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# THE BIBLE TEACHER

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# The Two Laws Of Pardon

Man is in sin and therefore he is lost. We are told that sin has entered the world, "and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12). Paul says that the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23). He said again that those who do the works of the flesh cannot enter the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21). We read in Revelation 21:8 that the wicked will be cast into the lake of fire which is the second death.

But man need not be lost, condemned, or cast into hell fire. Christ came to save man. Paul wrote concerning Christ, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Galatians 1:4). Peter declared, "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare 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." (1 Peter 2:21-24). Again we read, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (Romans 5:8, 9).

To enable man then to take advantage of Christ's sacrifice for his sins, then he has given two laws of pardon. These laws or commands are directed to man according to his state at the time. Pardon, remission of sins, or forgiveness is then given on the basis of one's obedience or compliance with the terms set forth for pardon. We will now notice those two laws of pardon.

The first law of pardon is directed toward the alien sinner or the non-Christian. Christ commanded the apostles, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15, 16). As the gospel was preached then men and women were called on to meet certain conditions or to obey a number of commands. The first such command was to believe in God, and to believe that Christ was the Son of God. The Hebrew writer said, "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." (Hebrews 11:6). Christ said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:36). The second command is repentance. Christ said that we must repent or perish. (Luke 13:3). Paul said to the people at Athens, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." (Acts 17:30). Repentance means that one must have a change of heart, that he must quit sinning. The third command is to confess Christ before men as the Son of God. Paul said, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:10). And finally, there is the command of baptism. After the people on the day of Pentecost had heard the gospel and had become believers, then they wanted to know what else they should do. The record goes on to say, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38). Saul was told to arise and be baptized that his sins might be washed away. (Acts 22:16). Peter said on another occasion, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 3:21). Also, it should be pointed out that baptism is a burial in water. (Acts 8:36-39; Colossians 2:12), that it puts one into Christ. (Romans 6:3, 4), and into the church. (1 Corinthians 12:13).

So now what do we have? We are told that when one meets the conditions that the Lord has set forth in his word then there is pardon, forgiveness, and salvation. These commands are no substitute for the grace and mercy of the Lord but rather they enable one to accept the salvation that the Lord has offered. Not only does Christ save one when he obeys these commands, but he adds him to his church. (Acts 2: 47), and bestows on him all spiritual blessings in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3).

The second law of pardon is directed toward the erring or unfaithful Christian. There are two kinds of sin. One is done unconsciously or unintentionally. This is where an individual is trying to serve the Lord as faithfully as he can, but in spite of that he makes mistakes and sins. Such sins are covered by the blood of Christ. (1 John 1:7). The socond type of sin is where one consciously and purposefully goes on and does those things that he knows is contrary to God's will. One then must repent of these sins if he is to be forgiven and hope one day to go home to heaven.

If one's sin is between him and a brother then he needs to repent and go and be reconciled to his brother. (Matthew 5:23, 24). If one's sin is between himself and his family or his friends, then he needs to repent of his sins and ask them to forgive him. (Matthew 18:15-17). But if his sin is of a public nature, then he needs to repent of his sin, confess his faults before the church, and ask the Lord and his people to forgive him.

In Acts 8:18-24 we read where Simon tried to buy the power of the Holy Ghost with money and as a result Peter rebuked him and asked that he repent and pray God that he might be forgiven. Then Simon asked Peter to pray for him. James said that the erring Christian should confess his "faults one to the other and pray one for another, that ye may be heald. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16). John wrote, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9). He goes on to say, "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 propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1, 2).

We can see then that the Lord has provided the sinner with one law of pardon and the erring Christian with another law of pardon. While the erring Christian need not be baptized again to be forgiven of his sins, neither can the alien sinner be forgiven of his sins through confessing his faults and praying for the forgiveness of his sins. What one does to become a child of God is one thing and what a child of God does to obtain forgiveness of his sins is something else. The Lord has provided forgiveness both for the alien sinner and for the erring Christian.

If you are not a Christian, we would like to encourage you to become one. You can do this by believing in Christ, by repenting of your sins, by confessing your faith in Christ, and by being baptized for the remission of your sins. Once you do that then the Lord will save you and add you to his church. We pray that you will.

If you are an erring Christian, we would like to encourage you to repent of your sins, confess your faults, and ask those you have sinned against for the forgiveness of your sins. The Lord then will accept you back and if you will remain faithful to him unto death then he will give you a crown of life, a home in heaven. (Revelation 2:10). We pray that you will comply with God's terms of pardon.



#### The Cause Of Division

This is an undeniable fact that division exist among the believers of Christ throughout the world today. Even though Jesus preached love and unity among all his followers, but yet they are divided in numerous sects and groups. I believe that none among us who believe in Christ as our Saviour wants to have division, rather we would all like to be united as one, but, yet we are divided. Aren't we? Our Lord prayed as he sat in the shadow of his death that all who would believe in him might be one in him as he and his Father are one. But the fact remains that we are still divided. So we ask, what is the cause of division? The cause of division is not what the Bible teaches, but what the Bible does not teach. If we had all believed and followed what the Bible said then we all would be united today in one church, one hope, one spirit, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. (Ephesians 4:3-6). Division, however, exists among the believers of Christ because many believe and follow things which are not taught in God's word. Certainly, we can all agree on what the Bible says but we all cannot agree on what the Bible does not teach. For example:

We all agree that Jesus was born and that he was born in the Bethlehem of Judaea. Also, we all agree that he was born to die on the cross for the sins of the world, because the Bible says so. But on the other hand, we all cannot agree that he was born on December 25th. Simply because the Bible nowhere teaches this. So we see that our disagreement is not on what the Bible teaches, but rather on what the Bible does not teach.

