

# **EXHORTATIONS**

## **Vol 1**

*by*

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## INTRODUCTION

To exhort is said to be an effort to urge, advise, or to warn earnestly. We might also add that it is a desire to proclaim, make known, and to encourage an adherence to God's will.

The New Testament preachers and writers were constantly exhorting. After Peter and the Apostles had preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost, the record says, "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." (Acts 2:40). On Paul's first missionary journey, and after he and the other brethren had returned to some of the places they had visited earlier, we read, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22). To Timothy, Paul wrote, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (2 Timothy 4:2). On another occasion, he said to Timothy, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." (1 Timothy 4:13).

The idea here, then, seems to be that of reminding, emphasizing, pleading, encouraging, persuading, and attempting to bring the hearer to the point of accepting and obeying the truth of God. It is an effort to get action, to promote response, to prompt obedience, and to challenge one and all to be faithful to the Lord.

In these articles, many of which appeared originally in our monthly magazine, *The Bible Teacher*, in New Delhi, India, a concerted effort is made to exhort the reader in the acceptance of the truths of the Bible. Nothing new is

presented, no attempt is made to alarm or to shock or to scare one into submission. There is no thought of threatening or forcing one to obey the Lord. Rather, we beg and plead for you to come to Jesus, to learn his will, to obey the gospel, and to be faithful to him so that you might be saved in this world and in the world to come. To this end, and to this end alone, do we exhort you.

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## **SOME WHO ARE NOT CHRISTIANS**

All are not Christians who claim to be Christians. This may sound strange but it is true nevertheless. Even more astonishing is the fact that millions and millions around the world fit into this category. These people may be honest and sincere, but honestly and sincerely mistaken. Let us therefore notice some of them.

1. One is not a Christian just because he was born of parents who believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The Bible teaches that it is the individual who obeys the Lord that is saved. Christ said, "He that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). Therefore there are many people who have never obeyed the Lord but are living in the so-called Christian community and are counted as Christians on the basis that they had parents who believed in Christ. But this is not according to the Bible.

2. One is not a Christian just because he was sprinkled as an infant. Worlds of people are under the false impression that this made them Christians. But please keep in mind that the gospel is directed to adults and not to infants. Furthermore, the Bible teaches that one must be old enough to hear the gospel himself (Romans 10:17), old enough to believe it (Hebrews 11:6), old enough to repent of his sins (Acts 17:30), old enough to confess with his mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Matthew 10:32), and old enough to be baptized for the remission of his sins. (Acts 2:38). Now would an infant be able to comply with these terms of pardon? If not, then it would be impossible for an infant to become a Christian. In the next place, sprinkling is not baptism. Rather, baptism is a burial. (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3, 4) That

means that those people who think they are Christian today, because they were sprinkled as infants, are not Christians. They have never obeyed the Lord. Certainly they have never been scripturally baptized. The sprinkling of infants in no where taught in the Bible. It is an invention of men.

3. One is not a Christian because he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. One must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God to be a Christian (John 14:1), but this alone is not enough. Mental acceptance of Christ alone is dead. (James 2:17-24). A saving faith is the kind that will lead one to obey the teaching of Christ. Read all of the cases of conversion in the book of Acts and see if this is not true. Often times these individuals will isolate certain verses of scripture and try to show that all that is necessary is faith, but what is he going to do with all of the other verses that teach obedience? (Matthew 7:21-23; Hebrews 5:8, 9). Even the devils believe that Jesus is God's Son. (James 2:19).

4. One is not a Christian because he is a member of some church. The majority are members of churches that cannot be found in the Bible. Do you think for a second that in the following of Christ he will lead you into some man-made organization? Christ said that he would build his church, and that he did. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2). Furthermore, he is the saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23); and there is but one. (Ephesians 4:4). When an individual obeys Christ, the Lord saves him and adds him to his church. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47).

5. One is not a Christian because he is living a good moral life. Many people are good morally. Some of them are even better than those who claim to be the most religious. But this alone does not make a Christian. Cornelius was a good moral man but he was lost, and he was not saved until he heard the gospel and obeyed it. (Acts 10).

If these are not Christians, then who is? Those who believe in Christ, obey the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15, 16;

Acts 2:38), are added to the church of the Lord (Acts 2:47), wear the name of Christ (Acts 11:26), and live the Christian life. (Revelation 2:10).

## ADULTERATION

When I was younger I often heard preachers talk about the pure unadulterated gospel of Christ. I don't think I ever appreciated the meaning of that expression until I came to this part of the world and was faced with adulterated food. Here in India, for example, food adulteration is one of the major problems of the country. It seems that just about everyone is effected by it. Those who are responsible for it are naturally trying to earn more money through this procedure. Those who buy adulterated food are simply trying to survive but this makes it difficult to do so.

A survey that has just been made known to the public through the newspapers says, "Bihar tops the list in food adulteration in the country, according to a recent survey conducted by the Central Committee for food Standards. The Committee recently examined 104,225 samples of which 30,175 were found adulterated." The different states ranged from 66.7 per cent to 19.9 per cent food adulteration. Here in Delhi, the capital of the country, adulteration stood at 37 per cent.

Not long ago it was announced that a large quantity of tea in Calcutta had been found to be adulterated. The tea had a mixture of manure, sawdust, and other impurities in it. A cartoon showed a milk man explaining to his customer that although water had been added as usual to the milk, he would not go up on the price of the milk in spite of the fact that prices

were going up on everything else.

Grains of all kinds, oils, dry goods, and just about every other edible thing may be adulterated when you go to buy it. For instance vegetables are constantly kept dripping wet not just to keep them fresh, but so they will weigh more. Melons often have water pumped into them for the same reason. And on it goes. Everyone wants pure food, but all are suspicious of everything they buy and figure that it has had some impurity mixed with it. This adulteration is not only expensive but it can be dangerous to one's health, depending on what has been mixed. But what can be done about this? Very little, it seems. At least this seems to be the plight of the consumer. How would you like to live in a place where in all probability all of the food you bought was polluted or adulterated?

As serious as food adulteration may be, spiritual adulteration is just as prevalent and even more dangerous. It is odd, but true nevertheless, that while most people are very much concerned about adulterated food, and are constantly trying to avoid its use, it seems that the majority prefer the adulterated gospel over the pure gospel. But why? Because they have come to accept the adulterated as the pure and genuine in religious matters. Neither are they aware of the consequences of such acceptance.

Those who are accustomed to pure food prefer that over the adulterated anytime and all of the time. Likewise, those who know what the pure truth is like will never be content with anything else. Who would want an adulterated gospel when he already has the pure gospel? Who would want to be a member of some man-made church when he is already a member of Christ's church? Who would want to wear some man's name when he wears the name of Christ? And finally, who wants to go to hell when he can go to heaven?

We are reminded of Christ's statement, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32).

What was he saying? He was saying that only the truth can make one free. He is talking about the pure truth, that which is free from the opinions, ideas, and teachings of men. Again, Christ said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." My friends, Christ is the one and only way to heaven. Man cannot come up with some substitute, some philosophy, some way that can match the Lord's way. Who would want to do that anyway? Why bother with a substitute when you can have the genuine? Why settle for the imitation when you can have the true and real thing? Try the pure and unadulterated brand and you'll never be satisfied again with the other.

## **WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?**

Not all people who claim to be Christians are Christians. This is seen in the religious world itself to those who have their eyes open. Surely, there are not many beliefs, many ways to be saved, many churches, many ways to worship, many doctrines, many ways to heaven, etc. There is but one belief, one way to be saved, one church, one way to worship, one doctrine, and one way to heaven. So it means that all who accept that one way are Christians and those who do not are not Christians even though they claim to be.

Who is a Christian? This is a very good question. It is a Bible question and therefore has a Bible answer. We will now point out a number of truths from the Bible that will identify the Christian.

1. A Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ. How could one be a Christian if he did not follow Christ? Listen: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let

him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24). "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27).

2. A Christian is a believer in Jesus Christ. How could one be a Christian if he did not believe in Christ? Christ said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." (John 14:1). "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8:24).

3. A Christian is one who has repented of his sins. Could one be a Christian if he refuses to repent? Christ himself said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3). "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9).

4. A Christian is one who has confessed Christ as the Son of God. Could one be a Christian if he refused to confess that Christ is God's Son? Christ said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32).

5. A Christian is one who has been baptized by immersion for the remission of his sins. Could one be a Christian if he failed to obey the Lord? "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one 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). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). Also read Acts 8:26-39 and Romans 6:3, 4.

6. A Christian is one who has been baptized into Christ. Could one be a Christian outside Christ? "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3).



7. A Christian is one who has been baptized into the church. Could one be a Christian outside the church? "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13). The spiritual body is the church. (Colossians 1:18).

8. A Christian is one who has been saved and added to the Lord's church. Could one be a Christian if the Lord had not added him to his church? "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47).

9. A Christian is one who wears the name of Christ. Could one be a Christian if he did not wear the Lord's name? "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Acts 11:26).

10. A Christian is one who is living for Christ. Could one be a Christian and not live for the Lord? "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). Also read I Corinthians 15:58 and I Peter 1:5-11.

Many additional points could be added to the foregoing to tell you who a Christian is and to explain what he is. But certainly one cannot be a Christian until he becomes a Christian. You are urged to consider these truths closely and examine yourself to see if you are a Christian according to God's word. If you are not, then you should become one.

## **WHAT ABOUT HAVING WORKERS UNDER US?**

India is famous for having so many preachers, many of whom serve as "in-charges" and "key men." These "in-charges" and "key men" may have several preachers working under them. That is, they are responsible for them, pay them and so on. Or perhaps I should say that the preachers under them are responsible to those that they serve under.

These "in-charges" and "key men" have powerful positions. They can hire and fire as they choose. They handle the money and can keep back part of it for themselves if they so desire. They can force their workers to do what they want them to do because they hold their money over their heads and can threaten to cut them off if they do not follow orders. Those who work under them pay respect to them outwardly but inwardly they despise them.

These "in-charges" usually get their funds from some foreign source. They have been entrusted with the money to see that each worker is paid. As far as the work itself is concerned, they do very little. They only dictate what others are to do and then take credit for it. They have little respect for those who work under them.

I have heard these men talk and brag about having so many men working under them. I have had letters from them saying that they need more money for more workers. I have told these people, and I am saying the same here, that they are serving in the unscriptural capacity of a bishop.

We do not need to be serving under another preacher and we do not need to have preachers under us. In doing this we only exalt men or allow them to exalt us. Rather, we are to

serve together under the leadership of the local church. When this is practised many of our problems will be automatically removed.

## **MISSED OPPORTUNITIES**

Today an elderly gentleman attended our worship service during which time one of the local preachers presented an excellent lesson on the judgement. But as the visitor departed he wanted to know why we were emphasizing fear, punishment, destruction, and so on, in our meetings instead of love. He said that our teaching was negative when it should be positive. I told him that we try to preach the Bible and since it emphasizes both the positive and the negative, we do the same. He replied that all of the negative statements of the New Testament only had to do with missed opportunities and that hell itself will amount to no more than this.

It is sad that there are many number of old men like this wandering around over the world, having nothing more to do than to find fault with those who are trying to teach God's word and do right, and they have little to offer but some cranky theory of their own. Here this man was rebuking us for our supposed negative teaching and yet all he had to offer was a negative spirit, correction, and condemnation. "Judge not that thou be not judged," Jesus said. (Matthew 7:1). Surely this kind of thing was what Jesus was talking about.

This man is not the only one who doesn't like to be reminded of the negative side of the scriptures. Some of my brethren feel the same. It is true that negative teaching of the scripture can be dealt on too much and can therefore do harm, but it is definitely there and cannot be ignored without

likewise doing damage. Jesus said, for example, in speaking of the city that would reject God's word, "Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city." (Matthew 10:15). Such people would not only be those who missed the opportunity to be saved, but would be those who plainly rejected it. The Bible says that those of Sodom and Gomorrah will be lost in hell, but in the day of judgment even they will be considered for mercy over those who have turned away from it. Therefore if the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, in all of their wickedness, will be punished, how much the more shall the people have to suffer who reject the apostles and their teaching? The same would apply to those of our time.

Surely hell will be much more than a group of people who are there as a result of having missed opportunities. If hell were no more than this then all it would amount to would be mental anguish, regret for having not obeyed the Lord. But according to the scriptures the wicked will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8), which is described as a place of everlasting punishment. (Matthew 25:46). It is also described as being a place where one is tormented in flames. (Luke 16:24). Hell then is a real place, for real people, who have failed to obey God. This is pretty negative, but it is the truth just the same.

## **THE MANY FACETS OF TIME**

Have you ever stopped to think about the many facets of time? If you haven't try it. It will frighten you, revive you, and humble you. It will cause you to open your eyes to many things.

1. Time never stops. It never stands still. There is *no way* to stop it.

2. Time cannot even be slowed up. It seems to be passing so fast that perhaps we would like to slow it down sometime, but we can't. What about those who would like to have birthdays to come around less often?

3. Time cannot be speeded up. Sometimes young people in particular want to speed time up. They want to grow up quickly so they can do things they cannot do now. They are anxious for tomorrow to come, for next week, for next year. They can hardly wait for a party, for a birthday, etc.

4. Time cannot be wished away. There are those who wish they had never been born, wish that a certain bad period of their life would go away, but wishing won't make time vanish.

5. Time cannot be called back. How many people would give all they have if they could just live their lives over? They would like to call a day, a week, or some period of their life back so they might correct it, but they cannot.

6. Time that is gone is gone forever. There is a second, a minute, an hour, a day, a week, a month, a year. While it is here it is ours but once it is gone it is gone forever. This is why we must use it wisely while it is ours.

7. Time always keeps moving forward. It doesn't wait on anyone. It is ever in motion. We must move with it.

8. Time is life. It is what life is all about. Life is measured by the marking of time.

9. Time is valuable. What we have in life, our hope for the future, everything, depends on how we use time.

10. Time is no respecter of persons. We all have the same amount of time in an hour, day, week, month, year. *How* we use it is what makes the difference.

11. Time is temporary. It is a short span, with eternity on either side of it.

12. Time is for our use. It has been given for that purpose and we must use it wisely.

13. Time can be wasted. We can be lazy and misuse it, thus making the time allotted to us completely worthless.

14. Time can save us or damn us. We will be judged by the way we use it. If we use it wisely to obey the Lord and to serve him, then we will be saved. If we fail to take advantage of the time we have, and the opportunities that are ours, then we will be lost.

15. Time is today. Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow is yet to come. Yesterday cannot be called back and tomorrow may never come. Today—the present moment—is all of time that we ever really possess.

16. Time can be measured. By seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, a life time.

17. Time passes swiftly. It is like a vapour. A moment is here and it is gone, replaced by another. Life is so short and we need to make every minute of it count for the Lord.

18. Time points to eternity. All of us are moving with time in that direction.

19. Time will pass. Time as we know it will eventually pass away. After that only eternity will remain. If we have used our time well then we can live forevermore with the Lord.

How do you view time? What does it mean to you? How are you using it? Are you satisfied with the way you are using it? Are you making it count for good? Even as you think about this, time is moving. Hurry, don't let it get away before you properly use it.

## **AT PEACE DURING THE STORM**

The story is told of a farmer who put a large ad in the big city newspaper for help on his farm. Only one young man of about eighteen years responded. The farmer was at least happy to have this one response. He asked the boy if he knew how to milk a cow, and he said no. Then he asked if he knew how to plough a straight furrow, but again the answer was no. When asked if he had had experience in sowing seed, the answer once more was negative. In desperation the farmer said, "Then what do you know?" The young man innocently answered, "I know how to sleep peacefully through a storm."

