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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

"Happy are the people whose God is the Lord"

How wonderful it is to know that we have actually entered the year 2000! Thanks be to God for keeping us safe and giving us another year to enjoy. May we all truly have a happy new year. But what does it mean to be really happy? Are you really happy? Have you experienced the real happiness? Surely, the real happiness, joy and peace can never come through the pursuit of worldly pleasure. Rather, "Happy are the people," as the Psalmist pointed out at Psalm 144:15, "whose God is the Lord." Is He your Lord? "We are," the Scriptures at Romans 8:37 says, "more than conquerors through Him who loved us." Regardless of the dire, dark forebodings that hover on the horizon, as a child of God one can say, "I am happy." Not because of my earthly possessions, if I have any; not because of my health and wealth and my achievements on earth. But, I am happy, because God is my Lord. I trust in Him; I have done what He has commanded what man should do to be saved from sin; I follow in His steps; I give Him the first place in my life; I worship Him as He has commanded; I am seeking His kingdom and His righteousness first. Therefore, I know that I am truly happy, because I am a child of God!

The children of God, in fact, should be the happiest people

on earth. Because as a child of God one knows what a great price God has paid for man's redemption from sin. The child of God belongs to Him. He is the heavenly Father who cares for His children. The child of God knows his destiny. He remembers the words of the Lord: "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:1-3). The joy and the happiness of the Christian is based on the fact of the knowledge that all his sins have been forgiven, since he has obeyed the saving gospel of God (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 6:3-6); and since he lives daily in Christ following His steps (1 Peter 2:21), the blood of Christ, therefore, washes his sins each day (1 John 1:5-9); and thus he is prepared to leave this world any time, with the trust and hope that he would enter the eternal home of God and live with Him in His heaven for evermore. (2 Corinthians 5:1; Philippians 3:20, 21).

Speaking of happiness, this is the time of the year, when people often use the expression: "Happy New Year." But seldom do we meditate upon the necessary ingredients that make for true and real happiness. The maddening pace of the frenzied world does not promote sober reflection and calm meditation. One needs to get away from it. However, a careful analysis of God's purpose for our lives will disclose the component parts of true happiness. No, happiness is not found in material riches. Yet, those who seek and trust in material things to bring them happiness find that utter despair and absolute dejection and despondency is their reward. "Take heed," warned Christ, "and keep yourselves from all covetousness, for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things which he possesses." (Luke 12:15). Neither is happiness found in worldly power. Some, becoming slaves to the lust for power, have enslaved multitudes to their bidding. Yet this supremacy did not bring them happiness. While men and women of the world are striving for power and dominion; to His followers, Christ said, "It shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for

many." (Matthew 20:26-28).

No one, certainly, who ever lived, on this earth ever tasted as much material wealth, power, dominion, and fame and worldly pleasure in every way as did king Solomon. Too, he was the wisest and the richest man who ever lived on the face of the earth! Yet, after Solomon had recorded the futility of his search for purpose and happiness in this world, as we read from Ecclesiastes 2:2-11, finally he wrote: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14).

Where is happiness then? Happiness lies in the knowledge of the true and living God, in knowing His will, and in submission to His will. This is what brings true happiness and complete contentment and peace and joy. Until we have the sense of security that comes by having obeyed the will of our Creator, God, our heavenly Father, we will not know the real happiness. "If you know these things," said Christ at John 13:17, "happy are you if you do them."

You need to get a copy of the Bible, wherein God has revealed Himself to man and His will for man. Read and study from it carefully and seriously. Also, you can receive Bible Correspondence Course, by writing us, free of cost! Surely, God's way is the only perfect way for true and everlasting happiness.

"From The Beginning"

J.C. CHOATE

A large part of the religious world believes and teaches that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is for all who will accept the Lord. Along with that misunderstanding, they teach that all such people should be able to speak in "tongues" and perform miracles. None of these people, however, can restore sight to the blind, give new arms and legs to those who have lost them or were born without them, and neither can they raise the dead. When challenged to perform a real miracle, they make excuse to get around their

inability to do such things as the Lord and His apostles did. It is only at some other place and some other time that a supposed miracle has been done—curing headaches, backaches, internal cancers, or some other psychological cure. But never do they perform an astounding feat contrary to the laws of nature that is later reported as news on the TV or in the newspaper, which would certainly be done if a true miracle had occurred.

To clear some of the confusion, we need first to ask the question: Who was promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Christ 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). Again, He said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you" (John 16:7).

To whom was Jesus speaking? To the apostles, the men He had especially chosen to carry on His work after His return to the Father. He was not speaking to the crowds in general, or to all those who would believe on Him in the coming generations, but He was making the promise of the Comforter only to the chosen Twelve.