Likewise, Ephesians 5:19 reads: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Therefore, we all agree that we should

sing in worship praises and spiritual songs unto our God. But all of us do not agree on the subject of instrumental music. Because the New Testament of Christ, under which we live today, nowhere teaches that we should play an instrument of music while singing. But it says clearly that while singing we should make melody (music) in our hearts. So we all agree on singing, because the Bible teaches us to sing, but we disagree on playing instruments in worship because the Bible is silent on this. Remember too that we are living today under the New Testament of Christ and not under the Old Testament law.

Jesus, at Matthew 16:18 said: "I will build my church." Now, we all agree that Jesus built the church, and that the church is his body, and that the church belongs to him. But we all cannot agree that the church of Christ is Catholic or Protestant or one of the denominations. Because we do not read in the Bible about a Catholic church or a Protestant church, or about any denominational church. Moreover, we can all agree to call ourselves Christians, because the Bible says that the followers of Christ were called Christians. (Acts 11:26; 26:28). But, on the other hand, we all cannot agree to call ourselves Baptist, or Methodist, or Lutheran. Why? Because the Bible does not teach or say any thing about any of these.

The same reasoning could be given for any number of things through which we can clearly see that the cause of division among the believers of Christ today are the doctrines and the commandments of men, and not the teaching of God's word. As long as people would follow their "religious leaders" their "church doctrines" and their "creed books", they would remain divided, away from God's truth. The only way to unity among all the believers of Jesus is God's word. God's word, if believed and followed unadultrated, will never divide people but it will unite them, because it teaches the same thing to all people alike. (1Corinthians 14:33).

# True Happiness

#### Francis David

The world is full of problems. It is hard to find any man who has no problems. Each individual has his own problems. Every-

body wants to be happy and wants to be without problems. People do all kinds of things, just to make themselves happy and comfortable, but I am sure that having all good things in life whether it is a big bank balance, big house or all kinds of electronic things, man is not happy.

May be it is your desire to be rich, have a big house, big bank balance, etc. But have you ever heard that there are and were men upon this earth who got fed up with all of these things and they have confessed that after accumulating all wealth they have discovered nothing but problems for themselves. It is true that you cannot buy happiness by your worldly possessions.

Do you know why man is not happy? because he has not learned the way to be happy. He spends his time in accumulating worldly possessions and when he does that he does not pay any heed to godliness. He has no contentment. Let us see what apostle paul says: "But godlines with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food raiment, let us be therewith content but they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the 'Love of Money' is the root of all evil which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O Man of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (I Timothy 6:6-11). Because of lust of money many people are away from God and they are not happy. They do not have the real happiness. We know that Solomon was the wisest and the richest king ever lived upon this earth. words he says "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure and behold this also is vanity. I said of laughter 'it is mad: and of mirth, what doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom and to lay hold on folly till I might see what was that good for the sons of men which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made great works; I built me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits. I made me pools of water therewith the wood that brings forth trees.

got me servants and maidens and had servants born in my house: also. I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me. I gathered me also silver and gold and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. got me men singers and women singers and the delights of the sons of men as musical instruments and that of all sorts. soever mine eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy for my heart rejoiced in all my labour, and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought and on the labour that I had laboured to do and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirits and there was no profit under the sun" (Eccl. 2:1-11). Do you realise friend that the enjoyment of this world is vain. Some people always set their minds on worldly riches and they do not realise what will happen after death by not having their right relationship with God the Almighty. We should know that there is nothing better for a man than to have right relationship with his creator. Worldly enjoyment is temporary. We can enjoy it for certain period of time but we have to go from this world to give our account to God. Our creator should be remembered in due time. are still alive we can remember God. We can render our service to him. Our life is very short and even in this short life we are not concerned about spiritual matters. Our lives are tied together with worldly possessions. James, in his espistle, writes 'Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you; your riches are corrupted and your garments are motheasten. Your gold and silver is rusted and the rust of them shall be a witness against you and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers, who have reaped down your fields which is of vou kept by fraud, crieth and the cries: of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton: Ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter." (James 5:1-5). Matthew 6:20-21 reads as follows:

"BUT LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES IN HEAVEN WHERE NEITHER MOTH NOR RUST DOTH CORRUPT AND WHERE THIEVES DO NOT BREAK THROUGH NOR STEAL FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS THERE WILL YOUR HEART BE ALSO".

I will like to give an illustration here regarding temporary enjoyment. When a mouse (rat) is attracted by a piece of bread or cheese in a trap he tries to get it. There is a lust in his eyes. He gets into the trap and suddenly finds himself shut up in the trap. Now here we see that for a short while he can enjoy that piece of bread or cheese but he got trapped. This is what we call temporary enjoyment on this earth.