Over the next several days the young man learned his duties and kept busy. Then one night there was a great storm. The farmer feared for the crops, for the livestock, for everything he had. He rushed to the young man's room for help but found him sleeping peacefully. He thought that if he tried to wake him and to instruct him as to what to do it would be too late to save his farm from damage. So in desperation he rushed out to the barn to check on the animals, but he found them all safe in their stables. Then he ran on to the hay stacks but all of them were in good shape with canvasses even draped over them and tied securely to the ground all the way around each one. Next he went to see about the fences but they had all been repaired and firmly braced. From there he went to look at the crops and he observed that they had been freshly plowed, with drainage ditches dug at the right places so that a heavy rain would not damage any of the plants. And finally, he checked on the various pieces of farm machinery but they were all parked safely in their respective sheds. He then remembered how the young man had told him in the

beginning that he could sleep peacefully during a storm. He now understood what he had meant.

The lesson in this story is simple. This young man could sleep peacefully through the storm because he had prepared adequately for it. What about you? Can you sleep peacefully through the storms of life? Will you be able to withstand the temptations you will be confronted with? Will you be able to overcome Satan? Have you prepared for the storm?

Now is the time to work to get everything in order. Today is the day of salvation. Remember, it will be too late to prepare when the storms of life come upon you. If you are ready for them, however, you have nothing to fear and you will be able to face them, and the Lord himself, with full confidence that all is well with your soul.

## **THE UNGRATEFUL BEGGAR**

The story is told of a traveler in India. It so happened that as he was walking along he came to a jungle area. On spotting a nice shade tree, he decided to lie down to rest for awhile. A beggar came along and asked this traveler for some help. Having seven coins tied up in a handkerchief, he had pity on the beggar, unwrapped the coins and gave him six of them. We would all agree that the traveler was more than kind in giving away six of the coins and keeping only one for himself. Surely he was thinking more of this poor man's needs than of his own. But this is not the end of the story. The beggar went a distance and waited for the traveler to go to sleep. Then he slipped back and took the seventh coin. We would cry out our disapproval of the beggar's actions. Instead of being thankful for the six coins he received, he was not satisfied until he had



taken the seventh one also. How terrible! How sad, we would say, that anyone would be so ungrateful. Surely we would not be able to find a kind word to say about the beggar in this case.

While we would condemn the beggar for being such an ingrate, are we not like the beggar in the things we do? God has been so good and gracious to us. He has given us six days a week to work and to take care of all of our needs. Surely this ought to be enough. As for himself, he has kept back only one day. This is the day that he has set aside for us to worship him on. (Acts 20:7). But what do we do? We take that day also as a work day, a day to visit, a day of recreation, or a day to do whatever we want to do. Often times we do not even give a part of it to him. We don't even take the time to worship. After the Lord has done so much for us it is hard to believe that we would do Him this way, but we do nevertheless. If he were asking for six days and giving us only one, such actions might be a little more understandable, but this not the case. How long will we conduct ourselves in such a disgraceful manner?

But that is not all. Our Father gives us all the things that we have. (James 1:17). He blesses us spiritually but he also blesses us materially. (Eph. 1:3; Matt. 6). We don't deserve so much but he continues to shower His blessings upon us anyway. Now what does He ask in return? Ninety percent of what we earn? No. Fifty percent? No. Twenty percent? No. He doesn't even state ten percent. Rather, he leaves it up to us to decide what we will give Him. The only guideline He has given is that we should give as we have been proposed, as we have purposed in our hearts, and that it should be done cheerfully. (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7). But what do we do in response to this? We not only keep our part but the Lord's part also. We use it all on ourselves and then offer excuse to the Lord that we would give something to Him but it is all used up. Then if that were not enough, we go on and ask the Lord to continue to bless us and actually expect Him to do so. If this is

not mockery, then what would be? How ungrateful can people be?

May God help us to realize that we re-inact the story of the traveler and the beggar again. We can see the beggar's sin; we need now to see ours. Surely we can do better than this. Let's allow this story to give us determination to do better. We can and we must if we are going to be the kind of people that God wants us to be. Let's be grateful for what has been given to us and not rob our Father of that which belongs to *Him*.

## **THE BIBLE HEART**

Most people base their religion on their feelings. In order to emphasize this they often pat their chest and say, "I know that I am a child of God because I can feel it right here in my heart." This is sad because it indicates how ignorant they are of the Bible heart, and if they are wrong concerning this then they can be wrong about other things, including their religion.

The Bible heart is not the physical heart or the blood pump that is within one's chest, but rather it is the mind of man. We know this by the various scripture references that speak of the heart. Please notice some of them:

1. "Blessed are the pure in heart." (Matthew 5:8).
2. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Luke 12:34).
3. "Wherefore think ye evil in your heart?" (Matthew 9:4).
4. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." (Matthew 15:19).

5. "Because of the hardness of your heart." (Matthew 19:8).

6. "Let not your heart be troubled." (John 14:6).

7. "They were pricked in their heart." (Acts 2:37).

8. "If thou believest with all thine heart." (Acts 8:37).

9. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." (Romans 10:10).

10. "According as he purposeth in his heart." (2 Corinthians 9:7).

11. "That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith." (Ephesians 3:17).

12. The word of God "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12).

Now, can the physical heart think, reason, believe, purpose, and be troubled? Of course not. It has a very important role to play in pumping blood through the body to make it possible for one to live. But the spiritual heart has an even greater work to perform. One is to believe with all of his heart, to obey God from the heart, to remain pure in heart, but these commands involve the seat of one's thoughts, one's reasoning ability, one's mental capacities, the mind itself. It is only in the mind that one is able to believe, think, and reason.

One can know in his heart that he is a child of God only when he has heard the pure truth, is able to understand it and believe it, and has obeyed it from the heart. (Romans 10:17; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:17, 18). Saul thought he was right in persecuting Christians (Acts 26:9), but he found out that he was opposing God, and only when he repented and obeyed God was he accepted of the Lord. (Acts 9; Acts 22:16).

Don't ever confuse the physical heart with the spiritual heart, and don't be guilty of relying only on your feelings as an indication of your salvation. You could also be mistaken, as Saul was. However, you will never go wrong by letting God's

word be your guide in all that you say and do. Why not compare your belief and the things that you have done religiously with God's word? If you are right then it will tell you so. If you are wrong, you can make the necessary corrections. It is always better to be on the safe side.

## **WE BELIEVE TOO**

A few days ago we were studying with a young man concerning the plan of salvation. He was under the impression that faith only saves and had already picked out about twenty verses of scripture to support what he thought to be the truth. We assured him that we believed all of these verses and any others that he might compile on the subject. We explained again and again that we accept the fact that one must believe in order to be saved, that salvation is by faith, etc. At the same time we asked him if he would now accept those verses that teach that one must repent and be baptized in order to be saved. But he said that the verses that he had given did not mention baptism. We came back to show that neither did they mention repentance. He quickly responded by saying that repentance was understood. And the same with baptism, we said.

On Mark 16:16 he quickly beat the trail to the latter part of the verse where, "Baptism is not mentioned." Then we patiently told him that the first part tells what one must do to be saved and the last part tells one how to be lost. If one wants to be lost then all he has to do is to refuse to believe, but more is required of those who want to be saved. Christ says that in this case one must believe and be baptised. Again belief, or faith, is there so there is no problem on that. But the question

is, can one be saved on the basis of faith only without going on to obey the commands of the Lord? Certainly Mark 16:16 shows that there is more involved than faith only. Actually, if one really believes the Lord he will do what the Lord has said, and this includes repentance and baptism. Read also Acts 2:38.

The question is not, do we believe? We do. Rather, the question is, will you obey? If you believe, you will.

## **WHO SHOULD GO?**

We have been asking who will go to one place or another in an effort to get members of the church to think in terms of taking the gospel to various mission fields in India. We are already getting some response with different ones saying that they would like to go. However, they are writing to us as though we should send them with the necessary support. Therefore, this article is an attempt to clear up the matter of support before too many conclude that we will send them.

Please understand that we have no support to give any of you. We know of no foreign brethren who can give you any support. Neither will we be trying to contact our brethren in America, Canada, or anywhere else to give you support to preach the gospel where you presently live or anywhere else in India. There must come a time when you are willing to do something for yourself, for your country, and above all, for the Lord. Why should you always look for someone else to do it? There is no faith or sacrifices in this kind of thing. If you go it will have to be for the reason that you want to go, that you can find a way to support yourself, and that you are doing it

because you love the Lord and the souls of men. Any other reason for going will meet with failure.

If India is ever to be evangelized it is gong to have to be done on the basis that there are those who are so converted to the Lord that they will rise up and find means and ways to take the gospel to every part of this country. It is not, "Who will send me?" but, "I will go." It is not, "I must have foreign support," but rather, "I don't want such support." One must be willing to say, "With the Lord (not with the dollar or rupee) I can do all things."

The thing that is wrong right now is that too much foreign support has been brought into this country in the name of Christ. Too many want their foreign brethren to give but they themselves give little or nothing. There are worlds of people here who are willing for their foreign brethren to sacrifice, and even demand that they do it, but they are not willing to sacrifice anything themselves. Brethren, men are making merchandise out of the preaching of the gospel. It becomes merely a job, a way to make a living; with very little results in actual conversions. In other words, foreign support is doing much more harm than good. When Indian brethren become converted to the Lord and begin to preach the gospel for souls instead of a salary, then the gospel will begin to move across this country as never before.

We are not opposed to support, but let it come from brethren or else get out and go to work to earn your living, and preach as you have the opportunity. Be your own boss. Make your own living. Preach the gospel without having to answer to any man or to report on every baptism. Wake up, brethren.

If you are unable to move to another area under the circumstances that I have described then perhaps you should stay at home for the time being. If your family obligations are such that you cannot go, then that means you *can't* go. If you are in bad health, you would not be worth much to move

into a new area to try to begin a new work. If the work where you are is small and struggling to get established, then maybe you are needed too much where you are to think about leaving. And likewise, if you are a new Christian and you are not well grounded in the truth, then you are not prepared to go.

In thinking about going to a new area to begin the Lord's work, you should certainly not think that to go will be a means of escaping from problems. You should not go expecting it to be easy or that you will be praised and honored for your efforts. And certainly you shouldn't go to merely find something to do.

If you are going to the mission field you should think long about it and pray much over it. You should learn as much about the place as possible, make any contacts you can, think about what you will do to make a living while there, consider the move for yourself and your family and how you will get there. You should have some plan in mind on what you will do once you arrive. You should have some leadership ability. And certainly you should know the truth, how to teach it to others, and you should be practicing it in your own life.

These are things that you need to take into consideration before going anywhere. Maybe you shouldn't go. Maybe you are not ready to go. But if you are, and you are determined to go, and if your going is governed by the suggestions in this article, then no doubt you will do the job that needs to be done. As you consider these things, we will pray for you. We will also be happy to supply you with literature as we have it available. But above all, God will surely bless you and see you through.

## **A VISION FOR SOUL**

How many of us are aware of the fact that we have a soul? Do we know what it is? Do we know its value? Do we know that it is lost? If so, what are we doing to save it and to prepare it to meet God?

If we are concerned about our soul we will be concerned about the souls of others. We must love the souls of all. This includes those of our family, relatives, and friends. It also includes those with whom we work, do business, and live. What about those that we go to school with, the people around us, over the city, and throughout the country? What about Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, and all other religious people? What about the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, the city and village people, and so on. Don't they have souls? Shouldn't we love them too?

The Christian must have a vision for souls. He must be concerned about souls so much so that he will do all that he can to reach them, teach them, and convert them to Christ. This requires a great deal of love. That kind of love can be seen in his life, heard in his speech, and demonstrated by the kind of results he gets from his work.

Those who have no vision for souls are empty and hypocritical. They are deceiving themselves but not those around them. They are losing because they are not concerned about the lost. They are religious but their religion is unprofitable.

Christ loved the souls of men so much that he gave himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world. That means that he



**gave himself for you and me. What are we giving him in return? Are we giving him our souls? Are we giving him the souls of others? What kind of vision do we have?**

## **EXAMINE YOURSELF**

- 1. Do you believe in God?**
- 2. Do you believe the Bible to be the word of God?**
- 3. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?**
- 4. Do you believe that you have a soul?**
- 5. Do you believe that there is a devil?**
- 6. Do you believe in a resurrection?**
- 7. Do you believe that there will be a final judgement?**
- 8. Do you believe in heaven?**
- 9. Do you believe in hell?**
- 10. Do you believe that all must spend eternity somewhere?**

## **BACK TO THE BIBLE**

**Man has long since departed from the Bible. This is very evident from what we see in the religious world itself. There is division and confusion everywhere. As a result, many have given up and quit altogether. But what is wrong with the Bible? There is nothing wrong with the Bible. Man's present condition does not come from following the Bible, but as a consequence of having left it. Therefore the solution is to be found in returning to the Bible.**

**The Bible is God's word revealed to man. God has**

spoken through his Son, Jesus Christ. (Matthew 17:5; Hebrews 1:1, 2) and that word has been recorded in written form that we might read it and believe it. (John 20:30, 31). It is all given by the inspiration of God. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). It is perfect. (James 1:25). It is the truth. (John 17:17). It is to be preached to all. (2 Timothy 4:2; Matthew 28:19, 20). It makes one free. (John 8:32). It will judge one and all. (John 12:48). It will live and abide forever. (1 Peter 1:23).

This book, God's word, will not deceive us, divide us, and lead us in the wrong direction. Rather, if believed and obeyed, it will save us and lead us as one to eternal life. No wonder the Psalmist David wrote, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and unto my path." (Psalms 119:105). He also wrote, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." (Psalms 1:1, 2).

We of the churches of Christ are what we are because we have obeyed the word of God as revealed in the Bible and we plead with one and all everywhere to return to the Bible for all that they do and say in the name of religion. We plead with you to do the same. Join with us as we speak where the Bible speaks and we are silent where it is silent. Take your stand with us as we do Bible things in Bible ways and wear Bible names only. This will not make you a member of your church but it will make you a member of Christ's church. It will mean then that we are united as Christians only.

To be more specific, let us urge you to return to the Bible for the Lord's church. Strange as it may seem, but when we turn to the scriptures we do not read of the denominations that we are so familiar with today, but rather we read of but one church and that one belongs to Christ. Christ promised to build it (Matthew 16:18), and it was built as promised. (Acts

2). Christ died for it (Ephesians 5:25), shed his blood to purchase it (Acts 20:28), he is the saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23), he is the head of it (Colossians 1:18), and he adds the saved to it. (Acts 2:47). There is but one (Ephesians 4:4), and it wears the Lord's name. (Romans 16:16).

We plead with you to return to the Bible for the plan of salvation. According to the scriptures one must hear the truth (Romans 10:17), believe in God (Hebrews 11:6), repent of his sins (Acts 17:30), confess Christ (Matthew 10:32), and be baptized for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38). Then one is saved and the Lord adds him to his church. (Acts 2:47).

We encourage you to return to the Bible for the Lord's name. Man-made names and titles are generally used today, but in the scriptures we read where those who obeyed God were Christians and Christians only. (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). And as a body, they were the body of Christ or the church of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 16:16).

We beg of you to return to the Bible for the Lord's way of worship. There is but one way. (John 4:24). We are to assemble each first day of the week (Acts 20:7), to pray (Acts 2:42), to study (2 Timothy 2:15), to sing (Ephesians 5:19), to partake of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:28), and to give. (1 Corinthians 16:2). The Lord's way cannot be improved on or changed for the better.

In these things, and in all things, we encourage you to go back to the Bible for a thus saith the Lord. Only then can you be right in religion. Only then will we be united. Surely the Lord's way is the one and only way.

## WHY CHRIST DIED

Christ died. This is a fact supported by both the Bible and secular history. With this in mind we want to make a number of observations.

1. Christ's death was no ordinary death. Many people have lived and many have died. The sacred writer says that all men must die. (Hebrews 9:27). What is so special, then about the death of Christ? Did he not live and die like many others have? Yes, but his life was different and the purpose for which he died was different. He lived a sinless life and he died to save man from his sins. (2 Corinthians 5:21).

2. Christ's death was spoken of in prophecy. The prophet Isaiah said, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:4-6).

3. Christ spoke of his own death. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 10:10). He goes on to show that he was speaking of the temple of his body and of his death and resurrection.