Christ continued talking to the apostles, saying, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth 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). Notice that Christ is making this promise to the apostles, to those who had been with Him from the beginning. Clearly, we can see that His language did not include everyone in that day, nor does it apply to us today, for none of us have been with Him, physically, from the beginning of His personal ministry on earth!

Judas, one of the chosen Twelve, betrayed Christ and committed suicide. Later, after the Lord's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, it was necessary for the apostles to select someone to take Judas' place. The record in Acts says, "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His

resurrection" (Acts 1:21-26).

Notice, that not just anyone could be chosen to be an apostle, but he had to be an eyewitness, companying with the Lord and the other apostles from the time of the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist.

Just before His ascension to heaven, Jesus gathered the apostles on the Mount of Olives and 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 21:49). He further said, "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 Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

To whom was the Lord speaking when He made these promises? To the apostles, not to people in general or of this generation.

All would agree that the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit, as recorded in Acts 2, on the day the church was begun. Following that outpouring, all believers who were baptized in water received the indwelling of the Spirit (Acts 5:32), but this did not involve miraculous power. Much later, when the first Gentiles were taught, (Acts 10) they also experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which Peter described as, "... the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15-18). Such an outpouring has not been promised to us, nor does it happen today.

Especially For Women

Jesus—The Christ

Part 2

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

"Well, that makes sense," exclaimed Andrew, as he re-read Luke's account of the conception and birth of Christ. "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born*

will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). So it was when the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary that the Word was **begotten** of God, that the Word in some way "**emptied Himself**," and **humbled** Himself to be made like man, and that He became **obedient** as a Son to the Father."

"Rachel was reading further in Hebrews, where they had left off the night before. "Here in Hebrews 2:17 it says, '*... in all things He had to be made like His brethren . . .*' And over here in the 5th chapter and 8th verse it says that He **learned** obedience as a Son. That means He hadn't been the Son, obedient to the Father, from the beginning. In emptying Himself and being born as a human, obedience was a new thing for Him. It had to be learned!" Rachel exclaimed.

"This is beginning to shed new light on what our salvation cost," Andrew reflected. "It means that, at least for some time, there was a complete change in the Godhead, so that Christ could be truly the brother of man."

"But if Christ wasn't the Son, seated at the right hand of the Father during the Old Testament period of time, where was He, and what was He doing? Is there any mention of Him then—or only of God, who *became the Father*?" asked Rachel, puzzled.

"I'm wondering how much we've just assumed and injected into the Scriptures, by thinking of Jesus as always the Son with the Father," mused Andrew. "I'm thinking now of prophetic Scriptures in this new light. You know Isaiah prophesied that there would be a voice crying in the wilderness—John the Baptist—saying, '*Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. . .*' (Isaiah 40:3). The Jews would have thought of God [the Father] when reading those words, but by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew (3:3) identified 'God' or 'Jehovah' as Jesus Christ. Even in reference to the creation, we think of God [the Father] primarily, but John said it was **by the Word** and **for the Word** that all things were made. There's a verse in Colossians, too—here it is, 1:16—'*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on the earth, visible and invisible . . .*' So when Genesis 1:26 tells us, 'God said,' "*Let us make man in Our image . . .*" the One of the Godhead doing the speaking could even have been the Word!"

"There's another place I've just remembered," exclaimed Andrew, turning pages quickly "Here in 1 Corinthians 10:4,

talking about the Israelites as they were in the wilderness, Paul wrote that they all, *'... drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.'* There's a reference in Isaiah, 48:21 about this: *"... The Lord [Jehovah] has redeemed His servant Jacob!"* And they did not thirst when He led them through the deserts; He caused the waters to flow from the rock for them; He also split the rock, and the waters gushed out.'

"Let's turn back to the story of the Israelites and see what we can learn about Christ there," suggested Rachel.

"Here in Exodus 3 is the first time God talked to Moses about bringing the people out of slavery," Andrew said. "Well! What a strange thing! In verse 2 it says that 'the Angel of the Lord' appeared to Moses in the flame of the bush, but in verse 4 and thereafter the One appearing to him is called 'the Lord' and 'God'! He speaks with the voice and authority of God. He says, *'I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'*" (Verse 6) Andrew continued to read, coming to verse 14. "Listen to this, Rachel! When Moses asked His name, *'And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."* And He said, *"Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'*" But just yesterday I was reading John 8—tremendous debate between Jesus and the Jews—and the Jews reached such a point of exasperation that they finally asked, *'Who do you make Yourself out to be?* in verse 53, and here in verse 58 Jesus assured them, *'... before Abraham was I AM.'* Their response was to take up stones to kill Him, because they identified 'I AM' with the name of God, as He had spoken to Moses, so to them this was blasphemy, that Jesus was claiming to be God. And He was. Putting these verses in Exodus and John together, it would seem that 'the Word' was actually 'the Angel of the Lord' who spoke to Moses. But He had not yet subjected Himself, taking the form of man, so he spoke with the voice of God, with equal authority!"

