

# **EXHORTATIONS**

## **Vol 2**

*by*

**J.C.CHOATE**

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## INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul wrote the Thessalonians thus, "For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance is unto you, that it was not in vain: but even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness: God is witness: Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God when ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is the truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:1-13).

Isn't that a beautiful picture? Paul and the other brethren therefore preached the pure gospel of Christ and they exhorted their hearers to obey it and to be faithful to it. Because of this they got results. We also thank God that we have God's word, the truth, and as a result we can proclaim the gospel. We are attempting to do just in the pages of this book. But in addition to the opportunity to read and study these lessons, you are blessed to be in position to have God's word, the Bible, to turn to, to be sure that you are reading those things that are based on God's will and therefore true. We would urge and exhort that you study the Bible with this material and with all other religious writings. Our souls are too valuable and too much is at stake for us to carelessly risk our eternal destiny by accepting and believing that which we read without a thorough investigation.

We hope that you will find these lessons helpful and profitable in your personal search for the truth.

J. C. Choate  
Church of Christ  
131, Moulmein Road  
Singapore 11.



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## **THE PENTECOSTAL PROBLEM**

Here in Asia, and around the world, there seems to be a great interest in Pentecostal teaching. This interest has been intensified as a result of the charismatic movement with the emphasis on "speaking in tongues" in most religious groups. No doubt a lot of this is a reaction on the part of many to the cold, routine, traditional and indifferent way of doing religious things. Therefore, the opposite extreme has a lot of appeal where all the stress is on closeness, warmth, participation, feelings, emotionalism, and the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. Both of these not only oppose each other but are contrary to the teaching of God's word. Why is it that man must always go off the deep end and end up in religious error? The Bible offers an alternative and that is the one way to God, the narrow way, the truth. (John 14:6). In this way one may follow the Lord but still be emotionally involved. To be cold and indifferent about it would render it heartless. To forsake the Lord for feelings only would be equal mistake. As stated, truth and emotionalism goes hand in hand in pure Christianity.

Getting back to the Pentecostal problem, let it be understood that that is exactly what it is—a problem. In the first place, the Pentecostals derive their name from the day of Pentecost and what happened on that day as recorded in Acts 2. Because the Apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on that day, and subsequently the power to speak in tongues and to perform miracles, there are many today who feel that they have likewise received the Holy Spirit and as a result that they can also speak in tongues and perform miracles. In reality, and contrary to their thinking of course,

they can do neither. But the whole thing is based on a misunderstanding of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. To understand it one must go back prior to the day of Pentecost and read and study those scriptures where the Lord promised the Holy Spirit, and especially the baptism of the Holy Spirit. To do that one will immediately note that Christ promised to send the comforter, or the Holy Spirit, which was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, to only a limited number and that number happened to be specifically the Apostles. (John 15:26, 27; John 16:13). Then when you turn to Acts 1 and 2 you will see that the Apostles were the ones who literally received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. As we read on in Acts 2 and the chapters following we see that the Apostles were the ones who spoke in tongues and performed miracles. (Acts 2:4, 43). We know that all did not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit to enable them to perform miracles because later on we have seven men being chosen who were full of the Holy Spirit but did not have the power to do miracles and it was through the laying on the Apostles' hands that they were given such power. (Acts 6). As a result, for example, Philip went down to Samaria and performed miracles, baptized a number of them, but he could not lay his hands on them that they might also have miraculous power and therefore Peter and John, Apostles, came down to lay their hands on a select number. Evidently it was a selected number since Simon was not one of those who received it although he wanted this power to the extent that he tried to buy it. (Acts 8). Therefore, we conclude from this that only the Apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit, which would include Paul, and later on Cornelius and his household to convince the Jews that the Gentiles were now accepted of God, but all others, with the exception of those the Apostles laid their hands on, that they might have miraculous power, received only the gift of the Holy Spirit, which carried no miraculous power with it whatsoever. Now since we are not

Apostles, and since there are no Apostles today to lay their hands on us to give us miraculous power, then that means that we do not have the baptism of the Holy Spirit and neither can we receive it. And that further means that without the baptism of the Holy Spirit or the laying on of hands measure of the Holy Spirit then we are not able to speak in tongues or to do any miracles. With regard to speaking in tongues, the Apostles did not mutter or stutter around making sounds and noises that no one could understand but rather when they spoke in other tongues that meant that they had the power to speak in other tongues or languages that they had not previously known. (Acts 2:6, 8). It is an admitted thing, however, that all of the Pentecostals are unable to miraculously speak in other languages as did the Apostles. When they travel to other countries they must speak through a local translator or interpreter. That means then that they do not have the baptism of the Holy Spirit as they claim.

In the second place, the Lord did not intend for the things that happened on the day of Pentecost to be so emphasized that such people would become known as Pentecostals. While these people may claim that this is a name that has been given to them, it could also be pointed out that it is also a name that they accept. That is, they call themselves Pentecostals. But what does the Bible say? It says that salvation is in the name of Christ, not in the name of Pentecost. (Acts 4:12). Furthermore, the Lord has promised to be with us only when we meet in his name. (Matthew 18:20). That means that when people meet in the Pentecostal name that the Lord is not with them. They might object by saying that they also meet in the name of Christ but if so then why are they Pentecostals? No, the Lord is not with them and will not be with them until they lay down their error to obey God.

In the third place, the Pentecostals claim that they have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and therefore the Spirit is

guiding them and all of that, and yet they are all divided up. They even reject one another, oppose each other, fight among themselves, and accuse each other of preaching false doctrine. Would the Holy Spirit lead some of them in one direction and others in another direction? Would the Holy Spirit have some to preach one doctrine and others to preach a conflicting doctrine? Would the Holy Spirit lead some of them into one church but have others to go into another church? Would the Holy Spirit condone man-made names, doctrines and practices? My friends, can't you see how that these people are utterly deceived.? Speaking of the evil, the wicked, the false teacher, the one who does not love the truth, the Bible says, “. . . Even him, Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in righteousness.” (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). These are the kind of people who do not love the truth and will not accept it when pointed out. They want to be deceived. They boast of their power and the signs and wonders that they are able to do. They claim that it is God who is doing them but God is not doing such because he has not promised to do so. If there are any signs and wonders done it would have to be through the power of Satan. But again, I stress that when people like this refuse to take God's word on these matters then it means that they do not love the truth. I remember one time talking to a Pentecostal woman who claimed that she had prayed for a sinner and God had saved her on the spot and then through prayer God had miraculously healed her of some disease. But I called her attention to what that Bible had to say about being saved, that Jesus said that one must believe and be baptized to

be saved according to Mark 16:16, and I continued to remind her of that until she finally became so frustrated that she threw up her hands and shouted, "I don't care what Jesus said." Well, to be sure, I was shocked that she would dare make such a statement. I then asked her how she could say such words. I asked her if the Holy Spirit had led her to make such a remark. She finally admitted that she had become excited and had spoken before she had thought. I then wanted to know if the Holy Spirit, since she claimed to be guided by the Holy Spirit, would allow her to get excited and to make such a statement before thinking. She never was able to fully explain what had happened. She was preaching error and when the truth become too much for her, then on her very own, and without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, because she never did have the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, then she declared that she didn't care what Jesus had said. But she was right—she didn't care what Jesus had said or else she would not have been following false doctrine. And the same applies to Pentecostals in general. They do not care what Jesus says. They are interested only in the Spirit, outward, fleshly, carnal, material things. They believe that they have some mysterious power and therefore that makes them better than everyone else and that is all that counts. But they are deceived. They have nothing. They certainly do not have the truth. If they had the truth then they wouldn't be all divided up. The Spirit would not so lead them.

In the fourth place, they are unable to speak in tongues as the Bible teaches and they cannot perform miracles. They would say that I am denying the power of God. I would ask then if they believe that God is still creating men and women out of the dust of the earth today as he did with Adam and Eve. If they explain that he is not, but that he has the power to do so, then I would ask them if they are not denying the power of God, if they are not limiting God. Sure, I believe God could put

on a new arm, give a person a new eye, raise one or more from the dead, that is, if he wanted to. But he doesn't want to. He doesn't have to. He has already proven himself time and time again. He is on record as having done all those things. Do you not believe it? Must he have to do it over and over again? Would you demand that he do so? What would be the purpose of it? If you do not believe the record that includes all of the miracles that God did, would you believe a miracle today even if you saw it with your own eyes? Those things were written that we might believe, and miracles were done to confirm the word. (John 20:30; Mark 16:20). My friends, the word has already been confirmed. It is time for you to believe it and obey it. He has not promised that he will confirm it again. But if you still maintain that miracles are for God's people today, then I challenge you to go out to the graveyard and raise one, two, a dozen, and all the dead that are there. You can't, and you know you can't. I challenge you, or anyone, to go to the hospitals and miraculously heal all the sick that are there. You can't and you know that you can't and neither can anyone else. I challenge you to put a new leg on that person that doesn't have one or to give a blind man new eyes. You can't and you know you can't. Has God failed? No, because he didn't promise to do such things. You are deceiving people. You are an imposter. You are the servant of Satan.

My friends, beware of the Pentecostals. Do not let them deceive you. Demand that they show you in the Bible where the scriptures call them Pentecostals. Have them to demonstrate their power by putting on a new arm, giving the blind a new set of eyes, on raising the dead. If they cannot, then you know that they are not living up to their claims. Ask them to speak in some language they have never studied. Question them about the church they are members of and the name that they wear. Compare their teaching with the word of God. If you will do this then you will surely be able to see them



for what they are.

The Pentecostal Movement is a problem in the sense that it represents many deceived souls, people who are using magic tricks to get attention and to gain followers, people who are teaching error. They claim to be following God but are lost. They claim to be guided by the Holy Spirit but are divided. They claim to be able to perform miracles but are unable to produce any real proofs and evidences of such. You, our readers, are urged to follow the scriptures, not the Pentecostals. Only the Lord can save you as you do his will. Then you will be a Christian, not a Pentecostal. That is the big difference.

## **PREACHING IS NOT ENOUGH**

The Lord has commanded that we go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15). Paul exhorted Timothy, "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. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lust shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Timothy 4:1-4). Again, Paul said, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18). Then he said to the Romans, after talking to them about the importance of the preacher and his bringing forth the good news, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and

hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10;17).

And on and on we could go in quoting statements from the scriptures that emphasize the importance of the preacher and his message. A great amount of stress is placed on this because this is God’s way of spreading his word. He wants one and all to know his will. He wants man to know what has been done for him that he might be saved. He wants man to know of his sin and his need of salvation. All of this is done through preaching. In all of the cases of conversion, the preacher was always there. The Lord has not promised to intervene and go to man directly to reveal his will. He has not seen fit to send an angel or to speak to man in the stillness of the night or to appear to him in a dream. Man’s only hope of knowing God’s will is through the means of preaching. This is the way faith is produced, and with a knowledge of God’s will, and with faith in it, then man is in position to act on it. Only through hearing the gospel then, and believing it, and obeying it can one be saved. There is no other way.

But as important as preaching may be, preaching and preaching alone, even when it is the truth, is not enough. For example, it is possible to hear the gospel and not believe it. In that case one will be damned. (Mark 16:16). It is also possible to hear the gospel, and even to believe it, but still not be saved. “But be ye doers of the words, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” (James 1:22). Far too many hear the gospel over and over, and even believe it, but they are still lost because they have not chosen to obey it. How sad. No telling how many people in this old world have heard God’s will at one time or another, and some have heard it over and over again, but they continue to neglect their salvation. Yes, they know the truth. They know, too, that they will be lost if they do not obey it. Nevertheless, they continue to procrastinate. Why? Sin, love of the world, not feeling the urgency of acting now. They believe and yet they do not

believe. If they had the faith that they should have then surely they would lose no time in obeying God.

No, it is not going to be easy to obey God. Some effort will have to be put forth. You will have to take a stand for the Lord, confess him as the Son of God, be buried in the waters of baptism to be saved and added to the church. (Matthew 10:32; Acts 22:16; Acts 2:47). On doing that you will then need to meet with the Lord's people every first day of the week to worship the God of heaven as he has prescribed in his word. (Acts 20:7; John 4:24). You will also be expected to wear his name, honor him, not to be ashamed of him, live for him, work for him, give to him, and if necessary to die for him. (Romans 12:1, 2; Revelation 2:10). No, this will not be easy but neither is living without the Lord easy. Without Christ you are lost, in sin with all of its consequence, and without all of the spiritual blessings the Lord gives to those who belong to him. You can't call upon God as your Father since you are not his child and he is not your Heavenly Father, and you have no hope after this life. When you put it that way it is easy to be a Christian. The only kind of preaching then that is going to be worth anything to you is the kind that you act on.

Why must we as Christian sit through sermon after sermon, especially those that are directed to us for our spiritual growth and the purpose of exhorting us to work for the Lord, and yet we are never touched enough to respond to them? Why hear at all if we are not going to obey? Hearing is important but hearing alone will not help us or anyone else. Rather, we need to hear with the thought in mind that if this is God's will, and if it applies to me, and I can better my life, or there is some good work that I can do, then I want to rise up and do that. If we as individual Christians would have that attitude then think of the difference it would make in our lives and think what a blessing it could be to the cause of Christ. And if we would act as a group then there would be no end to

what we could accomplish for the Lord. That is our great need at this time.

Then as preachers we must not only realize that we have the responsibility of proclaiming God's will but I think if we see that our preaching is producing no results then we need to take a close look at ourselves, our preaching, and see what can be done to be more effective. In the first place, I must be sure to be a Christian, one who lives and practices what he preaches, one who is sincere, and one who loves the souls of men. In the next place, I must lead the way and show the members in particular what it means to work for the Lord, how to do personal work, and how to get things done. I must be positive in my attitude. I must believe in what I am doing and be able to convince others that this is what needs to be done.

Finally, as preachers we often find ourselves doing as the religious world around us, and that is, we preach at the various meetings with the attitude that those who want to hear God's will and know the truth should come to the meeting place. The Lord said, however, that we should go to the lost to preach and teach the gospel. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16). Paul went from door to door. (Acts 20). Yes, it requires initiative to do that. It requires real effort, hard work, and inconvenience. It means that we'll have to go out and contact people in their place. Maybe it is at their home, in the office, on the job. Perhaps some meetings can be arranged in the home of a member who would like to have some of his friends to come in to hear the gospel. Whatever can be arranged, then it should be done. There are many people all around you, in your city, in your village, in your housing area, and over the country that would like to hear the gospel. Some of them would obey the gospel if we would but take it to them. My brethren, that is where you and I come in. God wants us to go out and preach to them. If we do not then that means that we are not only failing them but we are likewise failing the Lord.

Our preaching can be much effective if we will consider the methods that we are using and set out to make the necessary corrections. Why preach just to preach? We want to preach to as many as possible and to get as much results as we can. We can do far more than we are doing. May God help us to be conscious of our great responsibility to preach the gospel and of all the blessings that will come from it when we so do. And may God help us to so preach as to cause the hearer not only to believe but to obey the Lord. This is the kind of preaching that can be effective and is the kind of preaching that we need.

## **THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

Here in Asia we are familiar with the various religious communities. We hear about the Hindu Community, the Muslim Community, the Sikh Community, and even the Christian Community. Besides these, there are yet many others.

All of this on the surface sounds very good. Although it implies the division of the various groups, it would still suggest that each community is unified, is at peace, has its own interests, its own way of life. It would further lead one to believe that there is little or no contact with other communities, that each sustains itself, that it grows chiefly through physical birth, that it acts as a unit, that it may choose to vote or not vote for a certain party, that it has a spokesman, and that it is made up of a body of people who are communal in nature. It would also indicate that it has its own businesses, its own schools, its places of worship, its festivals, and that its sole existence is to survive and to care for the needs of its own

members without being overly concerned with the plight of others.

Taking a closer look, however, one will note that each community is divided into sects, with its own teachings, leaders, places of worship, festivals, way of life, and goals. The only way they may fit together is by loosely referring to all of them as Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and so on.

For instance, the only possible way for the church of Christ to be linked with the churches would be through the general term, Christianity. In other words, all who believe in Christ might be said to represent Christianity. This is the world's way of looking at it, and of those within denominational groups who would accept this definition, but this is not true with pure Christianity as set forth in God's word, the Bible. We need to understand this, all others need to understand this, to appreciate Christianity for what it is. If all one sees is the kind of Christianity that is made up of many sects with all kinds of names, doctrines, and practices, then it is little wonder that they have not been impressed by Christianity because this is but a corrupt form of it.

Pure Christianity as set forth in the Bible is made up only of those who have sincerely and scripturally obeyed the teachings of Christ and as a result of that they have been saved and consequently have become known as Christians, that is, followers of Christ. Everyone who becomes a Christian does so in the same way. There is one Lord, one saviour, and he has but one word and through that word he directs all to believe (John 3:16), all to repent or turn away from their sins (Acts 17:30), all to confess Christ as the Son of God (Matthew 10:32), and all to be baptized to be saved. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Then of course the Lord saves each one who does this.

All of these Christians together make up or comprise what is called the church. It is Christ's church. He promised it, died for it, shed his blood for it, is the head of it, and is the

saviour of it. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2; Ephesians 5:27; Acts 20:28; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23). Therefore, it wears his name. (1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 16:16). This being the case, when he saves one or more then he adds them to his church. (Acts 2:47). He adds all the saved to it. If one is saved he is a member of it. If one is not a member of it he is not saved.

In pure Christianity the Lord's people do not grow in number through mere physical births. It is true that Christians are to properly teach and train their children so that eventually when they reach the age of accountability they may want to become Christians but even then each one will have to make his own personal choice. Christians are not physically born and neither can the parents have their children christened or sprinkled to make them Christians. Again, let it be emphasized that Christians are the result of teaching and obedience to the gospel of Christ. This is called a new birth or spiritual birth. (John 3:3-5). In pure Christianity we not only attempt to teach our children so that they will grow up to become Christians, but we also believe in going to the denominational "Christian", to the non-Christian or to the unbeliever, in an attempt to teach him God's will and to convert him to the Lord's way. This is the main way we have of increasing our numbers. We are not content to remain at a certain level but we want to reach out to those all around us, to our whole country, and to the whole world. Christ said that we should go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15, 16; Matthew 28:19, 20). We believe that Christianity is good for us and we believe that it is good for all the world. We seek to accomplish this through teaching, example, and love. We would never resort to force, persecution, bribery, or deceit.

