

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 32

April 2002

No. 12

EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

"All Scriptures is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"

All Scripture, says the apostle Paul, in the passage cited above from 2 Timothy 3:16, has been given by the inspiration of God, that is, God breathed into men and inspired them to write His will for whole humanity. The Bible, therefore, is not an ordinary book, it contains the mind of God, and His will for mankind everywhere. All of the sixty-six books in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation are God's inspired. His message. His will. His teachings. His doctrine. But Paul writes again to Timothy, and said in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." What does this mean? This means that we ought to realise that while all of the Bible has been written by the inspiration of God, not everything, however, written in it applies to us today. For example, God communicated in the beginning with Adam, and Noah, and Abraham, and others. He gave them specific commands. Those commands are not for us today. Adam was told not to eat from a certain tree, Noah was told to build an ark; and Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his only son. There were things God had communicated through

the prophets and Moses to the Israelites. None of them were for us. Yes, they are written in the Bible. They were and are God's word. But we need to learn to rightly divide the Word of God.

In the beginning of the epistle to the Hebrews the writer mentioned: "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds." Today God speaks to us all by His Son. In Matthew chapter 17 we read Jesus took three of His disciples on a high mountain and there He was transfigured, also there appeared to them Moses and Elijah of the Old Testament. Evidently, the disciples got very excited and one of them said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But those words were still in his mouth, when suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, and that was the voice of God, who said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him." Immediately thereafter, when the disciples looked around they didn't see nobody there, but only Jesus. God took away both Moses and Elijah! What was the message for the disciples from God? God said, Hear Him. Hear My Son. Today we do not live under the Old Testament law of the Bible. But we live Under the New Testament law of Christ. God today speaks to us through His Son. His Son, Christ, had chosen His disciples, who were called the apostles. According to His promise, Christ had sent the Holy Spirit on them, after His resurrection from the dead and His ascension to heaven. Notice: He had told them while He was till with them, "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name. He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (John 14:25,26). Also, He had told them, the apostles, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (John 16:12,13). As Christ was leaving them to go back to heaven, He reminded them of His promise once again and told them that they soon would be baptized with the Holy Spirit

(Acts 1:4-8), which came to pass very soon as we read in Acts 2:1-4.

Today whatever God desires of us is written in the New Testament of Christ, and it is profitable for *doctrine*, for *reproof*, for *correction*, for *instruction in righteousness* that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:17). Certainly, then if the written word of God supplies all our needs and provide all the knowledge we need, and makes us complete and equips for every good work, do we need men to tell us what we must do to be saved, and how we should worship God and whatever we need to do to enter the heavenly city of God? The Bible teaches at 2 John 9-11 that if someone teaches anything that is not specifically written in the doctrine of Christ (His New Testament), he does not have God, and warns that we should not hear such a person, because he has gone beyond what is revealed in the inspired Scripture. If someone teaches something which is not already written in the Bible, do not believe him (Gal. 1:6-9). When someone teaches something, believe it only if it is written in the Bible. Yet, remember to rightly divide the word of truth.

How Urgent is Baptism?

J.C. CHOATE

When one is drowning, there is no time to lose. When one is sick and near death, the need for the right medicine is critical. When one is facing a very important University examination, preparation must be made *now*, not next week. There are many examples of urgency when one must act *now* while there is time to seize the moment that makes the difference between success and failure, life and death, and winning or losing.

As important as all of this may be, it pales into insignificance in comparison to spiritual matters. If one is lost in sin, learning the truth and obeying the Lord in order to be saved is a life and death matter. One can wait, and even be complacent about it, but he can wait too long. Regardless of one's age, there is no promise of tomorrow. The Bible says that *now* is the accepted

time, *today* is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

In most churches, baptism is considered to be unimportant and is minimized to the point that the candidates for baptism often have to wait for weeks or even months before they are "baptized." Of course, according to their thinking it doesn't really matter how long they wait because they do not believe that baptism has anything to do with their salvation. For them it has become only a seal of approval from their church that they are now officially recognized as members of that church.