Friends if you are in search of true happiness I would suggest you to come to Jesus. The enjoyment and peace which you can have in Jesus you cannot find it in anything of this world. Jesus says "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself." (John 14:1-3). (Your soul is important. Your soul is much worth compared to all your wealth. Think about it! "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and loses his own soul (life)? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 10:26).

# Miracles Today?—Part 1

#### Steve Perry

Are there miracles today? Well it is according to what you call a miracle. When a baby is born and a fruit tree bears fruit, this is a miracle to some. A miracle set in force by God many years ago and being carried on today in accordance with God's law of nature. But are there miracles today that defy the law of nature such as the miracles performed by Jesus and the Apostles? Some today claim to have the baptism of the Holy Spirit just as the Apostles had and claim to possess the spiritual gifts just as did many of the first century Christians, thus enabling them to perform miracles as did Jesus and his Apostles.

The important thing is not what we think but what the Bible teaches. Let us go to the Bible and see if the baptism of the Holy.

Spirit is promised to Christians today and if the spiritual gifts mentioned in I Corinthians 12:8-10 are still in force today. Having answered these two questions, we will see whether or not there are miracles being performed today as they were performed by our Lord and his Apostles.

#### Holy Spirit Baptism

The first mention of the Holy Spirit baptism in the New Testament is found in Matthew 3:11. Here John the Baptist said of Jesus "he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." John was speaking to a large audience (vs. 5) which in part consisted of evil people (vs. 7). Some of the people in this audience would be baptized in the fire of hell after judgment (vs. 12) and others with the Holy Spirit. But specifically who would be baptized with which, is not here stated.

In John chapters 14-16. Jesus was conversing with the Apostles. (Mt. 26:20; Mk. 14:17.) He promised them the Holy Spirit (Comforter) which he said will "teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26.) and "will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13.) Now is this the baptism of the Holy Spirit Jesus is promising?

In Luke 24:49. Jesus said to the Apostles, "I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Is this promise of the Father the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Let us see.

As we turn to the first chapter in the book of Acts we note that Jesus is again speaking to the Apostles (note the antecedent of "them" in verse 4 is "the Apostles" in verse 2.). Jesus "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." (Acts 1:4, 5.) Here is the first mention of the baptism of the Holy Spirit since it was mentioned by John. (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; Mark 1:8; John 1:33). Jesus also said in Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive

power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you." So the "promise of my Father" which would endue the apostles "with power from on high" (Luke 24:49; John 16:13; 14:26.) Is the baptism of the Holy Spirit as Jesus here states. (Acts 1:5.) This promise was fulfilled. (Acts 2:1-4.) Notice that the Holy Spirit came upon the "Apostles" not "the hundred and twenty." (Antecedent of "they", Acts 2:1, is "eleven Apostles" Acts 1:26.)

The baptism of the Holy Spirit promised to the Apostles however should not be confused with the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to every Christian. (Acts 2:38; 5:32; Romans 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:8, etc.) Although the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian (1 Corinthians 6:19) and helps him with his prayers, etc. (Romans 8:26-27, Ephesians 6:18.), the baptism of the Holy Spirit was only promised to the Apostles. The baptism of the Holy Spirit not only enabled the Apostles to remember what Jesus had taught them and to be guided into all truth. (John 14:26; 16:13.) it also gave them the power to lay hands on people so that they (the people) could perform miracles also. No one could perform miracles as did Jesus except the Apostles or those on whom the Apostles laid their hands. Philip could perform miracles because the Apostles had laid their hands on him, (Acts 6:5-6). but could not give this power to others. (Acts 8:6, 12, 14, 15.) It is obvious then that people today cannot perform miracles as did Jesus and the Apostles since the baptism of the Holy Spirit was promised only to the Apostles and the Apostles are not alive and here to lay hands on people.

#### Spiritual Gifts

In 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 there is a list of nine spiritual gifts. The so-called miracle worker would claim these gifts are still in force today. However we are told in the next chapter, chapter 13, that these gifts would be done away with "when that which is perfect is some." (1 Cor. 13:8-10.) That which the perfect is obviously referring to the "perfect law of liberty". (James 1:25.), which is the Bible. When Christianity began there were no Bibles as we have them today. Preachers prophesied miraculously a message they had not read and learned. They travelled to foreign lands and preached in languages unknown to themselves, etc. All

this was for the spread of the gospel in its beginning but was done away with when the word of God was written and complied.

Some would say "that which is perfect" refers to Jesus. But surely Jesus would not be referred to as a "that", in the neuter gender. It should also be noted that this passage could not be referring to when Jesus comes again because Paul says that after prophesies, tongues, etc. cease, (as spiritual gifts) faith, hope, and charity would continue. (1 Cor. 13:13.). When Jesus comes again we will no longer need hope. (Rom. 8:24-25.) or faith. (Heb. 11:1.).

Surely we can see that if a person today claims to have the baptism of the Holy Spirit and claims to possess some or all of the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:8-10, he is claiming something that God would not have him claim. If he has any power at all, it is from Satan and not from God. (Matt. 7:22; II Cor. 11:13-15.).

In next months edition of this magazine, we will note in part 2 of this article some of the so-called proof texts in the Bible used by those who claim to be able to perform miracles as did Jesus and the Apostles.