The Christianity as set forth in the Bible has no earthly head or headquarters. Rather, the Lord's people, the church,

recognize but one head and that head is Christ. (Ephesians 5:23; Ephesians 1:22, 23). He has all power and authority in heaven and in earth. (Matthew 28:18).

Pure Christianity has no manual, guide book, discipline, or confession of faith apart from the Bible. God has spoken and he has spoken through his Son and that message is revealed through the Bible. (Hebrews 1:1, 2; Matthew 17:5, Timothy 3:16, 17). Therefore, if we want to know what the Lord would have us to do then we go to the Bible. We do not depend on signs and wonders, a voice from heaven, an angel to appear to reveal God's will, or a dream. We have literature through which we strive to teach God's word, just like a preacher verbally preaches God's word, but these are not on par with God's word. What man writes or says is not equal to the scriptures. Man may err but the Bible contains the truth and it must have the final say. We are not to add to it, subtract from it or substitute for it in any way. (Revelation 22:18, 19; Galatians 1:6-9).

We have meeting houses but they follow no particular architectural pattern. The meeting house is only a means to an end, to provide the Lord's people with a place to worship. We may at the same time meet in a home, in a school building, in a hall, in a hut, or anywhere else where the Lord's people decide to meet. We do not worship the meeting place or have any shrines there. We do not have images, pictures, candles, incense, altars, or other similar objects that would detract and prevent us from worshipping the God of heaven.

We have no saints, holy men, fathers, priests, reverends, or other highly exalted men or women. Every Christian is saint, a priest of God, a teacher of the Gospel, and a minister to the need of others. We are both servants and kings as we reign with Christ who is the king of kings and the Lord of lords.

We have no festivals, holy days, or other such things



that would make us peculiar and different. We do not celebrate Christmas or Easter, do not observe Lent, or have a fast day or month of fasting. We meet each first day of the week to worship the Lord and through the Lord's Supper to remember the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection.

We do not have a special dress that would distinguish us from all others. We don't have to wear a cross, or abstain from meats. We are governed only by the Lord's word. We are simple people, who dress modestly, strive to be pure in thought, speech, and life. We are not odd, unusual, and fanatical. We love our country, strive to be a good neighbour, try always to tell the truth and to be honest in our dealing with all people. We believe in God's law of marriage, one husband and one wife, and to train up our children in the way they should go. We are Christians.

We are one people, one church, the Lord's church. We are Christians and Christians only. We mix and mingle with all people. We do not want to live in a community to ourselves or out off away from everyone else. We want to have peaceful and normal lives with the opportunity to practice the pure religion of God and to show the rest of the world what it means to be a Christian and then leave it to each one to decide for himself if he will be a Christian or not. We would invite one and all to consider Christianity, but be sure that it is pure Christianity and not an adulterated form of it. When it is pure it is beautiful, appealing, and desirable. Take a close look and see for yourself. Whether you realize it or not you need Christ and Christ needs you. Christianity can change you and give you hope and it can do the same for the world. This is our life, our work, and our goal.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF ONE**

God loves all, wants all to be saved, wants the gospel taken to all, but he deals with one person at a time. Although there are millions, and even billions of people, still he is mindful of you. To prove it he gave his Son to die for you. That being true, then it means that you are very important to the Lord. He wants you to hear his will, to believe in him, to obey his teaching, to be added to his church, and to live for him. There is one Lord and there is one you. The Lord has done his part to make it possible for you to be eternally saved. Now it is up to you to do your part. If you are not a Christian then you need to become one right there where you are by believing in Christ, repenting of your sins, confessing him before men, and by being baptized (buried) in water that your sins might be washed away. (Mark 16:15, 16; Romans 10:10; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). If you are a Christian then you need to be faithful to the Lord by worshipping him each first day of the week (John 4:24; Acts 20:7) and by living the faithful Christian life (Colossians 3:7; Revelation 2:10; Revelation 22:14).

The problem is that you may be off some where far away from us or other Christians. You may have heard the gospel by means of radio, through some literature, or even through this article, and would like to obey God, but since you are alone, and you are unable to come to us then you may reason that you can't. You may reason that you are unimportant, that being only one person that you would not be worth much to the Lord, and so on. But this is incorrect. Regardless of who you are, what you are, what you have been, or where you are, you are important to the Lord. If you are unable to come to us or we are unable to come to you, still there is hope. Please do not give up. First of all, it is important that you know that you are a sinner, that you need the Lord, and that you need forgiveness. Then it is important to know

that the only way you can be forgiven is you to come to the Lord on his terms. Forget about what man has told you. Forget about what even religious leaders have said. You must turn to God's word to learn what he would have you to do only after you know his will can you obey it. As already stated in the foregoing, he would have you to believe in him with all your heart. (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6). Then he would have you to repent of your sins or to turn away from any and all bad things in your life. If you have been living a good moral life and all of that, still you must repent or turn away from that of trusting in your own goodness to save you and realize that as a sinner that only Christ can save you. (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9). Next, you must be willing to confess Christ before men, that is, to let one or more know publicly that you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that you are not ashamed of him. The Lord wants you to go on record that you believe in him. So the confession with the mouth that you believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God is necessary. This is a commitment that you make and one that you will want to live by. (Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32, 33; Acts 8:29-39). And finally, you will want to be baptized or buried in the water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit for the remission of your sins. (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3, 4; Acts 8:26-39; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Matthew 28:18-20). Now when you sincerely obey the Lord then he will save you and add you to his church, the one church of the Bible, the church of Christ. (Acts 2:47; Romans 16:16). Through your obedience you will also enter Christ or the spiritual body of Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:26, 27). As such you will be a Christian.

Now the question would be, who will baptize you? Like we have already said, if it is impossible for us to get together with you to baptize you then naturally you will have to seek out

someone around you. But please be careful about this. If you go to some denominational preacher he will probably want you to be baptized according to his denominational teaching and he will want you then to be a member of his church. He could do it, if there was no other available, but in that case you should not let him mislead you into thinking that you are joining his church. You should have it clearly understood that you are obeying God to be a member of the Lord's church. Once you are baptized you should not have fellowship with his church but, as we are going to show in a minute, you should begin to conduct worship in your home or somewhere according to the teaching of the New Testament. But it would probably be better for you to talk to some man, one who is not a preacher, and request him to baptize you. He will probably tell you that he cannot do so or that he doesn't have the authority to do so, but you can assure him that you are the one that is obeying the Lord and that he is merely helping you to do so. But even better than that, in all probability, maybe you could have some young man, perhaps a relative, who is big enough and strong enough to baptize you. Again, explain to him that you want him to baptize you so that you might obey the Lord. Go then to a tank, a lake, a river, the ocean, the sea, a stream of water, or any body of water that is big enough so you can be immersed in it and there have him to baptize you. You can go any time of the day or night but you shouldn't keep putting this thing off to a more convenient time. Make up your mind that you are going to obey God and then do it. You'll be glad you did.

Then you will want to know if you can be a Christian by yourself. Of course you can, but in all probability you will not be alone for very long. Now that you are a Christian the next thing you will want to do is to begin to conduct worship in your own home or somewhere where you can have some peace and quiet. If you have a family then you ask them to meet with

you. If you are not married then you can ask some friends to meet with you. Maybe you know of some denominational people who can come to the meeting. But you should set a time on the Lord's day or on Sunday and you should meet at that time by yourself, or with others if they will meet with you, and it would be a good idea to do that every Sunday at the same time. You might be able to meet in some hall, in a school building, or some place like that. You should meet each Sunday (Acts 20:7) and in your worship you should have prayer (Luke 18:1), you should have some singing (Ephesians 5:19), and that should be vocal singing only (Colossians 3:16), and you should have the Lord's Supper, unleavened bread in remembrance of the body of Christ and fruit of the vine or grape juice in remembrance of the blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:23-29; Matthew 26:26-28), and you should have a period of Bible reading and study (2 Timothy 2:15), and then you should have a contribution or set some of your money aside to use in the work of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7). As you continue to do this, and as you continue to teach, then maybe in a short time you will have one or more who will also obey the gospel, and in this case you can baptize them, then you will have fellow Christians to worship with you. If I am speaking to a lady who has become a Christian then you will have to talk to your husband, relatives, or friends, and study with them until you eventually have a male who is willing to obey God and once that is done then he can take the public lead in worship. Until then, then you will have to meet by yourself or with children and the other ladies who may be willing to do so.

You might reason that you can't do this. Oh yes, but you can. You must. As a Christian and with the help of the Lord, you can do all things. It is even more important that you obey God and worship according to his will, that is if you know the truth, because it is up to you now, and the Lord is counting

on you, to represent him and to teach those who are around you. As a person you go out and get work, get married, have a family, and do many things. As one who loves the Lord you can also obey him, worship him, teach his word, and live for him. If you will then he will be with you, help you, bless you, and reward your efforts. Soon there can be several meetings to worship the Lord as the scriptures teach. You may be surprised at what just one person can do. Remember, the Lord is looking to you and counting on you.

You and the others who likewise obey God can perhaps move over to the next village or city and begin to preach the gospel there and start a congregation in that place. The work can grow to the extent that you have faith and determination to go forward with it. It is up to you to take the initiative. It is up to you to lead the way. Others will soon follow if you will do so. You will be amazed at what one person can do if you will but work at it. And there is much to do. Just keep going. Here is the whole country of India before you. Maybe you are the very one that the Lord is looking to evangelize this great land. Think of what a blessing it could be to you and countless others.

Now Satan will tell you that you can't do this. He will have others to tell you that you can't. He will try to scare you and to frighten you. You may reason that you are poor, that no one will listen to you, that you don't have the ability to do it. You may think that you need help. You may allow such things to discourage you. If so then you are not the man the Lord can use. But if you go to work and do what you can then the Lord will take care of the rest. Remember, that with the Lord's help you can do all things. Do you believe that? Then go out and prove it.

## **BUILDING A STRONG CONGREGATION**

The church in Asia is relatively young. Nevertheless, it is to be found throughout the area. Many of the congregations are small and are struggling to survive. It will therefore take time for the members to grow spiritually to see the emergence of strong congregations. The church must be strong to do the work that God wants done.

To date, the church throughout the area has been hindered greatly by people who rushed in to try to take advantage of the beginning of a new work. In other words, this represented an opportunity for them. Foreign preachers, not knowing the situation here, would be easy prey. Perhaps it would mean a job, some food, clothing, schooling in America, or some other material gain. The church therefore in the beginning years has been hit by hirelings and opportunists. Most of these have come out of a denominational background who never were converted to begin with because of their motives, and so the little teaching that these have done has not helped the church but rather it has been greatly hindered by false teaching and practices. They have also hurt the work too in the sense they have not been interested in the growth of the church but rather have been pre-occupied in keeping their job. Only with the coming of a missionary would they attempt to "gather" up some people for baptism so as to impress the man from abroad. In some cases they so use the local people that when the preacher of the church of Christ visits then they put the signs saying **CHURCH OF CHRIST** and when he leaves then they put up another sign. Now this is not to say by any means that all of the preachers or all of the members in general fall into this category. But I am saying that we have more than our share of such people and because of this then the Lord's work has been hindered and therefore the church has not grown as it should have.

Not only that, but the local people have been too dependent on outside help. But mark it down, for the church to grow and become strong then the local members are going to have to take the lead. They must decide that they are the ones to take the responsibility since the work involves their souls and the souls of their people. They must therefore invest of their time, money, and energies. They must preach, lead, and sacrifice. All of the money in the world, and all the help that can be provided, will not build a strong church unless the local people have been taught, converted, and are willing to give of themselves to further the cause of Christ.

In New Testament times we read of strong congregations of the church in various places. First of all, consider the church at Jerusalem. The church was not only first established there but it followed through with numerical and spiritual growth. It stands out as a great example of what one congregation can do. On its beginning day around 3,000 were added to the church. (Acts 2). A short time later the number was up to 5,000. (Acts 4:4). The members continued stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine and teaching and praying, breaking bread, giving, and so on. (Acts 2:42). They were so concerned about each other's welfare that they shared their material things with each other. (Acts 2). When a persecution came upon the church, the Apostles stayed on in Jerusalem while the members were scattered abroad, but nevertheless, they went everywhere preaching the word. (Acts 8). The Apostles and others went forth from Jerusalem preaching the gospel and often returned to this great church for further fellowship. They were very poor, and for certain weren't sending out preachers to put preachers on support, as so frequently practised in our times. We know they were poor because later on the Christians in other areas took up a collection to send to the poor saints in Jerusalem.

We then read of the great church that existed in



Antioch. This congregation was made up of both Jews and Gentiles but is remembered as the first great Gentile congregation. We remember too that it was at Antioch that the disciples began to be called Christians. (Acts 11:26). Also it was the church at Antioch that with prayer and fasting sent Paul and Barnabas out on their first missionary journey. (Acts 13). Later they returned to Antioch to report what God had done through them and after some time Paul went out on his second journey, and later, on his third journey. They were likewise poor in this world's goods. There were problems. Transportation was difficult. Communication was slow. Yet, they had faith, zeal, courage, and determination to go forth with the gospel of Christ. They took God's word to a lost world. They left behind Christians and congregations who were able to carry on all by themselves. They were likewise able to grow and develop to the point that within a short time they could even appoint Elders and Deacons. This should be a great example for us today.

Too many think of a strong congregation as one having a large membership, a large contribution, with its own meeting house, having its own preacher, and so on. While these things may have their place, that does not necessarily make a strong church.

When is the church strong? When it is sound in the faith (Titus 1:13), when it is pure and godly (1 Timothy 5:22), when it is united (John 17:20-23), when it is giving not only financially but of its own self to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:5), when its members are working and bearing fruit (2 Thessalonians 2:17; John 15:1-8), when it is prayerful (Acts 2:42), and when it has good, sound, spiritual, and strong leaders. When it is this kind of church then it may need some help but it will not depend solely on that help. It may be small but it will not remain small. It may be poor materially, but it will be rich in good works.

The church needs to be strong because it has a great work to do (Mark 16:15, 16), the stronger it is the more it can do, to win more souls, to begin new programs of work, to overcome the enemy, to resist false teaching, to set an example for others, to lend to stability, and to honor the Lord in all that it does. No doubt many other good reasons could be listed as to why the church needs to be strong. But it is either growing strong or becoming weak. It is either to do its work or not able to do it.

With the foregoing thoughts in mind then we come to this most important question for our consideration: What can be done to make the church strong? First, the work needs to be planned. Don't expect the church to grow with no fore-thought and no planning. What business, school, or government could survive for long without such? The church is the greatest institution in all the world with the greatest work the world has ever known. Surely it requires some interest, concern, the men getting together to think about its work, what it can do, and so on. Second, every member of the church needs to be involved. We don't need spectators, those who just come to worship but who never contribute anything beyond that. We need participants, those who are willing to commit themselves, to make some contribution to the over-all work of the church. We need to find out what each member can do and then put each one to work. Maybe some members can do more than one thing. Third, the church needs to be evangelistic. Don't wait for people to come to worship or to ask for a period of Bible study. The Lord has commanded us to go to the people. We should be going to the lost to let them know that we are interested in them, that we love their soul, and that we have some good news for them. The whole work of the church should be evangelistic in nature with no apologies to be made. Fourth, we should feel challenged and be so zealous for the Lord that we are eager to take on a lost world. We should be

able to see opportunities all around us to work for the Lord. We should be alive and active for Christ. Christians should be happy and excited about their role in the Lord's church. Fifth, we should be aware of the value of souls and make every member of the church aware of such. Only then will we put forth some effort for the Lord in the interest of saving our own souls and likewise in the interest of saving the souls of others. My, why can't we realize that the world is lost and it is up to us who have the truth, the light, salvation, and hope to take the good news of salvation to those about us. Suppose we don't take it. Then we will be lost and think of all who will have to suffer for it. As a matter of fact, we hold in our hands that which the world needs. We can therefore change the course of history. If we fail then not only will souls around us have to suffer for it but the world itself will suffer the loss of not having the gospel preached to it and the influence the gospel can have on it. Such is not to say if the gospel were to be preached to the whole world that all would obey God, but no doubt enough people would do so that those few could influence the rest of the world for good. So we need to realize the value of souls and the potential we have for the Lord when we set out to reach souls for him. Sixth, we need to engage in personal work realizing that we win souls one at a time. Every Christian therefore should be a soul winner. Seventh, we need to give as the Bible teaches. This includes first of all giving ourselves to the Lord. Then we will be prepared to give of our time, our financial means, or whatever we have to give to the cause of Christ. Eighth, we need to have some specific goals for the congregation of which we are a part. We need to have goals for winning souls, for attendance, for contribution, to make it self-supporting, to have our own meeting place, to begin other congregations, and so on. We should not only have goals but we should work hard to meet those goals and then go on to set new ones.

No doubt we could add much to what has already been said, and also we could think of additional points to add to the ones already listed, but surely enough has been said to cause us to be conscious of the need for building a strong church. It is honor to you or to me or to anyone else, and especially to the Lord, for the church to remain weak and dependent on others to help. Instead, the church needs to be strong, growing, working, producing, and accomplishing the great work that God wants done. In this way the church can be an asset to the community, to the country, to the world, and can bring glory to God.

How would you classify the congregation where you are? How would you classify the church here in your area? Do you think there is room for improvements? What can you do to help it to grow and to become strong? Your answer may make the difference.