We also see in the church, sad to say, that there are some who encourage those who want to obey the Lord to wait until the following Sunday to be baptized, for their own convenience. Sometimes in the mission field the local preachers will "save up" those who want to be baptized until the foreigner comes so that he can have the honour of baptizing them. This is a practice that should be discouraged, and those who are responsible for such should be taught, or rebuked and shamed, according to the situation. By doing this they are not only going against the examples found in the Scriptures but they are risking the loss of precious souls. A person could die before the foreigner can come to baptize him, or he might change his mind while waiting, or he might be misled by a false teacher who is opposed to the doctrine of the Bible on that subject.

When we turn to Acts 8 we read of Philip being directed to go out into the desert to meet a man on his way home to Ethiopia after having been in Jerusalem to worship according to the Law of Moses. As he rode along in his chariot, reading from the Scripture, Philip was directed by the angel of the Lord to go to him. The Ethiopian was reading from the book of Isaiah, so Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. The man answered, "*How can I except some man shall guide me?*" Then he invited Philip to come up into the chariot and he began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus. As they went on their way they came to a certain water and the eunuch said, "*See, here is water, what doth hinder me from being baptized?*" Philip explained that he could if he believed with all of his heart that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. The eunuch said that he believed, and **they stopped the chariot and both went down into the water and Philip baptized him** and then they came up out of the water and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing. Now

how long did they wait before Philip baptized the man from Ethiopia? Just long enough for him to confess Christ and to go down into the water. Why so quick? Because here was a man who had been taught what he should do to be saved and he was ready to comply with the Lord's will. Why wait any longer?

We also read in Acts 16 of the conversion of Lydia and her household and of the jailor and his household, and how that in both cases once they had been taught what they should do to be saved, they were ready to obey and they were baptized immediately. In case of the jailor, we are told that after Paul and Silas had taught him and his family the word of the Lord that they took them *the same hour of the night* and baptized them. But why the rush? Because **they were lost**, they had learned the truth, and they wanted to obey the Lord **in order to be saved**. There was no reason to delay their baptism and to delay their cleansing from sin.

In Acts 9 we read of the conversion of Saul. He was an unbeliever, a persecutor of the church, but the Lord appeared to him, convincing him that truly Jesus was the Lord, the Son of God. When Paul fell on his face, asking what he should do, he was told to go into the city of Damascus and there it would be told him what he must do. Blind, praying, fasting, and ready for further instruction, Saul waited in Damascus. A Christian man by the name of Ananias was instructed by the Lord to go to Saul, being assured that Saul would be used mightily by God to spread His cause. When Ananias came to Saul and explained what God had said, he asked Saul, *"And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and he baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). Saul did so immediately, and the rest is history.

Not only did these different ones obey the Lord in baptism after learning the truth, but in every case of conversion in the book of Acts it is very evident that all of the people lost no time in being baptized as soon as they understood what they must do. Likewise, when one learns that truth today and wants to be saved, then baptism should follow as quickly as possible. There is no need for putting it off until Sunday or even until the next day. If one wants to be saved, and baptism is truly a part of one's obedience to be saved—and it is—then there should be no delay in carrying out the Lord's will. For sure, after one has completed

his obedience to God, the Lord is not going to wait until some later date to save him, is he? And neither should we wait to do our part in order to be saved; and neither should we ask anyone who wants to be saved to wait until a later date to obey the Lord's commands. It is most urgent that the penitent believer be baptized as quickly as possible, to have his sins washed away, so that he can be saved and be added to the Lord's church.

Are You Proud Of Your Abilities?

FRANCIS DAVID

In the church we have all kinds of people from various backgrounds, some might be poor or some may be well to do. Some are more educated and there are some who are less educated. But we must know that when we become the members of the church, we don't have these things in our minds. Such things might give us a personal glory, but not the real Joy. We consider ourselves as the children of God and are one in Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul says: "For you are all sons (Children) of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:27) As Christians, we might be having some abilities that we can use for the glory of God. There are some who can do the good song leading, some are capable of doing good preaching and there may be some who can do the good job of teaching others through Bible Study. All these abilities are excellent but these should not make us feel big and important.

The church at Corinth had this problem. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12 we read there were Christians who had various spiritual gifts but they had a problem and that problem was that each one of them was thinking that having this kind of gift, "I am the best" and Paul had to exhort them by telling that you should all be one in Unity. He told them "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." After saying all about unity he says in Chapter 13 that a more excellent way which I want to show you is this that there should be love among you. He says, "Though I

speak with the tongue of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have no love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy, love does not parades itself, is NOT PUFFED UP; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil . . . and after saying all these things he says: "When I became a man, I put away childish things." If we are proud of our abilities then we must realize that we are harming the Lord's body. Whatever we do for the Lord, it should be without any pride. We must consider others better than us. Paul writing to Christians says: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself." (Phil. 2:3).