4. Christ was sent of God to die. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16).

5. Christ was obedient unto death. It was the will of his Father that he should die. "And being found in the fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:8).

6. Christ died without sin. Speaking of Christ, "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." (1 John 3:5).

7. Christ died for sinners. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). "Here is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10).

8. Christ died that we might live. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." (1 John 4:9).

9. Christ died on the cross. This was the most cruel death possible. Apart from the physical pain that accompanied it, it was made even more painful for Christ in that he was placed between two thieves as though he were no more than a criminal himself. Read Matthew 27. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2).

10. Christ died to take away the old law. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Colossians 2:14).

11. Christ died to give a new law or testament. (Matthew 26:28). "In that he said, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." (Hebrews 8:13).

12. Christ died for the church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." (Ephesians 5:23).

13. Christ died that we might have hope. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:3).

14. Christ died, but after his burial, he was resurrected and then ascended to his Father in heaven. (Matthew 28:6; Acts 1:10). Therefore Christ assured all mankind of a resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15). Truly there is victory in Christ. (1 John 5:4, 5).

These are some of the reasons why Christ died. As you can see, he did not die just to be dying. Rather he died for a purpose. He died for you and for me. He died for all mankind. He died that we might not be lost but that we might be saved. He died that we might have a better way of life. He died, above all, that we might be eternally saved.

The Lord has shown his love for you by giving himself for that you might live. It is up to you now to return his love and obey his will. Christ said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15).

## **WHY YOU SHOULD BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD**

If you do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God then this material is directed to you. There are many proofs and evidences to suggest that he was God's Son in every sense of the word and here are a number of reasons as to why you should accept him as such.

1. Jesus was with God in the beginning. In Genesis 1:26 we read: "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness." John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He goes on to show that this was Christ.

2. Jesus was spoken of in prophecy. In Isaiah 53 the prophet gives a description of Christ and the purpose of his

coming. Then in Acts 8:32-35 Philip finds the eunuch reading from Isaiah 53 and then begins at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus. This indicates that Isaiah was prophesying of him. There are many other such prophecies in the old Testament.

3. Jesus was born of a Virgin. This means that Jesus had no earthly father. Rather, God was his Father. Leaving his Father in heaven, he took upon himself the likeness of man by humbling himself and being born of a virgin, which was a miraculous birth. This was also a fulfilment of a prophecy concerning him. (Matthew 1:18-25; Isaiah 7:14).

4. Jesus was a perfect man. He was the only man to ever live a perfect life or to live without sin. Peter declares that we should follow in the steps of Christ, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." (1 Peter 2:22). It was because of his sinless life that he was able to die for sinners, and thus to bring hope to the world. (1 John 3:5).

5. Jesus came to fulfil the prophecies. "Think not that I am to destroy the law, or prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." (Matthew 5:17).

6. Jesus performed many miracles. He healed the sick, made the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, and raised the dead. He healed all manner of disease, fed the multitudes, and walked on the water. We are told that "many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did." (John 2:23).

7. Jesus was acknowledged as the Son of God by his disciples. Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16). Many other such confessions could be given.

8. Jesus was confessed to be the Son of God by devils. "And devils also came out of many, crying and saying; Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ." (Luke 4:47).

9. Jesus is quoted by others as saying he was the Son of God. "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world. Thou blasphemest: because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:36).

10. Jesus acknowledged that he was the Son of God. He raised Lazarus from the dead in order that he might be glorified as the Son of God. (John 11:4).

11. Jesus was acknowledged by God as being his Son. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." (Matthew 17:5).

12. Jesus was resurrected from the dead. Paul said, "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1:4).

13. Jesus can give life to those who believe: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:31).

14. Jesus is coming again. "I will come again." (John 14:3).

15. Jesus is likewise acknowledged as the Son of God in secular history.

16. Jesus lives today and will live forever. (Hebrews 13:8).

Space will not permit us to go on with further evidences and proofs both in the Bible and outside the Bible. But you are asked to consider what has been given.

Do you believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God? If so, confess him (Matthew 10:32), and obey him that he might be your saviour and that through him you might have the hope of eternal life. (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Colossians 1:27).



## **HOW MUCH DO YOU GIVE TO THE LORD?**

Most Christians want to put something into the Sunday collection, but more often than not it is not more than a few cents or a dollar or two. If one is not able to give more than this, then this is commendable. In some cases, those who give that much are giving far more than ten per cent of their earnings. With the majority, sad to say, such giving is but mockery. Such people should be putting in much more each week. Because they do not they end up in robbing God by withholding that which belongs to him.

The Bible clearly teaches that Christians are to give on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2), and that they are to give as they have been prospered. Likewise, they are to give cheerfully, as they have purposed in their hearts, and not grudgingly or of necessity. (2 Corinthians 9:7).

The Christian receives according to what he puts in. The reason many find Christianity to be dull, boring, and unrewarding is because they never put any thing into it. Those who have invested time, energy, and money have found that the rewards and blessings are great indeed. Try it and see if it does not work.

## **IS THE CHURCH IMPORTANT?**

1. Christ built one. (Matthew 16:18).
2. It belongs to him. (Matthew 16:18).
3. He loved it. (Ephesians 5:25).
4. He shed his blood for it. (Acts 20:28).
5. He died for it. (Ephesians 5:25).
6. He is the saviour of it. (Ephesians 5:23).

7. He adds the saved to it. (Acts 2:47).
8. He is the head of it. (Colossians 1:18).
9. It wears his name. (Romans 16:16).
10. It is his bride. (Romanis 7:4).
11. It is his body. (1 Corinthians 12:27).
12. He is coming back for it. (Ephesians 5:27).

All of this would make the church important. If not, what would?

## **CHRISTIAN LITERATURE**

Until only recently most literature here in Asia was denominational and the book stores across the continent carried a full stock of the same. Even then "Christian" Book Stores have been few and far between. Not only that, but most of their materials have been very expensive. So where has that left the Christian? With absolutely nothing in most cases or else dependent on literature that is full of error, provided he is able to get it and can afford it.

The Lord's church locally is still young. It is also relatively small in number. Because of this a literature program cannot be supported by Christians to the point that it can survive. This is partially true because it is not possible to adequately publicise the books that are available.

For this eason, here in Singapore and Malaysia we have been concentrating on Christian literature for the past three years and we shall continue to do so in the future. So far we have printed more than thirty books by a number of authors on a variety of subjects. Although we have a price list for them, we have mostly sent them out over the country free of charge. We would like to be in a situation where all who receive them

could help with both printing costs and the postage required to send them out, but again because of the foregoing reasons we have ended up in giving most of them away. We feel that it is urgent that we get these books into circulation that they may be of help to the church now rather than to wait until we receive orders for them.

We are trying to send these books to all preachers and teachers in particular. We are also willing to send them to any faithful Christian that may want them. And finally, we are sending them to those who are interested in knowing God's will whether they are members of the church or not. Of course, they are in the English language and we are therefore attempting to send them to those who can use them in this language. We hope to do more printing in the other languages as time goes by.

We would make several special requests of you. First, if you are getting these materials, please realize that it has cost a great deal of money to print them and to send them to you, not to mention the work that was done to make them available to you, and therefore you should be thankful that someone cared enough to send them and with this in mind you should treasure them, properly use them, and share them with others. In the second place, we would be grateful if you would express your appreciation for them by sending a contribution to help with the printing and postage. You don't have to do this, and you may not be able to do so, but if you can help it will be deeply appreciated. And third, if you know of those that you feel that they should get one or more of these books then if you'll send us their name and address we'll try to send them some of this literature.

Please keep in mind that we are not printing books just to be printing books. Neither are we sending them out just to get rid of them. Rather, we are trying to be of service to the Lord's church in Singapore and Malaysia and to provide

literature for those who may not as yet be Christians. We want to provide materials that will teach, convict, convert, help the Christian to grow, and to provide him with tools with which to teach others in his own area. Therefore, every book that is mailed out is done so with the prayer that it will accomplish the job it is being sent to do.

We want to encourage you not only to use these materials for your own personal study, but also these books can be used to conduct classes in homes, schools and in your home congregation. If you will use them properly you'll find that they can render a great service to you and to others.

We are great believers in Christian literature and therefore we are not only working through these materials but also through Bible correspondence course, tracts, etc. We believe that through using such we can reach and help hundreds and thousands of people that we could never reach and help otherwise. We further believe that through the printed page the cause of Christ can be firmly established and strengthened throughout this great country. Please join with us in these efforts.

## **WAITING ON THE LORD**

Among those who claim to be believers in Christ there is always someone talking about waiting on the Lord. To be more exact, there are many who offer this as their reason for not being more active. They say that they are waiting on the Lord to reveal his will to them, to tell them what to do, so they will know the right courses to take. They mean by this that the Lord is going to speak to them or in some way reveal his will to them separate and apart from his word. If you should be one of

these, and you may well be, since we have many readers, and this is the usual concept of the majority here in Asia as to how the Lord works, but if you are one of them then you are waiting in vain. Instead of you waiting on the Lord he is waiting on you to do his will. You remember how Saul was waiting but the preacher came to him and said, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). Also, as you read through the story of Saul's conversion in Acts 9 and 22 you will note that it was not Christ who told him what to do but a preacher of the gospel. Of course in this case the Lord did appear to him but this was in the time of miracles and prior to the time that the New Testament was given in written form.

The God of heaven has given his will to man and through this he reveals his teaching and gives instructions as to what he wants man to do. It is not necessary for any man to wait for the Lord to reveal his will to them because the only will that he has for man has already been revealed. He has not promised to, and neither will he, speak directly or in some other way to any man. He will not speak directly or indirectly, that is, apart from his word, to make known or to convey any message of any kind to any human being anywhere in this world. To do that would make him a respecter of persons, unless he dealt with every man in the same manner, and since he is no respecter of persons then you can be certain that he is not involved in such a practice. (Acts 10:34, 35).

In the next place, why should the Lord have to speak to any man? Why should man have to wait on the Lord to speak to him? What would be the purpose of it? He has already given his word to the world and he has asked his disciples to go to all world, to all nations, and even to every creature to preach its message. (Mark 16:15, 16; Matthew 28:19, 20). On reading the word, or hearing it taught, faith is produced (John 20:30, 31; Romans 10:10), and then it is up to the individual to either

accept it or to reject it.

Why would the Lord reveal his will to man and then find it necessary to speak directly to man concerning his will for him? As pointed out, that would make him a respecter of persons if he spoke to you in that manner and didn't speak to me in the same way. But should he find it necessary to do that then what was the purpose of giving his word if it is not complete and final? Also, why should any man have to wait on the Lord and why would the Lord make any human being wait if it is up to the Lord to speak directly to him?

Next, the question arises if that means that the Lord cannot speak to man. He cannot speak anything that would be contrary to his will, if so that would make him a liar, and the Bible says on the one hand that his word is truth (John 17:17), that it is complete and perfect (James 1:25), and that it completely furnishes man to every good work (2 Timothy 3:16, 17), and on the other hand we are told that God cannot lie. (Hebrews 6:8). Therefore, he cannot and will not speak directly to you about any matter. If you are waiting for him to do so then you are wasting your time.

The foregoing does not mean that God is dead, that he cannot see or hear, or that he is not with us. Neither does it mean that he does not lead us or guide us. He does so but through his word and by his providence. He is with us and in us, hears us and answers our prayers if they are according to his will and for our good. You remember that Paul revealed that all things work together for our good if we love the Lord and are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28).

The important thing to remember, therefore, is that we should hear God's will for us as revealed through his word, act on it, and be assured that the Lord will take care of the rest. Don't worry about having to wait on the Lord. He is more than aware of your needs, has already provided for them, and will more than adequately care for you. Are you waiting on the

Lord? If so, don't wait any longer— he is waiting on you. Will you not hear him, arise and obey his teaching by believing in Christ (John 3:16), repenting of your sins (Acts 17:30), confessing your faith in Christ (Matthew 10:32), and being baptized (buried in the water) for the remission of your sins?(Acts 2:38). If you will the Lord will save you and add you to his church. (Acts 2:41, 47). Regardless of who you are or where you are, the Lord invites you to obey him. You may be a preacher, teacher, and great sinner, but God's word applies to one and all since all have sinned and therefore all stand in need of salvation.

Even as a Christian you will not have to wait on the Lord. Instead he has revealed his will so the Christian will know his duty and can therefore go forth to discharge it. Again, don't wait on the Lord because he is waiting on you to act. Right now! May God bless you as you so do.

## **“WHAT HAS THE CHURCH EVER DONE FOR ME?”**

Recently while visiting in another country I was told that a local member of the church had asked, “What has the church ever done for me?”, when he was told that the church could not give him any support. This particular man had translated some and also had served as the song leader in the worship services. He just couldn't stand to think about doing things like this without getting something. It was pointed out that if he was paid for song leading, for instance, that the Bible teachers would no doubt ask that they be paid for their work, and so on with the other members.

When this man asked the question, “What has the church ever done for me?”, he was reminded of the fact that

the church had done a great deal for him. Because of the church he was taught the truth, saved, had the privilege of prayer, had many brothers and sisters in Christ around the world, received numerous spiritual blessings in Christ, enjoyed a clean richer life, had the hope of eternal life, and on and on with so many other blessings. With this in mind then how could he have ever concluded that the church had never done anything for him? Yet, with all of this, he could not see that he had been helped or benefitted by being a member of the Lord's church. All he could see was the possibility at financial gain and if there was none forthcoming then he felt that he had been cheated as a church member.

It is so sad for an individual to look on the church, and to be a member of the church, only with the thought in mind of bettering himself with material gain. When one so reasons he always loses because his motives are wrong. It is true that some of these do manage in one way or the other to gain materially by being in the church, but in this case that is all they will get from it. If one is genuine in his motives, though, then his attitude will not be, "What can the church do for me?", but "What can I do for the church?" In this context one will be blessed, not because he sought ways to receive, but because of his giving. (Matthew 6:33).

The Lord's church is not in the business of buying people, hiring people, paying people, and so on. It does support some men and it does help those who are in need, but not everybody. It can't support or give to everyone, not even to all of those who perhaps deserve it. The church has funds to work with based on the amount its members give. (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). The more that is given then the more it has to do with. The less given then less it can give. Even then it has to be selective.

Why can't we see the blessings that are ours as a result of being a member of the Lord's church? We can if we are



aware of what the church is, what its work is, how we became a part of it, our role as a member, and what God is doing for us as a member. Of course even this is dependent on our sincerity and genuine conversion.

Here in Asia we are faced with this very problem. Members of the church are constantly writing to us asking for support. As long as there is one foreigner here no doubt they will continue to reason that the church represents foreign money and therefore they want to get their share. Those so reason have not been converted to Christ but are thinking in their own selfish interests. Even if there were no foreigners here connected with the church, no doubt there would still be those who would be trying to get support out of the local leaders. They represent those who would actually stoop low enough to use religion for this purpose.

Do you remember in the New Testament of reading about Paul and his work? At times he did receive some support from various congregations, but at other times he worked with his own hands to earn his living. He knew that the brethren were poor, that they didn't have much, and what they did have they needed that to help those who were in greater need than himself, and so he hated to have to take anything from them. Every Christian should feel this way and if that were the case many of our problems would automatically disappear. Paul told the church at Corinth that he had taken support from other churches to preach to them freely. (2 Corinthians 11:7, 8). On another occasion he spoke of working with his own hands. (1 Corinthians 4:12). As to the work he did, in Acts 18:3 we read where in Corinth he dwelt with Aquila and Pricilla because he was of the same craft as they were "and wrought, for by their occupation they were tentmakers." Now if Paul could work with his own hands, and engage in a profession such as tentmaking, then why can't Christians do the same today? For sure, his tentmaking, and making a living with his own

hands, did not hinder his work for the Lord. Even when the brethren helped him, they certainly did not give very much because they didn't have much to give.

If your attitude is, as a member of the church, that the church has never helped you or you have never been blessed as a result of being a member of the church and that because you haven't been receiving any support from the church or you are not getting as much as you would like to have, then you are spiritually weak, blind, and probably dead as a Christian, that is, if you ever were a Christian.