## **FEAR OF COMPETITION**

One of the great hindrances to the cause of Christ is the fear of competition. With the church being young, and still without men who are qualified to be elders and deacons, and with congregations being few in number in most cases, then much of the leadership is left to the local preacher. With him possibly untrained, inexperienced, and on foreign support then the tendency is for him to protect his position and his salary. This is especially true if he is nothing but a hireling, but even if he is a good, sincere, faithful preacher, he may also be tempted to protect his job. This being true, the congregations usually stay small, the men are not encouraged to develop their abilities and neither are they used. This may

discourage them to the point that they may eventually quit. The preacher therefore is often left not only to do the preaching but also to teach the classes, to lead the prayers, and even to direct the singing and to wait on the Lord's table. A congregation that is so dominated by one person seldom grows to any size.

The idea is that the preacher is afraid of growth and development on the part of local men. He fears that if they become capable of doing the things that he does that he may be eventually challenged. He is afraid that he may even lose his salary since someone might be able to do a better job than he is doing. Therefore, since he is in position to control the situation then he may do just that. He would then offer an excuse for others not developing by saying that they are not interested, that they are not faithful, and so on. Such a preacher is no leader and therefore he should be dismissed. He will never build a strong congregation. He will only make certain that he keeps his job.

The congregation that supports him, or the foreign brethren who give his salary, should periodically take a good long hard look at their preacher and the kind of work he is doing. They should take note of his personal life, his family, the kind of friends he has, his study habits, his work load, whether he is converting anyone or not. If the church is growing or not, what kind of program the congregation has, if any plans have been made, if any goals have been set, if the members are developing and if any progress is really being made. If a congregation goes year after year, and remains about the same, then obviously something is wrong. Perhaps this preacher doesn't have the knowledge and ability to do the job that he has been given to do. Or maybe again, he is protecting his job. Or he may be doing an excellent job considering the given circumstances. In any case, the brethren need to take note and act upon their findings.

A good preacher, a capable preacher, one who really loves the Lord and his work, has nothing to fear. He will work hard, convert the lost, develop a program of work to involve the whole church, and train his brethren so they can work along side him to accomplish more for the Lord. He would welcome all the help he can get since it is impossible for one man to do all that need to be done. Even if there are those who excel him in various ways, still he can take satisfaction in knowing that he has helped, encouraged, taught, and made it possible for such a person to develop his abilities so that he can do what he is doing. Fear of others, jealousy, envy, deliberately holding one back, failing to provide the church with proper leadership is wrong and sinful, and such is not the Lord's idea of a Christian leader.

We need strong leadership in the church here in Singapore and Malaysia. It is going to take this if the church is to ever grow and spread throughout this region. It therefore must begin at the local level. We need men, both preachers and non-preachers, who will grow and develop to the point where they have the respect of the people around them. We need men, two or more in each congregation, who will reach the place in their spiritual growth where they can be appointed as elders over the local congregation. (1 Timothy 3: Titus 1). We need likewise two or more men in each congregation who will develop themselves to the place where they can become deacons to work with the elders. We need preachers who will be real leaders with the ability to convert the lost and to teach the members. We need preachers who will set the proper example, who will help each local Christian to reach his potential in Christian growth. We need preachers who are willing to give of themselves instead of always wanting someone to give them something. We need preachers who are more interested in saving the lost than they are in their salary. We need preachers who will help the church grow in number

and in spirituality. We need preachers who are helping others to become preachers. We need preachers who are out with the people, preaching to them, helping them, starting new works. We need preachers who practice what they preach in their life, in their spirituality, in their giving, and in their work. We need preachers who are helping to solve the problems of the members instead of being one of the problems. We need preachers who are helping the church to grow to the place where they can be self supporting, to have their own meeting place, to send workers out, etc. We need preachers who will encourage the ladies to teach the children, to teach their family members, and their friends. We need preachers, who will help to develop every member into an effective personal worker for the Lord. Yes, we need preachers, but the right kind. With such preachers, and men in general, who will assume the leadership of the church as they should then we are going to see some changes around over the country. We'll see an active church, and evangelistic church, and one that is known for its good work. My brethren, it is time that we begin to see such right here in this area.

I ask that you take a look at yourself, and the congregation of which you are part, and ask yourself what you are really worth to the Lord. Can't you improve? Isn't there more than enough to do? What a blessing we can be to ourselves, to our city, to our country, to the world, and to the Lord if we will but forget self, job, and any and everything that might hinder us and let us rise up and go to work for the Lord and change things for the better.

Isn't it a shame that the very ones that should be the real preachers, teachers, and leaders in the church are the very ones who are often holding the church back? Please, I beg of you, don't you be one of those. Rather, you should be the opposite. If you are looking for position, and want to be the greatest by the world's standard, you are in the wrong place.

The Lord himself said that he came not to be ministered to but to be a minister. He came not to be served but to serve. Then he said that if one would be great then let him be your servant. (Matthew 23:11), That is a real leader.

## **THE PROBLEM WITH OUR WAY OF THINKING**

Members of the church are no different from other people in some ways. Even as the world has problems, so do believers in Christ. Neither does it take very long to become aware of them. But it is interesting to note what they worry about. For instance, you will not come across anyone who is worried about the Atomic Bomb being dropped here or anywhere else in the world. None seem to be bothered about earthquakes, floods, famines, and the such like. We are not even bothered about the traffic situation whether we are driving a car, scooter, or crossing the street. Yet, we are constantly bothered, worried, and troubled about various things. We worry about grades, jobs, promotions, and marriages. In the church we are concerned about attendance and contribution. And on and on it goes. You will quickly note that we are worried with mental problems, things in many instances that never materialize. This is not good for our physical body, not to mention our spiritual welfare.

As a result of our mental torments we end up in becoming negative, having a defeatist complex, being fatalistic in our thinking, reasoning that whatever will be will be, saying we can't and in general just giving up. No wonder we have problems when we think and reason that way. For sure, nothing good ever came out of such pessimistic attitudes.



Out of the spirit of negativism and failure comes one excuse after another. We can't get a job because someone is against us or because of our religion. We failed our examination because the teacher or professor didn't like us. We can't do better because we are too poor. We can't attend worship because we don't have a way or because of our job or because of our school work. We can't give because we don't have it to spare. We can't go out to teach our friends because we are too busy. This reminds us of some people the Lord spoke of in Luke 9:57-62. They said that they would follow him but first they had to go to bury their dead, take care of their guest, and so on. Again in Luke 14:15-24 Christ tells a parable of a certain man who made a supper and sent out invitations to many to come and partake of it. But alas they all began to make excuse. One said he had bought a piece of ground and he had to go to see about it. Another said that he had purchased five yoke of oxen and he had to go to prove them. Still another just simply said that he had married a wife and that he would not be able to come. The servant then went to report the response to the Lord and then the Lord said to his servant that he should go out into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind. The servant did so and there was still room. Then the Lord sent him into the highways and hedges and compelled them to come in. Then he said that those who were bidden to come and refused to do so would not be allowed to taste of his supper. Now what is the Lord saying in all of this? He is saying that he will not accept our excuses. Those who are smart never rely on such flimsy reasoning. Have you ever noticed that the one who gets ahead in this world in all probability could have used the same excuses that we have offered so many times? They, however, did not sit down and complain about not having enough. They did not feel sorry for themselves or expect others to take pity on them. They were also poor and

had needs. But the difference was that they got up and worked on their problems. They said that they could do something about their situation and they did. Have you ever noticed in the religious world that some accomplish great things for God but some never do anything? Why is this? Because one refused to be defeated and the other never put forth any effort. Which category are you in?

There must be a way to overcome these worries, fears, problems, excuses, and negative way of life, and there is. Read carefully what follows, but for it to be of any use to you then you are going to have to apply it. For your sake and for the sake of all those lives you may touch. I hope you will.

1. Keep busy. Don't be lazy, wasting your time away, Don't sit idle, day dreaming all the time, thinking about yourself, imagining things to be worse than they are. Get up and do something. Go to work. Do anything right, but do something. Don't stop but keep trying. The Bible teaches this principle. It says that if a man will not work neither should he eat. We need to work for our families, for others, for ourselves, but above all, we need to work for the Lord. There is so much to be done and so few to do it. We can do our part. It will help us, give us some purpose in life, provide for the things that we need, give us a sense of accomplishment, and will bring a better life, a happy life.

2. Stop thinking of the perfect situation. Many do nothing more in life than imagine what it must be like to be rich, to have a car, to have a big house, to make lots of money, etc. They go to the films and live in a dream world. They are always wanting a hand out, looking to someone to feel sorry for them, never ready to face life and to find a solution for their problems. Some have tried and failed and so they give up. But let me say to you that you should not wait for something that is perfect to come along. Do something. If you fail, keep trying to do better. Be happy with whatever you are doing and this can

change things for you. You'll have a different attitude, others will take note of you, and things will begin to get better for you.

3. Change your thinking. You need to move out of the past into the future. It is not going to help by constantly thinking about your past mistakes and failures, that you should have done this or that. What about right now? What about the future? It is not where you have been but where you are going that counts. Learn from the past but don't live there. Think positively about your job, your boss, life, the church. Don't say that you can't, but that you can, and will.

4. Take action. Make plans but then put them to work. Translate them into productivity. Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13). Again, he said, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2). Now if you know anything about the life of Paul you know that he had problems, difficulties, obstacles, and persecution to deal with. Yet, here was a man that would not give up and quit. He would not let others control his life and tell him what he had to do. Instead, he said he could do all things through Christ who gave him the strength to carry on. He said that he was determined to preach Christ and to do his work. And so he was. Again, I ask you to take a look at those around you who have succeeded in various professions. Likewise, look at those Christians, preachers, teachers, and so on, who are leaders in the church. Don't they have problems and obstacles to overcome? Do you think that they succeeded without putting forth any effort? My friends, they worked, toiled, prayed, and worked some more to get where they are. Anything in life that is worthwhile, you have to work to get it. You have to put something into it, invest in it, sacrifice for it, to ever get anything out of it. The same applies to you and all others throughout the world. You can remain where you are or

you can take action and change things. You must do this if you are going to be successful.

5. Sit down and count your blessings. It is so easy to think of one's problems to the point that one forgets about all the blessings that he has, all the things that he has to be thankful for, all of the assets that he has. He may be rich and not even be aware of it. He should be mindful of what he has and talk about rather than to talk about what he doesn't have. Those who have more often times have bigger problems and greater worries. You should realize that. Start with what you have. You have life, a family, a country, health to work, perhaps a job, and on and on we could go. It may vary from person to person, but all have a great many things to be thankful for, if they would but sit down and think about them. The Christian is most blessed of all. He has God, Christ his saviour, remission of his sins, brethren, the privilege of prayer, the opportunity to work for the King, all of the many spiritual blessings that God has promised to those who belong to him, and above all there is hope of better world, eternal life with God. Now if you'll stop to think about all of that then you'll soon realize that you don't have anything to worry about or to be troubled over. You are created in the image of God and if you have obeyed the Lord then you are a child of God. As such you are as good as anyone else. Further, you have the satisfaction of knowing that the Lord will be with you and help you to do your work and that all things in the end will work together for your good.

My friends, these points can change your life. They can change the church. We must realize that if we have worries, problems and difficulties, it is not the Lord's fault. Neither is it, in many instances, the fault of others. We are the ones to blame because we allow these things to happen to us. I ask that you consider the foregoing as a remedy for your worries and problems. Stop those childish things and begin to live. It is up to you.

## BY WHAT AUTHORITY?

On one occasion the enemies of Jesus asked him by what authority he was doing the things. Jesus explained that he would tell them if they would agree to answer one question: Was the baptism of John from heaven or men? In response to this, the record says, "And they reasoned with themselves saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered, Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither I tell you by what authority I do these things." (Matthew 21:25-27).

The foregoing reminds us of what happens again and again in our own time. A member of the church can move into a village or city where the church does not exist and the local people who believe in Christ expect such a person to join them for worship and all that they do in religion. When he does not, they often question the individual in an attempt to put pressure on him to fall in line. They act as though one cannot worship and obey God without their approval.

One of the first things they want to know is this: "Who gave you the authority to come here to begin a new church? They think that every one who professes faith in Christ must be a part of a traditional denominational church, the one of course that they are members of in their community. The new comer is supposed to bow down and give in to those who are already there. He is told that he cannot teach anything that would be in contradiction to that which is ready taught. As a result, most people fall in line and the denominational churches continue to control them. The true Christian, and member of the church of Christ, would not be so easy to deal with. While he may be questioned concerning his authority, he would also ask his denominational friends: "Who gave

authority for that church to exist?" Furthermore, "By whose authority did you become a member of it? And by whose authority do you wear its name?"

The Christian acknowledges but one authority and that is the authority of Christ. (Matthew 28:18). He looks to Christ for everything. He hears his word, he believes him, he obeys him, is added to his church, wears his name, worship him alone, teaches his word only, and lives according to his will. (Matthew 17:5; John 20:30, 31; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47, Acts 4:12. John 4:24; Matthew 28:29, 20; John 14:15). He cannot have fellowship with any except those who have done likewise. If he lives where there are no members of the church then he must try to begin the church. He is not beginning a new church. He is not establishing a denomination. He is a member of the one and only church that belongs to the Lord. All other churches are man-made. They do not represent the Lord. Regardless of what is said or done in opposition, the Christian must go forth with courage and determination. By teaching the truth about the church those who are honest and sincere will want to become members of it.

Again, when a Christian begins to preach God's word there are those who question his right to do so. They think that such a person must be ordained by some church, trained in a recognized theological school or college, that he must wear a certain dress, wear titles like pastor, reverend, bishop, etc., and be appointed as a pastor, over some long established denominational group. But who said that this has to be done? Did God authorize this or did man make these rules? The Lord has commanded every Christian to be a preacher or teacher of his word. Christ commands us to go into all the world and to preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15, 16). Paul said, "Preach the word." (2 Timothy 4:2). Therefore, every Christian has a duty and responsibility of teaching others. He will not be condemned for teaching others. He will not be

lemned for teaching but for failing to teach.

Should the ordinary Christian begin to baptize his converts, he would be asked who gave him the authority to do that. Some of those converted through his teaching might even object to him doing the baptizing. Such people have the idea that there is some sort of special merit in the person who performs the baptismal service. These people need to understand that the one doing the baptizing is important only to the extent that he is willing to help the one who needs to be baptized to carry out the Lord's command. The Bible emphasis is on the one being baptized, his understanding, his sincerity, his belief, his obedience. His salvation does not depend on the one doing the baptizing and whether he is a Christian or not a Christian, whether he is a good man or not, whether he is sincere or not. The main thing is for one that needs to be baptized to find someone to baptize him as the Bible teaches. Certainly a Christian, a preacher, a preacher or not, would have every right to baptize a person in any village or city where there is one or more who wants to obey God. But turning the thing around, who gave anyone the authority to sprinkle or pour water on a person's head for baptism when the Bible teaches that baptism is a burial in water? (Romans 6:3, 4; Acts 8:29-39). Who gave anyone the authority to immerse a person because he claims to be saved when the Bible teaches that one must believe and be baptized to be saved? (Mark 16:16). Who gave anyone the scriptural right to immerse to make one a member of denominational church when the Bible teaches that there is one church and that when one believes and is baptized the Lord saves him and adds him to his church? (Acts 2:47).

Continuing, when a Christian begins to conduct worship in his home, in the home of a friend, or in a hall, and during the course of worship the Lord's supper is served, then there may be those who will ask who gave that person the authority to do that. Once more there is the problem on the

part of many people who think that only a priest, bishop, or some recognized padri can serve the Lord's supper. The Bible does not teach this. Rather, the Lord has commanded his people to meet on the first day of the week to worship (Acts 20:7), and when they do this then a part of it involves that of partaking of the bread in remembrance of the body of Christ and the fruit of the vine in remembrance of the Lord's blood. (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Christians are to do this and therefore Christians have the right to serve the bread and the cup to each other. There is no merit in some particular person serving it. The important thing is not the one who serves it but whether the individual who is partaking of it does so as the Lord requested, that is, in the remembrance of his body and his blood. But please answer these questions: By whose authority are believers in Christ to meet only once a month, once every three months, on some weekday night, etc., to partake of this Supper? By whose authority can only certain designated people wait on the Lord's Table? My friends, instead of asking questions there are just any number of people who needs to be answering some questions.

In the Lord's church, which is the one true church of the Bible, we have no earthly head, no earthly headquarters. We have no man-made creed or confession or manual with the rules and regulations of the church. We have no bosses. Instead, we have complete freedom in Christ. We are one in him. One is not over the other. We do not have to answer to man but to the Lord. We believe in God and Christ his Son. We strive to follow his word. We are just Christians. Where there are many of us in one city, village, or area we gather together for worship, When one finds himself alone somewhere then by himself, with his family, or whoever may choose to meet with him, then he may take the lead, and should do so, in conducting worship. As a faithful Christian man he has every right to teach God's word, to lead in prayer,



to direct singing, to partake of the Lord's Supper, and to offer it to any others who might be there, and to take up a collection for the work of the church. He also has the right to go out and teach his friends, and should they want to obey the Lord, then he has the Lord's authority to baptize them. For a woman, there are some problems since she cannot publicly teach, conduct worship, etc. She can teach privately, however, once there is one or more men who are willing to obey the Lord then the responsibility falls on them to take the public lead in teaching and in conducting worship services.

By what authority do Christians do this? By the authority of Jesus Christ. Please don't find fault, condemn, and reject us until you have investigated us in view of what the Bible teaches. If you will do so then you may find that the question of scriptural authority arises in relation to the things that you are doing rather than with members of the church of Christ. If you really want to be honest about the matter then while you are questioning the authority by which others are doing the things they are doing then at the same time ask yourself where the Lord authorizes you to do the things that you do. If you will do this, and if you will accept your findings, and especially if you will act on them then this may be a time of real discovery with the result that you too will become a Christian and member of the Lord's church. For after all, it is all a matter of authority

## **PRAISE THE LORD**

All of the Pentecostal type meetings, and even some of the other religious groups who have been influenced by them, are well known for their verbal expressions like "Praise the

Lord", "Hallalujah", "Amen", "Thank you Jesus", and so on. Perhaps the reason they use these terms so freely is that they feel in this way that they are participating, that they have the freedom to express themselves, and it also may be a means of reducing tension and formality. For whatever reason they use them, however, it soon reaches the point where they become vain words, with little or no meaning except for the fact that it just amounts to a lot of unnecessary noise and confusion.

