that the Spirit "guarantees" the reader that he will not misinterpret the Word; that the Spirit so "checks" the reader that he cannot be misled into error. Some extremists even go so far as to claim that they receive new revelations from the Lord, superior to the written word. These claims, however, are in opposition to what the Bible teaches.

Note carefully that this gift of discerning of spirits-John's annointing-is classified along with the word of unction or wisdom, knowledge, working of miracles and healings, speaking in tongues, and other wonders recorded in 1 Corinthians 12. Then. in chapter 13, the apostle Paul affirmed that these gifts were associated with partial revelation and when "that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (vs. 10). The imperfect revelation would give way to the perfect revelation; the incomplete would be completed; the unfinished would be finished. When that happened, the part-tongues, miracles, knowledge, prophecy and the discerning of spirits-would be taken away. As Paul said, "Prophecies...shall fail; t o n g u e s... shall cease; knowledge...shall vanish away" (verse 8). Today, the perfect or completed revelation is here-the New Testament. The imperfect and incomplete has either been finished or taken away.

Thus, one who claims to be guided by new and continuing revelations today is in error. We are not to be guided by the socalled "whisperings of the Spirit" but by the word of God. All teachers are to be examined and tried by the Bible. The only assurance we need in order to know that we know Him is to judge ourselves by his commandments, or words (1 John 2:3,5).

Resist The Devil!

Owen G. Solomon

All of us need to realize the reality of the devil. He is very much alive in our day. Peter said, "Be sober, be vigilant, your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5:8). James said, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). How may Christians resist the devil?

In James 4:8, we read, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." One way to resist the devil is to draw nigh to God. Jude said, "Keep yourselves in the love of God..." (Jude 21).

Prayer wil help us to resist the devil. Jesus spake a parable to the end "that men ought always to pray and not to faint." (Luke 18:1). The parable He taught was about the persistent widow. Persistence in prayer will help us resist the devil.

Another way to resist the devil is through proper knowledge and use of the Word of God. The Hebrew writer tells us that our high priest (Jesus) was "in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). When Jesus was tempted of the devil, he was tempted in all areas of temptation—lust of the flesh, pride of life, and lust of the eye. He answered each of the temptations by saying, "It is written", and telling the devil what God's Word said. The Psalmist said, "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee." (Psalm 119:11). Many times we fail to resist the devil because of lack of knowledge of God's Word. Proper study will help us to accumulate knowledge with which to resist the devil.

A forgiving spirit will help us resist the devil. In Ephesians 4:25-32, Paul discussed measures Christians can take to resist the devil. Along with a list of things Christians should NOT do, Paul said, "Neither give place to the devil." (vs. 27). Then Paul added, "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (vs. 32). Jesus said, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6:15). Paul showed the Corinthians that Christians should forgive one another, "Lest Satan should have an advantage over us, for we are not ignorant of his devices."

Finally, Paul admonished Christians, "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11). Paul lists the armour the Christian is to use to fight against Satan in verses 14-18.

If a Christian will draw nigh to God, be persistent in prayer, cultivate a knowledge and proper use of the Word of God, maintain a forgiving spirit, and equip himself with the whole armour of God, he can successfully resist the devil.

I Love You

James Pilgrim

The short 3-word statement, "I love you," may have been used more than any other sentence in the history of the world. It may also qualify as the most abused and misused statement known to man. For example, some have said, "I love you," only to gain social status, wealth, sex, or such like. But thank God for the many honest, sincere, and pure uses of the words.

What does it mean to love someone? What idea do we communicate when we tell others we love them? The Bible gives us the genuine definition of love or charity. Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. It is a startling contrast to the world's picture. According to the word of God, when one says "I love you," that person should mean the following: (1) I will be long-suffering with you; (2) I will be kind to you; (3) I will not envy you; (4) I will not vaunt myself, that is, I will not Parade myself before you; (5) I will not be puffed up, not have an inflated opinion of myself; (6) I will not behave myself unseemly with you; (7) I will not seek my own, will not be selfish; (8) I will not be easily provoked, but will be calm and patient, (9) I' will think no evil, that is, not keep a score of your wrongs, not place the worst construction on your deeds, not be suspicious of you; (10) I will not rejoice in iniquity; (11) I will rejoice when truth is known; (12) I will bear or face all things; (13) I will believe the best in you, will have confidence in you; (14) I will hope all things, desire, expect, rely upon you for good; (15) I will endure all things bravely and calmly for you; and (16) My love for you will never fail.

Before you tell someone, "*I love you*," again, think of what you will be saying. Either mean what you know love to be, or do not make the statement. We can love after the pattern above, for God commanded love to be that way. He has not demanded what we are unable to perform. If we do not love as defined above, the problem is with us, not with God.

Do you love yourself, your fellowman, and God?