Should you never receive a cent from the church, and you should hope and pray that it will never be necessary for the church to have to give you something, but should this be the case, even the church has already done more for you than you can ever do for the church. To understand this, however, you must understand the church as it is set forth in God's word.

How do you personally feel about the church? What does it mean to you? Regardless of how you answer these questions you are telling everyone by the attitude that you express and by the amount of work that you are doing for it.

## **DOES GOD DIRECTLY PUNISH MAN TODAY?**

Whenever some natural tragedy, such as a flood, tornado, earthquake, famine, or disease hits man, many conclude that this is God's way of punishing the wicked. If so, what would he do with all the rest? Is he a respecter of persons in sending his wrath on some while sparing others who are no better, if as good? Does he go about striking man here and

there at his pleasure?

Some people in the days of Christ thought that certain ones who had been the victims of disaster had been made to pay for their evil deeds. The scripture records it like this: "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:1-5). The Lord in both of these cases is clearly showing that these people had not sinned any more than the others of their day, so therefore it could not be said that they had been punished because of their sins. He is also saying that since these people were no greater sinners than the others, then why would it be supposed that they would be singled out from all the rest to be punished while the others were allowed to go free? The conclusion was thus reached that the sins of these people had othing directly to do with suffering and death. But the Lord turned to his listeners and said, "But, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." He is saying that all of you will eventually perish unless you leave your sins. He is not saying that they will perish physically because of their sins, but nevertheless they will perish spiritually if they continue in their sins. He is not saying that some will be punished here and there in one way or the other, but he is saying that all of them will be destroyed unless they repent. The cases of example with which he dealt had to do with this world but his point of emphasis concerns eternal punishment.

The Lord said, "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the

unjust." (Matthew 5:45). This means then, in terms of nature that the Lord blesses all with the sun, rain, and so on. This can also be turned around to say that famines, floods, earthquakes, and other natural disasters come upon both the good and the bad. Certainly the Lord has not taken nature to use as a common tool of punishment against the wicked. With such massive damage and destruction it would be most difficult to single out the wicked and to punish them alone while by-passing the righteous.

The fact is that in any given area of the world where climatic conditions reach a certain point the result will be a flood, tornado, earthquake, or some other calamity, with the natural results following. If man is there, whether good or bad, he must suffer the consequence. It is not that he has been singled out for punishment. There have been many stories of both good and evil people suffering much because of these natural disorders. There have been many other stories of both the godly and ungodly escaping almost certain death in spite of these things. Surely the Lord could hit the ones he wanted to hit and leave unharmed the ones he wanted to by-pass if he intended to punish the wicked directly in a physical way.

But, although God may not be sending these physical disorders directly as a means to punish man, still many lessons may be derived from such experiences. In the first place, they should remind one and all that God is still in control of things and that he is very powerful. He may not be working directly through the law of nature to send punishment upon man, but nevertheless he is still behind nature. He made the world and all things therein. This includes the rivers, the sun, the rain, fire, and all else. These things are controlled through the law of nature to the extent that they are controlled. But God is the one who put it all together and set it into operation. Hence, these floods, tornados, etc., should bring man back to his senses and help not only to realize that God is still in charge of

things but also that he is in need of God and His help. Think of the many people who have no time for God when things are going well. They even curse him, mock him, and go as low in sin as possible. But when the forces of nature hit a violent blow, they are ready to bow down before God and to ask for his mercy and help. If man could keep this posture, just think of what it could do for him. Perhaps some do, and therefore even out of tragedy many are helped. Not only is God looked to more by one and all in times of trouble, and not only do various ones find their way back to God on a permanent basis; but these times also help neighbours to get support to other States, and result in countries assisting each in times of emergency. So even disasters in these ways turn out to be blessings in disguise. Therefore, don't accuse God of striking you down with natural forces but if you are down, look up for help. It could make all the difference in the world.

## BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER

One of the distinguishing marks of Christianity is kindness. This is the ability to be sympathetic, forbearing, and to have a pleasant nature. Our Lord said, "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (Luke 6:35, 36). Paul exhorts, "And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32). He even describes love as being kind: "Charity (love) suffereth long, and is *kind*; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not

itself, is not puffed up.” (1 Corinthians 13:4).

In reading these verses, and with an understanding of what Christianity is all about, then I believe that as Christians we are to be kind, considerate, sympathetic, benevolent, forgiving, and showing the love of God in our hearts and lives for all people, both toward those who are members of the church and those who are not. This does not mean that we have to be weak, indifferent to sin and error, or to accept any and everything. Neither does it mean that we cannot condemn wrong doing or we cannot offer constructive criticism. But it does mean that when we are dealing with any individual, having to do with any problem, then we must have the spirit of Christ and handle the situation with a desire to save the person rather than to win a personal victory over him.

Being kind to people would include one's attitude toward them, what one says about them, and the way one acts around them. With the right kind of spirit we can do much to impress others for good, showing a real concern for them. No one is driven away from the Lord by kindness but many people are hurt, hindered, and lost to the truth because of unkindness.

One of the things that I see in the church that bothers me more than anything else is lack of kindness among Christians toward one another. There is so much envy, jealousy, and hatred among us. Members often deal with each other with a viciousness that is unparalleled even in the world, and all because of some little petty unimportant thing. There are people in the church today that one dare not cross in the sense of disagreement or offering constructive criticism, or doing something that they would not like. The consequences would be terrible. If you have any problem with certain congregations it will be only to your own hurt. These brethren will try to cut you down, will use their influence against you, and will seek to destroy you if at all possible. This is not

something made up or imagined but it is all too real to too many brethren. This is sickness and madness, not Christianity.

What is wrong with brethren when they conduct themselves like this? Surely they do not have the spirit of Christ. Such brethren have lost their love and concern for one another somewhere along the way and it badly shows. I admit that I don't agree with all of my brethren on various things but that does not mean that I must fanatically oppose them with the aim of hurting them and ruining them. I am sure that there are those who perhaps don't agree with me on everthing but I would hope that they would still love me, be patient with me, and continue to work with me.

If we would but love one another, communicate with each other, and visit among ourselves to discuss our problems, and seek to work these matters out then I am sure much of our difficulty would be removed. With kindness for one another, a desire to understand each other, and the longing to always have a forgiving spirit, things can be changed for the better. Of all people who should be practicing these principles, as well as preaching them, it should be those of us who are members of the Lord's church. Let us try it for a change and see if it doesn't work.

## **FIRST PRINCIPLES, NO. 1**

The first principles of the gospel need to be preached, and must be preached, but it is not necessary to preach them to the exclusion of all other Bible truths. Yet, this is done in congregation after congregation and perhaps this is doing more harm than any other one thing in the church today.

How many times have you complained, or heard others complain, about the local preacher's sermons? Nine times out of ten such criticisms are based on fact that the same lessons have been given over and over so many times that everyone already knows them by memory.

In most cases the preacher is to be blamed for this. Perhaps he is young and hasn't had the opportunity to study, grow, and to have the experience to know what is most needed. He may be one who is so busy with other things, or too lazy to study, that he relies on old sermons that have often been preached. Even these may be partially identical except for the titles. Sometimes a congregation changes preachers so often that the members end up hearing virtually the same line of sermons every year or so.

As long as a congregation is getting nothing but a diet of first principles, it is going to be difficult for much growth of any kind to take place. A person who has been a member of the church for several years eventually gets tired of hearing sermons on baptism on Sunday morning need the milk, or constantly hearing the preacher condemn denominational error. Especially is this true when all of the adult audience are already Christians.

New born babes of the word to begin with (1 Peter 2:2), but they shouldn't *need* milk all of their lives and neither should they be *fed* milk all of their lives. Rather, they need to be fed in such a way as to encourage spiritual growth. For this to take place they must gradually be transferred from a milk diet to a meat diet. With this kind of feeding or teaching, growth will follow, resulting in strong hard working Christians.

It so sad that so many Christians have been literally starved to death spiritually because they were never given any thing but first principles. Also, worlds of congregations have been stunted and rendered worthless because of the same



problem. Many unnecessary doctrinal problems have developed in the church because of a lack of adequate teaching beyond first principles. Why has this been allowed? Why haven't the preachers used better judgement than this? Why haven't the elders guided their preachers in the kind of sermons they presented? With just a little more wisdom in the kind of lessons taught and little more guidance from the elders the story might be entirely different.

Let's be sure that every non-Christian is taught the gospel. Let's also be certain that every Christian is well grounded in the faith. But then let's lead them on to higher ground. Let's help them to grow up in the Lord and to develop themselves so that they can be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. (2 Peter 3:18). Finally, let's remember that first principles are altogether necessary to salvation but at the same time there is a lot more involved in knowing the scriptures than having a knowledge of the first principles of God's word. As Paul said: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not strong meat. For every one useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. *Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ let us go unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptism, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement.*" (Hebrews 5:12-14; 6:1, 2).

## **FIRST PRINCIPLES, NO. 2**

While the majority of congregations may be constantly bombarded with first principles, there are a few churches that have swung to the opposite extreme. These are the ones where the plan of salvation is little known and the emphasis is more on a social gospel.

Although the first principles of God's word must surely be preached, a time comes when brethren need a stronger diet. When they do not get this, they become stunted, unhappy, discontented, bored, and critical. Many of these will eventually give up and quit because they are not strong enough in themselves to stand. Others will hang on because of various reasons but will be worth little to the cause of Christ. This is the kind of setting that prompts extremism. Sometimes brethren will accept anything to get a change.

The answer to this problem is not to eliminate first principles from all preaching and teaching. To do so would be to make an even more serious mistake. Those that have done so have practically lost their identity as the Lord's people. We have all heard members say, after visiting with certain congregations, that if they hadn't known otherwise they would have thought they were attending the service of a denominational church. But this is just the beginning. Once a congregation heads in this direction it usually goes on to other things. Instead of becoming closer to the Lord, it gets further away. It may become denominational, have fellowship with its religious neighbours, and so on. It so waters down the gospel that it no longer even sounds like the gospel. It preaches only love all the time and stresses the social needs of the community. It becomes little more than some club or social organisation that is known more for what it doesn't preach than for what it does preach. The next step would be liberalism and modernism.

In these congregations you have different kinds of people represented. Obviously the majority support this kind of thing and as a result they know little about the gospel because it is never preached to them. To attend a class you might hear most anything being discussed and most everything taught. There are usually a few who are still aware of the need for the gospel and they long to hear it preached. That doesn't mean that they would want to hear first principles all the time, but they would love to hear the truth of God's word preached.

So many of our modern day preachers think that to be popular, up to date, to show their education, etc., that they must be original, different and unique in their approach, in the content of their lessons, and in their work as a whole. (1 Corinthians 3:18-20). To preach the same old gospel, in their opinion, just won't do. (1 Corinthian 9:16). And there are congregations that cater to this type of preacher. They want someone to work with them, or to conduct their meetings, who has a name for himself, who is popular, and who is entertaining. But such preachers and congregations keep one another weak because they have basically rejected the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. (Romans 1:16, 17). Some of these don't go as far away as they might, but they want to stay close enough to the others that they can enlighten them and encourage them to follow in their steps. It is as though they think that they have found something new and now they must share it with all the rest. But, sadly, there is nothing new about it since the Bible warns again and again about the danger of departing from the faith. (Hebrews 3:12, 13).

It is such a shame that we can't learn to hold our balance and not to swing from one extreme to the other. (Ephesians 4:11-16). Why must we either preach solely first principles or not preach first principles at all? Why must we

show no emotion in our worship or lose all control of our emotions? Why can't we see the dangers of both sides and try to keep from going to an extreme in either direction? Surely there is a safe ground to walk on and we should walk on it. (2 Timothy 3:12-14).

By partaking of the milk of the word, as new born babes, we can go on to grow and develop, and with strenght we can eventually partake of the meat of the word. This is the Lord's plan. Where this plan is followed by both individuals and congregations we grow up in Christ to be the mature Christians and strong congregations that he intended us to be. In this way we can get the spiritual food we need, do the work of Christ, and find happiness and contentment at the same time. Of course this takes time and if things are not developing as we think they should then we must realize that it will not help matters to run off in some other direction. Only by remaining with God's plan can we be what the Lord wants us to be.

### **FIRST PRINCIPLES, NO. 3**

We have seen how the majority of congregations over the brotherhood are fed on a constant diet of first principles. Because of this extreme, some brethren have gone to the other extreme and place most of their emphasis on a social gospel. While it is necessary for first principles to be preached, this is not all that is to be preached. On the other hand, even though brethren may not want to hear first principles preached all the time, this does not mean that they should not be preached any of the time. Thus, we have seen that it is not necessary to go in either direction but rather somewhere between these two

extremes is a balanced scriptural ground on which all can stand and therefore all should seek to find it.

In discussing these matters we have talked about the ones who have never known anything but first principles, and the ones who have rebelled against them, and we have shown the dangers of both. But there is another group of brethren and these are the ones who have had a balanced diet. They have been taught the gospel, grounded in the faith, and they know what Christianity is all about. They continue to hear lessons from time to time that are directed to the non-Christian and to the new born babe, but they hear lessons also that help them to grow and to be more mature as Christians.

Of all the congregations today, the strongest ones are those that get this balanced diet. These are growing and developing. They are making progress. They are working and taking the gospel to others. They are happy brethren and because of this they stand out from all the rest. All congregations need to be like these.

What can be done to bring a congregation to this maturity? In the first place the leadership must recognize the need for the membership to be taught the pure word of God. They must have a preacher and teachers who will deliver the goods. Guidance and direction in this area must be supplied by stable elders. They have to be interested and concerned about every member. This means visiting them, teaching them, working with them, disciplining them, and helping them in their development. It means that there must be a lot of love shown, but at the same time a stand for the truth must be taken and it must be maintained. Finally, there must be a programme of work in which all members are involved. This begins with each member practicing what is taught in both word and deed in his way of life and in teaching others, in loving one another and helping one another.

Much will depend on the kind of preaching and

teaching that is done within the congregation. Brethren are tired of getting into ruts and never being able to get out. They don't want to have lessons in which they are never taught anything and therefore they never learn anything. They don't want to have to hear things read to them or lectured to them. They don't want to hear those who are not prepared to teach them. Rather, they want to be taught in such a way that growth is the result. They want to study and learn. They want to participate and they want to enjoy being a Christian.

In order to have such a happy balance, it is essential for the preacher to preach sermons that relate to the needs of the congregation. He needs to be able to speak their language, to communicate, to get his lessons across. He needs to know those with whom he is working, their needs, their potential, and then he needs to preach accordingly. If he'll preach what is needed, when it is needed, he will help the brethren instead of hurting them. Even though sometimes the truth may hurt them, it will be the instrument for growth.

Continuing, the preacher needs to use a variety in his preaching. He needs to cover a wide range of material. He must at the same time be dedicated to his work, practicing what he preaches, so that he will have the respect of the congregation when he preaches. Above all, his lessons must be true to the book with an ample supply of scripture references being given to support what he says. There is power in the word and this must not be forgotten.

The truth must be preached consistently, with the full support of the eldership or the leadership of the congregation. The truth should never be shunned on any subject, but one should exercise good judgement in all things and always preach with love and concern for all. The idea is to convert souls and to help Christians to grow, rather than to shock them, condemn them, and run them away.

With the proper balance in preaching and teaching,

individuals and congregations will grow and develop as they should. Remember what Paul said: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (2 Timothy 4:1, 2).

## IN CHRIST

Paul declares that salvation is in Christ: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is *in Christ Jesus* with eternal glory." (2 Timothy 2:10).

He writes to the Corinthians: "Therefore if any man be *in Christ*, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17).

But how does one enter Christ? Paul also tells how this is done: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were *baptized into Jesus Christ* were baptized into his death? (Romans 6:3). Again he says, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been *baptized into Christ Jesus* have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:26, 27).