When people constantly use these expressions then they soon begin to shout "Amen", "Praise the Lord", and so on out of habit and therefore giving no thought whatsoever as to why they are praising the Lord. Believe it or not, but someone may proclaim "Praise the Lord" at a point when it is entirely out of place to so do. The preacher may be talking about the sin of drunkenness and someone may be heard to say, "Thank you Jesus." What is the point therefore of all of these verbal expressions during a religious meeting? It would seem that they are not used wisely, result in a lot of nonsense, and consequently end in making mockery of God and the worship that is being offered to him

Pentecostals are famous for drawing people not so much for the purpose of hearing what they have to say in their preaching and teaching but to see and hear the show that always goes along with their meetings. They have so indulged in this kind of thing for so long they seem to think that this has to be done for it to represent true worship. It is just the opposite in that it indicates that it represents false and vain worship

Words and expressions like "Amen", "Praise the Lord". etc., are not bad words. They are good and may be used at times if done so in harmony with God's will and in a sensible way. But just to keep repeating the same words and phrases over and over all the way through a religious service is

boring and disgusting to intelligent human beings. This kind of thing usually appeals to the poor unlearned type of people who attend them. It is not that it is a sin necessarily to be poor and unlearned, at least in the things of this world, but it is a sin when one deliberately remains ignorant of God's will.

The Bible teaches, "let all things be done decently and in order." (I Corinthians 14:40). It also teaches that "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 4:11).

The Lord will be praised when he is worshipped according to the teaching of his word. Yet, if you don't follow the New testament pattern of worship, it doesn't matter how much you clap your hands, holler, shout, jump up and down, run around, say praise the Lord, Amen, and all of the other things that could be added to that, it is not going to impress the Lord to the point that he will accept it as true worship.

May God help us not to be carried away by such deceitful practices but let us hold true to his word and do what he teaches. Only then can we truly praise the Lord. Then the Lord can see it in our lives, not just hear it in empty words.

## **PROOF READERS**

When printing this magazine, tracts, or booklets, first of all we turn the manuscript over to the printer and then he sets up the type. After that he brings the proofs to us and we carefully read over it and make the necessary corrections. Again it is returned to the printer and he re-sets the type of

those words or sentences that have been marked for correction. He brings it to us for the second time and once more we read over the material to catch any additional errors that we might have overlooked the first time. Finally, it is sent back to the printer, he notes the errors and properly re-sets the type, and then it is printed, assembled, stitched, delivered to us, and then we send it on to you. This makes a lot of work on the part of a number of people and needless to say we do the very best job we possibly can to get out quality work. In spite of that, we allow some errors to slip through and the printer doesn't always make the corrections that have been noted. We regret this very much but all we know to do is to keep trying to do better. Naturally, we do not intentionally allow any errors to pass through and we are usually aware of them before it is sent to you. Still, we are human and no matter how we try to do better no doubt some errors will continue to go by unnoticed. I doubt seriously if it would be any different if some of our readers were in charge of the proof reading and printing because they are human too. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to do better but when a printing error is spotted the individual should ask himself the question, "Could I have done any better?" Sure, that particular error might have been caught, but what about all the other errors that might have been allowed to go by? And so it goes.

It is a little discouraging to have some of our readers to go through the material, pick out every error, and then write us about it. Do they think we are not aware of these errors and therefore it is necessary for them to inform us about it? Did we not write the material, proof read it, and then read it when it finally came from the press? Do they think that we cannot spell, that we cannot see the errors that are there? Do they think that we put them there intentionally? Perhaps we need to have such individuals to become our proof readers. If we did, however, I would predict that there would be many more errors.

It is amazing that such people are giving more attention to the printing make-up than to what is actually said. To be plain with you, if these people are reading this material for the sole purpose of finding errors then it is a waste of our time to send it to them and it is a waste of their time to go through it. As pointed out, we are already aware of the errors before they write in to point them out. Therefore we don't appreciate at all such critical letters.

Now if these people find some objection to the subject matter, can point out some error in the teaching being presented, or have question relating to the material, then we would be most happy to hear from them. We feel that in this case that their letters of criticism or correction would have to do with their faith instead of just finding fault for the sake of finding fault.

This literature, and all literature that we send out, is sent to one and all for the purpose of teaching God's will. We are sending it in the interest of souls. We would hope that the ones who receive it would take it in that spirit and would therefore read and study it in light of what the Bible teaches. Don't read it to see how many printing errors you can find, because this indicates absolutely no interest at all, and neither does it show any intelligence, but rather read it carefully, sincerely, and prayerfully for the content. Then and only then will it accomplish the purpose for which it was sent to you.

## **LONG HAIR**

A few years back the popular British singing group called The Beatles introduced long hair to the western part of the world. Representative of the hippie movement, of

rebellious against modern society and way of life, their hair style soon spread to others who were like minded. Today it is popular around the world not only among those who would be hippies, but also among young men, and older men too, of all walks of life. It has become so fashionable that any depict them as having long hair.

The east has always been known for copying the west. It not only copies the west but out-copies the west. For instance, if the girls of the west wear short dresses, the girls of the east usually wear theirs shorter. And so it is with many other fads or practices. It is the same in India. It usually begins with the wealthy and then spreads on down among the poorer classes. Have you noticed all the boys and men who are sporting long hair? Have you noticed all of the pictures in the various newspapers and magazines that show boys and men with long hair? Of course the Sandhus, Gurus, and others have been wearing long hair for years, but the present popularity of long hair among the male population did not come through their influence, but through the influence of the west. Why is it that the east always picks up the bad habits and practices of the west? It would be far better to find the things that are good to imitate if it must indulge in such things.

One of the saddest things to be seen is to observe young men who believe in Christ wearing long hair. Why do they do this? Surely it is not because they are following Christ. Rather, they are doing it because they see others doing it and they think if they are to be accepted then they must also have long hair. They are so eager to keep up with the world around them. Perhaps they think it makes them look pretty, smart, modern, up to date, and fashionable. Maybe they want to experiment, be different, and be noticed. Whatever their motive, it is not a good one.

Sometimes young people argue that Jesus and the Apostles had long hair. Who said so? Who has any evidence to

prove it? The pictures that we have of Christ and of the Apostles represent someone's imagination of how they might have looked. No one actually knows what they looked like or how they wore their hair, except for the fact that the scriptures tell us that it is a shame for a man to have long hair and we would therefore conclude that they would not have gone contrary to that divine statement.

Others want to know how long is long. That may be questionable up to a point, but we can safely say that when a boy or man's hair gets long enough that you can't tell him at different angles from a girl then it is too long. But why would any male want to look like a female? God made man and woman and he meant for them to have their own individual identities. One way of distinguishing them is by their hair. The Bible says it is a shame for a man to have long hair but that long hair is a glory to the woman. Men, remember that the next time you look at yourself in a mirror.

Now that we have referred to the scriptures more than once, let us go to God's word and hear Paul as he says: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this

cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is glory to her; for her hair is given for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." (1 Corinthians 11:1-16). That should settle the matter then. God has thus spoken against it and with the knowledge of that then long hair on a man becomes ugly, unmanly, and completely out of place. Regardless of how many have it, that does not make it right. To insist on keeping it only shows your lack of respect for God and his will.

Any man that has long hair, and that includes both young and old, needs to go immediately and get a haircut. Don't you realize that it is a shame for you to have long hair? Don't you know in so doing you are opposing God? God did not intend for you to have it and does not want you to have it. Society may accept it, your school or college may accept it, your friends may want you to keep it, your parents may permit it, but regardless of how much they may encourage you to have it, and in spite of what they may say about you if you cut it, as a God fearing person and one who wants to please his Maker and to bring honor to that name that you wear, the name Christian, then you must have your hair cut so that it will no longer be said to be long. You should have already done this, and it is to your shame that you have not, but if you have not, then don't live with your shame any longer. Get a hair cut. You can do that. You can afford it. You must do it.



## QUESTIONS FOR PREACHERS

Preacher friend, are you a member of the same church as were Peter, Paul, and the preachers of the first century? Do you wear the same name that they wore? Do you preach the same thing they preached? If not, why not? It might be well for you to go to the Bible and compare yourself with them. If you find then that you need to make some changes, if you are honest with yourself, with God, and your fellowmen, then you will make them. Also, those of you that count yourselves to be preachers of the Lord's church, you likewise need to go through these questions. You may find that you too need to make some changes. As a preacher, you must realize the great responsibility you have to obey the truth and to teach that truth to others. That applies to things that pertain both to doctrine and to one's manner of life. If you fail to do so then not only will you be lost but many others as well will be lost through your preaching and influence.

1. Where do you preach? Are you professional and only preach when you have to, and that in a designated meeting house, or do you preach anywhere that you have the opportunity?
2. When do you preach? Do you preach every Sunday? Do you preach every Sunday morning and every Sunday evening?
3. Why do you preach? Do you preach because you are converted to the truth, you really believe it, and feel that you must preach? Or do you preach merely for a salary?
4. What do you preach? Do you preach God's word or do you preach the creeds, philosophies, and doctrine of men?
5. How do you preach? Do you preach with sincerity, humility, and love for souls? Or do you preach with indifference, coldness, and bitterness? Are you gentle or ugly in

your presentation? You can draw people to Christ or drive them away according to the way you preach.

6. Who supports you? Do you support yourself through secular work or does the local church supply you with a salary? Or do you get your support from some foreign source? Are you worthy of this?
7. How do you dress? Are you clean and neat or are you sloppy and dirty having no respect for yourself? Do you dress according to the local dress or do you wear the gowns, robes, and religious dress to get attention and to seek the praises of men?
8. How are you greeted? Are you spoken to as Mr., Bro., or some other non-religious title? Or do you wear unscriptural titles like Reverend, Pastor, Most Right Reverend, Bishop, etc.?
9. What are you called? Are you just a Christian, or are you wearing the names of men?
10. How are you living? Do you practice what you preach or do you preach one thing and practice something else? Remember that you can fool part of the people part of the time but you can't fool all the people all the time.
11. Do you have any bad habits like smoking, chewing betel nut, and so on? Don't you know that through such thing people will lose respect for you?
12. Are you full of pride? Does it express itself in a haughty way? Do you find yourself to be boastful and prone to exalt self? This is a bad sign for you.
13. Do you pray as much as you should? How often do you pray? How much do you pray? A preacher needs to do a lot of praying. It will show up in his spirituality.
14. How much do you study the Bible? Even preachers need to study, although you wonder sometime if they ever do. How can you expect your brethren to respect you and come to hear you preach unless you adequately prepare

- your lessons. Anyone can talk, but a good preacher is one who is well prepared for every occasion that he speaks.
15. Do you love souls? Does it show up in your preaching and in your work as a whole? Are you trying to reach the lost because of your love?
  16. Are you able to lead your own family? Do they attend worship? Each worship service? Are they members? How are you bringing up your children? Both members and non-members are watching you and your family very closely.
  17. Do you pay your debts? That means, are you honest? If not, this will destroy you as a preacher.
  18. What kind of worker are you? Do you spend your time working for the Lord, studying, visiting, preaching, doing good works, or do you spend all of your time sleeping, sitting around, killing your time?
  19. What kind of leader are you? Do you do all the preaching, teaching, lead all the prayers, direct the singing, etc.? Or do you encourage others to participate? A real leader will be training the other members and will give the young men an opportunity to preach.
  20. Do you set a good example? If you are going to lead then you need to get to worship on time, have your family at each meeting, lead the way in all that is good and right.
  21. How much do you give? Do you give ten percent of your earnings? Do you give more or less? Do you give only enough to say that you are giving? Are you the type that is always receiving but never giving. It will be hard for you to preach on scriptural giving if you do not give scripturally yourself. You know what you are giving and so does God and so does most of the congregation in all probability.
  22. Do you have the ability to work with others? Can you get along with people without having problems to erupt? Or

- do you have the kind of personality that drives them away? Do you find yourself opposing anyone who has any potential leadership because you feel that they represent a challenge to your position?
23. Do you have the ability to convert souls and to build a strong congregation? How many have you converted? Is the church growing where you preach?
  24. Are you pessimistic? Do you always look on the negative side? Do you always frown on everything, expect everybody and everything to turn out bad? Do you always wear a frown? You need to decide to become a Christian and learn to believe in people. You should look on the bright side, love people, enjoy working with them, and learn to be happy and show it by putting a smile on your face.
  25. Are you evangelistic? Do you work to spread the gospel or are you willing just to keep things as they are?
  26. What are you worth to the Lord? Are you producing anything worthwhile for God? How is the cause of Christ being helped because of you?

Are you sure now that you have been honest with yourself and God in answering these questions? Be assured that others are asking them about you. Do they agree with your answers? God needs preachers, but only those who are converted, who are godly, and who are educated and who are hard working. If you can't measure up to God's expectations, then please don't be a hypocrite.

## REPENTANCE

One of the greatest needs of our time is for people everywhere to repent. This is a word that means to turn, to change, to go in another direction. It means a change of heart, and a change of life in the sense in which we are using it. Jesus gave a parable that helps us to see what repentance is. He said, "But what think ye? A certain man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not. Whether of the twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." (Matthew 21:28-32).

Some define repentance to mean that one is sorry for what he has done, but this is not enough. For example, one may be sorry for a crime that he committed, because he got caught, but he would have no such sorrow had he gotten away unpunished for what he did. Godly sorrow that is from the heart is what produces genuine repentance. Paul writes, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Going further, we are talking about repenting of one's sins or turning away from them. This means that one must quit doing that which is bad and wrong. For one to say that he has repented of something that is bad or wrong but to continue to do it simply means that he has not repented. In speaking to those who had repented. Paul wrote the Ephesian Christians:

**“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the things which are good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4:24-32). Now this is what repentance is all about.**

There were those who brought up cases in which people had died violent deaths and it was assumed that was God’s punishment upon them for their sin. Christ explained to them that they had not perished as a direct result of their sins, but he said, “Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3). The same would be true to this day. There are all kinds of accidents, natural disorders, etc., that bring destruction and death to hundreds and thousands. Although those who have suffered and lost their lives in such cases were sinners, it does not follow that God was directly punishing them for their sin. If he were doing this then what would he do to the rest of us? Nevertheless, whether we live or die, and under whatever circumstances, if we fail to repent or turn away from our sins, then this will eventually bring about our eternal destruction.

Just here we need to realize that when Jesus asks us to repent he is asking us to give up and to quit any and every bad

thing that may be in our lives. At the same time remember the Lord has never asked us to repent and turn away from any good thing, but only that which is bad and destructive.

The command to repent is directed toward the individual who is guilty of sin and wrong doing. This does not include infants or little children. They may be guilty at times of bad things but it is not with full comprehension of what they are doing. The law of the land does not hold children guilty of crimes and therefore does not punish them for such. They may be put in a correction home so they can get proper care and training, but they are not directly punished. Spiritually, also, the command to repent is directed toward those who are old enough to know right from wrong and those who are old enough to hear the gospel, to believe it, to repent of their sins, and to be baptized for the remission of their sins. This includes all responsible being. Paul said to the people on Mars Hill, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30).

After Peter and the apostles had preached the first gospel sermon on the day of pentecost, with faith being produced in the hearts of many of those present, the people finally cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? 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 2:37, 38). Some of these people had taken part in the Lord's crucifixion. Therefore it was necessary for them to have a change of heart about Christ. It was now necessary for them not only to believe in him, but to commit themselves to him through obedience to his will. They were now to follow Christ, serve him, and teach others that he was indeed the Son of God and the saviour of the world. They could not obey God without doing this.

When Saul repented he quit persecuting the Lord he began to preach Christ as a resurrected Lord. (Acts 9). When

the jailor repented he washed the stripes of Paul and Silas, men that he had formerly held in prison after they had been beaten. (Acts 16:19-40). Christ said of such people, "I say unto you likewise joy shall be in heaven over sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." (Luke 15:7). Again he said, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (Luke 15:10).

Not only does the sinner need to repent, but there are times when Christians likewise need to do the same. Since it is possible for a Christian to make mistakes and even to fall from his relationship with Christ, then in such cases he also need to repent, and *must* repent if he is to be saved eternally. A good example of this is the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. The record says, "And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in the land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, kissed him, And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and



in thy sight, and no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.” (Luke 15:11-24).

In Acts 8 we have the story of Simon the Sorcerer. Philip had preached the gospel to the Samaritans and many of them believed and were baptized. The record says, “Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.” (Acts 8:13). After Peter and John had come down from Jerusalem to lay their hands on some of the local Christians, the record says, “And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.” (Acts 8:18-24).

Even as faithful Christians we are subject to mistakes and errors. We may neglect things that we need to do and do things that we should not do. Therefore, we must repent of any and every bad thing in our lives and continually try to better our lives. The Bible says that we are not to allow sin to reign in our bodies. (Romans 6:12). Again we are exhorted to present

our bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord. (Romans 12:1, 2).

Have you repented of your sins? Have you removed from your thinking, from your speech, from your actions that which is hurting you and destroying you? Are you daily striving to live a pure and godly life? Jesus wants you to. If you have not repented then you need to do so right now. If you will repent and be baptized you can have the remission of your sins. (Acts 2:28). Remember, you can't obey God and keep your sins, and in the end sin that is not repented of will cause you to be eternally lost.

## **DOES MAN HAVE A SOUL?**

Here in Asia most of the emphasis has been placed on physical man. Through the years the bigger portion of religious work that has been done in the name of Christ has been in the interest of man's physical welfare. Especially is this true at this time when social work is so popular and when the majority look upon this approach with their personal approval. That means that the most important part of man, his soul, has been primarily overlooked and by-passed. The question arises if the average person is even aware of the fact that he has a soul. If so, you would never know it. Little effort is put forth to save it. Seldom, if ever, do you see tears shed because one is so convicted of his sins that he becomes aware of his lost condition and wants to obey God so he can be saved.