The Bible condemns Pride. In proverb chapter 6 beginning from verse 16 the wise man says: "These six things the Lord hates . . . a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood." Being a good leader in any spiritual category, you must be careful and watchful lest you become a proud leader. Apostle Peter tells the younger people, (Sometime young people are more prone to these things), "Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." (I Peter. 5:5-6).

What kind of church leader are you? Are you proud of your abilities? if so, then devil is trying to work on you. He is encouraging you to feel big, the best and the excellent. You know, when we have pride in us then we don't realize that it will take us to destruction, because pride is highly destructive and to tell you the fact many good and wonderful leaders in the church all over the world are being ruined by this deadly sin. Let us be humble and follow the example of our Master. He is one of the supreme example of leadership with humility. Let us all be the kind of leaders as God wants us to be.

Receiving The Blessings Of God

CLEM THURMAN

How do we receive the promised blessings of God? At what point, and on what conditions, do we receive God's blessings? There is probably more confusion in the religious world over those two questions than any others. Some contend that there is nothing at all for us to do, that God simply bestows His blessings unconditionally upon those He chooses. Others say we must earn His blessings either by our works or by our suffering for our sins. But what does the Bible say?

The apostle Paul wrote, *"For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory"* (Eph. 2:8-9). This passage makes it clear that we cannot "earn" God's blessings, that we cannot be saved by our own efforts. But some extend that, therefore, we must be saved by "faith only," that there are no other conditions. But the Bible answers that clearly: *"What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? . . . Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself . . . Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect . . . Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only"* (James 2:14,17,21-21,24). The only time "faith only" is found in the Bible, God tells us that we are NOT justified by "faith only." Frankly, I don't know why people don't believe God on this!

So, When do we receive God's promised blessings, and under what conditions? Let us look at three examples in the Old Testament to see how people received God's promised blessings, and then conclude with the New Testament. Even though the Old Testament was *"nailed to the cross"* (Col. 2:14), and we are not under its laws and rules, it is still important for us to study it. As Paul said, *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope"* (Rom.

15:4). The principles under which God gives His promised blessings to man are clearly revealed in these examples.

The Healing From The Fiery Serpents

The people of Israel had been disobedient, railing against God and His laws and against His chosen leader, Moses (Num. 21:5). God sent *"fiery serpents"* among them as punishment, and many of them died (v. 6). The people then came confessing their sin and asking for mercy. God promised to heal them: *"And Jehovah said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a standard: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live"* (Num. 21:8). God offered healing, but it was not granted without conditions. he gave instructions of what they were to do: [a] Moses was to make a serpent (of brass) and set it on a standard in their midst, [b] Those who were bitten were to look on this brazen serpent.

The next step is clearly shown: *"And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him"* (Heb. 11:6). No one ever received a promised blessing of God without faith. These Israelites had to trust God to heal them, and that meant accepting His method of cure.

But they were not cured when they believed, for a *"dead faith"* (that is, *"faith without works"*—James 2:17) cannot avail. It must be a faith that obeys what God says. The people of Israel were not healed when they believed, but when their faith led them to look upon the serpent. Not one received the promised blessing of healing until they did what God told them to do! Notice this: *"And it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived"* (Num. 21:9).

Notice, then the pattern: [1] God promised the blessing, [2] He gave instructions for the people to follow, [3] the people believed, [4] they did what God said, [5] the blessing was given.

Conquering The City Of Jericho

When Israel came into the promised land of Canaan, the first city they had to conquer was the city of Jericho (Josh. 6). How could they do it? First, God promised it to them (v. 2), and then told them how: *"And Jehovah said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thy hand Jericho . . . Ye shall compass the city, all the men of war, going about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six*

days. And the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets . . . All the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall go up every man straight before him" (Josh. 6:2-5).

It took a lot of faith for these people to do as God, said, for as a military maneuver, it just made no sense at all. But God would give the plan power when the people trusted Him enough to do what He said. They marched around the city in accord with God's instructions, and when they did what God said, the walls of Jericho fell down and the city was theirs.