Can one have salvation outside of Christ? Can one be a new creature without entering Christ? Can one become a child of God before entering Christ? Can one receive the benefits of the death of Christ without being baptized? Can one enter Christ in some other way apart from baptism? Evidently not. If so, where does Paul, or any other New Testament writer, say so?

Once one enters Christ, in addition to the salvation he receives, Paul concludes by saying: "Blessed be the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ....” (Ephesians 1:3). After all of this, for what else can one ask? Truly, being in Christ means one has every thing.

*Are you in Christ?*

## **BY WHAT DO YOU MEASURE SUCCESS?**

Every one wants to be successful in whatever they may attempt to do. There are people all around us who are using every means at their disposal to achieve this goal. Unfortunately most of these aim for the wrong things in life. They measure success by wealth, position, education, and social status.

Christians are also human beings and they may get caught up in this race. By what standard do you measure success? Is it by the material things of life? Could it be the earning of a larger salary than any of your co-workers? Maybe it is becoming an elder in the church or being the preacher of the biggest congregation in the area. It might be that of having the newest car or owning one's own home. Perhaps it is the achievement of being invited to speak on the college lectureship programme or being a foreign missionary. It could also be many other things, and may perhaps be the wrong thing.

Much pressure is put upon us to measure up to the world's standard of success. We are encouraged, pushed, and prodded to get into line. We are told that we must compromise, that we must produce, that we must out-do the other fellow. As a result, we lose our identity as Christians and become more and more like those around us. We complete,



race, and allow the world to dictate to us. In so doing we are deceiving ourselves and failing our Lord and Master. We may be successful as far as we are concerned, and as far as man is concerned, but in the eyes of the Lord we have failed.

I have had members of the church—and these include preachers—to tell me that they are tired of this rat race. They are tired of trying to out-do their friends and neighbours. They are tired of trying to have the biggest house, the biggest car, and the biggest salary. They are tired of the rush, the competition, and all of the hypocrisy that goes with it. YES, they are tired of it. Aren't we all?

Jesus also spoke of success, position, and greatness. When asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Mathew 18:1 — 4). Again he said concerning those who deal with God's word, "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:19). We asked about position and greatness, Jesus responded by saying: "But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mathew 20:26 — 28). In dealing with names, titles, and positions, he concluded, "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Mathew 23:11,12).

It is not difficult to see that the Lord measures success by humility, obedience, service, sacrifice, dedication, work, and we may not amount to much as far as the world is concerned, but if we have a pure heart and we are sincerely walking in the steps of Christ, then we have reached a height that many never attain. We should remember that Jesus looks on the heart rather than on the outward appearance. He knows what we *are*, instead of what we *think* we are.

We need to get back to the important things of life. We need to begin to look up to the Lord instead of always looking down on others. We need to do more serving instead of expecting everyone to serve us. We need to be willing to work in hard and difficult places instead of always seeking a position of honor. We need to use what we have instead of hoarding up more and more for self. Yes, we need to give ourselves to the Lord. Then, and only then, will we be successful in his sight.

## HEARING ONLY

That we have some major problems in the church today cannot be denied. Perhaps the one that is doing more damage than all of the others is not even recognized as such. I am talking about the practice of most Christians coming to hear the preacher and then going away to forget what was said. This is repeated again and again and again. We come on Sunday morning to hear God's word taught and then we go home. We return on Sunday evening to hear another lesson from God's word and then we go home. We are back on Wednesday evening to hear still another lesson and we go home. We do the same the next week, the next week, and the next week after that. We continue with this practice year after

year, all of our lives. But what does it amount to? Very little.

We hear the gospel over and over again. Since we are only hearers, and not participants in sharing with others, we become tired, bored, and restless. We know the lessons before the preacher presents them so we become critical of him. We are hard to please and we are anxious to hear something new and different. This leads us into other things such as fads, acceptance of error, modernism and liberalism. What else can we expect when we are hearers only? Actually, all of our problems and debateable questions over the years have sprung from the attitudes of a people of inactivity.

If hearing only has been our problem then a doing membership will solve it. The answer is as simple as that. All the church today needs to do is to begin to obey the teachings of Christ in order to rid itself of its present problems. A church at work will not have time to argue, fuss, and debate about everything that comes up. In fact, where the church is active, industrious, and deeply committed and involved in daily service to God it will be content, growing, and spreading. Those who bring their friends and neighbours to the meetings will find each lesson fresh, informative and inspiring because they will be listening to the message through the ears of their guests.

It is important to hear the truth, but hearing only will not help anyone. James exhorts us, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1:22). Again, Christ said that it is not enough to say, Lord, Lord, but we must be doers of the will of the Father to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and to enter heaven itself. (Matthew 7:21).

Now that we know God's will, it is past time for us to go out and practice it. Why sit and listen and listen and listen if we are not going to do what the Lord has said? There is so much to be done. There are the lost to reach, the poor to help,

the orphans to care for, the sick to give medicine to, the prisoners to visit, and hundreds of other things to do. We have so much to do and so little time to do it in. How we need to get out of the pew and go to work. God will not really bless us until we do.

## **THE PROBLEM OF THE LACK OF TEACHING**

Why is it that so many of our new converts at home and abroad fall away within a short period of time? Why is it that so many of those who remain do not take their responsibilities very seriously? Why is it that they often use denominational language in discussing religious matters? I personally think that these questions can be answered with one statement: In most instances these people were not sufficiently taught.

We are so anxious to convert people that after a little teaching we encourage, persuade, beg, plead, and pressure them into some type of action. They agree to baptism, hardly knowing why they are being baptized. They become members of the church without fully understanding the significance of it. With this kind of background, it is little wonder that some of them say they say and do what they do.

I am firmly convinced that we need to teach everyone to the point that we are satisfied that each person knows and understands the truth. This doesn't mean that he must know all the Bible from cover to cover, but it does mean that he should be fully convinced that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he should know and understand the significance of the commands of the gospel, and that he should be taught of the importance and uniqueness of the church of the Bible. If he

can be taught properly prior to his obedience to the gospel then he will be in a much better position to live and serve God after he becomes a Christian.

I realize that in the various cases of conversion in the New Testament often the people heard the gospel only one time before their obedience, but on the other hand most of them had been prepared by the law or by a miracle to take such a step. How can we go into areas of the world where the people have hardly heard of Christ and preach the gospel one time, and baptize a number of them, and expect anything concrete to come from it?

Christ said, "Come unto me . . . and learn of me." (Matthew 11:28, 29). He said again, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." (John 14:1). Paul said, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Then Christ says, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:19). Also, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15). I believe these verses speak for themselves, and there are many others like them. They stress the importance of preaching and teaching God's word to lost souls. Why? So that they may know the truth, that faith will be produced, and that they might obey the Lord. How can people obey the Lord's will if they are ignorant of it? How can they make strong Christians if they don't have a sound faith? And how can their faith be strong if they have not been taught sufficiently?

I think all of us should be very sure that we are teaching the word of God to the extent that it is the *word* that convinces, convicts, and prompts obedience, not our own persuasiveness. I think we should be certain that we so ground one in the faith that he will know what he is doing, what he is becoming, and what he must do to be a faithful child of God. With more teaching will come more stability and with more stability the church will be stronger and with this kind of strength it will be

able to do its work and to fulfil its purpose for its existence.

## **HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE THE CHURCH?**

Do you love the Lord's church? How much do you love it? What are you doing to prove your love for it? It is easy to say that you love it but it is another thing to mean it and to show it.

The church has been talked about so much and defended so often that it is possible that many of its members have magnified it; and glorified it to the extent that it has taken on a meaning that it was never intended to have. In other words, there is the actual living church of reality and then there is the church that is preached and that in the minds of some people may be on a different plain than God intended.

The real church is made up of people, the followers of Christ, the saved. (1 Cor. 12:20). Its members are not perfect. They make mistakes. They therefore need help. They need love, encouragement, and guidance. The church that is preached is perfect, a united body, comprising all the attributes that would cause people to want to be a part of it.

How much do we love the church that is made up of those who have obeyed Christ? Don't we talk about one another, have problems in getting along with each other, and talk about "kicking" certain ones out of the church? Is that love? Who would want to be a part of such a group? But we are always preaching how wonderful the church is, telling why it is so much better than all other churches. We tell the world that we love the church, that they should love it too. We say that we ought to put it and its welfare first.

Aren't we hypocritical? Haven't we created another church, a fictional church, an imaginary church? I really believe that there are some who truly love the church that is set forth in the Bible and they would do anything and everything in their power to plant it throughout the world. But many of these same people have little love for the living church, the one that is composed of imperfect humans. To them there is a difference between the one on paper and the one in human form. Such a difference shouldn't be there, but it is, and that a great distinction is made between the two can be readily seen.

There is but one true church. (Eph. 4:4; 1:22,23). We read about it in the scriptures, but it literally exists too. (1 Cor. 12:27). It is both divine and human. (Acts 2:47). The divine side is of the Lord, and presents his pattern for the church. (Matthew 16:18, 19). The human side consists of its members. (1 Cor. 12:12). This church represents Christ on the earth. (Col. 1:18). His name is glorified by it. (Eph. 3:21). Christians should love the one who built the church and they should also love those who are members of it. (1 Pet. 2:17; 1 John 4:21).

When we go to tell people about the church of the Bible we should sincerely tell them what it is, why they should be members of it, and what it is like to be a part of it. We should love them to this extent and we should continue to love them once they become obedient to the Lord. If we do not love the Lord's people we do not really love his church, and if we do not love the church we do not really love him who died for it. One cannot successfully love the truth that produces the church and not love the church itself.

If you really love the church you will love its members. If you genuinely love it you will not just preach this doctrine of love but you will live a life of love too. Only then can it be said that you love the church in the truest sense of the word.

## HOW MANY WILL BE SAVED?

One's work for the Lord can be very revealing. It doesn't take long to realize that the majority of the people are not deeply interested in religion in one way or the other. There is so much indifference among believers. Most have already made a decision on what they want to be and it is very difficult to change them to something else. It is not much better in the church. The same indifference is there. Most of the members are in deep ruts and it is almost impossible to get them out. They don't want to do anything. They excuse themselves by saying that they don't have time or don't know how. The preacher is usually left to do all of the preaching, teaching, personal work, etc.; and much of his time and effort are used in babying the members and staying after them to get them to even attend the worship assemblies. After all of that, some of them are less than dependable and eventually will fall completely away.

Sometimes you can't help but just wonder how many will eventually be saved. How many really want to go to heaven? How many are thinking about it? How many are working toward it? How many are preparing for it? Isn't it sad that you just have to beg and plead and constantly work with people to try to help them go to heaven? Even then, most of them—the majority—may very well miss heaven because sooner or later they may slip out of the Lord's hands.

You have to love the Lord a lot to work for him. You have to love people a great deal to work with them in the interest of their souls. This is so because it is an uphill battle all the way. It takes a lot of patience, faith, courage, zeal, and determination. Even then you wonder sometimes if it is worth it when you see such little results from so much work. But you can't give up. You have to keep trying. The Lord didn't give up. He was betrayed, and even denied by his own, and finally



crucified, but he didn't give up. We may wonder how the Lord tolerates us and puts up with us but it is by his longsuffering that he continues to extend his grace and mercy to us. (2 Peter 3:9; Ephesians 2:8, 9). Perhaps in spite of everything some of us will still be saved, including some that we have worked with.

We need the Lord so much, and is this not true of the whole world? Maybe we who are the elders, deacons, preachers, teachers, and leaders in the church are the ones who are failing. Perhaps the people in general do not see in us the sincerity, the concern, the urgency, and the love for souls that should be there. We may not be the kind of leaders that we need to be. Therefore, we need to re-examine our own lives motives, and work to see where we stand. Do we want to go to heaven? What are we doing ourselves to be saved? When we answer some of these questions perhaps we will better understand some of those with whom we are working.

## **KNOW WHO YOU ARE**

In talking with members of the church I try to encourage them to know who they are and what they are. I explain to them that they should know the truth, know what they believe, and take their stand on it. I tell them that they should be sure of themselves, never doubting for a minute, I have an idea that this would be good advice for brethren everywhere.

In order for the church to be strong its members must be strong. This means that they must be fully converted. They must know what they did to be saved and why it was necessary for them to do it. They must not only understand that there is

but one church, but they should also know what the church is and why it is necessary for them to be members of it. They should realize that they are Christians only and that to remain Christians they must be faithful to the Lord in worship and in their daily living.

Christians should be so converted that they understand that they cannot have fellowship with those of other religious organizations. This doesn't mean that they have to be ugly, or even unfriendly, with such people, but they cannot condone their practices or bid them God's speed. Instead, they must be putting forth an effort to teach these people the truth.

If brethren are grounded in the faith, having sound doctrine, and with zeal to share it with others, then the church will be stable and it will grow. It is when the Lord's body is filled with half converted people who are unsure of their faith, and members who want to sympathize with those of other beliefs, that the church is hurt and left with the inability to do the job that needs to be done.

Again, let me encourage one and all to read and study God's word until you know where you stand. Don't be a hypocrite and pretend to be something you are not. If you can't be sure of what you are religiously then at least be honest about it.

Having the truth of God in our possession, it should be no great task to learn that truth. We should not only learn it but believe it and teach it. How can we teach something that we do not know or believe? At the same time, we should be sure that we teach the people that we are working with to the point that they also have this full knowledge and faith and conviction. If the church is to do its work then it must have more people who know who they are religiously and the purpose of their existence.

## **HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW GOD'S WORD?**

Do you know the truth? Have you obeyed it? Are you able to teach it to others?

Are you sure that you have the truth? Have you studied the Bible enough to make sure of that? Can you tell others what you know?

Should some false teacher come to your home, would you be able to answer him? He would probably be a hard core representative of his organisation and the question is not, could you convert him, but the question is, could you answer his false teachings? Would you be satisfied with the way that you handled him?

Did you know that there are many who are going around teaching false doctrines who are better versed in the Bible than we are, who have a greater zeal for spreading their teachings than we do, and who are making many more converts than we are? They are in error, and they are teaching error, but they believe in it, and want others to have it, so they are working on it. In order to answer them, we are going to have to study and prepare ourselves, in the first place. Secondly, we who have the truth are the ones who should be out knocking on doors and using every means at our disposal to teach the truth. We are the ones who ought to be taking the initiative in these efforts. It would be much easier to teach people the truth from the start than to let someone else mislead them and then later to try to convert them from the error of their way, even if it were possible to do so.

But in order to accomplish these things we must have a knowledge of the truth, we must be sure of our salvation and of what we believe, we must have a knowledge of the scriptures, and zeal to teach it to others. Perhaps then we'll not sit at home to wait for some false teacher to come by to teach is his

doctrine, but we may be out knocking at his door trying to teach him the truth.

Paul said, in speaking of Christ, "Whom we preach warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." (Col.1:28). He also said, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! (1 Cor. 9:16). Do you share these feelings with Paul? My brethren, if we do not know God's word we cannot teach it to others. If we know his will and are obedient to it, we can do nothing less than to teach it to our fellowman.

## **PLEADING WITH PEOPLE**

Why should we have to beg and plead with people to accept the truth? This seem unreasonable, yet, we do. And it is as though we are their enemies when we do. People don't want to leave what they already have even for the truth. They seem to be satisfied and even resent being bothered. This is heart-breaking.

Here we are asking people to read and study their own Bible to see what it teaches. We ask them to investigate what we are saying by comparing it with the scriptures. We encourage them to become members of Christ's church. We plead with them to wear the name of Christ. We urge them to go to God's word for all that they say and do in religion. But what kind of response do we get? People want to know why we are against the other churches? They look upon us as being the ones who are teaching error. Isn't this strange? We are only trying to get them to go to God's word, to accept Christ's

church, his name, etc., and yet we are branded as enemies of Christ. It is truly hard to understand.

If we were trying to get people to accept our word over God's word, if we were urging them to become members of some church that is not found in the Bible, if we were introducing a man-made name to them, etc., then we could understand this kind of reaction. But when we are pleading with them to turn away from error to follow the truth only, and then we still get this kind of response, I find it hard to understand. We would be more successful in converting people if we taught error. This seems to be more in line with their thinking.

