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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

***"Do not be overcome by evil,
but overcome evil with good."***

Since the 60's or the 70's it is a different world altogether in which we live today! Not only technology and science has progressed, giving us Colour T.V., Fax Machine, E-mail, and Mobile Phones, etc., but the way we view things today and live our lives today are also different. Peoples' speech, eating habits, and clothings, and attitudes are no longer the same today. Those who grew up between 50's and 70's realise what we are talking about. And some of us occasionally speak up and show our concern about things going in the way they are heading. But one of the things we are all the most concerned about is the growing trend or threat of global terrorism; and more so, about the growing danger of high-tech terrorism. The reasons for the terrorists attacks in various forms and shapes could be different, that is, political, religious, racial and social. But the root cause of all terrorism is the same—HATRED. People hate people, because what they have been told or they had heard about them, regardless of whether it is true or false! The saddest thing, though is that usually the innocent people are targeted by such hateful people.

The first recorded case of hatred is found in the Bible in

Genesis chapter 4, wherein we read of unrighteous Cain killing his righteous brother Abel. Christ was hated by the Jews and the Romans and was killed by them on the cross. Though, as Peter proclaimed, they were fulfilling the very purpose and determined foreknowledge of God, when they had carried out their plans. (Acts 2:23). But, what was the response of Christ from the cross? The Bible says He was praying for His enemies, by saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:24). The only sure way to deal with hatred in right manner is to possess the mind of Christ, as the Bible says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5). Hate cannot be overcome by hating. Avenging and retaliation is not the way to win over hate. The one and the only way to eliminate hatred from the earth is to teach people about the love of God and the gospel of Christ.

Christ taught: "You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5:43-45). At Romans 12:17-21, the Bible teaches: "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." May God help us to understand that all of us have but one heavenly Father, and in a sense, we are all His children. He says only one thing to all of us, and He desires only one thing from all of us. He loves us all, and He wants us to love Him and love all people. **Only by following His will we can hope to enjoy truly a happy and blessed new year. May God bless us all in this new year as we try to live by His will each day.**

What If . . . ?

J.C. CHOATE

We are living in an unbelieving world. Many do not believe that God created the heaven and the earth. They don't believe the Bible is the word of God. They don't believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. They don't believe in heaven and hell. Rather, their explanation for the earth and all the things in it is the theory of evolution. They are trying to replace God and Christianity with atheistic humanism.

If there was no God, no creator, no Son of God, no heaven, no hell, and all the rest, maybe all of that unbelief would not matter greatly. Humans would be like animals at death—that would be the end of it. On the other hand, even if there was no God, would the world and our individual lives not be better because of belief in God and all of the other things that go with that belief? Wouldn't one be a better person, have a better life, have something to live for and to look forward to? We can see in the world that there has always been a need for religious morals and values, for belief in a higher power, for authority to respect.

But what if? What if all of those unbelievers are wrong? What if there is a God? What if He created the earth and all things in it? What if He created the earth and all things in it? What if he created man and woman and gave each one a soul? What if the Bible is the word of God? What if Christ is God's Son? Of a certainty, we know that death will come to all. What if after death there is a judgment? What if there is a heaven for God's people? And what if there is a hell for the wicked? And what if heaven and hell will be for eternity? Then what?

If these things are true—and there is ample evidence to convince the honest seeker that they are true—then all of those who do not believe, who have not obeyed the Lord, are not members of the Lord's church, and have not lived the faithful Christian life will be lost for all eternity. Christ said, "He that rejected me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48). Speaking of the wicked and the righteous, Christ said, "And these shall go away into everlasting

punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46). The Apostle Paul declared, "And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe because our testimony among you was believed in that day." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). Then John wrote, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9).

For those who are in the numerous world religions, what if they are not of God? You may believe in them, you may worship your gods, live sacrificial lives for them, and offer sacrifices to them, but what have you accomplished if you have no saviour, no one to forgive you of your sins, and you end up lost for all eternity? The Bible says there is but one God, one Lord (Christ, the Son of God), one Spirit, one faith, one baptism, one church, and one hope. (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Then for those of you who believe in Christ and are in various denominations of men, what if the Lord has but one church, it wears the Lord's name, and Christ is the Saviour of the church? (Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16; Ephesians 5:23). What if the church is important and you must be a member of it to go to heaven? 1 Corinthians 15:24). What if you must believe and be baptized to be saved? (Mark 16:16). And what if Christ adds the saved to His church only? (Acts 2:47). You may be satisfied with your denomination now, and you may believe the preachers who tell you that you can be saved by saying "the sinner's prayer," and that the church is not important, but remember that when we face the Lord at the judgment, we will be judged by His word only, not according to what the preacher told you. (John 12:48). Don't take a chance with your soul.