First, we are to love ourselves. We are taught to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Matt. 22:39). How could we love our neighbour if we did not love ourselves? We should have self-esteem. However, let us not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. (Rom. 12:3; 1 Pet. 5:5). Apply 1 Cor. 13:4-8 to yourself.

Second, we are to love our fellowman. (Matt. 22:39). This even includes our enemies. (Matt. 5:44). Brethren in Christ are also included. (Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 2:17). Love of others is to be based upon the inspired words of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. When we genuinely love our fellow-man, we will seek to do good for him. (Gal. 6:10).

Third, do we love God? Perhaps a good many will answer in the affirmative. The first and great commandment instructs us to love God supremely. (Luke 10:27). "We love him, because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19). God and Christ said, "I love you," in the death of Jesus. (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16; 15:13). Many claim to love God. Among the number are many honest and sincere people. However, not all claims to love God are true, even though honestly and sincerely believed. (Cf. Prov. 14:12). Jesus said, If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15). One cannot love the Lord 'and be His friend without doing all He commands. (John 15:14; 2:5).

Again we ask, do we love God? Do you? Run the following . brief test to determine the truth about the matter. Be honest in your answers and conclusions. Have you heard the saving gospel of Jesus? (Mark 12:29; Rom. 10:17; 1:16). Have you believed in God and Jesus? (Heb. 11:6; Acts 10:43; John 8:24) Have you repented of your sins? (Acts 3:19; 17:30, 31; Matt. 21:28-32). Have you confessed Jesus Christ as God's only begotten Son? (Matt. 10:32, 33; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9, 10). Have you been buried in water baptism for the remission of sins? (Acts 2:38-Comp. Matt. 26:28; Acts 22:16; Mark 16:16; Rom. 6:3, 4; 1 Pet. 3:20, 21). As a Christian, have you been faithful? (Mark 13:13; Rev. 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:58). Faithfulness manifests itself in many ways. For example, regular attendance (Heb. 10:25), generous giving (1 Cor. 16:1, 2; 2 Cor. 9:6, 7; Gal. 6:10), purity of life (1 Tim. 5:22; 2 Tim. 2:19-22), and such like.

What did you discover in the test? Remember, obedience to the commands of Jesus is necessary to loving Him. Do you love the Lord? Have you obeyed all of His commands from the heart? (Rom. 6:17, 18). If one or more of the answers is negative, you do not love the Lord, you are not His friend, and you have not been saved. It matters not how honest and sincere you were in what you did. Note some who were religious, but not accepted. (Matt. 7:21-23; 15:7-9; Cf. also, Prov. 14:12). A knowledge of such should create within you a desire to be obedient, not an attitude of resentment or hatred for being told what is right. Cf. Gal. 4:16.

If you have not loved yourself, your fellowman, and your God as you ought, let this be the time you begin. The church of Christ loves you, and wants to help you to obey your God.

Keeping And Sharing The Faith

Gene A. Ellmore

Leaders of oppressed people have often used slogans to instill courage into their followers. Black leaders used the slogans: "We shall overcome" and "Keep the faith baby". God's people have been oppressed by the devil and his legions. And will overcome not only by keeping the faith, but by sharing the faith.

Every cause has a purpose or ideal. One can learn the purpose by asking the question, "Why does this cause exist?"

A small boy was asked the following questions to define the clarity of particular causes: (1) Why does the fire department exist? He answered: to put out fires." (1) Why does a doctor exist? He answered: "To make people well." (3) Why does the church exist? He hesitated, then answered: "to go to be good."

The small boy was correct to a point. A man must have faith (Heb. 11:6) and keep it (Rev. 2:10), but there is more: he must share the faith. Why? Because there is a cause — "to seek and save the lost" (Lk. 2:10).

The church must be as firm in its faith and as clear in its stated purpose as is the fire department or the doctor or the people who are in desperate need of its services will not call until it is too late.

There are certain essentials in sharing the faith. The first essential is to possess it. This means to be converted. Peter was converted. He gave up fishing to follow Jesus. But what else was involved? It is one thing to give up his heart to the Lord?

To be converted is to change. "Old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). By what means can we make this change? By following the word of the Lord which "is perfect, converting the soul" (Psa. 19:7).

Are you really converted? This means standing on the promises more than just sitting on the premises. For in reality, sitting in a metting house no more makes you a Christian than sitting in a chicken house makes you a chicken. Are you really a Christian or do you just wear the name? Have you just been baptized or have you been born again?

Is there a change in my life? How can I know if I am truly converted? The following passages of scripture will help each of us to test the reality or genuineness of our conversion: (1) The measure of a man's love—Lk. 14:16, 33; (2) The measure of a man's faith—Matt. 6:33; (3). The measure of a man's pratice— John 15:8. It all begins, continues and ends with a man's desire—2 Cor. 8:5.

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