In this lesson we want to make a study of the soul of man because man indeed has a soul, believe it or not. We want to see what it is, where it came from, its function, its need, etc. The reason we are doing this is because you need to know that you have a soul, every person needs to know this. You

need to know the worth or value of the soul if you are ever going to be moved to do something about it.

The word soul has reference to the inner man, the spirit of man, that which is in the image of God and will live on forever and ever. The Bible tells us that God created physical man, but that was not all. He likewise created the inner man, that is, he made man a living spirit, a soul. This inner man was created in God's image. According to John 4:24, God is a spirit, and when the Scriptures say that God created man in his image it means that he created man with a similar spiritual likeness. We read, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." (Genesis 1:26, 27), Again, we read, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7).

You will also note that when the Genesis record speaks of the creation of the various animals, fowls, and sea life, it is never stated that he created them with spirits or with souls, neither does he say that he created them in his own image. Therefore none of these living things have souls and when they die are gone forever. That is why they may be killed and used for food. But it is a different story with man. Regarding him, God not only created him physically but also created man spiritually in his own image. This means that God created man to resemble him. But in what way? Surely not in a physical sense because God does not have an earthly form. Therefore, we must conclude that since God is Spirit, he also made man a spirit. Further, the scriptures say that God breathed into man the breath of life and he became a living soul. Man is therefore a dual being. He is both physical and spiritual. Solomon talked about what happens to man when he dies and he spoke of man as being a dual being when he said, "Then shall the dust

return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

The scriptures tell us that the soul will live on after death. Christ said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28). Because the soul will live on and because it is possible for it to be eternally lost, it is necessary to save the soul and to prepare it for life after the physical body dies. For the reason the Hebrew writer exhorts the Lord's people. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." (Hebrews 10:33-39). James writes, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (James 5:20).

Continuing, we are told that those who are over us, the elders of the church, watch on behalf of our souls: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; as for that is unprofitable for you." (Hebrews 13:15). Again, James says, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your soul," (James 1:21). Peter declares, "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:9). Going on, he says, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the

brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:22, 23).

After the gospel was preached on the day of Pentecost and the people wanted to know what to do to be saved, they were told, and the record says., "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41).

As can be seen from the foregoing verses, the soul is the most important part of man. Christ said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Because of this Jesus came into this world to die for the sins of man that the soul might be saved. Man was lost and without hope because his soul was stained with sin. With Jesus, however, things were changed. He offered himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. This doesn't mean that all will be saved, but it does mean that those who will believe in Jesus and obey his teaching can be saved.

The teaching of Jesus is directed toward the soul of man with the idea of saving him from sin. As man applies that teaching he will be helped and benefited physically as well as spiritually, but the main goal is to save his soul. Man can be helped and blessed physically all of his life but if he loses his soul then he has lost all. On the other hand, regardless of the physical suffering that he may have to go through, if he can save his soul then he has gained the greatest prize of all, eternal life with his Lord.

The gospel, the church, the Christian life, the hereafter are all significant only as they have to do with the soul. Peter says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to

repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9). Again, he said, “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. 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 4:16-18).

When one realizes he has a soul, and recognizes what it means to be lost, and what it can mean to him to be saved, then this will effect his every thought and action. On the other hand, if there is no such knowledge, and even if there is, if one is careless and indifferent about his soul and is always reasoning that there is yet time to prepare the soul to meet God, then one is not only very unwise but there is a good possibility that he will finally lose his soul.

Are you aware of the fact, dear friend, that you have a soul? If not, you need to know that you definitely have one. If you are aware of this fact, how do you picture the soul? How important is it? Is it more important to you than everything else? Do you realize that it needs to be saved? Are you concerned about it? Have you ever wept or shown any emotion whatsoever over your soul? Are you willing to obey Jesus that you might be saved? Are you willing to be faithful to him that you might be eternally saved? Do you realize that one day that you will die and then you will have to answer to God concerning the condition of your soul?

What is the state of your soul today? Is it prepared to meet God? Now is the time to prepare. After this life there will be no further opportunity.

## REACHING OUT FOR THE SOULS OF MEN

Our goal as the Lord's people in Asia, and throughout the world, is to preach the gospel to every creature. But there are so many. How can we ever reach all of them? To anyone with even a brief acquaintance with the methods that are at our disposal for accomplishing such a task it is evident that there are at least three major avenues through which to work. These are:

1. **Personal Work.** This is going out to the people, knocking on their doors, getting acquainted with them, asking for an opportunity to study with them from the Bible, extending an invitation to them to attend our regular Sunday meetings, and leaving behind some literature. There is no end to the people we can meet through this effort. Many of them will not be interested, a small percentage will even be ugly, but some will express an interest. Regardless of their attitude, there is an opportunity to let them know who we are, of our interest in them, and to teach them some truth whether accepted or not.
2. **Literature Work.** This offers even a wider field of work. The personal contact is not always there, but note everyone wants to be visited. There is a limitation to the visits that can be made and tracts and other materials can be put out at such times, but otherwise literature must be sent through the mail to the local area and to the whole country. This is a means of getting the gospel to the masses, into areas where we could never go personally, and thereby reaching more people than we could ever reach than through the usual traditional methods. Any number of materials may be used, These include Bible correspondence courses, tracts, magazines, booklets, books, the scriptures, and so on.

3. **Radio Work.** This is yet another way of reaching the masses of the people in various language broadcasts. Although we are unable to use any station in India, we do have access to Radio Sri Lanka. Already there are a number of broadcasts aired every week in several different languages including Hindi and English over the same station.

While pulpit preaching, street preaching, campaign preaching, and such like, are also a means of preaching and teaching God's word, yet these methods of communicating the gospel are dependent on getting people to come to hear the gospel as it is proclaimed. The problem is that only a small number of people will come. These are usually the most faithful members of the church and those people that they have personally invited to attend. This means that if the world is to ever be evangelized, we cannot sit in our meeting houses and expect people to come to hear us preach the gospel. Rather to reach people, and especially to reach the masses, we are going to have to go to the people. That is why we have mentioned personal work, literature work, and radio work.

My brethren, what are we really doing to take the gospel to those around us and to the people of this country? Remember, the church will never grow until we grow enough to do what the Lord commanded, and he said, "Go." Go my brother, Go. Go with the gospel. Go with the Lord. Don't sit at home offering excuse for the church not growing. If you'll go to the people and teach them the truth some of them will accept it and obey the Lord. Do you believe it? Try it and see if it doesn't work. Whether you get any results or not, the Lord still said that we should go. But don't worry, when we go and preach God's word, and do the job right, then it will get results, and it will get some good results. Again, I suggest that you try it and see what happens.



## **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, that moves sinners to obey God. I am but the messenger and I am important only to that extent.

Paul declared the gospel to be God's power to salvation to everyone that believeth. (Romans 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 8:32).

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 changed 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. God help us all to see this and to act accordingly.

## **SOCIAL WORK**

Much of the religious work done here in Asia is what is called social work. There are schools, hospitals, clinics, orphanages, rural uplift schemes, and all kinds of projects going on. All of these are concerned primarily with man's physical well being. Practically no emphasis whatsoever is placed upon his soul. It is as though man has no soul but that

our only concern should be to help keep the stomach full.

What people do not seem to realize is that the stomach can be kept full for fifty years, but that won't save his soul. Furthermore, it matters not how well man has survived in this present world, if he dies without his soul being saved then he has lost everything. It would be better to have starved to death with a saved soul than to have died as a rich man with a lost soul. The present day emphasis is upon the wrong part of man.

We of the church of Christ are interested in the souls of men. This doesn't mean that we have no concern for man's physical needs, but those needs are secondary and should not become the church's purpose for existence. Our chief aim in this country is to take the gospel to every soul and to give man the opportunity to save his soul through obeying God.

What a lot of people overlook is the fact that when the gospel is preached and it is believed and obeyed, as a man applies the principles of Christ to his life, that he will become a better person, that he will be a cleaner person, that he will be an honest person, that he will work harder and accomplish more. This will make it possible for him to have greater respect from those living around him, he will be able to get a better job, he will be able to make a better salary, and this will enable him to have a better house, to eat better food, to wear better clothes, and to give his children a better education, and so on.

Social work is fine but it must be kept in its proper place. Anyone can do social work whether he is a Christian or not, but not all can and will preach the gospel. Therefore let's get back to the job that the Lord has sent us to do and that is to preach the gospel to every creature. When we do that the social reforms will naturally follow. Try God's plan and see.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DIVISION?**

The religious world is full of division. There are all kinds of churches, denominations, and religious bodies. This is true here just as everywhere else. But why is there so much division? Where did it all come from? Who is responsible for it?

When we talk to denominational people about the Lord's church as set forth in the New Testament, and they begin to see that the church of the scriptures is different to their church, that to be a member of Christ's church they will have to leave their church, then they begin to offer excuse. They will tell you that all the division comes from the west, that we should not be divided, and therefore they will stay in their church. What they fail to realize is that there is a lot of division in west and there is a lot of division here, but what caused it all? Men's refusal to follow God's word only in religious matters. The result was denominationalism—division—and to remain in denominationalism means that one chooses division.

For a person to argue in favour of division as most do is about like taking up for the thief and condemning the one who is trying to help the individual to escape from the thief. We are trying to get people to leave division to return to pure New Testament Christianity, but paradoxically we are accused of causing division because we are encouraging them to leave denominational churches to become members of the church Christ established. We are teaching the truth and we are accused of teaching division.

Christ prayed that we might all be one. (John 17:20, 21). Paul condemned division among his brethren. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13), and went one to say that those who cause division are not serving the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 16:17,

18). Then the scriptures go on to tell us about Christ building the church (Matthew 16:18), that there is but one body or church (Ephesians 4:1-6), that Christ is the saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23), and that he is the head of it. (Colossians 1:18). Furthermore, all who obey the Lord's will are saved (Mark 16:16), and added to his church. (Acts 2:47).

Division exists where people obey the doctrines and commandments of men. It stays alive where people will not read and study their Bible so they may know the truth. There is no hope for such people because they are in error and refuse to leave it. In the end, they will be among those who will be crying unto the Lord to save them but he will say unto them, "I never knew you. Depart from me ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:21-23).

## **THE BEAUTY OF THE TRUTH**

Did you know that it is possible to know the truth on religious matters? All you have to do is to go to the Bible because it contains only the truth. In praying to God, Christ said, "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). The truth never contradicts itself. It is always right and therefore you must accept it to be right.

You don't have to depend on your opinions or go to some man for information. Neither can you or should you depend on your feelings or to go along with the majority. Rather, you have a mind, the ability to think and reason, and you can go to the Bible to read and study and to learn the truth for yourself. Once you are doing what it teaches then you know

that you are right regardless of what others say.

The Bible will tell you the truth about the church, the plan of salvation, the kind of worship God wants, and what is expected of you in living the Christian life. The beauty of the truth is that it is all there in God's word and you are free to do what it says. You are encouraged to do this and when you and I do that then it will make us one in Christ Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6).

## **THE DIFFICULTY IN CONVERTING THOSE WITH RELIGIOUS EMPLOYMENT**

Sometimes brethren will go out to preach and teach God's word and in doing so they may come in contact with those in religious employment. These individuals are usually nurses, doctors, and various staff members of a "Christian" hospital. Others are preachers, teachers, and directors, etc., of various denominational churches, schools and projects. At the beginning, these individuals are very friendly and express a great deal of interest in what is being taught. But when they discover that these visiting brethren are not denominational and that they are preaching truth from the Bible that will challenge them to leave their present churches and likewise their jobs, then they begin to withdraw, are less friendly, and in the end completely reject that which they have been taught. This greatly disturbs the visiting brethren and they wonder what is wrong. They ask themselves if perhaps they have the wrong attitude, or if they should change their approach.

None of this, however, puzzles me. The problem is as plain as day. It is the fact that all of these people have jobs

with religious bodies and organizations. Therefore, when someone comes in teaching things in general that they can accept and at the same time remain where they are then that is fine. But when something is taught that would require them to leave their jobs, then even if it is the truth, they must reject it and they must also reject the ones teaching it, that they may keep their jobs, or as students, to keep their scholarships. Such people are not always honest and sincere since they will put their salaries before everything else.

I have been working in this part of the world for many years and I have found that there are only two types of people that will leave their religious jobs. First, there are those who will leave if you have a similar job to offer them. This would not indicate though that they have been converted to the truth but only that they have decided to change jobs and surely this should never be the basis for a change. Second, if there are those who are really convinced of the truth that they have heard, and they are honest and sincere with themselves and with God, then they will change. This is the way it should be, but I am sorry to say that very few will do this. To most people job is more important than God, truth, soul, or anything else.

Considering the foregoing statements, it is not surprising that brethren dealing with people with religious jobs get such poor results. As a matter of fact, it is almost a waste of time to bother with them. It would be better to work with those who have not sold their souls.

If you are reading this, and you are working for a religious group, let me ask you: Are you working for this organisation because you really believe it represents the truth or because it is a living for you? If you really believe in what you are doing, then if you are taught the truth, you will accept the truth because it is truth. If you are working at this job because it brings you a salary each month then no amount of truth could ever change you.

My friend, if you are only a hireling then I have no time for you and I certainly don't have a job for you. I would say that in such case you are getting everything out of your religion that you will ever get, and that is a salary. How sad it is to know that you are lost and that even if you are ever taught the truth you will be content to remain lost in order to guarantee the continuation of your salary. If you could ever learn what is important in life then you would put the truth of God before everything else in this world even if you had to starve to do it. I am praying for the day that there will be some of this kind of people to be found in Asia and when that day comes it will be a great day indeed. There, no doubt, are some already and I would very much like to have the honor to meet them. We need many more.

## **WHAT IS YOUR CONCEPT OF GOD**

Most people here in Asia believe in God or a supreme divine being. The question arises, however, as to who He is? To the majority he takes many forms. He is the god of destruction, the god of life, the god or goddess of love, and on and on the list goes according to man's needs and his fears. There are hundreds and thousands and perhaps millions of these gods and goddesses and deities. One merely chooses the one that he wants to worship, and to him that one becomes his god.

Because this is the predominate belief, and inasmuch as this teaching and philosophy has been handed down from generation to generation, then to the untaught believer in Christ, this may still be his concept of God. Such people picture God as being one who rewards them physically when



they please Him but they fear that He may strike down from heaven to physically punish them when He is displeased with them. For example, if a child in the family dies they may take this to mean that God is punishing them for some failure. If there is a cyclone, a famine, an accident, or some other type of loss, they feel that this may be the result of God's anger being poured out on them. Therefore, they reason that if God's anger is to be turned from them they must somehow atone for their deeds. This attitude grows out of ignorance, fear, and superstition, out of following the traditions and customs that have been handed down, and from the influences of other religious practices and philosophies upon their lives.

What is your concept of God? That is, how do you picture God? Is He one or many? Is He made up of many gods and goddesses? What do you believe about Him? How much do you believe in Him? How does He deal with you? How do you deal with Him?

The Bible tells us over and over that there is but one God. (Galatians 3:20; Ephesians 4:6). He is a Spirit (John 4:24), living (1 Thessalonians 1:9), everlasting (Romans 16:26), and Holy. (Psalms 99:9), He is mighty (Isaiah 9:6) merciful (Psalms 116:5), and loving. (1 John 4:8). There is no end to the traits of perfection that we could list of him. The Bible describes him as a Spirit, person, who works and who deals with man. It is therefore, possible to know him, to obey him, and to be rewarded by him.

God is the creator of all things. (Genesis 1:1). The Bible tells us how he dealt with His creation from the beginning and of his dealing with man down through the ages. It tells us how He deals with us today, how He speaks to us, what He expects of us, and how we will all finally stand before Him in the day of judgement.

Paul wrote to the Romans, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unright-

eousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; to 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 imaginations, 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 four-footed beast, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour 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 1:19-25). Please note that it was possible for them to know God even by the things that they saw around them. That is they could have known that there was a Creator by seeing that which He had created. But they turned away from God and began to worship that which had been created rather than to worship the one who had created it. This displeased God very much.

God has said that man should have no other gods before Him. (Exodus 20:3). In Exodus 20:4, 5 He forbids man to make any graven image of anything in heaven or on earth and to bow down to it. We do not know what God looks like and therefore we cannot picture Him or make a resemblance of Him. He likewise knows that if we should make an image of some kind to represent Him then that would become our god and He Himself would be rejected. He is jealous over us with a godly jealousy and wants us to worship Him only.

In Acts 17:22-31 we have this record: “Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I

perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, **TO THE UNKNOWN GOD**. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him. Though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; Whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

Among mankind in general, God does not send blessings and punishment directly on any man, woman, or child today because of his goodness or as a result of his evil deeds. One may suffer in various ways, and even as a result of his sins, but not necessarily because God sees the individual doing wrong and sends intentional suffering upon him. Likewise, because of one's good moral living, being kind, honest, hard working, etc., one may receive benefits, and this because of following the principles of God's teachings, but not that God directly rewards such people with his blessings. Among His children, those who have obeyed Him and have

become a part of His family, God deals with them as a Father.

God does not want men to serve Him merely out of ignorance and fear, but He wants us to know Him, to come to believe in Him, and based on this to obey His will. We may know him through a study of the Bible, and we may know His will for man today especially through a study of the New Testament. There we will see His love, grace, and mercy in giving Christ to die for us that we might be saved. We may learn of the church, how to worship God, and how to live for Him. We may also learn what He has in store for us if we are faithful to Him, and of the punishment that awaits those who fail to believe in Him and to obey Him. Read and learn, study and believe. Obey God. God has spoken through his Son Jesus and His message for man has been recorded in the Bible so that we might be saved eternally.