Notice the pattern was the same as with the healing from the bites of the serpents. [1] God promised them the city, [2] He gave instructions on what the people were to do, [3] they believed God, [4] they did what God told them, [5] they received the promised blessing. And, again, please note that they did not receive the promised blessing when they first believed. The blessing was not given until they obeyed God's word.

The Cleansing Of Naaman, The Leper

Naaman was a General in the army of Syria, which had conquered Israel (2 Kings 5). But he was a leper. His wife's servant girl, an Israelite, had been taken captive, and told her mistress about a man in Israel who could heal Naaman. So Naaman came to Israel to consult with the prophet Elisha. *"And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean" (2 Kings 5:10).* But Naaman was angry, thinking that was "too simple." He even said the rivers back home were just as good as the Jordan. But his servant convinced him to do what God had said. *"Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:14).* This example follows the same pattern as we have found before.

[1] God promised the blessing of healing from the leprosy, [2] He gave instructions as to what must be done, [3] Naaman had to believe, [4] he did what God said, [5] the promised blessing was then received. Did Naaman receive the promised blessing when he first believed? Or did he receive it when he

had dipped six times (partial obedience)? No, not until he had fully complied with what God required did Naaman receive the promised blessing.

New Testament Examples Of Conversion

We are not under the laws of the Old Testament today. Thus, we are not told to make a brazen serpent, march thirteen times around city or go dip seven times in the River Jordan. But God has promised us the blessing of salvation, or the forgiveness of our sins, in Christ. How do we receive that promised blessing? Let us look at some examples in the New Testament Scriptures.

"Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:36-38).

"And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ . . . When they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized" (Acts 8:5,12).

"The eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God . . . and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him" (Acts 8:36-38).

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately" (Acts 16:30-33).

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do . . . Ananias said . . . And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his

name" (Acts 9:4-6; 22:16).

Notice in each one of the above examples of salvation the same pattern that we have seen before. [1] God promised salvation, [2] He gave instructions to be followed, [3] people believed, [4] they did what God said, [5] God saved them. There was no deviation from that pattern. Nor does God deviate from that today. No one has ever received a promised blessing from God who did not follow the pattern above. That is why the apostle Peter said, "*Ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth*" (1 Pet. 1:22). It is why the apostle Paul wrote, "*Whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness*" (Rom. 6:17-18).

Just as in the cases noted from the Old Testament (the serpent, Jericho, Naaman), God's promised blessings are given only when we hear His promise, heed His instructions, believe Him and do what He says. That hasn't changed. Not one of those examples shows one saved by faith only. Each received salvation from sins when his faith led him to be baptized, in obedience to God. No one receives His promised blessing at "the point of faith," But when that faith leads him to do what God says. As the Bible says, "*Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect . . . faith working through love*" (James 2:22; Gal. 5:6).

The Meaning Of Life

ROD RUTHERFORD

Long ago, King David asked God, "What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him" (Psalm 8:4)? People have many things in common with animals. They breathe the same air. They eat similar food. They have many of the same needs. But, people are different from animals.

Because we are different from animals, we want to know why we are here. What is our purpose on this earth? Since we know that we only live a few short years, how should we use our

time? Should we live only to satisfy the needs of our bodies? Should we spend our time looking for the pleasures of this world?

Because we are different from animals, we want to know where we are going when we die. Life on earth is very short. Job said: "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue" (Job 14:1,2). Are we the same as animals when we die? Do we just breathe our last breath and then there is nothing?

How can we find the answers to these questions? The only One who can give the answers is God Who created us. The answers are found in His Book, the Bible. In the Bible, God has told us who we are, why we are here on earth, and where we will go when we die.

What Is Man?

What is man? What makes him different from the animals? The Apostle Paul answered this question when he wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica:

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Animals have physical bodies only. But, every person has a spirit within his body. Our bodies will die, decay, and return to the dust as did the first man Adam (Genesis 3:19; 35:18; James 2:26). But, the spiritual part of man will continue to live. The Bible says: "Then the dust (our bodies) will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit (the thinking, conscious, eternal soul which lives within the body) will return to God Who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Why Are We Here?