The facts are these: God created the heaven and earth and all things in it (Genesis 1:1—). Christ is the Son of God who lived in this world and died on the cross for the sins of man, was buried, was resurrected, and returned to the Father in heaven where He remains to this day. (John 3:16,17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-

4). The Bible is the word of God, inspired by Him, and it completely furnishes man to every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Christ has promised to save all who obey him. (Mark 16:16; Galatians 3:26,27). Christ has but one church and He is the saviour of it. (Ephesians 4:4-6; Ephesians 5:23). All will die and be judged by the Lord. (Hebrews 9:27; Acts 17:30,31). The righteous will go to heaven to live with the Lord forevermore. (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 22:14). The wicked will be cast into the lake of fire to be punished forever and ever. John said, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:12-15).

So what shall we do? Shall we risk our very soul on doubt and unbelief, or shall we take the safe course? How can we look at the earth and all things within it and conclude there is no God? The very fact that we are intelligent, soul-searching beings is evidence that there is a God, a creator. If that be so, we must be wise enough to get acquainted with Him, learn His will for us, and comply with it. By doing so we have all to gain and nothing to lose. To take the course of unbelief is to lose everything.

Especially For Women

Does Divorce Matter That Much?

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

"... Whosoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery"
(Matthew 19:9).

There are almost as many different scenarios in marriage/divorce/remarriage situations as there are situations, and the majority of people have managed—through their own thinking or with help—to reason around and conclude that Jesus' words don't quite fit them. Usually, Matthew 19:9 seems fairly straightforward and clear, *until one's own broken life, or that of a friend, becomes a problem.*

THE DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE OCCURRED BEFORE THE COUPLE BECAME CHRISTIANS

In this age of pervasive immorality, marriage is treated lightly. Among people in the world, it is more common to find a person living with the second or third mate than to find one still faithful to the first marriage partner. What happens, then, when the couple learns the Truth and wants to obey the Gospel, becoming a part of the Lord's family?

The reasoning is introduced, "Matthew 19:9 applies only to Christians. When people in the world don't know anything about the Bible, God can't hold them responsible for making a mistake in marriage. But, now, they can be baptized, washing away their sins, and their marriage will be all right."

Is this true?

What is sin, in general? It is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4; Romans 4:15). Romans 3:23 pronounces that "... *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" The entire point of Christ's coming into the world to die for sinners is that, yes, certainly does hold all of us responsible for learning and abiding by His law. The adulterer may not know God's law but that ignorance does no more to remove the guilt of his disobedience than does the ignorance of the infidel who denies the very existence of God. Both will be held responsible in this world and in the world to come.

Another scenario along this line: In an adulterous marriage, what if one had obeyed the Gospel before the marriage and the other had not? If God were overlooking the ignorance of the non-Christian, would that mean that the marriage was only half adulterous?

Back to the cleansing power of baptism: If (repentance) + baptism = forgiveness of an adulterous marriage for unbelievers, does (repentance) + confession of faults = forgiveness of an

adulterous marriage for erring Christians? The parallels are there for all other sins, why not for adulterous marriages? But if this resolves the problem, then why did Jesus single out divorce and remarriage? Why not just naturally include adultery with everything else that may be wrong in a person's life? Maybe, just maybe, the meaning of "repentance" may affect such a marriage—and maybe those who say baptism washes away adultery have omitted the repentance which is required before baptism can be *true baptism*. . .

"NOT UNDER BONDAGE . . ."

And what about that verse in 1 Corinthians 7 that says, ". . . *if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases . . .*" The subjects of the previous verses had been (1) rendering due marital affection, (2) permission for the unmarried and widows to marry if they were having problems with temptation, (3) the married person was not to leave his/her mate, but if they had done so then they were not to remarry but to be reconciled, (4) the marriage of the believer to an unbeliever was recognized by God and sanctified, so the believer was not to leave the unbelieving mate; however, if the unbeliever left, the Christian had not disobeyed God and was not to be held responsible—however, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, did not contradict Jesus' statement in Matthew 19:9; permission was not given to remarry. The word is not even mentioned.

What about, "*Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.*" These words are used as a canopy, spread over adulterous marriages. But does anyone say the murderer is to continue to murder? The thief, to rob? The child abuser, to beat his children? The gossip, to continue gossiping? A closer look at the verses preceding 20 will show that the situations under discussion were circumcision/uncircumcision and slavery/freedom—not some life-style of wrong-doing.

"WE DON'T HAVE EXAMPLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT OF PEOPLE BEING REQUIRED TO DIVORCE . . ."