What is your concept of God? Do you believe in the true and living God? This can make all the difference in the kind of life you live here and where you spend eternity.

### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Do most people believe in God?
2. How do the majority look on God?
3. Has the Hindu concept of God influenced the Christians belief?
4. In what ways do some people picture God's dealings with them?
5. What is responsible for these beliefs?
6. What does the Bible tell us about God? How many gods are there? Who is He? What are some of His characteristics?

- 7 Why did God give the Romans up?
8. Does God allow man to make graven images to represent Him? If not, why not?
9. Why is God jealous?
10. What did Paul find at Mars Hill? What did He say about idolatrous worship? To whom did He point them?
11. Does God send blessing and punishment directly upon man?
- 12 How does God deal with man today?
- 13 Is it possible to know God? How?
14. Can we obey God and serve Him today?
15. How will God finally deal with each one of us?
- 16 What is your concept of God?

## THE GODHEAD

The religious world speaks of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit as the trinity. The word trinity does not appear in the Bible but the concept, the idea of three divine personalities, is there. You also may find a trinity in other religions such as in Hinduism, but that does not mean at all that one of these religions is related to the other. Although we do not read of trinity, as such, in the scriptures, we do read of the Godhead which amounts to the same. This expression is found three times in the New Testament and means "the deity."

The first time the term Godhead is mentioned Paul is speaking to a group of idolatrous people, and after pointing to the God of heaven as the creator of all things, he says, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver or stone, graven by art and man's device." (Acts 17:29). The next time

it is mentioned, the same person is speaking to the Romans about how they had turned from God and had begun to worship the creature more than the creator. Then he said, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20). Finally, Paul says to the Colossians; "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principalities and power." (Colossians 2:8-10).

There are those who teach that Jesus was at the same time, God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. These individuals are often spoken of as "Jesus only" people. This is clearly a false doctrine when you study the scriptures because they distinctly speak of God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. For instance, Paul says in Ephesians 4:1-6 that there is one of each. In John 17 we have Christ speaking to his Father and in John 16:13 he promise to send the Comforter or the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 28:19, 20 we have Christ teaching that those who obey his teachings must be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In 1 John 5:7 John says that there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 17:5 God acknowledges his Son from heaven. In John 1 Christ is spoken of as the word who came down from God. When Christ was baptized by John the record says that the Spirit descended on him like a dove and that the Father spoke from heaven to express his approval of his Son. (Matthew 3:13-17). Surely, therefore, these many references would indicate that there are indeed three in the Godhead.

Next, there are those who say that there are three

Gods, God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is true that all three of them are deity and therefore all have divine attributes but at the same time they are not spoken of as three distinct Gods competing with each other or even with each having his own distinctive work. Instead, the Bible teaches us that there is one God, one Lord, and one Spirit. (Ephesians 4:1-6). There are three personalities but at the same time they are one. John says this in 1 John 5:7. Christ said in speaking to the Father concerning the apostles and those who would obey him through their word, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou has sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." (John 17:21, 22). Even as far back as Genesis 1:1 we read, "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." We are told that the Hebrew word for God in this verse includes all three in the Godhead. We read on how God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." (Genesis 1:26). Whom was God including in that statement? It is obvious that Christ and the Holy Spirit were included here.

It is true as human beings we don't fully understand the Godhead. To begin, we cannot with human minds understand their eternal nature. Next we are not able to fully comprehend the Father-Son relationship. For instance, when did Christ become the Son? Then the Holy Spirit and his work often confuses us. Although we do not understand all of these things, we accept them by faith. Surely God has given to us all of the information about himself, his Son, and the Holy Spirit that we need. Had we needed any more then he would have revealed that also. Perhaps the reason we don't know more about them and understand them better is because we have not studied enough. Whatever there is to learn, however, is revealed for one and all in the Bible.

Let us now think briefly about each one in the Godhead:

1. God—the Father.

He was in the beginning (Genesis 1:1), the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:5), the **I AM THAT I AM** (Exodus 3:14), and besides him there is no other. (Deuteronomy 4:39). He is Spirit (John 4:24), the Father (Matthew 6:9), and the giver of all blessings (James 1:17). He is one (1 Corinthians 8:6).

2. Christ—the Son.

He was with the Father in creation (Genesis 1:26, 27; 3:22; Hebrews 1:1, 2; John 1; Colossians 1:9-17), was before Abraham (John 8:51-59), and the only one in the Godhead clothed in the flesh. (Philippians 2:6,7). He was born miraculously (Matthew 1; Luke 1), performed miracles (John 3:2; John 20:30, 31), and died for man. (Philippians 2:6, 7). He was resurrected and ascended to the Father. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 1:9) and thus became man's saviour. (1 Timothy 4:10). Because of his deity and relationship with God, he was also called God (Philippians 2:5-11; John 1), and worshipped as God. (Matthew 28:9). Those who obey him are baptized in his name (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38), enter his spiritual body which is the church (1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:47), wear his name (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16), and do all things in his name. (Colossians 3:17). There is but one Lord. (1 Corinthians 8:6) He will come again some day, at which time he will judge all mankind. (John 14:1-3; Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

3. The Spirit of God — The Holy Spirit.

He is always listed third in the Godhead. He was present with God and Christ in the creation. (Genesis 1:1, 2). Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21). Christ promised the Holy Spirit to the apostles (John 16:13), and he came on the day of



Pentecost with the beginning of the church. (Acts 2:1-4). We are to be baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19, 20), and upon our obedience we receive him as a gift to dwell within us. (Acts 2:38). As Christians we are to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23). There is only one Spirit. (Ephesians 4:4).

These are the personalities of the Godhead as revealed in the Bible. We could say much about each one of them but don't forget that there are many false gods, christs and spirits. Therefore you need to thoroughly acquaint yourself with the true Godhead lest you be deceived and led off into error.

These are some of deep things of God. We can know and understand God and Christ and the Holy Spirit and their relationship to one another and their relationship to us only to the extent that God would have us to. We should be content with that. Remember that Paul said: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." (Romans 15:30). And again, he said: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." (2 Corinthians 13:14).

### QUESTION FOR STUDY

1. Define trinity as it is used in the religious world.
2. Does the word trinity appear in the Bible?
3. Is it unscriptural to use this term?
4. Do other religions have a trinity? Does this mean that these religions are related?

5. The idea of the trinity is expressed in what way in the Bible?
6. What is the Godhead?
7. List three scriptures that speak of it.
8. What are some different teachings about God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit?
9. How can God, Christ and the Holy spirit be three personalities and yet at the same time be one?
10. List some scriptures that would teach three distinct personalities in the Godhead.
11. Does the Bible teach there are three Gods in Christianity? In what sense can they be said to be God?
12. Can we fully understand the Godhead? If not, why not?
13. How are we to accept the Godhead?
14. Has God given us sufficient information about them?
15. Give some facts about God.
16. List the outstanding facts about Christ.
17. What does the Bible tell us about the Holy Spirit?
18. Why must we be acquainted with the members of the Godhead?
19. Are there false Gods, Christs, etc? In what sense?
20. Does the Godhead live today? Where? How?

## **RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD**

The Apostles Paul wrote the young preacher Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15). Please note in particular that he speaks of "Rightly dividing the word". The American Standard version says "handling aright the word of truth."

The Berkley Version of the New Testament translates it: "Correctly analysing the message of the truth." These various translations and versions are saying the same thing in substance, that we must be very careful in the way we deal with God's word. In other words, we must study it carefully and reverently to determine what God's message is for us today.

You might be surprised to learn that not all people love the truth. (2 Thessalonians 2:10). That is why all do not believe it (2 Thessalonians 2:12), do not obey it (Romans 2:8), do not walk by it. (Galatians 2:12). There are others who resist it (2 Timothy 3:8), and still others that turn away their ears from the truth. (2 Timothy 4:4). Because of this it is advisable that each person study God's word for himself so that he may come to know the truth as it really is. (Romans 10:17).

You might think that it would be impossible for you to study the Bible on your own to the point that you may know what the Lord would have you to do. But in spite of your fear, you can do just that. God has revealed his will in the Bible and given it to one and all. Surely he has not given a book that we cannot understand. It is true that some of it is very deep and difficult to understand, but other parts of it are easy to read and study and to understand. It is designed so that everyone may be challenged by it but all may know the things that God expects of him to be saved. Then as one continues to read and study, he is gradually able to understand more. A person doesn't begin his secular education by going to college but he starts off by learning how to read and write, and the classes that follow prepare him eventually for college itself. The same is true with the Bible.

Let us realize that we cannot let the Bible fall open at any point and begin to read and think that that is God's message for us today. You may be shocked to find that not all of the Bible is directed to man today as a law. As a matter of fact, most of it does not apply directly to us. Continue to study

with me and I will show you how this works. For example, in Genesis 6 God commanded Noah to build an ark, but that does not mean that he has commanded us to build one. Then in Genesis 12 we read that God commanded Abram to depart from his country to a country he would show him, but this doesn't mean that we must leave our country. And so on with many other commands that we read about in the Bible.

All of this clears up when we understand that the Bible is made up of total of sixty-six books and it is broken into two major divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament has thirty-nine books and the New Testament has twenty-seven books. The old Testament begins with creation in the book of Genesis and continues through the book of Malachi. The New Testament begins with Matthew and goes through Revelation.

God have his people a law but later decided to give a new law. This made the first law old and therefore it became known as the Old Testament. The second law being new, it became known as the New Testament. The word Testament itself means covenant, will, or law. Thus the Hebrew writer said in speaking of Christ and the New Testament, "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." (Hebrews 9:15-17). In Hebrews 8:7 the same writer said, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second, "Then in Hebrews 10:9 he said, "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." So the writer makes it clear that the Old Testament law was taken away and a new was given. One under the new law can no more keep the old

law than those under the old law could keep the new law that was yet to be given. That is, those who lived under the Old Testament law had to live by it and they will be judged by it on the day of judgement, and those of us who are living under the New Testament law are duty bound to abide by it because we will one day be judged by it.

From the beginning of time up to this time, as set forth in the Bible, there have been three major periods of time. The first was the Patriarchal age, which had its beginning with Adam and Eve and continued up to the giving of the law of Moses. You may read about this from Genesis 1:1 up to Exodus 20. The word patriarch means father and during this age God spoke to the fathers or the heads of the families and in turn they spoke to their people concerning God's will for them. This period has often been described as the star-light age which signifies a limited amount of light. It lasted for 2500 years. The second age is the Mosaical dispensation or period of time. This was the time in which God gave his law to Moses and through which he spoke to his people in a written law. It began with Exodus 20 and ended with the death of Christ on the cross. It is described as the moon-light age in which more light was given. It lasted for 1500 years. And finally, the third period of time is said to be the Christian age which began with Christ's death on the cross and will continue to exist until Christ comes again, meaning that it is the third and final period of time. During this age God speaks to us through Christ in the New Testament. (Matthew 17:5; Hebrews 1:1, 2). This period is said to be the sunlight age in which full light has been given through Christ. It has already been in force for almost 2000 years and how long it will yet continue we know not. We are therefore living in the Christian age and we are governed by the law of Christ.

When we understand the way the Bible is divided up and the ages that are revealed therein, we are able to know the

law that is binding on us. We know at the same time that we cannot go back to the Old Testament law to justify any practice that we want to engage in such as tithing, keeping the Sabbath, the use of mechanical music, etc. Although we cannot go back to the Old Testament for the Ten Commandments, we must realize that commands such as not to kill, not to steal, etc., are taught under the law of Christ. Just because the Old Testament is not binding on us as a law, this does not mean that it is not inspired of God. It is inspired of God, is the word of God, and there are many reasons why we should read and study it. The Old Testament tells us about God, his creation, the history of mankind, how he chose his people and dealt with them. It tells us that when people obeyed God he blessed them and when they disobeyed him he punished them, etc. Paul says of the Old Testament, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4). Speaking of the things that happened under the Old Testament law, he said again, "But with many of them God was not well pleased: For they were overthrown in the wilderness. 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 is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, 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." (1 Corinthians 10:5-11).

Also, it has been said that the Old Testament foretells the New Testament and that the New Testament explains the Old Testament. The Old Testament tells about the coming of

Christ and his church and there are many many principles there that would apply to any age.

Christ lived and died under the law, although his teaching and life was concerned with what would happen under the New Testament Law. When one understands this then he understands why he cannot go to the thief on the cross as an example of how one is to be saved today.

There are many Old Testament quotations in the New Testament but both Christ and the various New Testament writers make it very clear that the first law was fulfilled and replaced by the law of Christ. (Matthew 5:17-19; John 1:17; Luke 24:44; 2 Corinthians 3; Galatians 5:4; Colossians 1:14). They speak of the New Testament as the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25), that we have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:4), and that by keeping the commandments of the Lord we may have the hope of eternal life. (Revelation 22:14). We are likewise warned that we are not to add to his law, subtract from it, or to substitute for it in any way. (Revelation 22:18, 19; Galatians 1:7-9).

Finally, to understand the word of God as it may apply to us today, here are some good questions to ask while studying:

1. Who is the speaker?
2. When was it spoken?
3. To whom was it spoken?
4. Is the language figurative or literal?
5. Is it a command?
6. Does it seem to conflict with other simple truths, as I understand it?
7. In what context was it spoken?

If you will consider seriously the things that have been said and attempt to answer these questions as you study, then surely you will see the wisdom of Paul's statement when he said that we should rightly divide the word of truth.

Furthermore, when you apply these rules of study you will indeed be able to see the wisdom of his statement since it really works. When you rightly divide the word it is possible to understand the Lord's will as he intended for you to understand it. When the word is not rightly divided then one is left confused and bewildered. Truly God knows best and when we learn to follow his instruction then we are rewarded.

### QUESTION FOR STUDY

1. Who said that we should rightly divide the word?
2. What does it mean to rightly divide the word?
3. Do all people love the truth?
4. Why should each one study the Bible for himself?
5. Is it possible to understand the Bible?
6. Can we allow the Bible to fall open at any point and begin to read it and feel that this is God's will for us?
7. Are all of the commands of the Bible directed to us?
8. How many books are there in the Bible?
9. Name the two major divisions of the Bible.
10. What is the difference in the Old Testament and the New Testament?
11. Define testament.
12. Which testament is bibbing today, the old or the new?
13. List the three major periods of time set forth in the Bible.
14. In which period of time or dispensation of time do we live?
15. Can we go back to the Old Testament for the authority to justify the things we are doing?
16. What is the purpose of the Old Testament today?
17. Under which law did Christ live and die?
18. Why can we not go to the thief on the cross as an example



- of salvation?
19. Mention some scriptures that tell us that the Old Testament is no longer binding but that we are to be governed by the New Testament law.
  20. What are some question that we can ask that will help us to better understand God's will?
  21. Can you see the value of rightly dividing the word of truth? In what way or ways?

## **GOD HATH SPOKEN**

The Hebrew writer tells us: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." (Hebrews 1:1, 2). From this text we are affirming that God exists and that he has spoken. He has created all things and has made man in his image. (Genesis 1:26, 27). He has spoken to man in the past at different times and in different ways. At first he spoke to the patriarchs or fathers directly and they in turn conveyed God's message to their families. Some of the fathers were Adam, Noah, Abraham, and many others. Later he spoke to the prophets like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, and so on, through the law of Moses. But in these last days, that is, since the death of Christ upon the cross, God speaks to man through Christ as revealed in the New Testament. At the transfiguration, God said concerning Christ, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matthew 17:5). In this particular setting we have Moses present to represent the Law, Elias to represent the prophets, and then Christ. Peter

wanted to honor the three equally, by building a tabernacle for each of them, but God by-passed Moses and the law and Elias and the prophets and made it plain that now he speaks through Christ. As to our relationship to him, God said, "Hear ye Him."

Are we to understand that God does not speak to us today through the Old Testament scriptures? That is correct. That does not mean that that portion of scripture is not the word of God, because Peter said that Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21), but it does mean that it was directed to those who lived before the death of Christ and therefore God does not speak to us today through this law. In other words, it has been fulfilled (Matthew 5:17, 18; Luke 24:44), nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14), and is no longer binding. (Hebrews 9:16, 17; 10:9, 10). John wrote, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17).

This being so, then we cannot go back to the thief on the cross and use him as an example of how one can be saved today. Neither can we go on back into the Old Testament scriptures and find verses to justify the sabbath, the practice of tithing, or the use of mechanical music for our own present day. Paul says concerning the use of the Old Testament scriptures, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4). Then in 2 Corinthians 3, and many other scriptures that could be given, we can see clearly that the old law has been replaced by the new law and that if we therefore have accepted the law of Christ only to return to the old law then we are fallen from grace. (Galatians 5:4).

All of this to say that although God has spoken in the past that does not mean that it is directed to us. Rather to know what God has said to us then we must look to Christ, the

word (John 1:1-5), as it is revealed through the written word, as recorded in the pages of the New Testament. Concerning this, we read, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30, 31). In relation to Christ and his word, and the importance of it, Christ says, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48).

Referring to the scriptures itself, Paul writes, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Peter says, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us unto glory and virtue." (2 Peter 1:3). Then James says, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:25). God has therefore spoken through Jesus and that has been recorded in the pages of the book we call the New Testament. It is revealed here alone and so important is it that we are warned that we are not alone and it, subtract from it, or substitute for it in any way. (Revelation 22:18, 19; Galatians 1:6-9).

As we can see, God has given us a perfect law and its value is revealed in the words of Paul, when he said, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17). Christ says that God's word is truth (John 17:17), and that the truth makes free. (John 8:32). James says that we are to be doers of the word and not hearers only. (James 1:22).

God has chosen to speak through a written law as revealed through Christ and recorded by inspired men. In doing so he has revealed unto man everything that he wants man to know. He has told him about the creation, the history of man, the coming of Christ and his sacrifice for the sins of the world, and then he has gone on to tell how the church was established, what to do to be saved, how to worship, how to live the Christian life, and where man will spend eternity. It is wonderful that we have such a book and that we do not have to wonder and guess about God's will for us. We also may compare that which we hear with God's word to see if it is the truth or not. In this way we may always know the truth on any matter that pertains to life and godliness.