"Let's check other verses in the Old Testament that talk of this 'Angel'," suggested Rachel. Honestly, in all the reading we've done during these months, I had never noticed this 'person'! To her surprise, she found numerous references in the concordance to 'the Angel of Jehovah' or 'the Angel of the Lord': Genesis 16, 17, 18 and 19; Exodus 14:19; 32:34; Judges 2:1; 13:6; 2 Samuel

14:17, 20; Isaiah 63:9 were only the beginning of the list. "You know, I believe 'the Angel of His Presence' in Exodus 32 and 33 and in Deuteronomy 4:37 must be the same Person," Rachel exclaimed. "He has to be one of the Godhead, because He is called God and the Lord, and He speaks as God, yet in Exodus 14:19 it says '*the Angel of God went before the camp of Israel*' and in Exodus 33:2 God says, '*I will send My Angel before you,*' and, look—here in verse 5 He says, '*. . . I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.*' But in verse 14, God promised Moses, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'

"Back here in Exodus 23:20,21 God told Moses, '*Behold I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him.*' These verses show that One in the Godhead was the Sender, and Another—the Angel—was the One being sent. Yet, the Angel had the power to forgive, or not to forgive, a power which only God can claim!"

"It makes me think that even though the Word spoke and acted with full authority in the Godhead, even during that time He was already functioning in the role of Mediator between God and man," Andrew observed thoughtfully. "The passage in Exodus 33 makes a strong distinction between the One who was speaking to Moses and the One who was being sent to lead the Israelites. And the Sender said that he was sending His Angel, because if He Himself went with them, He would consume them because of their rebellious hearts!"

"Here's another place which talks about the exodus from Egypt, Andrew,—Isaiah 63:7 talks about '*the Lord*' and His great goodness toward Israel, then verse 9 says that '*the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit. . .*' What an exciting passage of Scripture! Actually, the three Persons of the Godhead are here—and 'the Angel,' the Word or Jesus of the New Testament, was even then doing the work of redemption! And it says that they 'grieved' the Holy Spirit, just as we are warned that we can grieve the Holy Spirit today!"

"So, the Word was not just sitting in Heaven, waiting for His turn to come on the scene!" concluded Andrew. "He was working for man, helping him, even redeeming him, all along! Now, Rachel, we need to start over with our studies, and re-read the Old Testament, looking for reference to the Word and the work He was doing. And we need to re-read the New Testament, too, to understand exactly what it teaches about the cost of our salvation. These passages we've read have opened my eyes about so many truths that I had never realized."

To be Continued . . .

The Bitter Truth

FRANCIS DAVID

Jesus Christ, our Lord said: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32). When Jesus used to teach and preach, many people believed in him, but there were some who did not believe. They ignored the things which he spoke to them. The Jews leaders, did not believe because they had self pride in them. Some were prejudice and did not like the truth. But let us see what is the truth? In the words of Jesus, when He was praying for his disciples, He prayed like this: "Sanctify them by your truth, Your word is truth." Here we see, God's word is truth. All Scriptures is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3:16). There are many things in the Bible which are taught by Christ and apostles but because of the hardness of their heart people don't believe them and do not accept those things as the truth. Long back Jesus said about such people that they draw near to HIM with their mouth, but their heart is far from Him. (Matt. 15:8).

Today, when we talk to people about the establishment of the church, they hesitate to accept that Jesus is the one who established one church. Jesus said in Matthews 16:18, "I will build my church" and this church is His body and he is the head of the body (Col. 1:18), its hard for people to accept it because they believe in many man made churches. According to the

Scriptures there is only one church (Eph. 4:4). Now, this is the truth and fact based on the Bible, but for some its bitter. We tell people, that baptism is for the remission (Forgiveness) of sins. Our Lord plainly said: "He that believes and baptised shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). When the church was established on the day of Pentecost, Apostle Peter while talking to People told them that they need to repent and be baptised for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38). Isn't this the truth based on the Scriptures? But because of the hardness of our hearts we don't want to accept it. This is a bitter truth for us, because we are prejudice and we had believed it and we don't want to change our minds from this. What about infant baptism? This is a false doctrine. Bible nowhere teaches that infants should be baptised. An infant is not the subject for baptism. Baptism (Immersion) is meant for adults. Don't you think so? Since, we had been practising it for years and that is why we are not interested in accepting the truth.