Life on earth is very short. Death will soon come to each of us. Therefore, we are not wise if we live only to satisfy the needs of our bodies. We are also very foolish if we live only for the pleasures of this world. The Apostle John warned: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away,

and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (I John 2:15-17). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, asked: "What is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul" (Matthew 16:26)? Our purpose on this earth is to bring glory to God by doing all He has told us to do in the Bible. The wise man wrote: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Where Are We Going?

Where will our spirits go when we die? What happens when we leave this earth? After we die, we will go to be judged by God. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Each person will be judged for his own life (Romans 14:12). Each will be judged according to the way he has lived on earth (II Corinthians 5:10).

After the judgment, there are only two possible places to go. One place is for those who have lived for God and served His Son, Jesus Christ. It is a place of peace, happiness, and rest. It is called "Heaven" (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 4:16, 5:6; Philippians 3:20; Revelation 21:35). The other place is for those who refuse to obey God, reject Jesus Christ, and spend their lives in the pleasures of this world. It is called "Hell," "the second death" and the "lake of fire" (Matthew 10:28, 25:46; II Thessalonians 1:7-10).

I Must Choose

God loves us and wants us to be saved. He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die as a sacrifice for our sins so that we can be saved (John 3:16). But, God does not force us to be saved. He wants us to choose for ourselves. Jesus invites us to come to Him: "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28,29). In order to come to Jesus, we must believe that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God (John 8:24); we must repent of all our past sins (Luke 13:3); we must confess our faith in Christ before men (Romans 10:9,10; Acts 8:37); and we must be buried in water in baptism and raised up out of the water to live as a new person (Romans 6:3-5; Acts 2:38; II Corinthians 5:17).

From Acorns To Oaks

BYRON LAIRD

When the Book of the Law was lost, God's ancient people went astray. When it was found, it was used by honest and earnest men to lead Israel back to God's way (II Kings 22:8-23; 28). Thus, the kingdom was in the Law.

Likewise, by putting the power of reproduction in the Gospel, the Word (which is the seed of Christ's kingdom), God has made possible a faithful kingdom (or church) in any place, any time. It is not necessary to have some organic connection between present congregations, and leaders of the past to assure fidelity.

Churches of Christ today strive to restore the New Testament church, not to build a bigger and better denomination. As an original work of art can be restored by carefully following certain principles, so can the church. The concept of restoration is not only logical, but Biblical also.

Founded during the first century by Jesus Christ, His church still exists on earth today. We recall Christ's promise, "upon this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Death could not prevent Him completing His purpose, for "the Lord is not slack concerning His promises" (II Peter 3:9). We believe this happened.

However, Jesus died about 50 days prior to the birth of His church in Jerusalem, so He implemented His plan through His apostles on that Pentecost day following His resurrection. We know that Peter and the other apostles could only lay the foundation, Christ (I Corinthians 3:11).

Peter did so by preaching Christ: His death, burial and resurrection (Acts 2:22-36). At the end of his sermon, about 3,000 souls responded for baptism, thus constituting the first church of Christ on earth (Acts 2:38-47). It is certain that following Christ's plan made them disciples of Christ, not of Peter, the man who presented the plan.

Do we not have an example of a restoration of the church not long after its establishment in Jerusalem? Here is how it happened. Shortly after being established, the Jerusalem church

was scattered abroad. It appears that the only disciples remaining in Jerusalem were the apostles, for it is written of the church that "they were all scattered abroad except the apostles" (Acts 8:1-4). Taken literally, this passage indicates that the church was right back where it started from on that early Pentecost morning.

Central to the concept of restoration is the Biblical idea that the "word of the kingdom is the seed" (Luke 8:11). The kingdom (which is the church), is in the Word, just as the oak is in the acorn. In the acorn, there are the essential features of the plant it came from, such as species, variety, colour, bark, leaves, fruit. Therefore, as long as the healthy acorn remains, the kingdom of oaks has not been destroyed. Likewise, as long as the Bible stands, the kingdom of Christ, with its salient features, has not been destroyed. This is why Jesus said, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Daniel averred "it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44), and the writer of Hebrews assures us it "cannot be moved" (Hebrews 12:28-29).