The majority of the people who pretend to be following the Bible are so grounded in denominational error that error has become the truth to them and the truth has become error. It doesn't mean anything to them that we are urging them to go the Bible to see for themselves what it teaches. They think they already have the truth, and so that suggestion is meaningless to them. They have heard of the church of Christ so few times, they think of it as being new church that is presented to them in contrast to the churches that they have been familiar with all of their lives. The name Christian is not new to them since they all claim to be Christian in spite of their denominational names and titles. And on and on it goes.

What can we do to such people to get them to see what we are talking about? The only solution seems to be that we just continue to preach to them. Eventually it will begin to get through to them, provided we haven't given up on them or they haven't refused to continue their study with us.

It is almost unbelievable that you would have to beg and plead with people to accept the truth, but you do. This is how mixed up the world is. That is how much influence the devil has even on religious people. It therefore becomes hard work to deal with people of this nature. On the other hand, it is

a pleasure to come across someone occasionally who wants the truth, is teachable, can think and reason for himself, and ends up in obeying the truth. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had more people like this?

## **WHEN IS ONE SAVED?**

Christ said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). When did Christ say one is saved? Before or after baptism?

Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized every one 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). When did Peter say one receives the remission of sins? Before or after baptism?

Ananias told Saul, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). When did Ananias say that one has his sins washed away? Before or after baptism?

Peter also said, "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). When did Peter say that one is saved? Before or after baptism?

Paul wrote, "Know ye not, that so many of us were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3, 4). When did Paul say that one enters Christ? Before or after baptism?

Paul also wrote, "For ye are all the children of God by

faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:26, 27). When did Paul say that one puts on Christ? Before or after baptism?

The question is often asked: When is one saved? Before or after baptism? Many say before and others say after. If one will read the foregoing verses of scripture and honestly answer the question asked, then he will readily know when one is saved. When this is done there is no need for further discussion.

When were you saved? Or when did you think you were saved? Did your actions match those in the verses quoted? If not, you have not yet been saved. You can be saved only when you do what the Bible teaches.

## **CAN ONE OBEY THE GOSPEL?**

It has been said that one cannot obey the gospel. Those who argue this, ask the question, "How can one obey facts and promises." But there are also commands of the gospel and these must be obeyed.

Christ has said, "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).

Paul wrote to the Romans: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." (Romans 6:17, 18).

On the negative side, he writes: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed

from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory or his power." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Peter likewise says: "For the time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God: and if it first begins at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:17, 18).

If the Lord is going to punish those who do not obey the gospel, then the conclusion follows that those who obey the gospel will escape the Lord's vengeance. Surely he would not punish one for something that he cannot do.

Have you obeyed the gospel of Christ? Remember, the Hebrew writer has said: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Hebrews 5:8,9).

## **VOTING IN THE CHURCH**

I believe that the Bible forbids the practice of voting people into and out of the church. (Acts 2:47). I also think it is unwise to have voting of any kind in the church.

In past years it was not uncommon to hear brethren preach against voting in business meetings. It was said that Christians should be able to discuss their business and come to unanimous decisions without having to resort to a vote. Now it is not uncommon to hear that the decisions of the church are reached through voting. Preachers may be hired or fired on a



vote. Programs of work may be approved or rejected by a vote. All other business may hinge on whether the majority are for it or against it.

What is wrong with voting? What is right with it? When every faithful and unfaithful member of the church has an equal vote, then that means that the unfaithful, the weak, and the indiffererent may be able to have as much, or more, to say about what the church does as the most loyal, faithful, and hard working Christians. Not only so, but in most every case where voting is practised, those who do not even have enough interest to attend the different services of the church will show up at the business meeting to vote their way on various matters.

Furthermore, the practice of voting leads to politics, for one or more will seek to influence the votes of others. This leads to cliques, division, jealousy, envy and the possibility of the bad element gaining control. It also leads to position and power. This is wrong. It is completely opposed to God's design for the governing of his people.

Even though we live in a country that practices democracy, and the majority vote wins and rules, this does not mean that the church is a democracy or that we can practice voting. The church rather is a monarchy. As for the organization of the church, Christ is the head of it and he shares that position with no man. Coming down to the level of the local congregation, Christ is still the head, but he has directed that elders and deacons are to be appointed to see after the scriptural and physical needs of the members. These scripturally appointed leaders are to make the final decisions when it comes to the business of the congregation. They should be of the same mind, working together in unity, and so concerned about the overall welfare of those that they are overseeing that they should be able to discuss these matters among themselves and come to a group decision

without having to cast individual votes.

Even where a congregation does not have qualified men that can be appointed as elders and deacons, the men of the congregation should be able to meet regularly to discuss the business of the church and to make their decisions without having to resort to a vote. Surely Christians can work together to this extent. If they cannot, then something has gone wrong somewhere. This is what is suspected of some congregations today that have introduced the practice of voting into the affairs of the church. We can't help but ask, what will be next?

## **WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN YOUR LIFE?**

One of the members of the church in New Delhi, India has said again and again that the most important thing in his life is Christ and his word. He says that family, country, money, and all else are secondary to this. Not only does he say it, but after being around him for awhile you know that he means what he says. This is a wonderful attitude and one that every Christian should have.

There are not nearly enough Christians in the world today who feel this way. Too many have allowed the things of this world to come between them and the Lord. These are husband or wife, children or parents, a job, friends, worldliness, and a thousand other things. As a result many have suffered spiritually. When the Lord is not first, one cannot be what he should be and neither can he involve himself in the Lord's work as he should.

What is the most important thing in your life? Are you sure that it is Christ? Are you putting Him first? Are you

involved in his work? Are you living daily for him? Are you giving your all to him? If not, then he is not as important to you as you might think.

When Christ becomes Lord of your life then you will be a changed person. You will not have to say it but those who associate with you will know it. You will then know how to live, to love, to serve, and to give. You'll be full of peace, contentment, and joy. You'll be prayerful, zealous, and fully committed to the Lord and his cause. You'll be involved deeply, and completely immersed in that cause. All of this will be so because Christ will be your life.

May God help us all to become more aware of our need for the Lord and his word. Let us go back to him so that we may go forward with him.

## **WHO IS YOUR SAVIOUR?**

It might sound ridiculous to ask this question, but you would be surprised at how many people in the world today are looking to the thief on the cross to take them to heaven. Never mind that Christ said later that one must believe and be baptized to be saved. (Mark 16:15, 16). Never mind that the book of Acts contains one case of conversion after another that shows what one must do to be saved. (Examine, Acts 2:37, 38). All of this is brushed aside with one stroke and thus hundreds and thousands, and even millions, retreat to the thief on the cross and use him as their hope for salvation. They conclude that if the thief was saved without baptism then they can likewise be saved without it.

For all practical purposes, as far as the majority are concerned, the Lord might as well have said nothing more

after speaking to the thief. Such people think nothing at all about discarding what Christ said later about salvation. They think, evidently, that what he said to the thief nullified all future statements on the subject. To them, the conditions he laid down are immaterial.

I wonder if these people have ever stopped to consider what they are doing. They are looking to the thief for their salvation instead of Christ. They are risking their very hope on this man. How sad to think that anyone would discard Christ and his word for someone like this. Of course the thief can't help it and he is not responsible for this cult that has been built around him. Those responsible for it are the guilty ones and they will have to answer to God for it.

How would you like to be in this kind of predicament? Thank God that you are not, but if you are like me you are constantly having to deal with people who follow the thief. It is very discouraging to think that anyone would be so blind as to fall for this kind of thing, but people do all over the world. This should be a reminder to one and all that it is very easy for anyone to be deceived.

Considering the fact that there are worlds of people who are looking to the thief as their saviour, it might not be out of place to ask the question, who is your saviour? While the thief may not be, someone else, or something else besides Christ might be. Whoever he may be or whatever it is, you will be disappointed. There is only one true saviour and that is Jesus Christ. He has all power and authority to speak, to command, and to save. We would do well to listen to him, but above all to believe in him and to obey him. Only then can we be saved because only then will he be *our* saviour.

## **ALL OF THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WORD**

There are those who argue that only what Jesus said is of importance and that the words of the Apostles amount to little more than the teachings of men. Such people need to read what Christ said on this subject when he spoke to the disciple: "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." (John 15:20). Here the Lord emphatically says that if one will accept his word, he will also accept the word of the apostles, or vice versa. This also suggests that if an individual rejects the word of one then it amounts to rejecting the word of the other.

Again, the Lord said to the Apostles, "Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13). Listen once more: "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." (John 14:20). Later on, Paul declared the origin of his teaching when he explained, "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Galatians 1:11, 12). This should be sufficient proof that the Apostles spoke and wrote only the word of God. Therefore, when you read what they said, you are reading His word.

While reading through the Bible, whether it be in the Old Testament, the statements made by Jesus, or the epistles of the various New Testament writers, one may be assured that all of it is the word of God. This means that one must accept all of it without addition, subtraction, or substitution.

As a law, the New Testament is binding on all people of our day. All of it is God's word, regardless of the one who spoke it or wrote it. Even Christ said, "He hath loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." (John 14:24).

Do you believe the whole Bible or just parts of it? If you reject part of it, you might as well reject all of it. If you believe the Lord you will also believe His messengers.

## **HAVE YOU LOST YOUR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE?**

Christ prayed to God, "Sanctify them through thy truth:thy word is truth." (John 17:17). Again he said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32). But how can we know the truth today? This knowledge comes by searching the scriptures (John 5:39), by studying the word of God (I Corinthians 10:11), and by hearing. Paul writes, "so then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17).

A Bible knowledge is altogether necessary. It produces faith, leads to obedience, salvation, and freedom. It protects from error and enables one to expose false teaching. It also makes it possible for one not only to live the Christian life but to teach God's word to others with confidence that only the truth is being taught.

As wonderful as it is for one to have a knowledge of the scriptures, it must be understood that in order for one to retain what he has, he must use it. It is important that he gets a sufficient amount of spiritual exercise, that he teaches what he knows to others, and that he constantly adds to his knowledge.

Through the use of his knowledge by teaching his family, his friends, in class situations, facing false teachers, etc., he will continue to be familiar with the truth already learned and at the same time he will find it necessary to do additional study to supplement what he already knows.

Sad to say, but so many Christian have lost most of their Bible knowledge by failing to use that which they have learned. They feel that they don't have time to study, and fail to use the little that they do know to teach others. They leave it up to the preacher and Bible teachers to do the studying, preaching, and teaching. When faced with false teachers, or when someone asks them a Bible question, they have to encourage the individual to see the preacher for the answer. They remind us of those the Hebrew writer spoke in his time: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebrews 5:12-14).

As the Lord's people, we were known in past years as those who were well versed in the Bible. Members of the church could usually be detected from others by this trait. This was because we studied more, memorized more, and taught more. But what can be said of us now? From all indications we have fallen into the habits of our religious neighbours. Many of us are as ignorant of God's word as they are. This is a terrible shame. We are also reaping the consequence. The church is not growing, many of its members use denominational terminology freely, more and more of our leaders are going off after liberalism and various kinds of religious error. This is in keeping with what Peter said, when he exhorted that

we should add to our faith knowledge, and so on. He goes on to say, "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." (2 Peter 1:8, 9). God said of his people in the long ago, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6).

Let me ask you: Have you lost your Bible knowledge, that is, provided you ever had one? But if you did have one, and you have lost it through failure to use it, then this means that you have lost the truth, freedom, faith, and all of the other blessings that go with knowledge. This means, too, that God has lost much and the church is poorer because of it. You are like the man who did not use his talent, and in the end he lost that talent also, with God condemning him as an unprofitable servant. (Matthew 25:14-30).

May God help us to take warning and study, learn, and grow in the knowledge of the Lord. The more we know of God's will the more we can do for him and the more effective we will be in his service. Anybody can be ignorant and most are. To remain willingly ignorant though, is a disgrace. God, on the other hand, wants us to know his will, to obey it, and to teach it to others. This is what makes people free—this is what saves.

## **THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD**

The longer I preach the more convinced I become of the power that is in God's word. It is not me that has the power but the power is in the word that I preach. It is not me that



converts but it is the word which enters the heart and convicts and moves sinners to obey God. I am but a messenger and I am important only to that extent.

Paul declared the gospel to be God's power to salvation to everyone that believeth. (Roman 1:16, 17). Peter says that our souls are purified in obeying the truth. (1 Peter 1:22). He goes on to say that we are born again by the word of God. (1 Peter 1:23). And finally, Christ tells us that the truth makes men free. (John 9:32).

This word is from God. (John 17:17). It lives and will abide forever. (1 Peter 3:21, 25). It is quick and powerful and sharper than a two edged sword. (Hebrews 4:12). It was written that we might believe. (John 20:30, 31; Romans 10:17). We are to be doers of it. (James 1:22). It completely furnishes man unto every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Then in the end it will judge man. (John 12:48).

With this being true, how much we need to read it, study it, obey it, preach it, and live by it. We need to refer people to it, urge them to read it, and quote from it. Our sermons should be filled with it.

It is so easy for man to drift away from God's word, to begin to preach his own philosophy, ideas, and opinions. It is easy for him to rely on what man has said and overlook what God has spoken. If he is not careful he will begin to quote men instead of quoting the scriptures. This may make him seem intelligent in the eyes of men but it makes him little in the sight of God. In doing this his sermons lose their power and influence for good. They are no longer able to convert souls and to give hope. Instead they deceive and lead people away from God.

We often think we are so big and important. We imagine ourselves to be so valuable to the Lord and his cause. Really, it is the other way around. We are so little and insignificant. We are so frail and worthless. We become

important to the Lord not because of who we are or what we are, but because of the message we proclaim. If we will humble ourselves, and yield ourselves to the Lord's wishes, preaching his word, then the Lord can use us. We then become a mouthpiece for the Lord—not to speak of ourselves, but to speak the word of God.

Brethren, God's word is so powerful. It can do things that we can never do. This is why we need to preach it and to keep preaching it. This is why we need to keep it pure. This is why we need to fill our sermons with it. It will not return to the Lord void. It will not fail. It will bring forth a harvest.

Don't underestimate the Lord's word and the power of it. It can change people. It can save people. It can change nations. Yes, it can change the world. How blessed we are to be bearers of it. But what a great responsibility we have to see that it is properly delivered. May God help us all to see this and to act accordingly.

## **THE TEACHING OF CHRIST VERSUS THE TEACHING OF MEN**

God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matthew 17:5). Christ said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." (John 6:63). When Peter was questioned concerning his loyalty to Jesus, he responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6:68). In praying to God, Christ said concerning the Apostles, "For I have given unto them the word which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee and they have believed that thou didst send me." (John

17:8). Also read John 14:23; John 12:47-50; and Matthew 24:35.

The foregoing has been called to your attention to show you the importance of what Jesus said and of the importance of believing and obeying it. However, man has also spoken out on most of the things that Christ taught. The results is that the majority usually end up in listening to man rather than to Christ. To show you the contrast in the two, we will now give some examples of what we are talking about.

1. *The teaching of Christ:* "And Jesus came and spoke unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18).

*The teaching of men:* "The pope has the final say." "The bishop has all authority in our church."

2. *The teaching of Christ:* "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6).

*The teaching of men:* "There are many ways to heaven." "One way is just as good as another."

3. *The teaching of Christ:* "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:17, 18).

*The teaching of men:* "The law of Moses is still binding today." "We practise tithing."

4. *The teaching of Christ:* "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. . (Matthew 7:21-23). Also, read John 9:31.

*The teaching of men:* "All who pray to the Lord for the forgiveness of their sin will be saved on the spot."

5. *The teaching of Christ:* He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16).

*The teaching of men:* “He that believeth is saved and can be baptized if he wants to.” “Baptism is not necessary for one to be saved.”

6. *The teaching of Christ:* “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” (Matthew 16:18).

*The teaching of men:* “There are many churches.” “One church is as good as another.” “The church is not important.” “One can go to heaven without being a member of any church.”