Many people today, however, are confused concerning the way God reveals his will to man. In spite of all that has been said, and the clearness of it, there are still those who believe that in addition to the scriptures God speaks through signs, miracles, wonders, dreams, and through direct communication to man. For instance, there are those who speak of seeing a vision, or of the Lord appearing to them in person to deliver some special message. To those who are unfamiliar with God's word this may have some significance, but to those who know what God has said then they know that such cannot be.

Let's take a look at some situations in New Testament times to see what happened when the Lord or an angel appeared. Of course we must understand that this was in the time of miracles and at a time when the church was in a state of infancy and just because these things happened at that time does not mean that they are happening today. Actually, at that time they didn't have the New Testament in its completed form and such appearances and means of communication were necessary at times for specific purpose but even then at no time did they ever reveal God's word but served more in the

capacity of getting the preacher and the sinner together. First, look at Acts 8:26-39, and there you have the angel of the Lord speaking to Philip the evangelist and instructing him to go to a certain place to find the man of Ethiopia riding alone in a chariot. He did so, was invited to ride, taught this man the truth, and baptized him. The question that comes up though is, why didn't the angel go to this man and teach him the truth?

Continuing, in Acts 9 we have the story how the Lord appeared unto Saul. When Saul wanted to know what to do, the Lord told him to go into the city and there it would be told what he should do. Next, we have the Lord appearing to Ananias in vision to ask him to go to one called Saul and Tarsus. Ananias didn't want to go to begin with because he had heard of all that Saul had done against the church but the Lord assured him that he was a chosen vessel unto him. Ananias went and baptized him. (Acts 22:16). But why didn't the Lord do all of this? Next, we have Cornelius having a vision and seeing an angel of the Lord coming to him and asking him and seeing an angel of the Lord coming to him and asking him to send for Simon Peter, Then we have Peter falling into a trance and the Spirit of the Lord speaking to him concerning the men who had come from Cornelius to get him and the Spirit asked him to go doubting nothing. He went and taught Cornelius and his household the truth, and they obeyed the Lord, thus becoming the first Gentile converts (Acts 10, 11). but why didn't the Spirit teach Cornelius and his household the truth without going through all of this effort of getting Cornelius and Peter together so that Peter could teach him the truth? We shall see.

The apostle Paul warned, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But

though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” (Galatians 1:6-9). Did you notice what Paul said? he said that the one true pure gospel had already been preached to them. Therefore if he, or even if an angel from heaven, should come and preach a different gospel to them, then they would stand condemned.

If you will notice, you will find that all who claim that the Lord or some heavenly being has spoken directly to them, separate and apart from the written word, that the supposed message given to them is different to what the Bible teaches. Could we assume for a minute that God would say one thing in his word and then give a conflicting message in another manner to the same individual? Could we assume that God would speak to the majority through his written word but then choose certain individuals to give special messages to him? Surely not. The fact is, when one begins to tell you that God is speaking directly to him then you can mark it down that he is either mentally unbalanced or else he is deceived and therefore is not speaking the truth. If we want to be sure of what God has said then we must go to his rather than to wait on a direct message from him. If he has something yet to say to us then we cannot say that the Bible is the final will and testament for the Lord and we cannot be sure if it really represents all the truth. However, the word of God is final and complete. that is why Jesus to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature and to teach all nations this truth. (Mark 16:15, 16; Matthew 28:19, 20).

The key to all of this is found in Paul’s statement when he said concerning the gospel: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” (2 Corinthians 4:7). That is why the Lord used Philip, Ananias, Peter, etc., in preaching the gospel

because he has chosen man to deliver his message to other men.

In conclusion, remember that God has always spoken and today is no exception. He speaks through Christ and Christ speaks to us through the written word. There is no other way to know God's will. Will you hear him? That is why he has spoken.

### QUESTION FOR STUDY

1. Explain Hebrews 1:1, 2.
2. How has God spoken to man in the past?
3. Does God speak today? Through whom? How?
4. Is the Old Testament law binding today?
5. Can we go to the thief on the cross as an example of what to do to be saved? If not, why not?
6. By what will we be judged in the last day?
7. Are the scriptures complete?
8. How important is God's word?
9. Does God reveal his word to man in any other way apart from the written word? If so, illustrate. If not, give scriptural reason.
10. Give some examples from the New Testament that show how the Lord sent messengers directly to man or appeared himself. What was the purpose of this?
11. Did any of these ever tell man what to do to be saved?
12. Discuss the meaning of Galatians 1:7-9.
13. In what has God placed his message today?

## **FACTS YOU MUST FACE**

Life is a reality. We are here and therefore we must face it regardless of conditions or situations that we find ourselves in. We can better our plight in this world and have something to live for and look forward to if we will recognize some specific facts and decide to act on them. What are these?

1. There is a God in heaven and he is the creator of all of us. (Genesis 1:1). He is the one and true living God. (1 Thessalonians 1:9). He is Spirit. (John 4:24).

2. Each one of us have a soul that will never die but will live on forever and forever. It has been created in the image of God. (Genesis 1:26, 27). It is more valuable than all the world. (Matthew 16:26).

3. All are sinners before God. Paul said, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). From the context you will note that the sinner under consideration are responsible beings, knowing right from wrong. That does not include infants or unresponsible beings. But to show the consequences of unforgiven sins, the same writers says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ nor Lord." (Romans 6:23).

4. God sent Christ to save man from his sins. Christ said, "For god so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should be perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8).

5. God has chosen to speak through his Son, Jesus' to make known his will to man. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." (Hebrews 1:1, 2). God said of Christ at the transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye



him.” (Matthew 17:5). But how does Christ communicate with us? Through the written word, John wrote, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20:30, 31). Paul declared, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they call on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?.....So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:13-17).

6. The salvation that the Lord offers is by the grace of God. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8, 9). “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of the regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” (Titus 3:5). Man cannot be saved by keeping the law or through his own good works. Rather, man must comply with the Lord’s terms of pardon in order to be saved. Even though he does so that does not mean that he is earning his salvation. Regardless of how many commands he may obey, or the good deeds he may do, if he saved it will only be by the grace and mercy of God. Compliance with the Lord’s will does not nullify God’s grace but instead it is a sign of one’s acceptance of it.

7. One must obey Christ in order to be saved. We read, “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). To obey Christ one must believe in God and that Jesus Christ is his Son. But without faith it is impossible to please him . . .“(Hebrews 11:6). Christ said, “Ye believe in

God, believe also in me.” (John 14:1). Jesus also said, “Ye are many friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” (John 14:15). Therefore the question is: Do you believe in the Lord enough, and love him enough, to obey him? What has he asked that we do? First, that we repent of our sins. (Luke 13:3). Next, he has invited us to confess him before men as the Son of God. (Matthew 10:32). Finally he has commanded that we be baptized. (Matk 16:16). Faith will not question but it will obey. Those who obey will be saved from their sins. The apostles taught the same in Acts 2:38. See Acts 22:16.

8. Those who obey the Lord and are therefore saved by the grace of God are added to the Lord’s church. This is what happened on the day the church had its beginning. (Acts 2:47). It will also happen to you or anyone else who does the same thing. If one finds himself in some man-made church then is a sign that he has not obeyed the Lord but has rather obeyed the teaching of men.

9. As a Christian one must worship the Lord each first day of the week and live daily the Christian life. (Acts 20:7; Revelation 2:10). This involves more than just saying that you are a Christian. It is total commitment with a life of service. (Matthew 16:24; Romans 12:1, 2).

10. All must die and face the Lord at the day of judgement. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die but after this cometh the judgement.” (Hebrews 9:27). “For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ . . .” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

11. The righteous will live with the Lord throughout all eternity. (Matthew 25:46).

12. Those who fail to obey the Lord will be cast into the lake of fire where they shall ever be punished. (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 21:8; John 5:28, 29).

You are encouraged to consider each of these facts very

seriously. You will have to deal with them now or later. The wise will do so at this time.

## THE NEW BIRTH

We constantly hear people talking about being born again, born again Christians, the new birth, etc. What do they mean? Should you question them they would generally explain it as having reference to those who gave accepted the Lord as their personal saviour. Should you question them further they would probably go into great detail but still end up to explain the subject in harmony with the word of God.

Since this is a Bible subject then we want to go to the Bible to see what it teaches. The best way to commence is to read the text itself. So we begin to read: "There was a man of the Pharisees, name Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb. and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listed, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:1-8).

First, let us observe that this birth that is under consideration has nothing to do with a physical birth. There have been those who have tried to explain away the water in this text as having to do with the physical birth, but not so. Nicodemus thought that a physical birth was under consideration but the Lord explains that this is not the case. Second, if it is not a physical birth, then it must be a spiritual birth that he is talking about. And so Jesus explained, by saying: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." (John 3:5). What is he saying?

1. "Except." There is just one way to enter the Lord's kingdom, and Jesus gives the negative side by beginning, 'Except', or unless—.
2. "Man." Man here is used in the generic sense, meaning both male and female. In other words, all accountable beings. Infants are not even included.
3. "Born." A birth requires two essentials: the begetting and the birth itself. In the new birth, which is a spiritual birth, one of the essentials is the Spirit and the other is the water. In this instance one is begotten of the Spirit and born of the water. It is that simple.
4. "Water." The water here has reference to baptism. You will note that it is literal water inasmuch as on all occasions when water is symbolic or figurative it is always said to be living water, etc. There is just one act in the Christian religion that involves water: and that is baptism. Thus when one is buried in water in baptism (Romans 6:3, 4), there is the coming forth or the new birth.
5. "Spirit." In the new birth one is begotten by the Spirit, but how? Through the word of God. The word was given by the Spirit, and as it is planted in a good heart, it begets and brings forth obedience. The believer determines to

give his life to God, to turn away from worldliness and sin and he is buried with Jesus in baptism so that he can rise as a new man, washed and clean of sin and born into the family of God. Listen to Peter: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:22, 23). So the spirit works through the word of God to beget, and through obedience one is baptized. Thus he has been born of the water and of the Spirit. It is just that plain.

6. "Kingdom." This is the kingdom of God, the church. (Matthew 16:18, 19). Jesus says there is just one way to enter it, and that is through being born of the water and of the Spirit.

Christ continues by showing the difference in the physical and spiritual births and then illustrates with the wind. Although one cannot see the wind, the result of it can be seen and felt. So with the Spirit. Its operation cannot be seen, but the results are clearly visible. The Spirit works through the word and by obeying its teaching one is saved, enters the Lord's kingdom and brings forth the fruits of the spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23).

Finally, the Lord does not have two ways of being saved or two ways of entering the kingdom or the church. The teaching of the new birth agrees completely with Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38 and all other verses that tell what one must do to be saved. In other words, when one hears the truth (Romans 10:17), believes it (John 20:30, 31), repents of his sin (Acts 17:30), confesses Christ (Romans 10:10), and is baptized (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16), he is by this process born again and thus enters the Lord's church. (1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:47). The question is: Have you been born again according to God's word?

## THE UNKNOWN TONGUE

There are religious people among us who claim to speak with tongues, or in an unknown tongue. Their own interpretation of this is that the Spirit of God is speaking through them. They further explain that they do not know what they are saying, that those who hear them do not understand what they are saying, but that only God knows. But the Bible nowhere teaches such a thing. Such people are merely deceived and are not speaking in any tongue, let alone in an unknown tongue, and end up in only making sounds and jibbering and jabbering.

The Bible does speak of an unknown tongue (1 Corinthians 14:2), but even then it is not unknown to the individual doing the speaking. In this case, the speaker understands what he is saying but the audience does not—thus his understanding is unfruitful. As a result he speaks to God and he is edified (through understanding), but to his audience it is meaningless because his language is unknown to them. (1 Corinthians 14:4).

We know that by “tongue” the writer has reference to words that can be understood because Paul explains, “So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue *words easy to be understood*, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.” (1 Corinthians 14:9). Going on, Paul says, “For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” (1 Corinthians 14:14, 15). Unknown tongue here is an unknown language to those who may be listening. Therefore in such a case Paul says that he would be praying but that those listening would find his prayer to be meaningless. The same would be true with his singing. So he determined to pray and

sing with the spirit and with the understanding also.

It is very clear that when Paul speaks of tongue he is speaking of languages, and thus when he speaks of the unknown tongue he is talking about an unknown language. Continuing his thought, he says, "Else when thou shalt bless with the Spirit, how shall he hath occupieth the room of the *unlearned* (those *uneducated* in the language being used) say Amen at the giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is no edified. I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." (1 Cotinthians 14:16-19).

Going on, the apostle reminds them, "In the law it is written, with men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe." (1 Corinthians 14:21, 22).

Listen again, "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course: and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to *himself* (the inference is that the speaker understands what he is saying or thinking), and to God." (1 Corinthians 14:27, 28). The unknown tongue is a language unknown to the *unlearned listeners*. So if there be those who speak in an unknown language, then let them take their turn in speaking, and let it be interpreted. But if no interpreter is present then there should be silence and each one is to speak to himself and to God. In other words, they should have their own private prayers.

Now who had the power to speak in other languages? The apostles did, for the Lord promised them the baptism of the Holy Spirit and one of the resulting signs was the fact that they spoke in other languages. (Acts 2:6). Cornelius and his household also received the baptism of the Holy Spirit to show that the Gentiles had been accepted of God too, and they spoke in other languages. (Acts 10). Then those on whom the apostles laid their hands received the Holy Spirit and were given the power to speak in other languages. (Acts 19:1-7). Were there any others? If there were, the Bible nowhere says so. But why did these men have this power? To have the ability to go into different parts of the world and preach the gospel in the local language without the need of taking the time to learn the local language or of having an interpreter. How long was this to last. Until the New Testament could be written and given to the world. Paul said that the time would come when tongues or language (miraculous) would cease. (1 Corinthians 13:8-10; James 1:25). So there are no miraculous tongues being spoken today. There is no need for such. The Bible has been given to the world.

Even those who claim to speak in tongues overlook several things:

1. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was not promised to them.
2. Since only the apostles could lay their hands on others that they might have the "laying on of hands" measure of the Holy Spirit, and since the apostles are dead, no one today can have that measure.
3. Speaking in tongues always had reference to speaking in other languages.
4. Speaking in tongues was for the unbeliever. (But today it is done in their religious services among believers only, preferably).
5. Today if the claimants don't know what they are saying, and those who hear them don't know what they are say-



ing, then how could they expect God to know? This is not the way it was in New Testament days, so obviously men don't have the same power today.

6. Those who claim to speak in tongues cannot speak in other languages as did the apostles on the day of Pentecost. When their big preachers come to Singapore, or go to other parts of the world, they have to have translators just like those of us who do not claim to have the "gift of tongues." So in no way does the "unknown tongues" claimed today compare with the tongues used in the New Testament.

In conclusion, it means that many people have been deceived. We beg of you to read and study your Bible that you might know the truth on this subject. But don't be deceived into thinking you have something, or that others have something, when really there is no such power given to men today.

## WHAT IS SIN?

The word sin is a very small word but it has vast meaning and significance. All are familiar with it and involved in it whether they realize it or not. It dominates and controls the lives of millions around the world. It has caused more sorrow and heartaches than any other thing. It is the cause of war, destruction, and death. It is responsible for all of the prisons throughout the world. It breaks homes and does hundreds and thousands of other things. Above all, it causes the souls of men to be lost. This is sin. It is evil. It is evil, wicked, ungodly, that which is bad, wrong, and destructive. It is never good, and never results in any good being done.

Now that we have said all of this about sin, the question that naturally arises is: What is sin? The word of God defines it like this: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4). Where there is no law, there is no sin, but in contrast to where there is law, and that law is transgressed and broken, then sin has been committed. This, then, is the meaning of sin. It is just that simple. The Law may be the law of the country, the local law, or the law of God, but nevertheless, if the law that one lives under is broken then a mistake has been made, a wrong has been done, and thus sin has been committed.

Sin had its beginning with the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, back in the garden of Eden at the beginning of time. The story goes that after God had created man and woman, made them husband and wife, and had placed them in the garden of Eden, that the serpent, the devil, came to them to tempt them. But let's read the story from here; "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the Garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." (Genesis

3:1-7). Now this is the way sin entered into the world and it has been here ever since. Reading on through Genesis 3 we find that man did indeed die, spiritually, since he and his wife were driven from the garden. They were also to die later physically, and physical death was likewise passed upon all mankind. There were also other consequences of their sin: "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this thou art cursed above the cattle, and above every beast of the field: upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: Thorns also and thistles shalt it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field: In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." (Genesis 3:14-19).

Please do not conclude from the foregoing, as many have done, that the original sin of Adam and Eve has been passed on down to us today. We have not inherited their sin, therefore, we are not guilty of their sin. But, though we are not responsible for their sin, we do suffer the consequences of it, which includes physical death, earning our own living and the suffering of childbirth. As for sin, we are responsible to God for our own sin and not for the sins of others.

According to the scriptures, sin originates in one's life as he is tempted of his own lust, and lust conceives and brings

forth sin. James explains it like this: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempted he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth death." (James 1:12-15).

The Bible says that all have sinned. Paul writes the Roman brethren, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). he also said, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." (Romans 3:10). These verses refer to those who are guilty of wrong doing, and the writer concludes by saying that the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23). But why does one commit sin? Because he is influenced by the author of sin, the devil. John verifies this by saying, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8).

There are all kinds of sin. There are sins of omissions, sins of commission, sins of the flesh, religious sins, sins against the law, etc. Furthermore, James says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17).

Man was weak, sinful, lost, and without hope. He could not better himself or save himself. Then Christ came for the specific purpose to save man. He came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10). He came to die for the sins of the world. Concerning him, Peter says, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to

sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (1 Peter 2:22-25).