What about our singing? The Bible teaches that when we sing we must make melody in our hearts (minds). (Ephs. 5:19, Col. 3:16). Sing with understanding (I Cor. 14:15). We do not read anywhere in the new testament, any congregation used instrumental music in their worship. The truth is, we must sing with our minds and not play on the instruments. What about woman speaking or preaching in the church? When we say church, it means the assembly. The people who use women in the church as speakers and leaders are breaking the command of God, Because God's word says: "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive . . . (I Cor. 14:34). At another place Paul said: "And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence (I Tim. 2:12). A lot of time, we don't want to accept it, why? because it is a bitter truth. These are the commandments of God and we must accept it. There are a lot of things in the Bible which people don't want to accept because for them those are bitter truths. (Jn. 5:39; Acts 17:11) When God says something, He means it. Let us search the truth, if we do that we have the promise that truth will set us free. Jesus said: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (Jn. 8:32). The Churches of Christ all over the world are pleading to people to come back to the Bible, leave all the man made doctrines. Do you love the truth? If you love the

truth, you will try your best to accept it. There is one gospel according to the Scriptures and this gospel is that Jesus Christ, died on the cross, was buried and rose again on the third day. (I Cor. 15:1-4). Apostle Paul says: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before so now I say again, If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (Gal. 1:8,9). You can obey this gospel today. Just be baptised into death of Jesus and be buried with him in the watery grave. (Rom. 6:3-4). The truth is, when you obey the gospel your sins will be washed away (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Do you want to be free from sin, if yes, then accept it and obey it. If you do, then you will be glad you did.

Voices In The Wilderness

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Those valiant prophets of Old Testament days were truly voices crying in the wilderness. They spoke for God, as truth bubbled up and spilled out of their fervent hearts. Often the people they were trying to save for God's service deeply resented them but still, by sheer determination, those courageous servants of heaven pressed on in their loyalty to Jehovah. It was not easy to buck the tide of a convenient religion and the morass of ignorance that sheltered a traditional view of godliness. Jeremiah wept because the people of his day hid behind the facade of church-house piety (Jer. 7:1-28) that slowly, but surely, eroded the genuine foundation of sincere devotion. Isaiah was grieved because rebellious children added sin to sin (Isa. 30:1). In the tears of Jeremiah, as lamentations is known in the Septuagint, that tremendous man of Anathoth wept aloud over the shameful indifference of Judah that resulted in seventy years of bondage in Babylon (Lam. 1:12; 4:5).

Ezekiel, down by the river Chebar, reminded the seed of Abraham that due to their inclination to be like the nations around them (Eze. 20:32) they would have the experience of

seven decades in captivity to see how tragic such environment would be! Daniel, the brilliant statesman of heaven, in the midst of heathen rulers, would vividly remind God's backslidden people that the real Ruler of heaven and earth was the very one they had sinned against (Dan. 4:25). Those five books, Isaiah through Daniel, have powerful messages for us today, but sadly, they are still voices crying in the wilderness because they are seldom studied and little known in our age. We rob ourselves of spiritual insight when we pass up opportunities to study the prophets.

In the last twelve Old Testament books we come face to face with some of the richest sections of Scripture. Hosea through Malachi is a block-buster of spiritual dynamite. They were preachers par excellence who defied all odd and every opponent to speak up for their Creator. In Acts 13, Paul reminded the Jews in their own synagogue, that they heard *the voices of the prophets* every Sabbath when they read from Holy Writ! With the exception of Jonah, the reluctant prophet, those brave men persevered with a most unpopular message in the face of constant enmity by the masses. They magnificently proclaimed the message God told them to preach (Jonah 3:2). Men could neither hire nor fire them because their commitment was to their Maker and not to the mandates of their contemporaries (Galatians 1:10).

"O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly Woe."

Let us notice some main points from each of the last 12 books of the prophets:

Hosea 4:6—Bible knowledge is a must!

Joel 2:13—Inward purity is demanded!

Obadiah 3—Pride goes before destruction.

Jonah 3:2—God's message must be preached.

Micah 6:8—Proper attitudes must be manifested.

Nahum 1:3—God does not overlook evil.

Habakkuk 2:20—Reverence demands obedience.

Zephaniah 1:18—Our idols cannot save us!

Haggai 1:6—Life is empty unless God comes first.

Zachariah 13:1—Redemption comes through Calvary!

Malachi 3:8—Robbing God is a serious crime.

These combined points remind us that Amos makes it clear that we cannot walk with God if our lives do not agree with heaven's will. Joel forever reminds us that multitudes "stand in the valley of decision" and cannot escape making a choice. Micah beautifully promised

the coming of Christianity (4:1-3) and the birth of Messiah (5:2) wherein our sins can be "cast into the depths of the sea" (7:19). Malachi challenges us to recall that Jehovah has a book of remembrance lest we so live as to have our names blotted out (Rev. 3:1-5). Haggai, in some of the Bible's most picturesque language, urges all men to *consider our ways and turn back to God*.