# Can We Sit Quietly?

#### Gary C. Hampton

King Felix III proclaimed that all subjects are to be "cloaked with laughter, festivity, frivolity, fun and merrymaking, with only reasonable reserve or restraint, if any at all!" The Mobile Press Register further said the King "declared four days of misrule for the Port City." In describing Saturday night's activities the paper said "raucous revelry continued." As many of you know, Mardi Gras literally means "fat Tuesday." It is a final day of filling one's carnal appetites full enough to last through a forty day lent which follows.

In the March, 1979 issue of Catholic Digest, Angus J. Walker

says the "Sisters" told him, as a boy, that lent gave great opportunity to "earn points that would help us get into heaven."

What stand should a Christian take toward Mardi Gras and lent? Does the Bible give us any guidance in this matter?

Certainly a Christian could not let go of all restraint. Paul said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." (1 Corinthians 9:27.) Neither could we be a part of four days of "misrule," for the word really means disorder, anarchy, or lawlessness. Christians are to be subject to the law of the land. (Romans 13:1-7.) "Raucous" means "boisterously disorderly" according to Webster. "Revelry" is specifically condemned in Galatians 5:19-21. Nor can a Christian fill all of his carnal appetites, for "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Galatians 5:24.).

Lent is not mentioned in the Bible. While we should control earthly desires, such control should not be limited to a forty day period. Instead, we should daily be transformed into the kind of man God would want us to be by renewing our minds through studying his word. (Romans 12:1-2).

Can we enjoy the parades and sit quietly by about the rest? Scripture plainly says, "No." "Abstain from all appearance of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:22.) When writers from the local paper can see and report on the immorality in the streets, how can Christians fail to see such? It is because we choose to close our eyes?

# The Divine Challenge

#### Paul Epps

The dying words of a father or mother, husband or wife, remain in our memories of treasured words. The same principle is true regarding the parting words of our Saviour. Jesus gave these parting words, "Go teach all nations—go teach the gospel to every creature". (Mark 16:15-16).

The apostles carried out the parting words of a crucified and resurrected Saviour. They "went everywhere preaching the word" and nothing could stop them, not even governments, persecution, ridicule, cruel scourgings or even death. They did not intend to be stopped. They loved the One who first loved them. They loved the One who died for them. Within thirty years after the parting words of Jesus were spoken, the gospel had been carried to the ends of the Roman Empire. (Romans 10:18; Colosians 1:23).

Today, we are faced with the same parting words of Jesus, "Go teach all nations." But the question may be quite disturbing to us—Are we fulfilling those parting words? It is great to have as our motto, "Let us speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where it is silent." But are we speaking words of Jesus to our friends regarding their soul's salvation?

There are about twenty-two Scriptures that teach on the subject of the Lord's Supper and its importance, and we obey the teaching by assembling around the Table on the first day of the week. We have obyed the Scriptures that tell the importance of being baptized, buried with Christ in the watery tomb, to come forth a new creature, after having complied with the Scriptures that teach on faith, repentance, and confession of Christ as the Son of God. But what have we done with those parting words of the Master, "Go ye...and teach the gospel..."?

We need a burning passion to see men and women, boys and girls, saved from a burning hell. Christ and the early Christians had this burning passion. We also need spiritual wisdom. The wise man said, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life: and he that is wise winneth souls." (*Proverbs 11:30*). There is no greater enduring work than that of winning souls to Christ, because man's spirit never dies.

The new year is still young, and the parting words of Jesus should be deeply instilled in our hearts, "Go ye...and teach..." Each of us would do well to have the following as our 1983 resolution: (1) I will prepare a list of prospects for Christ (2) I will pray daily for each soul on my list until they are taught God's word. (3) I will try to teach them myself, or set up a study and go

with someone else. (4) I will do my best to win one lost soul to Christ in 1983. Let us begin now!

## **Eroding Convictions**

#### Maxie B. Boren

The following is an imaginary, brief interview of an average New Testament Christian of some years ago: Q-Do you believe the Bible is the inspired word of God and authoritative in all matters of religious belief and practice? A—Yes sir! There is no doubt in my mind about this. Q-Do you believe there is just one true church? A—Indeed I do, because that is what the New Testament plainly teaches! Q-Do you believe that there are saved persons in the denominational world? A-I can only believe what the Bible teaches, and it says the Lord added to the church such as were being saved. Acts 2:47. This is why I try so hard to teach people the truth, because Christ said "the truth shall make you free." John 8:32. Nothing else will suffice! O-How do you feel about the use of mechanical instruments of music? A-I believe them to be sinful and wrong in the worship of God because the New Testament does not authorize their use. To use them is to go beyond "what is written" and such is plainly condemned in the sacred Scriptures. Q-What is your view on social drinking. revelling, promiscuity, and such like? A-The Bible says that whosoever would be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy James 4:4. It also says "love not the world," I John of God. 2:15ff, "be not conformed to the world," Romans 12:2, abstain from every form of evil," I Thessalonians 5:22, and "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." I Peter 2:11. How much plainer would it have to be? Q-What kind of preaching do you think the church needs? A—The preaching should be straight forward, bold, and plain...definitive. There should be no doubt as to what is proclaimed, and it should be right from the Bible. "Thus saith the Lord" will resound from every pulpit of the true church!