7. *The teaching of Christ:* That “They all may be one...” (John 17:20, 21).

*The teaching of men:* “Thank God for all of the churches where every man can join the church of his choice.”

8. *The teaching of Christ:* “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.” (Matthew 15:9). Also read John 4:24.

*The teaching of men:* “It doesn’t matter how you worship just as long as you are honest and sincere.”

9. *The teaching of Christ:* “And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.” (Matthew 23:9).

*The teaching of men:* “You may call your priest and the pope, father.”

10. *The teaching of Christ:* “But of that day and hour knoweth no men, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” (Matthew 24:36).

*The teaching of men:* “We may know the time of the Lord’s second coming.”

Now can’t you see the difference in the teaching of Christ and teaching of men? Which have you accepted? John exhorts us not to believe every spirit because “many false prophets are gone into the world.” (1 John 4:1). He goes on to

warn that if we transgress and cease to abide, in the doctrine of Christ, we have not God. To have the Father and the Son we must abide in the doctrine of Christ. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of evil deeds." (2 John 9-11). Then Paul wrote, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." (Romans 16:17, 18).

My friends, it is possible to be deceived in religious matters but once one learns the truth then he should honour the Lord enough to accept his word over the word of man. You will note that in the statements that have been listed from man that no scripture references have been given and this is because they are not scriptural statements. We invite you then, and plead with you to go direct to the Lord's word for all that you say and do in religion. Only then can you be right, and you may know that you are right, because it is the teaching of Christ and not of a man.

## **THE POWER OF AN EXAMPLE**

As the Lord's people sometimes we may wonder what we can do to help to further the cause of Christ. We may think in terms of doing something big. We want to preach, be a teacher, write Christian literature, or do any number of other things. But we may not have the ability or the opportunity to do these things. In that case, what can we do? Does that mean

that we are worthless to the Lord? Does it mean that we are not important and that there is nothing we can do? Certainly not. Every Christian can do something, often times much more than he might realize. Many can serve in areas that they never imagined, if they would but try. But regardless of one's background, his training, his ability, or many other things every Christian can set a good example. We can be Christ-like. We can be stable, steadfast, obedient and faithful workers in the Lord's vineyard. This perhaps is needed today more than anything else. There is power, great power, in a good example.

Example is defined as a representative sample, something forming a model to be followed or avoided. Example or ensample are used in the New Testament several times. In the King James English Version these words are used separately but they both mean the same thing. To further illustrate what we are talking about when we speak of an example, there is an old saying that states, "Actions speak louder than words." Another such that is very similiar is, "I had rather see a sermon any day than to hear one." In other words, it is easy to preach and teach and tell someone what to do, but what is said is often forgotten. The thing that impresses people more than anything else is *how* you live. That is the example that you set.

Let's think about the power of the example for a few minutes as we turn through the scriptures. Some of the stories told are used to illustrate a bad example and others to set forth a good example. Peter shows how God dealt with the wicked of the old world in sending the flood to destroy them. He continues by saying, "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." (2 Peter 2:6). The lesson for us, then, would be that if we live as they lived God will destroy us as he destroyed them. He might have simply said that if we live ungodly lives

we will have to suffer the consequences, but that is not nearly as convincing as when he goes back and mentions one case after another of God actually destroying the wicked. These are powerful examples to encourage us to live for God. Similiar lessons are taught in 1 Corinthians 10:6-12 as Paul relates some stories pertaining to the behaviour of the Israelites. After revealing how God had delivered them from bondage, he shows that many of them were overthrown in the wilderness because God was not pleased with them. Then he says, "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it written. The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also murdered,, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Again, the evil deeds of God's people are listed along with a description of how he dealt with them, and this serves as a powerful example to us that we should not go and likewise. Notice, he says that we not be idolaters, fornicators, or murderers: lest we should be punished as they were. He says that they are our examples that we should not do such things.

While we could dwell on many other stories that would serve to teach us that we should not follow those examples, we will now turn our attention to the good examples of others and the good examples that we ourselves should set. James shows how the prophets serve to teach us valuable lessons on the qualities we should have in our daily lives. He says, "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. Take, my

brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure, ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." (James 5:9-11). Of course as indicated in James 2:11 Christ is the greatest example of all for us. Luke tells us that he "began both to do and teach." (Acts 1:1). In John 13 Christ taught his disciples a great lesson by humbling himself to wash their feet. Then he said, "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than the Lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (John 13:13-17). The Lord did not wash the disciples' feet to leave an example that should be followed and practiced as worship in the church, as some would conclude, but rather he desired to teach them a lesson on humility. No doubt they had too much pride. They felt too important to bow down to wash anyone's feet. In that part of the world, where it was very arid and dry, the countryside was very dusty. With the practice of wearing sandals, when people came in off of a hot dusty journey, the host would offer water for the visitor to wash his feet. One's feet usually represent the lowly part of man, that which is dirty and unclean. Surely a person would wash his own feet but it would be difficult to wash another's feet. Jesus then humbled himself, as their Lord and Master to wash their feet. What a great example for them and for all! Surely if the Lord could wash their feet then the lesson was that they could do any needed service for one another.

But that is not all that Christ did in the way of setting an example. We could perhaps dwell at great length on the many



other things that would serve to teach us valuable lessons. At the very pinnacle of all of that would be the great suffering that he experienced on our behalf, and leaving us an example. As a matter of fact, Peter wrote, "For even here unto 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; Who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." (1 Peter 2:21-24). In this instance Peter is stressing that Christ left us an example in suffering, that even though he was without sin, he was willing to suffer for our sins, that in spite of the fact that he was reviled, he reviled not, although he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Since he is our example in all of these ways, and in so many others, then Peter exhorts that we should walk in his steps, or we should follow his example and strive to be like him. We could do nothing greater than that.

Speaking of the Thessalonians, Paul writes, "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not speak any thing." (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8). So Paul pays a great tribute to these brethren by saying that they had been ensamples or examples to all who had believed. He says that they had followed them in the Lord, had suffered much through receiving the word, and that they had sounded forth the word of the Lord to all in Macedonia and Achaia. Because of this, their faith had been spread abroad. That is, they had

shown others what it really meant to follow Christ and to spread his teaching. Others would do well to follow the pattern that they had set.

Paul, in discussing the conduct that he and others had demonstrated among the Thessalonians, said that they had done what they had done "to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us." (2 Thessalonians 3:9). To the Philippians, he said, "Brethren, be ye followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)". (Philippians 3:17-19). In 1 Corinthians 4:16, Paul wrote, "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me." Similarly, he said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1). How was it that Paul could be their example and even encourage them to follow him? Because he was following Christ and he knew that if they followed him they would not be following him as a man but in reality they would be following Christ. How wonderful it would be if we could so live that the same would be true when people follow us.

To the young preacher, Timothy, Paul wrote, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (1 Timothy 4:12). Older people often look down on young people. They are suspicious of them. They find it hard to believe that they could be serious about the more important things of life. They imagine them to be unstable, not dependable, weak, and worldly. Paul is therefore encouraging this young man to so live that no one can despise him because of his youth, but rather that he should be an example of the believers in his Christian behaviour and duties.

The Apostle Peter was an elder in a local congregation of the Lord's church and as such he encouraged his fellow elders to be an example before the flock instead of acting as lords. He encouraged them to lead instead of driving, to be humble instead of proud, to teach by doing rather than by commanding. He says, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (1 Peter 5:1-9).

In another passage Peter explains that a Christian wife can perhaps have more influence on her unbelieving husband by living a godly life before him than she can by constantly trying to teach him with the word. Hear him: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on apparel; But let it be the hidden man of

the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter 3:1-4). A wife can nag and nag at her husband to obey the Lord but she may never reach him. She can go along with her husband to please him but this will not bring him around. She can try to reach him through outward dress and beauty but neither will this touch him. Peter says that a quiet and godly life, where the wife shows the purity and devotion of the hidden man, or the heart, will do more to move her husband and to bring him to the truth than anything else. This is the power of a good example. Although the wife is mentioned here, likewise a Christian man may win his unbelieving wife through his faithfulness to the Lord. There is nothing quite like a person being able to see Christianity come to life in another person. This can have an influence on people when nothing else can.

We are all familiar with the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, when he said, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let you light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16). How simple these words are and yet what a great lesson is in them. Christ says that as Christians we are the light of the world. That is, we reflect the light of Christ. Through Christ we are the good influence in the world. We are the only light that the world knows. We are like a city that is set on a hill that cannot be hid. Everyone can see us. They know we are there. We are like a light on a candlestick that gives light to all that are in the house, yea, even the world. Just as one would not light a candle and then cover it up or hide it, neither should we allow sin or bad conduct to destroy our light or image as a Christian. Rather, we are to live in such

a way that all may see our good works and glorify the Father in heaven. Isn't that a beautiful thought? We say again, there is no greater power than that of setting a good example.

What kind of example are you? Are you living for Christ? What about your speech? Are you honest? Do you live a good moral life? Are you able to control your temper? Are you a good neighbour? Do you show love in your life for others? What kind of attitude do you have? Do you attend the assemblies of the church? Are you giving of your material means as you have been prospered? Are you ready to do whatever you can to help further the cause of Christ? Can Christ be seen in your daily life? Paul wrote, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20).

My brothers and sisters in Christ, let your life speak for Christ. You may quietly preach Christ through your example and have a great influence on those around you. Listen-worlds of people will never read the bible. They will never attend the various meetings of the church. They may never listen to a radio program or read a piece of literature. But they may watch and observe you in your daily life. They will read the gospel according to *you*. What will they read? How will your life read? Will it be a good record of Christianity? What a great responsibility we have, then, to use our example as a means of reaching people for Christ and through this to spread his cause. Thank God that from the least to the greatest, however we may be classified in the Lord's eyes, we can in this way render a noble service to Him.

## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO SIN?

There was a time when we knew about sin. We heard about it. It was spoken against. We knew what it was and we knew of its consequences. Those who engaged in it were frowned on, shunned, and disgraced. But it seems that times have changed. Attitudes toward sin are not what they were at one time. The word sin is almost never used anymore. For instance, how often do you hear the word sin used? How often do you hear someone talking about sin, or labeling a certain action as being sinful? Who knows anything about sin? What would be classified as sin today? As a matter of fact, many things that were frowned on at one time are now accepted. Many would be insulted for the subject of sin to be brought up.

As pointed out, many things that were at one time labeled as being sinful are now generally accepted. These would include homosexuality, living together outside of marriage, adultery, fornication, abortion, bad language, nudity, lying, cheating, murder, and many other similar acts. For example, a number of countries have now passed laws to legalize homosexuality. Those who engage in such now pass it off as being their own personal lifestyle. They are known as the "Gays" in some parts of the world and with the change of attitude toward them they have come out into the open to declare who they are and they seem to take pride in all of the attention they are getting. Some would pass them off as being sick, but they would reject even this idea. Actually, these are people who are involved in an unnatural act and the Bible labels it as being sinful and ungodly. Instead of being legalized, it should be outlawed. Certainly those who involve themselves in such a practice stand condemned before God and must repent of such activities in order to become Christians.

In the modern day society attitudes have so changed

toward morals that a segment of young people, and even some older people, have to live together as man and woman outside of marriage. They claim that marriage is old-fashioned and out of date. However, the young women in particular who get caught in this kind of philosophy will be the ones who will have to pay for it in the years to come. One can say what he wants to about marriage but where there is no marriage contract then the male will eventually feel free to walk out on the arrangement. But where will this leave the lady? It will leave her without a companion, perhaps with children, and who then will want to marry her? She therefore has all to lose and nothing to gain. Of course such living is bad and wrong and sinful. God's law demands marriage, and regardless of what the world has said it is not old-fashioned and out of date. It is as modern and up to date as today.

Akin to this are fornication and adultery. Fornication is an immoral act between man and woman both outside of marriage as well as in marriage. Adultery results when one is married lawfully and scripturally but puts away his or her companion without a scriptural reason and then marries another. (Matthew 19:9). More and more of these acts are being indulged in and it is becoming a sinful way of life.

Abortion is the act of killing a baby before birth. At one time this was done mainly where the life of the mother was in danger or where young women had become pregnant outside of marriage and rather than to go through the shame of having their child they would risk their lives by finding some one to do an unlawful abortion. But countries around the world, including Singapore, are now freely legalizing and performing abortions on thousands and even millions of women. In highly populated countries this may even become a popular means of holding the birthrate down. But this is nothing less than an act of murder. This is the killing of a new human being. It might be argued that this child is not a human being since it is yet

unborn. If it is not a human life then what is it? Would it be vegetable life? No. Would it be animal life? No, again. Then it must be human life. And if it is human life and it is aborted or destroyed then that means that it has been killed, and that is murder. Actually, what we have today is that thousands and millions of unborn babies are being murdered around the world. Isn't that a horrible thought?

When we read of what King Herod did at the time of Jesus' birth we think how terrible that he would send his soldiers to Bethlehem and have them kill all the male babies two years and younger. He did this because he had heard that Jesus was born to be a king and he feared that one day Jesus might challenge him for his throne. Of course Jesus was not going to be an earthly king but Herod didn't know this. Anyway, Herod has gone down in history as having been a fiendish person, a murderer of children. And he *was* all of that, but it has been estimated that maybe 200 children were killed at that time but that is nothing in comparison to the number of unborn babies that are being killed each day in our time. Thousands more than that are being aborted every day and yet most people think nothing about it. Another heinous act with which we are all familiar was what Hitler did in recent history. He also had a program of exterminating babies, crippled and insane people, and he attempted to systematically do away with all of the Jews living in his country. That was a horrible thing, no one will deny. But as bad as it was it was nothing in comparison to what is happening in our own time, and that lawfully. Various governments and countries have even borrowed some of Hitler's ideas and practices for their plans to eliminate the weak and unwanted from society.

As awful as the foregoing is, did you know that this could be just the beginning? As the people around the world harden themselves to this kind of thing, they will be ready for some further evils to be introduced. And this is already in the



works. In America, bills in many States have been formulated to permit older people who consent, and whose families consent, to be taken off drugs, medicines, and machines and allowed to die. Then eventually it may come to pass that crippled children, insane people, and people at a pre-determined age will be exterminated for the "good" of the rest of society. Yes, the world is changing in its thinking and attitudes toward certain evils, but this is not making the world any better.

Bad language is now accepted as decent language. Nudity is on the increase. Even more and more of it is seen in Asian films. It is somewhat controlled by the censors but the very fact there is a growing number of adult pictures tells us that something is wrong somewhere. Then add to that the many other social, moral, and religious acts and practices that are somewhat common place and you can begin to get the idea of why the question is being asked, "Whatever happened to sin?"

As an explanation for some of these things we are told that people who indulge in them are sick. Often times a murderer or one who is guilty of some other hideous crime tries to get by the law by pleading insanity. Some of these sins may also be explained away with "situation ethics." That is, people would say that it depends on where you are, the circumstances, and so on, as to how a certain act or practice may be classified. Of course the Bible teaches that sin is sin, that there is no double standard. Other evils that are practiced may results from the social values in certain places. In many countries the things we have discussed have been legalized, and are therefore lawful. But regardless of what laws man may pass, if a thing is sin it is sin. Then many would reason that "everyone does it" but they fail to realize that everyone can also be wrong. In recent times also the idea has grown up among young people in particular that one should be left to do

his "own thing". They reason that if you want to do it and feel that it is right for you, then who would have a right to object to it? This kind of reasoning, if practiced by all, would nullify all laws and would turn man loose to do as he pleased and thus the whole world would be flung into a chaotic condition. Neither has the women's lib movement helped the situation because the idea is basically that woman is liberated and should be free to do whatever she wants to do.

The question we need to ask, then, is: What is sin? It is said to be many things. Some of the words or synonymous that would define it would be "iniquity, offence, transgressions, wickedness, evil, bad, wrong, ungodliness", and so on we could go. The Apostle John tells us that "All unrighteousness of the law." (1 John 3:4). That is, God's word is our standard of authority and when we go beyond that law or when we break it then we have sinned or done wrong. In 1 John 3:8 he says that "He that committeth sin is of the Devil." Also, "If we say ... we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." (1 John 1:9). And Paul concludes, "For all have sinned." (Romans 3:23).