A great apostasy, or falling away, was predicted by Paul in Acts 20:28-32; II Timothy 3:1-5; I Timothy 4:1-4; II Thessalonians 2, II Timothy 4:1-4, among other passages. It happened. But, it is unnecessary to trace that faithful church in a visible, unbroken line of succession, throughout history. The congregations were, and still are, autonomous. The power of reproduction is in the Gospel. There were groups in history who did not follow Rome and subscribed to many of the principles characteristic of the first century church, seeking to be the New Testament church. They were opposed by the clergy, who, in effect, had "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men" by chaining the Bible to the pulpits, but when the Bible was placed in the hands of the people so they could read for themselves, movements got under way on the continent of Europe toward restoration of New Testament Christianity.

John Wycliff, William Tyndale, Martin Luther and others, at great cost of themselves, began this work. As the Bible (the seed) was made available for planting, the fruit appeared first in the form of Reformation. Unfortunately a number of practices, for which there is no Bible authority were accepted by the reformers. Figures like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others contributed much, but their efforts were weakened in that adherents

crystallized their teachings into creeds, and formed new denominations unlike the New Testament church.

Step by step, the process of reformation continued as men who loved truth in America continued the search for the pure seed of the Gospel.

A number of men were, each, preaching the same message. This preaching became a great movement. Their slogan was, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, let us be silent; let us call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways; in matters of faith, let us have unity, in matters of opinion, let us have liberty, and in all things, let us have charity!" This movement had great appeal. It still does, for by teaching and practicing the original divine principles set forth in the New Testament, we can, indeed, restore the New Testament church at any place and time. We ask your help. We believe that we understand the Gospel as it was intended. "Come now let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18).

The Place Of Reason

STANFAST OYINNA SNR.

The ability to reason is one of the most powerful abilities with which God has blessed man. God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27), for it was only in this way that God could fellowship with men. God could show men His purpose and men could respond to the words of the most Holy God.

As it is written, "Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak" (Hebrews 2:5). This declaration is exhilarating to the spirit of the redeemed of the earth. God is presently preparing the future inhabitants of "that world" (Luke 20:35) for rule and dominion there.

God is a God of purpose. He has never done anything that has not had far-reaching implications and results. Christ is, at this present time, implementing the precious salvation that He purchased. Soon, God will be justified in all His workings. God will be proven to be true in every instance and conclusion. And, men will come before the judgment bar of God and give an

account of the deeds which have been done in the body.

God illuminates. He has provided a way that man might be saved. God has always loved man and has always wanted "His off-spring" (Acts 17:28) to come to repentance. Remember that Christ was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. This redemption is not a quick fix to avenge an attack waged by satan that resulted in this blighted condition of man. God foreknew that man would fall and from the very start of this enterprise, He planned the way back to Himself.

This man that God created is wonderfully created indeed (Psalm 139:14). Just look at one capability of this creation: man has the ability to choose, to reason, to respond. God truly has made man in His own image. We are God's creation and are given the right to freely choose.

God created man in His image because God wanted man for Himself. But, God wanted man to choose for himself. God foreknew all the implications of creating man free and yet, God continued with His plan. It was a good plan.

Men can reason with their God. They can come to God if they will only humble themselves, repent, believe, and obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us remember our God in the days of our youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Let us use our minds and reason to the glory of God. Let us render unto Him our "reasonable service" (Romans 12:1-2).

The Kind Of People We Ought To Be

ROGER JOHNSON

Jesus is coming again! The fact of His coming should serve as a present incentive to holiness of life and wholeheartedness in service. It was in the context of a discussion of the second coming of Jesus that the apostle Peter urged, "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness" (II Peter 3:11). In this chapter, Peter lists several characteristics or marks of the Christian in whose life the truth of Christ's return is a practical hope.

1. He Seeks To Live A Christ-like Life

What would be your immediate reaction if you learned that Jesus was coming within the next two hours? Most would need every bit of those two hours to prepare for His coming. Apologies would have to be made which, for one reason or another, have not been made (Matthew 5:23-24). Certain books would be destroyed; loved ones whom we have failed to teach or warn would be contacted; confessions of wrong would be made. The fact is, Jesus is coming—and He may come today. The practical effect of this truth should be an incentive to holy living (II Peter 3:14).

2. He Manifests More Interest In The World To Come Than In This World

"We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:13). This is not to say that we make no positive contribution to the society in which we live on earth, but we realize that this world is not our home. We are only pilgrims passing through. (Philippians 3:20). At Jesus' second coming, this present world will be dissolved (II Peter 3:10) and there will be the realization of that heavenly home prepared by Christ (John 14:1-3).