A similar interview in our day and time might sound something like this: Q—Is the Bibie inspired and is it authoritative? A—Well, er, ah, I think we need to qualify what we mean here...er, ah, I do

think it contains much good...er, yes, truth, but I'm not sure that total truth is obtainable, and interpretations vary you know...and er, ah, I'm not so sure. Q-Do you think there is just one true church? A-Well, er, ah, I wouldn't want to go that far...people are offended when we preach that, you know. Q-Do you believe there are saved persons in all churches? A-Well, er, an, I know what the Bible teaches, but I prefer to think that as long as they are sincere, they' 11 be all right...regardless of-what II John 9 says. O-What do you think about using instruments of music in worship? A-Well, er, ah, I wouldn't necessarily advocate using them, er, ah, I'm not so sure it would hurt anything too much. O-What is your feeling on worldliness in the church? A-Well, now, everybody's got to sow some wild oats, haven't they? Ha. What harm is there is an occasional drink and a little fun now and then? After all, everybody's doing it. Q-What kind of preaching do you think the church needs? A-Well, sir, you've finally asked me one I am an expert on...what we need are short sermons, about 15 or 20 minutes at the most...and positive...yes sir, they must be positive...none of this negative preaching for me! Whatever we do, we don't want to offend anyone...why some of preaching we've had will drive people away, etc., etc., etc., etc., etc., etc., ad nauseam!

And we wonder why the church isn't growing!?

# The Crumbling Walls

#### John G. Shaver

Often in the course of the preaching and teaching of God's word, we neglect the books of the Old Testament. This of course, is a mistake. The Old Testament is replete with lessons and illustrations that are as applicable today as they were in the period of time in which they occurred. (Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:11). Such is the valuable lesson we may learn from the crumbling walls of Jericho. We understand, of course, that the walls fell by the power of God, but do we really understand the great power that was wrought and the profound lessons taught?

Picture, if you will, a well fortified city with thousands of men of war stationed around the walls ready to repulse any attack upon the city. These men as well armed and trained, the city is well provisioned for repelling an attack, and any attacking force would pay dearly for an attack on this city. The walls are not just logs or stacked stones. They are formidable, for houses were built upon them. (Josh. 2:15). Picture now the attacking force in the formulating of battle plans. Instructions must be given to the men of war, and plans are to be followed if victory is to be theirs.

How would you have approached this fortified city? What would be your plan of battle? Holy Writ divulges the formulation of the battle plans. (Josh. 6:3-5). This battle plan is unlike any other battle plan that we have ever examined, for it is from God; it is divine. It must be followed in all points, for the record says, "And the Lord said..." (Josh. 6:2). What more could one ask? Here we have a plan drawn by the finger of God-no mistakes, no room for error, perfect in every detail. The city of Jericho is under seige; none can go in and none can come Out. The battle plan is related to Joshua, he who must initiate the plan and motive the army of God to accomplish that which has been commanded. But there is one point in this plan that is out of the ordinary. have given into thine hand Jericho..." (Josh. 6:2). The city of Jericho has already been given into the hands of the children of Israel! In the thinking of some people of today, that was all there was to it. Why carry out the battle plan if the city has already been given? In their minds Jericho was an unconditional gift. Many of our own brethren seem to feel that the grace of God is unconditional, and that relieves us of any responsibility toward God. Of all the unholy, vile, and evil doctrines that have infiltrated the church of our Lord, this is one of the most ridiculous. city is to be given unconditionally, why the battle plan? Why did Joshua relate the plan to the people? Why did they carry it out to the minutest detail? Because they knew that God meant what he said, and said what he meant! Wouldn't it be wonderful if some among us would come to this realization, and return from their adherence to sin-filled denominational doctrines to the pure and undefiled word of God!

Joshua has received the plan of battle; he has at his disposal

the weapons of warfare that would be needed to take the city. This battle plan is not one that he, a mere man, would have implemented. He would have used catapults, battering rams, and other implements of war. But in all this Joshua didn't question God's plan one time. Why? Because he knew several things about the God he faithfully served. He was the merciful, loving, and majestic God of heaven. He was also the God that demanded and expected complete obedience from his subjects. Obedience such as that of Abraham. (Gen. 22:1-19), Noah (Gen. 6:9), and Moses (Heb. 8:5). The all-important factor that would place this city in their hands was complete obedience to the will of God. (Ecc. 12:13).

The divine plan is carried out. (Josh. 6:6-19). Joshua instructs the priests and the people in their respective duties. None questioned the plan of God as people question his plan of salvation today. None refused to obey as they refuse today. The great march started with seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the city ark of the covenant. They marched around the city once a day for six days, seven times on the seventh day. There was not one deviation from the divine plan. During the seven days of marching we see two types of people involved. Inside the city, were heathen, idolators, and unbelievers who would jeer, ridicule and deride those who were marching. Those outside of the city were marching onward despite the jeers, ridicule, taunts and derision, carrying out the plan of God.

Observe the results of the complete obedience to God's plan of battle (Josh. 6:20-27). The plan has been carried out to the letter—no deviation, no disregard, no addition or subtraction, not one instance of disobedience. The people had done their part; they had obeyed God explicitly. Then the great shout! The laughing, jeering, ridicule and taunting from within the walls sudden!y turned to screams of terror as the walls fell. They utterly destroyed the city. It was theirs. Why? Because they understood that God demanded obedience, and they obeyed. (Eccl. 12:13). It was also understood by them, that if they obeyed God, he would be faithful to his promise. (Heb. 6:18).