"You can advertise your virtues,
You can self-achievement laud,
You can boast yourself somebody
But you cannot fool God."

Zechariah made it exceedingly clear that our own power and might will never propel us to that sublime realm but that the power of the Lord can sustain us. Habakkuk warns us that to *sin against our own soul* is a most serious mistake and that only the faithful will still be around when the smoke is cleared from the debris and carnage of iniquity. Hosea's tragic and troubled relationship with an unfaithful wife but magnified the role that Israel played as Jehovah's flippant bride. On the brink of destruction, reeling from apostasy, the people of God were reminded one more time that their bridegroom loved them freely and desired their return home. Obadiah tells of the shameful indifference of Esau's descendants who were unconcerned about their brethren and passed by on the other side, even cheering Babylon on as they conquered Judah! For such spiritual crimes they would be absolutely shattered by the mighty hand of Jehovah's judgment. Jonah represents those today who selfishly care more for personal comfort and political clout than for the lost souls of the world. When the shade of a tree on a hot day means more to us than the plight of the unsaved millions we are kin to that reluctant prophet of long ago!

"While the souls of men are dying
And the Master calls for you
Let no one hear you idly saying:
'There is nothing I can do'."

Those voices crying in the wilderness, the prophets of yesteryear, beckon us to higher resolve and deeper loyalty to the same God we all claim to serve!

God, The Scriptures, And The Church

JASON MOON

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). What a verse! It is a great verse to preach. People say "amen." But, it is a difficult verse to practice! What does it say about my attitude toward God, Scripture, and the church when I put other things before "the kingdom of God and His righteousness?"

When I Don't Practice Matthew 6:33 I Detest God

What? I love God, not hate him. But when we aren't loyal to God we choose the Devil. I'd never do that! But that is exactly what we do when we don't put God first. "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other . . ." (Matt. 6:24).

When I Don't Practice Matthew 6:33 I Despise The Scriptures

I'd never do that! They are "given by the inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16). But, when we put other things before "the kingdom and His righteousness" we display an attitude of contempt for God's word and in essence declare that it's not applicable and I don't really believe it. "He who despises the word will be destroyed" (Prov. 13:13). "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (Jn. 12:48).

When I Don't Practice Matthew 6:33 I Disdain The Lord's Church

Where do you get that? The "kingdom" is the "Church" Christ promised to build (Matt. 16:18-19). Peter used the keys of the kingdom and the Lord's church was established after his death, burial, and resurrection (Acts 2). This kingdom came with a high price. It was purchased with Christ's precious blood (Acts 20:28). When I don't put it first (including attending the assembly) I disdain his church and his blood. "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29)?

The Immodestly Dressed Woman

GLENN COLLEY

As a preacher of the good news this subject always makes me sad. I wish it never had to be discussed. It is sometimes embarrassing to the one teaching, and to the hearers. It sometimes evokes anger among hearers who like to dress immodestly, and they feel they are being insulted. They hastily make arguments which skirt (pardon the pun) around the real issues. But it must be discussed. Whether or not we admit it, the woman of the church who goes in public scantily clad in shorts or short skirts or low cut blouses or too tight clothes, is doing something that's inherently wrong. She's taking the total picture of man, woman, husband, wife, and distorting it. She, perhaps unknowingly, takes the sexual impulses, designed by God to draw husbands and wives closer together, and allows them to be cheapened.

God didn't accidentally design woman the way He did. There is as much careful purpose in Eve as there is in the starry sky or in the delicate of the animal kingdom. God incorporated into this man called Adam, and into all his sons forever, the attraction to woman. Why? "Therefore shall a man leave his

father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Gen. 2:24-25) The reason man is sexually impressed by, and attracted to woman is because of God's design.

But God does not mean for the purpose of this attraction to be distorted or misused. Jesus said, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matt 5:28).

Note the difference between the physical attraction of a husband and wife, and that of a man who is physically attracted to a stranger on the beach, or at the pool, or at the mall. Of one He says, "Let thy fountain be blessed; and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving deer and graceful doe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou enraptured always with her love." (Prov. 5:18-19) Of the other He says, "Whoso looketh on a woman to lust after her committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matt 5:28)

Although some might quietly rationalize to themselves, "Well, so long as nothing physical happens, nothing wrong has been done." Yet, the Book of Christians says different. God is not only concerned with our overt actions, but also with our hearts. (Matt 5:28)

A Christian woman will be concerned about the effect she may potentially have on the hearts of the men about her. She didn't create the physical, visual attraction, but she accepts its presence. She may not even understand it's strength, but she accepts its strength.