3. He Is Concerned For The Lost

Peter spoke of the great compassion Jesus had for the perishing (II Peter 3:9,15). We should share in His deep concern. In anticipation of the Lord's second coming, every opportunity of spreading the gospel should be utilized.

The fact of Christ's second coming should exert a deep influence on us in inducing us to lead holy lives. Nothing on earth is permanent. It is all transitory. "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved," what manner of person have you been?

Who Is Right?

VERNON C. JOINES

It may be difficult for us to see things as God wants them to be because we are so busy seeing things as we believe they ought to be. It may be more difficult for us to see the New Testa-

ment picture of the Lord's church in the first century because we are so accustomed to churches in the twentieth century.

Six thousand years of human history bear out the truth that in religion God's way always works and man's ways always fail. The only sensible path to pursue is the path that God has laid out for us. The passing of time adds to the mountain of human ways, ideas, philosophies, creed, manuals and churches, but it cannot improve God's Word. Nineteen centuries ago, Jesus built His church, and the apostles revealed His will by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Man can improve upon neither, but the need of the hour is that we accept and learn to be content with both. The New Testament is still intact; the Lord's church is yet the same as when built.

For various reasons, men have written creeds and established churches. We are not so much concerned about their motives as we are about the outcome of their labours. Honest souls are divided in religion and do not believe there is any specific answer to the problem of division in religion. Some will ask, "Who is right?" then they will decide that no one is entitled to the claim, therefore, all are right. But, think, God's Word is right, and they only can be right who conform to and defend that Word (Psalm 19:7-8; 33:4; II Peter 2:15).

In faithful churches of Christ today, we offer absolutely nothing but the Word of God and an effort to conform to God's pattern set forth in the Scriptures. We know that whatsoever is not authorized by the Bible rightly divided whether human creeds, ideas, ways, practices or names, will result in the departure and division. We do not plead for "our way" over "your way" but for God's way over men's ways. The all important question for time and eternity is, "Are you conforming to God's way?" Such produces unity and the Lord's church, not divisions and denominations. (Isaiah 55:7-9; Luke 1:6; I Corinthians 1:10).

Good News

KIPPY MYERS

Gospel Is Good News

As you may know, the Greek word in the New Testament which is often translated into the English language as "gospel"

means "good news" or "good message." The Greek word is euangelion: eu (good) + angelion (news or message). Even our English word "gospel" comes from Old English: god (today ye would say good) + spell (today we would say story or message). Either way, Greek or English, gospel is good news!

The gospel of Jesus Christ, therefore, is the GOOD NEWS about Jesus. It the GOOD news that God has worked out an eternal purpose, willing even to send his Son to suffer in our place so that we might be completely forgiven of our sins. It is GOOD news that we can live with God forever and ever. That is GOSPEL in the absolutely highest possible sense of the word!

Meaning Of News

According to the Merriam-Webster. Dictionary, "news" is defined in one or more of these four ways, "(1) a report of recent events, (2) previously unknown information, (3) material reported in a newspaper or news periodical or on a newscast, (4) matter that is newsworthy."

Notice that definitions (1) and (2) are pretty general statements. If I tell you that one of my daughters just got a new job, that is something that happened recently and it is something that you did not know before I told you. Thus, it is new to you and thus, news. Old news is almost by definition not newsy. When we say that something is "old news" we usually mean that it is no longer news. Some people speak of the gospel in this way. They have heard it and thus they think of it as old news. It is an old message, all right. But not everyone has heard it. To those who have not heard it, it is still news and very, very GOOD news.

But (3) and (4) allow the people who disseminate the news to decide what is and is not news. If the editor of a given paper wants to titillate and shock so that he can sell more papers, then he will likely claim that such things are newsworthy and will print them. But is it truly something worthy of my time to read? Not really. Two actors get married, a boy won a lottery, etc. These matters may seem interesting in a frivolous sort of way, but they are not the kind of things that should mean a lot in our lives. Some people think that the gospel is not flashy enough, new enough, or interesting enough to be considered newsworthy or something we should tell others about or put in the newspaper.

They would rather tell us about movie stars and scandals than eternal life.