Let us examine some things that we may understand from this

important period of Israel's history. The walls fell, but not from natural causes. The Israelites made no attempt to take the walls themselves. The marching, the rams, horns, or the shouts didn't make the walls fall. They fell as a result of God's power. It was their confidence and faith in God that led them to obey him, and therefore, God rewarded them by being faithful and true to his promise (Heb. 11:6). Israel, led by Joshua, obyed God. Spiritual Israel, the church, led by Jesus Christ, must obey God. (Matt. 7:21-23; Heb. 5:8-9).

# No Ordinary Book

#### **Dalton Key**

The Bible is no ordinary book. It has been aptly described as the Book of books. As a product of the divine mind, it naturally shines with divine splendor. John Ruskin called the book of Job the world's greatest poem. Daniel Webster named the Sermon on the Mount as the greatest legal digest. Charles Dickens referred to the Lord's parable of the prodigal son as the greatest short story ever written. Truly this book, the Bible, stands as the masterpiece of the ages.

John Sheldon, one of England's leading historians during the 1650's, owned a library of over 8000 volumes and was regarded as one of his country's most learned men. When this renowned man of letters lay dying, he called for his friend, Archbishop Usher, to whom he confessed, "I have surveyed most of the learning that is among the sons of men, and my study is filled with books and manuscripts on various subjects. But at present, I cannot recollect any passages out of all my books and papers whereon I can rest my soul, save this from the sacred Scriptures: 'The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.' (Titus 2:11). The Bible is no ordinary book.

And is not the Bible's longevity a glowing tribute to its rare and invaluable worth? Issac Taylor spoke of the Bible as a

deathless book, having survived three great dangers: the negligence of its friends; the false systems built upon it; and the warfare of those who hated it. And hate it men have. Many a maddened mortal has sought the destruction of this Book of books, yet all such attempts have been feeble at best and failures at last. Voltaire once disparagingly declared the Bible to be an exploded book and predicted its extinction within 25 years. And yet more Bibles were published during those next 25 years than in any such period before them. In fact, the very room from which Voltaire issued this prophecy was soon after filled from floor to ceiling with Bibles enroute to Switzerland. Robert Ingersoll once remarked that within ten years the Bible would not be read, and yet Ingersoll has been dead for almost a century and the Bible remains the world's best seller. As the poet has penned, "Hammer away, ye hostile hands; Your hammers break: God's anvil stands."

We concur with David, who wrote, "My heart standeth in awe of thy word". (Psalm 119:161). Of a truth, the Bible is no ordinary book.

# The Church Must Not Fellowship Denominations

#### George Reed

The Lord's church is not a denomination. The bride of Christ does not have a worldly head or headquarters. She does not call her preachers by unscriptural titles. Reverend (Ps. 111:9), Father (Mt. 23:9), Pastor. (Eph. 4:11). The church the Lord purchased with his blood. (Acts 20:28) has no written creed book. Her doctrine is found in the Bible. Let all those who would add to the pages of the New Testament beware of Matthew 15:13. "But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up."

The church is the exclusive body of saved people. A few years ago, a friend of mine was attending a so-called Christian

college on the West Coast. The president of the college (this was during a youth lectureship) was welcoming all the young people into their midst. He asked if there were any Baptists in the audience, and asked for a sign of hands. A number of hands went up. He did the same with the Lutherans, Methodists, etc. Then he told all those who were members of the church of Christ to clap for their Christian brothers. This was truly a sad scene. If sinners are saved outside the Lord's church, they are saved without his blood (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25; Rev. 1:5, 6). If one is saved outside the Lord's body, then he is saved in a sinful condition. Baptism puts us into the Lord's body. (I Cor. 12:13). Yet, baptism is for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Therefore, if one is saved without the church, he is saved without baptism. And if he's saved without baptism, he's saved without the Lord's church. If not, why not? If one is saved outside the Lord's church, then Christ died in vain. It was Christ's purpose to die and establish the church. (Mt. 16:16, 19; Mk. 9:1; Acts 2; I Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20). There can be no doubt about it: salvation is in the body. (Eph. 5:23), and all those outside the body (church, Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18), are lost. (I Jn. 5:19).

What do we mean when we say, "the church cannot fellow-ship denominations?" We mean that the Lord's church cannot, in any way, shape, or form help them in spreading their false doctrine. But members of the church must not only abstain from helping them, but reprove them. Paul told the Christians in the first century to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them". (Eph. 5:11). Brethren that partake in denominational cake sales, garage sales, car washes, etc., promote the doctrines of demons.

A big question among us today is, "Can the church support denominations via James Dobson?" How in the world my preaching brethren and elders can open their pulpits up to a member of the Nazarene church is beyond my comprehension. There is no way under heaven that the New Testament sanctions the Nazarene church. Do not we have men capable of teaching on the structure of the home? And yet brethren will take the Lord's money and hire a denominational man to do the Lord's work. When will some of my brethren wake up?