In 1 Timothy 2:9-11, Paul discusses women and their dress. He puts as their objective when they dress themselves, that they would appear as "women professing godliness." (1 Timothy 2:10)

With this in mind he says, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." (1 Timothy 2:9)

The term "modest apparel" uses the word modest in a way different from that to which we are accustomed. It literally means "that which does not call undue attention to one's self." It is more in one with what we think about when we consider a "modest" house, or a "modest" car. From this teaching the Christian

woman would not be prohibited from wearing pretty clothes, but would be prohibited from wearing the outlandish. This would hold true for whatever culture or century the woman happened to occupy. This word would also forbid her from wearing that which drew undue attention to her because so much skin was being exposed.

Now consider "shamefacedness." It literally means that women are to have a sense of shame, a natural sense of embarrassment with regard to being ill-clad before men to whom they aren't married. It is shamefacedness which makes a woman blush and take cover when a closed door is accidentally opened at an *inopportune* time. The problem some women in the church have is that they have been conditioned to believe that since the Bible doesn't draw specific lines of "too short" or "too low" that they are free to wear immoral women's wear. They can *pretend* that men have seen so many bathing suits, or so many short shorts, or so many tight clothes that they don't notice, and therefore this discussion is reduced to what the woman *prefers* to wear for comfort or the accepted style of the setting. That pretending is childish and foolish. A woman who believes that needs to ask her husband the truth. Then he should *tell* her the truth. She needs to ask herself why pornographic magazines make millions. She needs to ask herself why everything from fast cars to soft drinks are sold with pictures of sexy young women. She needs to consider what she knows about her own husband. Then she needs to re-think what she wears in view of others.

The next word in I Timothy 2:9 is "sobriety". One version translates this "with . . . propriety," another says "with . . . good sense." This clearly implies that there are important things a woman must consider when she decides what to wear. By connecting this to "shamefacedness" Paul tells us the sense in which he is discussing dressing with sobriety or propriety. It is with regard to those things which are, or should be, embarrassing to the woman professing godliness. When she dresses, she has a choice of dressing in a way which reflects sober thinking, or in a way which reflects a *lack* of sober thinking.

Romans 12:2 says, "Be not conformed to this world . . ." Daddy, are you passively sitting by while your teen-age daughter is leaving the house in clothing that shows too much? Are you acting blind in order to please her preferences instead of

standing for what you know is true? It is amazing that daddies and husbands *know* what they know, and still remain silent on this subject in their house. Mothers, your daughters will be respected more by their boyfriends if they dress modestly, and you want them to be respected.

There are beaches which are private. There are pools with fences and privacy. There are clothes which are airy and yet not immodest. We *can* dress modestly if we want to, and suffer little for it. Or saying it another way, we can dress in such a way that God will not be ashamed of us.

Faithful Sayings

MEL FUTRELL

I would imagine that all of us have heard and are therefore familiar with some faithful sayings. Faithful sayings are those sayings which have merit, value; they are sure, they are true and can be trusted. In fact, Psalm 19:7 says, "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." Likewise, haven't we all heard such statements as, "You need to remember this . . . , you ought to write this down . . . , My daddy used to say . . . , or This is going to be valuable to you some day . . ." And all of these phrases were used to introduce a faithful saying from someone dear to you.

Now admittedly, there are countless faithful sayings in the Bible, due to it being GOD-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16-17), but there are few statements in the New Testament which are specifically called "faithful sayings." Please consider these.

1. 1 Timothy 1:15—The faithful saying here centres around the very purpose of Christ's coming into the world, to save sinners.

2. 1 Timothy 3:1—This faithful saying is that aspirations of serving as a bishop are good desires.

3. 1 Timothy 4:8-9—The faithful saying that is worthy of all acceptance here stresses the value of godliness.

4. 2 Timothy 2:11-12—This faithful saying is comprised of three parts which emphasizes the demands of Christianity.

A. If we die, we live. (an allusion to one's dying in baptism?)

B. If we suffer, we reign.

C. If we deny him, we get denied.

5. Titus 3:8—The faithful saying here touches on the profitability of good works.

Let's back up a minute and take a closer look at number 3 from 1 Timothy 4:8-9.

While it is true that some would view verse 10 as representing the faithful saying (see LIVING WORD COMMENTARY SERIES Vol. 14, P. 78). Others, (see ROBERTSON, WORD PICTURES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, Vol. 4, P. 580) myself included, would view verse 8 as containing the actual faithful saying being highlighted by the expression of verse 9. Remember, Paul said this saying was worthy of all acceptance. In other words, the application of this faithful saying is that we should train ourselves in godliness. Brethren, bodily training has some value but it has little value when compared to godly training. Godliness on the other hand, is valuable everywhere and at all times.