Bad News

That raises questions related to what we call "news" these days. Lot of studies have been done about this regarding what types of items are reported in the "news," the bias of the reporters, how much time is given to which topics, etc. But it seems to me and many others that the tenor of news these days is decidedly negative, bad, shocking solely for the shake of shock, etc. That is, a television program or newspaper sometimes reports information that is actually relevant to my life, information that I need to know (e.g., tax laws or weather conditions). But a lot of it is simply either gossip, prurient material, fear mongering, or somehow pandering to a special interest group. Sadly, a large number of people then take this "bad news" and think that it accurately represents the world. That is, they think the world is a horrible place because that is the way that it is so often pictured in the electronic media.

There is a definite lack of good news in the electronic media. For example, have you ever heard how many airplanes takeoff safely and land safely every day around the world? I am sure that you have not. But they are innumerable. However, (note this) it is precisely because it is so NORMAL for an airplane to take off and land safely, that it does not seem to be "newsworthy" because it is the way life goes on around us day in and day out. We can look around and see that things are going pretty well. Most of us do not even know anyone who was killed in a major plane crash. But let one plane crash, and the news is filled with it from dusk to dawn and probably for more than one day.

The same is true with crime and other "newsy" subjects. Do you want to hear every day that Mrs. Brown is healthy, ate breakfast with her husband of forty years, took the grandchildren home, and had a wonderful day at work? They do not feature that kind of thing on the news because you can see that for yourself. What you do not so often see is someone shooting a man, burning down a business, or crashing an airplane. Thus, it is the abnormality of an event that makes news "news."

Some people take the Bible completely wrong. They think that it is BAD news because it tells them that they are lost in sin

and that some types of human behaviour are evil. But is a medical doctor bad for telling you that you have a disease? After all, he did not invent the problem. He is only telling you about a problem that you **ALREADY** have. The first step in overcoming a problem is realizing that you have a problem. Thus, it is good to know about the problem. The extraordinarily good part, i.e., the really good news is when he tells you that your disease is one hundred percent curable.

That is part of the good news in the gospel too. We were **ALREADY** in sin. The Bible holds up a mirror so that we can see the truth about our situation. But the Bible tells us that even while we were sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. The Bible does not just focus on the bad (regardless of what some naysayers think). It reports it, but it emphasizes the good news that God always loves his people and provides a way of escape from sin. That is **GOSPEL!**

"With Grace, Seasoned With Salt"

YARBROUGH LEIGH

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:6). A parallel passage reads, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

It seems strange that it should be necessary to warn Christians not to engage in corrupt speech. Yet, both observation and experience teach us that such admonition is sorely needed, and is often unheeded even when given in love and with much persuasion.

What is "corrupt speech?" Of course, filthy speech; that is: speech employing obscenities, gross cursing, and vulgarity—especially when it appeals to the grosser and more base areas of human nature—is "corrupt" because it endorses corruption and multiplies corruption. Yet, is not speech "corrupt" also if it stems from a mind that is distorted by anger, jealousy, envy, malice, bitterness, etc.? Can a heart that is filled with cursings

bring forth blessings? Also, is not idle or careless gossip—the thoughtless repetition of rumor and hearsay which is not and cannot be verified—“corrupt” speech? Even when there is no conscious thought or intent of injury or hurt, if a moment’s careful reflection should reveal that harm, and not good, would be the certain result of the repetition of it, would not that be “corrupt” speech?

Paul’s admonition is that our speech be “that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.” Further, he admonished, “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 4:31-32).

What a world of good would be brought about were “Christians” to diligently practice such teaching! Alien sinners have been discouraged and turned away from obedience by “corrupt speech” from the mouths of professed “Christians;” whereas speech that is good and useful to edifying, etc., might have drawn them closer, and led them to be saved. Weak “Christians” have been caused to stumble and fall by the corrupt speech of other “Christians” to whom they looked for example and encouragement. The usefulness of dedicated workers has been destroyed by the careless speech of thoughtless church members who “really didn’t mean to do any harm.”

James wrote, “For in many things we all offend. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (James 3:2). Further on, he wrote, “But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8).

Since the tongue cannot be “tamed,” we must ever keep it “caged” as we would a wild animal that is not to be trusted to roam freely without restraint. Since even the best sometime offend in word, we must all watch and be on guard against bringing hurt and hindrance through idle or thoughtless speech.

We have a choice. With our tongues we can build up, encourage and strengthen; or, we can discourage, disillusion and cause to fall away from the truth. The choice is ours.

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