What does the Bible say about the sins that we have discussed thus far, and those who commit them? Let's go to the Bible and see. Paul writes concerning a wicked group of people: "For the invisible things of him from the creation are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth

of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.” (Romans 1:20-25). Here was a group of people who had turned from God and had begun to worship images of man, fowl, and beasts. They had gotten so far away that the Lord gave them up to their own destruction. That is going as far into sin as you can go.

Again Paul writes, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” Unless one turns away from sin he cannot be saved, and if one is not saved then he cannot be a part of the Lord’s kingdom or church. Neither can such a person go to heaven. That is how serious this question is.

A similar passage is found in Galatians 5:19-21: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, here sies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Here, and in so many other places throughout the scriptures, specific sins are mentioned. They are also specifically mentioned as works of the flesh and those who do them cannot enter the kingdom of God. It is true that since the church is made up of human beings, that a congregation of Christians—being human beings—might accept one or more into their fellowship who is guilty of one or more of these things but that does not mean that the Lord has accepted them. Also, one may claim that he has repented, and on this basis, may be accepted into the fellowship of the saints, but also again that does not mean that the Lord has added such

an individual to his kingdom or church. The only possible way to be saved and to be added to the church is for one to repent or turn away from all of his sins and thus to obey God that his sins might be washed away. (Acts 17:30; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Acts 2:47). But one other thing, and that is , someone might claim that Paul did not mention some particular sin and therefore that sin may be done without the Lord's disapproval, but Paul did mention it when he said, "... and such like." No doubt Paul, or the spirit who guided him to write these things, knew that the day would come when man would invent to himself similar acts and practices that would likewise be wrong and, so as not to leave them out, he summed up the whole thing by saying that one could not do these particular things, and such like, and expect to enter the kingdom of God or the church.

We are told what will happen to those who commit such sins: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Such is to say that all such people, those who do these things and all other bad things will be lost or will be cast into hell which is described as spiritual death, where one will be punished forever and forever. Yes, that is how serious sin is with the Lord and this is the consequence of sin. It should therefore not be taken lightly.

In Galatians 6:7, 8, Paul reminds us of this important truth: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." If we think we can sin without reaping the consequences, we are mistaken. We should not be deceived into thinking that sin is nice and that there is happiness in it. There have been those

who reasoned that it is to be expected that young people in particular would sow their wild oats or would go on while they are young and do some things that they will not do when they become older. These same people overlook the fact that when young people or old people sow to the flesh that they will also have to reap the consequence.

Finally, we read the words of Paul; "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23). It is true that you may go on and do all the things you want to do in life. You may engage in all of the sinful things that we have mentioned, and many others that we have not mentioned, and you may reason that this is your business. You may go and do them and even have the approval of others. But remember this one thing: You will receive your wages for this, if not in this life, at least in the world to come and your wages will be death, spiritual death, eternal death. You cannot live a life of sin without having to suffer the consequences sooner or later, and often times sooner. Even if you live a long life, and do not experience many consequences in this life, eternity is a long time to have to pay for a few short years of sin. You had better think about the value of your soul and ask yourself if you are really ready to sell it for a few worldly sinful things. (Matthew 16:26).

My brethren and friends, there are some facts that we need to face. We must realize that sin is sin, that we cannot hide from it, and we must rid ourselves of it or suffer the consequences. We can call it by many names, even pretty names; we can pretend that it is not there. Overlook it, try to hide it, but sin is still there. Only obedience to Christ can bring forgiveness or wash away our sins. (Acts 2:38; Matthew 26:28; Acts 2:47).

How do you view sin? Do you know what sin is? Do you recognize it? Do you condone it, wink at it, or hate it? Do you know what it can do for you? Have you repented of it in

your life, purified your body and soul of it, and are you working against it? Oh, how we as God's people need to be on guard against it, warning others about it, and pointing to a life of godliness and showing what it means to live such a life. And we have this promise from God's word itself, "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).

Whatever happened to sin? Although the word has somewhat been put in the background by the masses, nevertheless, the evil is still there—it is alive and strong—and still working in the lives of all accountable beings all over the world. It is still taking its toll, bringing heartaches, pains, sadness, sorrow, death, and eternal destruction to millions and billions. Again, we point you to Jesus Christ as the alternative, the only answer to sin. Through him, and only through him, can one rid himself of this killing disease and through him and only through him can one have the hope of life and life eternal. The wise will have no difficult choice to make when considering between the two.

## **THE VICTORIOUS KINGDOM**

There is nothing more thrilling than to experience victory. That is what life is all about: seeking to win, to be successful, to overcome. In sports, whether it be an individual or a team, the game is played to win, to defeat the opposition. Victory may not always come but at least that is the reason for all of the hard work and strenuous effort. Who wants to be on the losing side? Students go to school or to college to pass their course. They study, cram, and prepare for the examination

with the hope that they can make a passing grade. They do not want to fail and perhaps ruin their future. Likewise in the business world, the whole idea is to sell and make a profit. Some might go bankrupt, but the aim is to be successful. Countries go to war against each other with but one thought in mind and that is to be victorious over the enemy. During India's war with Pakistan, these words were constantly being spoken and heard, "Victory is Ours." A few years ago, during World War II, Churchill always gave his famous sign by holding up his hand with two fingers spread which symbolized 'V' for Victory. And so it goes in every phase of life.

Although all are constantly seeking victory or success, the goal is not always reached. Where two or more are playing a game, someone has to lose. It may be that both worked hard to prepare for it, but still that might not be enough. Sometimes students fail their course although they had high hopes of passing. Not all businessmen succeed. Some go broke. They lose all of their money. And not all countries win when they go to war. They may even lose their country and it may cease to exist. This means then that where there is victory for some there may be defeat and disaster for others. This is hard to take, but it is a fact of life nevertheless and we have to live with it.

Wouldn't it be nice to know that there is an area in which you can always win, where you can experience victory every time, and where it would be impossible ever to be defeated? Well, there is such an area or place. This is in the spiritual realm, in the Lord's kingdom or church. The Bible pictures the kingdom as a victorious kingdom. Therefore to experience victory all one needs to do is to be in this kingdom. Let's take a closer look and see what all this involves.

According to Ephesians 1 the kingdom or the church had its beginning in the mind of God. That is, he planned it, made all preparations for it and had the prophets to speak of

its coming. Then in passages like Isaiah 2:2, 3; Joel 2:28, 29 and similar references, the prophets of God foretold its coming. In Daniel 2:44 in particular we read, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." Here Daniel tells us when this kingdom would be set up or established. It would be in the days of a certain group of kings. According to the context, and the actual time in which the kingdom was established, it was in the days of the Roman kings. Furthermore, he said that God would set it up and that it would never be destroyed but then it would stand forever. Now that is reassuring, isn't it? We know that with earthly kingdoms, they are constantly coming and going, governments rise and fall, new countries are coming into existence while other countries are ceasing to exist. But in the case of this kingdom, it will never be destroyed. That is, it is impossible for it to be destroyed. And coupled with this, is the promise that it will stand forever. Once established, it would continue to exist for the rest of time and then it would stand through all of eternity. That is why we are referring to it as the victorious kingdom.

In Matthew 2:1, 2 John the Baptist came preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. It would be of heaven, from God, and it was nearby or would soon be established. Christ said to those gathered around him in his day, "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." (Mark 9:1). Since some of those who were living at that time would still be living at the coming of the kingdom, then evidently it came shortly thereafter. But if we can find when the power came then we may know when the kingdom was established because the kingdom was to



come with power. On turning to Acts 2 we may read of the coming of that power. It was originally promised to the Apostles (John 15:16) and was said to be the Comforter. He was to be given to them to call to their remembrance all the things that the Lord had taught them. Jesus had promised that he was going to establish his kingdom but they did not at that time fully comprehend the nature of the kingdom. Even at the Lord's ascension Peter was asking if he would not restore the kingdom, and he was thinking of the earthly kingdom of Israel. He thought that perhaps that Christ would return to this kingdom all of its power and glory but of course the kingdom the Lord was going to establish would be a spiritual kingdom. The spirit, then, would guide the Apostles in matters pertaining to kingdom so that no mistake would be made. Also, even though Christ taught the Apostles he would die, would be buried, and in three days would rise from the grave, they did not understand this before his death. When Christ did die, and after his burial, they somewhat gave up and returned to their original professions. They thought all was lost. But the Lord did come forth from the grave and go on to do the work that he had promised he would do. The Apostles then needed the power of the Holy Spirit to call to their remembrance all the things that Christ had taught them and to give to them the very words that they should speak, to guide them in all of their work to be sure that the kingdom or church was established and that it might victoriously spread throughout the world. The Spirit would also give the Apostles the power to speak in other languages so as to be able to preach the gospel among any language group they came in contact with without having to take precious time out to study the language involved or to be hindered by translators. He also enabled them to perform miracles to confirm the word inasmuch as the people did not have the completed New Testament to turn to read and study to see if the Apostles were preaching the pure

word of God, but through the signs and wonders that they would be able to do by the power of the Spirit, it would be obvious to all that they were indeed Apostles of God. So the kingdom was to come with power and the power was to be given for these reasons. Through all of this God's people were assured of complete victory.

So initially, God planned the kingdom, then He spoke of it repeatedly in prophecy. When Christ came, he himself promised to build the kingdom or the church. Jesus said, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:18, 19). Now what had Peter and the Apostles confessed here? That Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Based on that confession, the Lord said that upon this confession, or upon this rock, I will build my church. So the church would be built upon the fact that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. That foundation is a sure foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), with Christ being the rock, the chief corner stone. And Peter says that we as Christians are lively stones built upon that chief corner stone and that we are therefore built up a spiritual house, which is the family of God, the church. My friends, the church or kingdom therefore rests to this day on that foundation. Had the church not been built on such a foundation from the beginning, it would have long since crumbled and fallen away and would by now be forgotten. But it lives on even to this day and it cannot be destroyed and it will stand forever because it is built on Christ. But notice again that Christ said that he would not even allow death, or the gates of hell, to keep him from building the church or the kingdom. He knew he was going to die. He knew he would be going temporarily to the place of the dead. But he

said that he would not allow even this to keep him from building his church. And finally, Christ speaks of the church and the kingdom as being the same organization or institution. The terms church and kingdom are used interchangeably like the words body and church in Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 1:22, 23. Interestingly enough, prior to the establishment of the church, it is almost always spoken of as being a kingdom. This is always the case in the Old Testament and even in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the word church is used only about two times and all other times it said to be a kingdom. However, after the church was established, whereas at times it was spoken of as being a kingdom, it was usually referred to as being the church. But whether it is spoken of as being the church or the kingdom, the writer has reference to the same organization. Some have said that the Lord intended to establish the kingdom but when he got ready to do so, the Jews had rejected him and therefore he substituted the church, but at some future time the kingdom will yet be established. This is absurd. Surely the Lord knew what he was doing and surely he carried out his plan and established the kingdom, which is the church, on schedule. There is therefore no kingdom yet to come since it has already been established.

But continuing, when we turn to Acts 2 we will find that the Apostles were gathered in Jerusalem as the Lord had asked them to do (Luke 24; Acts 1:8), that a large crowd was gathered there since it was Pentecost, a Jewish feast day, and people had come from all over the world to observe it. Surely this was no accident. Then the power came, as promised. With the Spirit being poured out upon the Apostles, they had the power to speak in the language of the people that were gathered there and then they preached that Christ fulfilled the prophecies, and performed miracles, had died on the cross, had been resurrected, and appearing before many he had returned to the Father in heaven to sit down on the right hand

of God to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. As a result, there were those who were pricked or cut to the heart and they wanted to know what they should do. Being brought now to the point of belief, they were told to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Some three thousand of them gladly received the word and were baptized and the Lord added to the church those who were being saved. Thus we have the beginning of the church, or the kingdom. And please notice that from the very beginning, from the very first day, it was a great success. They didn't get down to the last minute and find that it would be necessary for it to be postponed or rescheduled. Instead, it started on time. Everything was on time. Everything went like clock work. Not only so, but from that day forward the gospel began to spread and the church or kingdom began to spring up everywhere.

The church had its enemies but persecution and all of the efforts to slow it down and to destroy it were unsuccessful. The record says that the disciples were scattered abroad but that they went everywhere preaching the word. (Acts 8).

The Hebrew writer tells us, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:28, 29). In the context he shows that everything in the earth and in heaven will one day be shaken and removed except for the one thing that will stand, and that is the Lord's kingdom. Concerning it, he says that it *cannot* be shaken or moved, As the prophet of old said, it cannot be destroyed; it will stand forever.

As the Lord's people, members of the church, the Lord's kingdom, we are on the winning team. We have the Lord's promise that he will be with us (Matthew 28:20), we have his word, which is the Sword of the Spirit (Hebrews

4:121), spiritual armour to protect (Ephesians 6), and all spiritual blessings in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3). We are free from sin, and as sons and daughters of the king we have nothing to be ashamed of in this world. We are told that even the devil cannot harm us, that is, if we will resist him he will flee from us. Too, Christ has promised to help us to overcome every temptation that befalls us.

As citizens of the Lord's kingdom we represent a preservative power for the world. As the Lord's family we not only have a loving Father to look to for help but we have each other to turn to in times of need. There is no need so great or small but that we can look to the Lord for help, day or night, all of our lives because he cares for us.

In the book of Revelation we read of many of the Lord's people being persecuted and even put to death. No doubt some were beginning to waver in their faith, but among all of the many other things set forth in that great book, three strong points are made: First, those who had suffered for the Lord would not lose their reward. That is a lesson we also must remember. Regardless of what we go through in his life, if we belong to the Lord and if we will but remain faithful to him unto death, then we will receive a crown of life. (Revelation 2:10). Second, just because there were persecution, problems, and difficulties, that did not mean that the Lord had forsaken them but that he was still on the throne and that he was still in charge of things. Likewise today, sometime we may think that God is far away from us, but this is not so. he still lives, reigns, and he is still in charge of things. Someone has said that if God should direct some individual to give an inspired account today of how he is working in the world then it would no doubt read much like the Bible. For instance, there are countries that rise and fall, governments that come to power and then go down and there individuals who rise to power while others are defeated. Does all of this happen by accident? Do you recall how Herod

in the long ago made a speech and the people said that God had spoken. Instead of being humble and refusing such an honor, he gloried in it and the record says that he was smitten of the Lord, being eaten of worms. Now if the inspired record had not revealed this fact, it might be said that Herod just died. Also, Ananias and Sapphira suffered death at the hand of God because they lied concerning their gift. Again, had it not been for the inspired account we might think that this couple died natural deaths. But in both cases, God brought them down. Does not God deal in the affair of man today as he did then? Surely God lives and he is still in charge of things. To reach any other conclusion would be serious mistake. And finally, in the end, the Lord's kingdom will be victorious. Oh, how wonderful to know that the Lord's kingdom will withstand all of its enemies and will live on forever more. How wonderful to be a part of such a kingdom and to have such assurance and such hope.

Brethren and friends, if we are citizens of the Lord's kingdom, the church, and if we are faithful citizens, then we are assured of victory. We are on the winning team and we cannot lose. We may be few in number, we may not have large meeting houses, we may be rejected and even mistreated, but with the Lord we are going to be victorious. We may hold our heads up, have every confidence, smile at the world, and take the initiative against all odds, because we have the Lord, the truth, we are members of the Lord's kingdom, and truly faith is the victory. Onward, therefore, Christian soldiers, as the song goes, marching as unto war the royal banner going on before.

My friends, if you are not in this kingdom, the church that we can read about in the Bible, then you are on the losing side. In the world, even in man-made religious bodies, you cannot win. As sure as you are living, you will be defeated. The only possible way to be a winner is to become a Christian

and a member of the Lord's church, which is the victorious kingdom that we read about in the Bible.

**“CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU” (Rom.16:16)**

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