It amazes me, brethren, what emphasis our society places on body training. Many in this country seem to be "eat up" with their bodies. One can't turn around without hearing about body toning, body sculpting, body building, body beauty, etc., Don't get me wrong, I believe we should take care of our bodies since they belong to GOD (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). But one begins to wonder what is really being stressed in some homes, the physical or the spiritual? Is it more important that little Johnny make the soccer team or that he spend time in God's word daily and is prepared for Bible class? And I could go on asking more of the same questions. So tell me, where and on what is the emphasis being placed in your home? Is it on things of a temporal or an external nature (Colossians 3:1-2)? Please consider the insightful quote below.

"Most saints, in this generation, appear more zealous that their children should shine on earth, than in heaven and that they may be rich here, at the hazard of eternal bankruptcy. They labor to make them rich and genteel rather than pure and holy; and spend more time in fashioning them to the foolish and wicked taste of polished society, than in teaching them by precept and example the word that is more precious than gold, and more

precious than rubies." (Alexander Campbell, *Millennial Harbinger*, 1833, P. 364).

Surely the sentiments of Campbell are also appropriate for today. The apostle Paul said, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4:16) But with the current emphasis on the body, with many it is the inward man that perishes and the outward man that's being renewed day by day.

The Mind of Christ

KEITH KASARJIAN

If the average church member were asked if they wanted to grow spiritually, I believe 100% would answer in the affirmative. Many only wish to grow but do nothing about it. Still others actively pursue growth. They increase prayer time, read the Bible every day, give more, and attend every service, all in an effort to grow. In spite of all this effort, many times they still feel the emptiness that is a result of immaturity. Why? What went wrong? They didn't first have the mind of Christ.

A prerequisite to Christian growth is to have the mind of Christ. Paul describes this mind set in Philippians 2:5-9. Notice several things that are involved in having the mind of our Savior.

Self-surrender is involved in having the mind of Christ. Verse 6 tells us that He "thought it not robbery to be equal to God." The word translated "robbery" is from the Greek word "harpagmos," which means "a thing eagerly to be seized, coveted, or desired." The fact that He came to this earth is proof of His willingness to surrender self. We live in a selfish world that encourages us to be selfish, but we must resist the temptation. When a decision is to be made in the church, do we want our way or what is best for the church? When there is conflict between my way and the Lord's way, who wins out? Jesus will never be at the pinnacle of our life until we take ourself down.

Servanthood was characteristic of Jesus (v. 7, Matt. 20:26-28). When we see the life of service that Jesus lived, we ought to be motivated to serve also. What Christians are willing to

sacrifice for is sometimes amazing and disappointing. Many will travel great distances, stand in long lines, and sit through inclement conditions, all to see a football game. What are we willing to do for the cause of Christ?

Overcoming temptation was a daily part of His life. He "was made in the likeness of men," (v. 7) "yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15). We need to read James 1:13-15 to understand the temptation process is an effort to overcome.

Humility is a vital part of the mind of Christ. Notice the statements found in verses 7 and 8; "made himself of no reputation," "he humbled himself". Was there ever any doubt about the humility of Jesus? The Bible is replete with warnings about the dangers of pride and it's results. If the Son of God and Savior of the world found reasons to be humble, I think I can too.

Obedience was the end result of the aforementioned qualities (v.8). Paul felt it necessary to point out that Christ wasn't just obedient, but that He was obedient even to the point of death. He continued by saying that not only was He obedient to the point of death, but even death on the cross. It was Him who prayed "Not my will . . ." Is that our attitude? Are we "all ears" to the will of God?

Just imagine the church where every member had the mind of Christ. That congregation would be the mature, growing, godly body that Jesus wants His church to be. Let us work daily on having the mind of Christ.

Followers Of Men Rather Than Christ

JOSEPH D. MEADOR

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (I John 2:19).

The apostle John, who is often called "the apostle of love," refers in the above scripture to those who have left the church and who are thus engaged in walking by carnal sight rather than

by spiritual faith. Contextually, he sounds warning to the New Testament church concerning the "anti-Christ," whom he describes of conduct and belief has set himself in opposition to the teaching of Jesus. John further describes as anti-Christ those who were formerly disciples of the Lord, and members of the church.

Brother Guy N. Woods has aptly portrayed:

They became apostates from the fold by going out. They were not "of" the disciples i.e., they did not possess the same spirit of obedience characteristic of the disciples, for if they had "they would have continued with" the disciples. In going out, i.e., in apostatizing from the faith, they were "made manifest" (shown to be, not of the disciples) . . . Others, like those of this text, adopt false and heretical doctrines, forsake the church, and make shipwreck concerning the faith (I Timothy 1:19).