Would we ever think of having Billy Graham or Oral Roberts in as a guest speaker? If not, why can we sponsor a denominational film? The world sees it this way: "If they can show his movies, they can support his preaching. If not, why not?" It looks like they have a pretty sound argument. My Bible still tells. me not to be "unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity?" (II Cor. 6:14). John warned the brethren that "whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works". (II Jn. 9:11). Brethren, we not only open up our houses, we give them the entire church building! It's a shame! It's sad to say, but I think we will eventually see James Dobson, and other denominational preachers in our pulpits. After all, some of our very own brethren are appearing on denominational church growth seminars.

God has given the church the responsibility to preach the truth. (I Tim. 3:15), edify one another. (Heb. 10:24, 25), and to care for each other. (I Cor. 16:1, 2; Gal. 6:10). The Lord's church is the *only* one that worships in spirit and truth. (Jn. 4:24). The church sings. (Eph. 5:19), prays. (Acts 2:42), gives. (I Cor. 16:1, 2), observes the Lord's supper. (I Cor. 11:23-29), and preaches the gospel. (Acts 20:7) as is taught in the New Testament. (I Pet. 4:11). Since we cannot go beyond the things that are written. (I Cor. 4:6), don't you think it's time we clean up our act?

#### "Where There Is No Vision"

#### Raymond Elliott

"Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; But he that keepeth the law, happy is he". (Proverbs 29:18). The usual connotation of the term "vision" in this verse coincides with a definition given by Webster: "The ability to perceive something not actually visible, as through mental acuteness or keen foresight

(a project made possible by one man's vision); force or power of imagination (a statesman of great vision)." The understanding of the word "vision" colours one's interpretation of this verse. Thus many suggest that when the leaders of a congregation have vision, projects and programs will be introduced into the work; otherwise, where there is a lack of such, the church will suffer greatly. This may in fact be true in principle; however, this is not the correct meaning of the passage under consideration. Let us examine carefully the scriptural understanding of this verse.

The New International Version renders the first part of Proverbs 29:18 thus: "Where there is this revelation..." "Where there is no prophecy..." The Revised Standard Version: Douay Version: "When prophecy shall fail..." The Hebrew word for vision as used in this verse is haza. It is defined in the Theological Wordbooks of the Old Testament. (I, 634) as follows: "The revelatory vision granted by God to chosen messengers, i.e. prophets. Such apparantly was the experience of Balaam the son of Beor. (Numbers 24:4, 16). This vision of the prophet took place sometimes in the waking state, but also in the spirit". (Num. 24:2). Sometimes the experience of seeing a revelatory dream is designated by haza and hazen (Aram). (See Dan. 2:26, 4; 5:9):" Thus, a vision was one of the ways by which God revealed his will to the prophets. We learn this fact in Hebrews 1:1: "God, having of Old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in diverse manners..." The source of their messages was the Spirit of God: "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". (II Peter 1:21).

"The revelation of ancient prophecy was not continuous and uninterrupted, but came in flashes; between them were intervals of darkness. Sometimes those intervals were long and most distressing to a people that had learnt to draw its chief lessons from Divine oracles. "The following passages bear out this fact. I Samuel 3:1: "And the word of Jehovah was precious [rare] in those days; there was no frequent [Heb., widely spread] vision." II Chronicles 15:3: "Now for a long season Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law." Lamentations 2:9: "Yea, her prophets find no vision from

Jehovah." Ezekiel 7:26: "Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumor shall be upon rumor; and they shall seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders." There were 400 years of silence from the closing of the Old Testament until the opening of the New Testament when God did not give any revelatory messages to his people. The absence of such was like the vanishing of the cloud and pillar of fire from the children of Ierael. They were lost without divine guidance.

In the absence of divine revelation, false prophets often deceived the people. "Then Jehovah said unto me, the prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake I unto them: they prophesy unto you a lying vision, and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their own heart". (Jeremaiah 14:14; see also Jeremiah 23:16).

Today, God has not left us without a guide, to grope about in darkness; rather divine light has fallen from heaven to men in the form of the Holy Scriptures. God speaks to us in this era through his Son Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1, 2). We are to "hear ye him". (Matthew 17:5). When Christ left earth to ascend back to the Father, Jehovah God sent another Comforter to guide the apostles into all the truth. (John 14:26; 16:13). Paul declared that what he received, he received by revelation. (Ephesians 3:3-5). The Spirit revealed all the truth to the apostles and inspired men, enabling them to speak that "which the Spirit teacheth". (I Corinthians 2:10-13). These inspired Holy Scriptures once delivered, guide us unto all good works. (II Timothy 3:16, 17; Jude 3). It is the duty therefore of Christians to study the Sacred Writings, to circulate them throughout the world, and to teach them to their children and the unlearned.

Let us also observe the end result when there is no revelation from God, or when men refuse to follow his revealed word: "The people perisheth," or "The people cast off restraint." It was said of Ahaz that "he had dealt wantonly [or cast away restraint] in Judah, and trespassed sore against Jehovah," wherefore God brought Judah low. (II Chronicles 28:19). The prophet Hosea

informs us that the people of God in his days were destroyed because of the lack of knowledge of God; that they committed various sins because they hearkened not to the commands of the Lord. (Hosea 4:1-6). In Paul's time, the heathen world "refused to have God in their knowledge." As a consequence, "God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting". (Romans 1:28-32). The fatal effect of the absence of divine revelation is confusion, disorder, rebellion; the people are uncontrolled, and they fall into grievous excesses, which nothing but high principles can restrain. This explains the reason why so much violence, immorality, divorce, strife, and all manner of sin exists today; the vast majority of people desire not to be guided by the Holy Scriptures. They could care less as to what God might have to say on such matters.