Christ himself said, when he instituted the Lord's Supper, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matthew 26:28). Paul wrote, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Ephesian 1:7). This, when sinful people heard the gospel and asked what to do to be saved, they were told to "... Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remissions of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38). Saul was told, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). Therefore, since the blood of Christ was shed for the remission of sins or for the forgiveness of sins, and when people obeyed the commands of the Lord they received the remission of their sins or had their sins washed away, then we would have to conclude that through one's obedience to the Lord he comes into contact with the blood of Christ and is therefore cleansed and purified. Since this is something that man cannot and could not do for himself then it means that it is by the grace of God that all of this is possible. (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

To those that are Christians, John says, "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. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he as faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in sin." (1:7-10).

Only those who are clean and pure from sin can

eventually go to heaven. Only through Jesus can we be saved and have the hope of eternal life. All of the sinful and ungodly will be lost and cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 21:8).

Do you know what sin is? It is lying, stealing, killing, cheating, bribing, deceiving, immorality, hatred, cursing, disobedience, envy, jealousy, greed, love of money, racism, division, hypocrisy, and on and on we could go. One must know what sin is, that he is guilty of sin, what it does for others, the world, even him, before he will want to rid himself of it.

Are you aware of what sin is? Are you conscious of what it has already done to you and what it will do to you? If so then you realize that sin is not good for you and will not help you and that it has nothing to offer you but heartache and sorrow. If you are therefore wise you will look to Jesus for help. Believe in him, repent of your sins, and obey him in baptism and he will save you. As you belong to him, he will help to remain free from this terrible disease. May God bless you as you give your life to Jesus, the one who died to deliver you from the bondage of sin.

## **THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

One of the most misunderstood and controversial subjects of our time is the Holy Spirit and his work in the lives of people today. Out of all of this have come the Pentecostal doctrines and teachings which have added more and more confusion to the whole thing. In addition to this, many members of the church are equally confused and because of a lack of teaching may find themselves accepting and promoting on the mission of the Holy Spirit.

Our chief purpose in this study will be an attempt to put the Holy Spirit and his work in their proper perspective as set forth in the Bible. So far most people have a tendency to want to push the Holy Spirit into the background and out of sight while others go to the other extreme and over emphasize the Holy Spirit to the point that the other members of the Godhead become almost insignificant and minor. Both positions are wrong and the teaching of extremes does great harm. All of us will be much better off once we learn the place of the Holy Spirit in our lives and allow him to do the work that God intended.

Let's stop now and ask, who is the Holy Spirit? We need to get acquainted with him if we are to understand him and his relationship with us. To begin with, let us realize that he is not some ghost-like spirit that works mysteriously with us and in ways that we cannot explain. He does not come upon us and take control of our lives and cause us to act in a strange way and to speak in a tongue that no one knows. This may be the work of a *spirit*, but not the *Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit himself is a person with a definite identity and work. He is not merely God or Christ, although he is like them and is a part of the Godhead. He is deity, that is, supernatural.

The Holy Spirit is often spoken of as the third person in the Godhead. He was with God and Christ in the beginning. (Genesis 1:1, 2). Christ commanded the apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19, 20). Those who obey the Lord are given the gift of the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit himself. (Acts 2:38). Paul tells us that there is but one Spirit. (Ephesians 4:4).

To really understand the Holy Spirit and how he works in our lives today, we need to go back to the days of Christ and the apostles and consider the measures of the Holy Spirit. In so doing we must recognize that the purpose of the indwelling the Holy Spirit in those of New Testament times and his

purpose in us are two entirely different things. To argue that because Christ, the apostles, and others, performed miracles, spoke in other tongues, etc., that we should be able to do the same today, is a misunderstanding of the mission of the Holy Spirit, and this is where the whole problem lies.

First, let us begin with Christ because the record says that the Holy Spirit was given to him without measure. (John 3:34). The term measure denotes a limit on the power being given. When it says that the Spirit was given to him without measure then it means that no limitations were placed upon the power of the Spirit as he worked with Christ. Later we are going to see that the Apostles and others received the Spirit too but they received limited measures. It was not that they did not receive the Spirit, but he worked in them and through them in a limited way. That is, he did not exert all of his power through them.

Second, the apostles received the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist had said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:11, 12). Please note that Christ himself would administer the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit. Later we read where Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, but the promise was made to them only, not to people in general, and certainly not to people of our day. When Christ was giving final instructions to the Apostles before his return to the Father, he said, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49). Please note that Christ was speaking here specifically to the Apostles and he said that he would



send the promise upon them and that they should tarry in Jerusalem until they received it. Now if that is not restricting that gift to a select number, then what would you call it? But that is not all. He also said to the Apostles, "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 14:26). "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (John 15:26, 27). "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come." (John 16:13). These and other verses make it clear that the Holy Spirit was to be sent by God and Christ upon the Apostles, those that had been with him from the beginning, and that the Spirit would call to their remembrance all things Christ had taught them, would guide them into all truth, and show them things to come. This promise was not made to all people of that time and neither was it made to us today.

Keeping the foregoing thoughts in mind, you can understand the following verses: "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, 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. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was

received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” (Mark 16:14-20). Now you can easily see that the Lord here is dealing with the Apostles and the pronouns “they” and “them” refer specifically to the Apostles. When he therefore speaks of the signs and miracles that would follow them that believe, he was referring to the Apostles who would do these things as a result of their belief in him, but he was not referring to those in general who believe and are baptized. Later, the Apostles were able to do these things that he listed, but the purpose of them was to confirm the word or to prove that they were speaking the word of God.

In Acts 1:8 Christ again promised to send the Spirit upon the Apostles: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” After the Lord’s return to heaven, the Apostles gathered and Matthias was chosen to take the place of Judas, and then going into Acts 2, the record says, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4). Now who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Go back to the end of Acts 1 and read who the subjects are: not the one hundred and twenty, but the Apostles, the ones to whom the promise was given. Read on down to verse fourteen and see who stands up to preach: Peter and the eleven, the twelve apostles. Read on down to verse

forty three, after about three thousand had obeyed the Lord, and it says, "And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the *apostles*." So there can be no doubt here as to who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Besides the Apostles we have only one other case of Holy Spirit baptism in the scriptures and this was in the case of Cornelius and His household who became the first Gentiles converts. The Apostles were Jews and to show that the Gentiles were not excluded from the salvation of the gospel, the first Gentile converts likewise received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, proving that God is no respecter of persons. When Peter spoke of it he had to look all the way back to the day of Pentecost to find another case of Holy Spirit baptism. Read Acts 10 and 11.

Third, there was the measure of the Spirit that was given by the laying on of the Apostles' hands. Since the Apostles could not be everywhere and do all the work that needed to be done, then in Acts 6 we hear the Apostles asking the brethren to choose seven from among them full of the Holy Ghost, (And notice that they already had the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:38, but not the power to work miracles), so that they might lay their hands on them to enable them likewise to have miraculous power. Later we read of one of them, Philip, going down to Samaria to preach the gospel. The record says that he performed miracles and many believed and were baptised. This is the first instance of anyone working miracles besides the Apostles. But Philip could not pass on the power of the Holy Spirit that the Apostles had given to him. Therefore, Peter and John were sent for and they came down and laid their hands on some of the new Christians. They did not lay their hands on everyone, however, for Simon the sorcerer is a case in point. (Read Acts 8:1-24). Now, as you read through the New Testament and of the various miracles

that were performed, including speaking in tongues or other languages and other such things, these things were always done either by the Apostles or by those on whom they laid their hands.

Fourth, and final, we read about the ordinary measure of the Holy Spirit, the non-miraculous measure. This is the measure that all Christians receive, and this is the measure that is in force today. This is the measure that Peter spoke of in Acts 2:38, when he 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." But if there are no miraculous powers connected with this gift then how do we know that we have the Holy Spirit? In the first place, all of those who obey the pure gospel of Christ, and are therefore members of the church, are promised the Holy Spirit. We may know that we have the Holy Spirit because God's word says that those who obey his teaching will receive the Holy Spirit. But how does he dwell in us? Just as God and Christ dwell in us. What is the purpose of his dwelling in us? Paul says that he bears witness with our spirit that we are the Children of God, that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Romans 8:16, 26). Paul also admonishes us that if we live in the Spirit we are to walk by the Spirit and thus to bear the fruits of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25, 22).

During the times of the Apostles the New Testament had not yet been given in written form. Therefore, with the birth of the church, the Lord's people needed special guidance. She was like a babe, infant, and needed miracles to direct her and to guide her until the New Testament could be given in written form. That is why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13 that the time would come when tongues, and other miraculous things would cease. Thus when the Apostles died, and those

on whom they laid their hands, died, the miraculous age ended because by this time the New Testament, the perfect law of liberty, had been given in written form (James 1:22, 25), and from that time down to this man has not had to depend on childish things such as miracles but has been able to go to the New Testament itself to know God's will and to be guided by it. (John 20:30, 31; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 4:11).

The New Testament was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and it completely furnishes man to every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). When man therefore goes to it to read, study it, and to obey its teaching, then he is being guided and directed by the Holy Spirit, but not separate and apart from the word. Why then would any one want to push aside the word of God and all of its teaching and rely on his feelings and his claims concerning the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Such a person is blind, deceived, and lost. In such a case he is being guided by the evil spirit, not the spirit of God.

In light of what the Bible says, how could anyone today claim to have the baptism of the Holy Spirit? How could anyone claim to be able to perform miracles, speak in tongues, etc.? Such people are not only ignorant of the Scriptures but make a mockery of God and his power. There are people of all religions who claim miraculous power, but we know that such claims are false. This is not to say that God does not live and that his people are powerless, to the contrary, he does live and his people have the power of the Spirit within them.

Please don't be deceived. You don't have to go around all the time saying "Praise the Lord," "Thank you Jesus," "Hallelujah," etc., to prove that you have the Spirit living in you. If you have truly obeyed God, you have the Spirit. (Acts 2:38). Study your Bible, believe what it teaches, and trust the Lord to do what he said he would do. If you will then you should not have any trouble in understanding the Holy Spirit and his work in your life for today.

## LOOKING FOR PAULS

If you are familiar with the story of the Apostle Paul, you know what he meant to the cause of Christ in the first century. Surely the Lord saw in this man the great potential he represented for Christianity even before his conversion. He was a man who was not only well educated secularly and religiously, but he was also full of faith, zeal, courage, and determination. Being a Jew and one who was active in propagating Judaism, feeling that Christianity represented a threat to his religion, he set out to persecute and to exterminate those who were spreading it. He said later that he verily thought within himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (Acts 26:9). Not telling what he would have eventually done had Christ himself not stepped into the picture. In Acts 9 we have the account of the Lord appearing to him and when Saul (as he was called then) asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" He was told to go into the city of Damascus and there it would be told him what he should do. He went, blind, fasting, and praying and later Ananias came to him and commanded him to arise and be baptized to wash away his sins. (Acts 22:16). He did so and began immediately to preach the resurrection of Christ. From that time onward it was as though a wild fire had been turned loose on Asia and Europe because wherever he went he preached the gospel of Christ. Because of him, and others like him, the gospel was taken into all the world in a short time.

There probably never has been another man exactly like Paul, nor will there ever be. But there must be men today, as in every age, who closely resemble him in many ways. There are the men who hear God's will, obey it, and then because of the drive that is within them they are able to lead hundreds and thousands of others to the truth. They are special men because of their faith and courage coupled with

zeal and determination. Nothing can stop them. These men are not followers, except for following Christ, but they are leaders in that they are out working, teaching, converting, and leading men and women to Christ. They are not sitting around waiting for someone to come by to tell them what to do but rather they are up moving and taking the initiative for the Lord's cause. They are out on the front line fighting the good fight of faith. Because of them the gospel will then become known, the church will be planted, and only eternity will reveal the good that was done.

Here in this country, as well as around the world, we are looking for Pauls. We are trying to locate them through literature, radio preaching, and personal contact. We believe they are out there. Perhaps we have not met them yet, and we may never meet them, but they are there. They are already unusual men. They are leaders. They are teachers. They are in all kinds of professions. Some may even be bad men. But the point is, they have the ability to become great men of God. If we can but get the truth to them, arrest their attention, awaken them to God and their need, then they will do the rest. Once they learn the truth they will obey it and then they will begin to teach it to others. How do I know this? I know they will, if they are like Paul.

Are you a Paul? It is true that not everyone can be a Paul, or even close to being a Paul, but there are some like him and we believe that if we can reach such potential leaders with the truth then they can be worth so much in spreading the gospel in their own areas and throughout their country. Through them and their work, all of the people of the world could hear the gospel of Christ. How wonderful this would be!

Regardless of who you are or where you may be, will you hear the gospel, believe it, repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of your sins? (Romans 10:17; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Matthew

10:32; Acts 22:16). If you will, the Lord will save you, add you to his church, and God can use you to reach souls. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; Matthew 28:19, 20). It is urgent for you to act now, both for yourself and for others. You may not know it but you might become another Paul.

## **HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?**

Wherever I go, I ask the people that I meet if they have ever heard of the church of Christ before. Many of them will reply by saying, "No, I have never heard of that church, which one is that?" I then point out that it is strange that they have never heard of it because that is the only church that one can read about in the Bible. Evidently such people are ignorant of what the Bible teaches.

If you have never heard of the church of Christ, I would like to introduce it to you. I'll do this by simply asking you to take your Bible and begin to read and study it with the Lord's church in mind. As you do this, you will be amazed at what you will find. You will discover that the Lord has a church too! You will learn many other things about the church. As a matter of fact, you will learn everything about it that the Lord wants you to know because everything he wanted man to know is recorded in the Bible.

Just because it has perhaps not existed in your area before, that does not mean that it did not exist somewhere else. It could have existed in your area before, and it can exist now, if you and others will do what the Bible teaches. When you do what the Bible teaches then the Lord saves you and adds you to his church. (Acts 2:47). Furthermore, the word of



God is said to be the seed of the Kingdom. (Luke 8:11). That just simply means that when the seed is planted in good and honest hearts it will bring forth a harvest and that harvest will be children of the kingdom or church.

Just because there are churches all around you, that does not mean that they are of the Lord. The scriptures speak of but *one* church, not *churchés*. (Ephesians 4:4). That church is identified as being the one that Christ built (Matthew 16:18), in Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-49), in A.D. 33 (Acts 2) , and wears the name of Christ. (Romans 16:16; Acts 11:26). Those churches that do not match these facts cannot be of the Lord.

The church of Christ is not a denomination. Because there are denominations, and many of them, people have become so accustomed to denominationalism that the only way they know how to think is in the terms of denominationalism. All they have ever known is denominationalism, so they conclude that all churches are denominational. But this is not true. The church of Christ is not only non-denominational but is opposed to denominationalism. It is also opposed to Catholicism and all man-made religion.

The Bible tells us who established the church, where it was established, when it was established, and the name it wore. It also tells us about the government of the church, what one must do to become a member, what one must do to worship the Lord, and how to live the Christian life. Read the Bible and see for yourself. The scriptures have spoken on these matters, leaving none of those all important things to man's wisdom or opinion.

The church of Christ is to be found all over the world. It is located in many areas in Asia. If it is not in your city or village, we would encourage you to read and study the Bible and do what it says and then the church can be established where you live. You don't have to go to the church, but the church can come to you.

If you are ignorant of the church of Christ then it is your own fault, since you had a Bible to read and study for yourself. if you are a member of some denomination, then it is not the church of Christ, and therefore you have allowed men to deceive you and to lead you into something that the Bible does not teach. So what will you do? Read and study the scriptures to learn the truth, depart from your error that you might obey God and be added to the Lord's church.

Perhaps you have not heard of the church of Christ in the past, but I am sure that you will be hearing a lot more about it in the future.

## **BACK TO THE DARK AGES**

In an editorial, April 21, 1973, appearing in the New Delhi edition of the Times of India, it says, "It's back to the dark ages in the United States right now, a mood of compulsive activism brought on no doubt by the war, social upsurge and drugs. Outside of this country (India) America boasts the largest number of practicing astrologers. Horoscopes are computerised and purveyed, a dollar a reading, to millions of people curious to break the time-barriers. Mumbo-jumbo is souped up", the editorial continues, "sorcery and superstition revived, and the lowest tastes and fears pandered to. In fact, mysticism has become big business. With the accident thus going occult, it is not surprising that several universities have begun to offer supposedly serious courses in witchcraft, necromancy and satanism. Thrown in for good measure (or perhaps as a cover) are subjects such as ESP, hypnotism and yoga; but the basic trend is towards astrology, numerology and thaumaturgy. Even voo-doo black

magic is not excepted.”

Isn't it sad to have to read such a report? It is even sadder that these things are happening. But way? Why would a people who are educated, like those in the United States, revert back to such beliefs and practices? This is not going forward, but backward. This is not progress but recession. If all of these things, such as astrology, witchcraft, sorcery, black magic and superstition could help people then there are countries in the world today that would be far ahead of America. But they can't help and they won't help. Rather, they will hurt and destroy those who become involved with them. Our country will therefore be harmed to the extent that its citizens accept such beliefs.

Christianity in its many forms has failed the people of America and the world. It has not satisfied. It has not met the needs of man. He is bored and tired with the relics of the past. Therefore he is desperately looking and searching for something to fill the void that has been left. This has led him to the extremes in the other direction. Once more he will be disappointed.

What one and all need is pure New Testament Christianity. Brethren, if there was ever a time in history when we have been challenged to deliver the goods, *it is today*. First of all, we must be sure we are standing on solid ground and then we'll be in a position to help those around us. Next, we must not be ashamed of what we have but we must boldly take it to the people. And finally, we must realize that there are words of people looking to us for help.

The question is: Will we become part of the problem or will we be help to solve the problem that our people are faced with? Next, will we allow the world around us to influence us or will we be determined to influence the world for good? Satan and sin have surrounded us, but we cannot afford to let them escape with the souls of men. We must fight back and

fight to win. Never before have we had such opportunities to do good and to lead people out of the bondage of sin and despair. Let us meet the challenge and help to turn our people back in the right direction. God will help us if we will. God have mercy on us if we don't.

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

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