The Bible presents varied and articulate reasoning concerning the infection and spread of the disease of apostasy. In fact, both Testaments are replete with examples of this spiritual affliction. Therefore, we turn our attention to the query: "Why do some leave the faith?"

Deception

A potent weapon which the forces of evil have used against men and women of every generation is that of deception. Paul, in writing his second letter to the church at Corinth, noted that satanic deceivers were then present among the body of Christ in that locality, and he fully described their mission and method as they attempted to divide the church. As he sought to characterize the false teachers of Corinth, he pointed out that they feignly posed as pious and informed brethren, yet because of their lack of true Bible knowledge, they were void of any true spirituality (I Timothy 1:19-20; 6:4). He further informs the faithful at Corinth that such teachers were mere impostors of those possessing true Christian maturity. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is not great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness: whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:14-15). Centuries earlier, Hosea the prophet of God to Northern Israel, cried: "My

people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6), and because of this they too were easily led by false teacher into similar ruin.

The Bible also points out that many will be deceived into believing doctrinal error because they choose to follow personalities rather than the teaching of Christ (2 Timothy 4:1 ff; Matthew 7:21-23). This has well been century when during the great premillennial heresy of the twenties and thirties, many were deceived into error by "that sweet-spirited preacher," R.H. Boll. Many remember as well the "kind and meek" attitude which continues to be displayed by the father of the modern "Unity and Diversity" heresy, W. Carl Ketcherside, (as well as by his disciples, Leroy Garrett, Rubel Shelly, and Don DeWelt). How many are there among the church today who are guilty of similar human loyalty rather than fidelity to Christ (John 14:15,23).

Desire For Preeminence

The carnal desire for preeminence is a strong driving force among some "professing" Christians who are bent toward a course for the control of things divine. Some have ventured so far in their quest for power that they have sought to undermine the authority which God has provided within the eldership by encouraging congregational rebellion toward that body.

The apostle John recounted to Gaius the sad state to which Diotrephes had fallen in that he loved to have the preeminence among men (3 John 9). From verses nine through twelve of John's third epistle, we learn that Diotrephes desired to be the petted and pampered pilot of the church, so much so in fact, that because of envy he refused to receive the beloved John as a fellow brother in Christ. No doubt, Diotrephes believed that he had risen to new height of spirituality, far superior to that of the aged apostle from whom he had personally withdrawn.

When a man's goal is to achieve the control of individuals or the church by force, while still desirous of receiving unto himself the accolades of his petted disciples, then such a one is as guilty of the sins of pride and division as was the puffed up Diotrephes of ages past. To him, the end always justified the means. Such a perverted spirit would rather rip asunder the body of Christ than mend; divide rather than graft; yea, split apart rather than seam.

Despisers Of Doctrine

Since the beginning of ancient patriarchy, there have been those who have openly defied the will of the Lord in regard to prescribed worship (Genesis 4:5; Leviticus 10:1-2), and in regard to revealed organization (Numbers 16; Jude 11). Such a lack of respect for the authority of God has forever been associated with the dispositions of contempt (Psalm 107:11), injustice, corruption (Isaiah 1:23), and stubbornness (Deuteronomy 31:27).

Some in the church today are despisers of doctrine and are seeking to amend the will of God in order to make it mold and conform to their notion of "progressive" Christianity. This system, without scriptural precedent, transforms the desires of men into dogma and tempers the teaching of Christ with the dross of human will worship (Col. 2:23; 2 John 9). However the Bible clearly teaches that Christians should attend unto doctrine (I Timothy 4:13-16); that Christians should be nourished up in doctrine (I Timothy 4:6); that Christians should continue in doctrine (I Timothy 4:16); that Christians should hold in sincerity the doctrine of Christ (2 Cor. 2:17; Titus 2:7; 2 John 9); that Christians should hold steadfastly to doctrine (2 Timothy 1:13; Titus 1:9); and that Christians should speak that which befits sound doctrine. (Titus 2:1).

Division And Separation

It is not the truth of God's Word that divides, for indeed, the bedrock of Christians' truth is that which is incapable of division, and when the hammer of error and innovation falls upon the wedge of discord, it shall recoil at once against the seasoned stone to faith, but will instantly fragment the unstable sandstone of human ambition. Thus, error and weakness are the cause of division.

We are living in a time in which the winds of change and doctrinal discord are beating fiercely against the ship of Zion, and even though the end of the squall is not in sight, there have been many spiritual casualties and many more have simply abandoned ship. Therefore, we are saddened to realize that we can no longer walk in fellowship with some whom we have counted as friends, because they themselves are no longer walking in fellowship with God (I John 1:1-7).



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