"But he that keepeth the law, happy is he." The man who is truly blessed is one whose "delight is in the law of Jehovah; and on his law doth he meditate day and night". (Psalm 1:1, 2). "He that giveth heed unto the word shall find good: And whosoever trusteth in Jehovah, happy is he". (Proverbs 16:20). The doer of the word shall truly be blessed. (James 1:25). Those who keep the law of the Lord shall be blessed eternally. (Revelation 22:7, 14).

# Standard Of Unity

#### Ray Hawk

In the past few years, men have tried different approaches to establish unity between those who accept Jesus as the Christ. In this article I want to examine four of these.

#### Traditions

Some believe we may have unity if we accept the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. The tradition stretches from the second century down to our present time. Catholics believe this sacred tradition has been handed down by the church fathers. These traditions are held to be binding upon men. Have they brought unity, even among Catholics?

What was bound by the church fathers in Catholicism several hundred years ago is no longer accepted as law. Traditions

change as the whims of men modify. Unity under this system is not based upon traditions, per se, but on what the hierarchy thinks is best at the time. This is exemplified in the Mormon Church when the United States passed a law against polygamy. A revelation was suddenly received by the hierarchy that Mormons were to stop practicing this tradition. These changes and a discarding of long accepted traditions, supposedly handed down by God, creates malcontent and division rather than producing unity.

#### Emotionalism

The claim was made in the late 60s that the Holy Spirit was baptizing people in different beliefs in Christianity and thereby breaking down denominational walls and creating unity. For a short period it appeared that this claim was based upon truth. People from different denominations, even from the churches of Christ, were meeting and worshipping together. They all had one thing in common: the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

However, as time passed, the true nature of this movement began to show its divisive head. Instead of creating unity, this movement produced more confussion. Some groups claimed that they had the true baptism whereas others did not. Since each man could claim to be God's spokesman, division was created rather than unity's being formed. Every single leader among these many Pentecostal or charismatic movements preached and practiced something that was contrary to the Bible.

Again, what this approach did was no different from the traditional one. It is based upon the whims of men and has as a base of authority what men desire.

#### Atheism

It may seem strange to bring in atheism as an approach to bring together those who believe that Jesus is the Christ. There is an element of atheism among those who say they believe Jesus is the Christ. One major denomination, a few years ago, called it "Christian Atheism."

"Christian Atheism" is a result of traditionalism and emotionalism. When men throw off God's authority and base their religion upon man's authority, the end result is skepticism, humanism, and atheism. When men finally quit pretending that they are following God and recognize they are following what is right in their own eyes, there is a kind of unity among them. They are united in following their own ways. But, this unity does not produce peace, for one man can never sit still for another man's authority. He must exercise his own, for atheism is built, not upon love (I Cor. 13:4-8), but upon self-centeredness!.

#### Scriptures

The only real unity that can bring peace to its adherents is the word of God. Why have the scriptures not brought unity among churches of Christ? Perhaps our approach in the past few years has not been correct as we came to the scriptures. Our failure to have unity is not the fault of God's word, but due to our own short comings. Our attitudes have not always been right, but the scriptures are always right. We need to come to the word of God, not to prove something, but to allow it to prove us. We have the right standard for unity, we are just having a difficult time applying it!

# . Golden Sincerity

#### Glenn Colley

The kiss of Judas has long been infamous for open, blatant hypocrisy. The account is painted in vivid colours in Matt. 26:47-50, Mark 14:43-46, and in Luke 22:47-48. Look at Matthew's account:

And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign saying, whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

False affection is universally disgusting. The mere thought of someone taking a sweet word or gesture and perverting it for their own interests leaves a bad taste in our mouths.

Take, for instance, the comfort for those sorrowing over the loss of a son or daughter. How needed and kind are the words of

reassurance and understanding during this dismal time. How would you feel if the very ones that murdered your dear son came to comfort you? That is what happened in Genesis 37. Because Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other children, (Gen. 37:3), some of his sons developed a serious hatred for Joseph. Even most children are familiar with the account. They sold him into slavery without regard to whether he lived or died. They then took the precious multi-coloured coat, dipped it in animal blood, and carried it to Jacob. This is what they told him:

"This we have found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces."

Now, here is the icing on the cake: "And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him." They not only produced the deep sorrow, they hypocritically poured hollow, meaningless comfort on their grieving father!!

What must God think when our worship is coupled with a nonchalant attitude? When we join our voices with others of the Lord's church, do we really worship? Do we sing with grace in our hearts, (Col. 3:16), or with emptiness in our heads? Are we praising or posing? Should we sing "Standing on the Promises," or "Sitting on the premises?"

When someone is leading a prayer, keep in mind that he is leading us, and not substituting for us. Our responsibility is to pray with him.

Our hearts and minds are specifically regulated in regard to the Lord's supper:

"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

Worship is not a posture of the body, but an attitude of the soul. Let us make certain that when we place our worship and praise before the throne of the Omnipotent, it is made of golden sincerity, and not of glittering ritualism.

"God knoweth your hearts..." (Luke 16:15).

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