No, we don't. But we do have the law concerning marriage, and the command for repentance. And we have the statement in

1 Corinthians 6:9-11, "*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor **adulterers**, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such WERE some of you.** . .*" Somebody stopped being an adulterer!

"YOU KNOW GOD WOULDN'T WANT TO BREAK UP A HAPPY HOME . . ."

There were times in the Old Testament when God required that the Israelites who had married unbelievers put away those mates, not because of adultery but because *He knew they would lead His people away from Him* (Ezra 9,10; Deuteronomy 7:3-4).

It is a strange thing that people say with great determination that they do want to go to heaven when they die. Yet, almost 0% would look for a way to separate, with the least repercussions inflicted, from an adulterous situation so that they could *live* an upright example before mates and children. Such a thing would be *beyond reason, absolutely too much for God to expect!* Yet that same couple may turn around and get a "*no fault*" divorce, destroying their "happy home" and inflicting all the repercussions on their children! Why? Not for the sake of eternal salvation, but for no cause at all! Aren't we strange in our thinking?

"YOU KNOW GOD WOULDN'T WANT TO BREAK UP A HAPPY HOME . . ."

In these times, there are "happy homes" where no marriage has ever taken place. Recently, a woman who was not a Christian but who had begun to attend the worship assemblies of the church, wanted to rent a house from me. She had been married and divorced three times, and was now living again with her first husband. Without his financial contribution, she could not afford the rent on any house, but they had not remarried.

I was moved by her plight. She and her little boy **had** to live somewhere, and there was no way for her to earn enough to house, feed, and clothe them without help. I could urge her to give up her "live in" situation, obey the gospel, and work with God to help turn things around in her life—which would have

required to great leap of faith on her part. I could have urged that she and her former husband remarry, so that they wouldn't be living in—and teaching her son—a sinful relationship. I was concerned about her soul and the soul of her little boy. I urged her to change her life so that God could be free to help her with her problems. But I could see that she wasn't about to give up the money of a “live in,” and that she knew he wouldn't marry her, at least, not yet.

With the logic of many Christians today, I should have ignored the violation of God's law, rented the house to her, and hoped that she would eventually “be baptized” and bring up her son to have some exposure to truth. After all, when problematic marriages can be so easily glossed over, what difference does “a little of paper make?” But wouldn't I have been condoning immorality by renting my house to a “live in” couple?

Sin is a problematic thing⁹. Often it inflicts tremendous pain—even on innocent victims, like children—that never goes away.

THE OUT-CRY

Do you know what? The weaker, sympathizing part of me says, “I wish Jesus hadn't made that statement. I see hurting people, and I wish it were easy to just erase the sin with a word, and all would be gone. If Matthew 19:9 wasn't even in the Bible, it wouldn't matter about divorce.”

And do you know what else? We aren't the first ones to think that! Even as the words left Jesus' mouth, his own disciples raised an out-cry: “Why if that's the way it is, it would be better not to even marry!”

When we hear all of these objections and their accompanying heart-wrenching cases of messed-up marriages, deep in our hearts we long to back away from such hardness. We would, if Matthew 19:9 didn't stop us like a brick wall. And there's not a thing we can do to erase those words from the record. We don't have the authority.

Jesus hurts for hurting people too. Don't you know He didn't want to make a single *unnecessary law*? He had the authority—if anyone did—*not to say those words*. But maybe *even He* didn't have that authority, because he backed His statement with a

referral to the way marriage had been from the beginning. Maybe, inherent within the husband/wife relationship, from the very creation of Adam and Eve, has been the rightness of marriage and the wrongness of divorce; like truth is right and lie is wrong—not because of *an arbitrary law*, but *a fact of inherent rightness and wrongness*.

So when the disciples objected, Jesus didn't begin to back-pedal and to soften what He had said. Have you noticed that? Jesus simply answered, There are some (1) who are eunuchs from the womb, some (2) who were so treated by others, and some (3) **who have done this for the sake of their souls! He was insisting that the soul is truly worth the sacrifices required for salvation.**

"HE WHO IS ABLE TO ACCEPT IT, LET HIM ACCEPT IT."

And that's how He left the case; as hard as nail, without a word of compromise.

Maybe Jesus places a higher value on eternal salvation than we do. Maybe he knows it's worth a few years of being a "eunuch", if that's what it takes.

Maybe, even though He loves all humans, He **does have a standard**, and if humans aren't willing to meet it, maybe He is willing to let us go on our determined way and be lost. That's sort of what He said, wasn't it?

BUT WHY WOULD DIVORCE MATTER THAT MUCH?

But why would such a common thing as divorce matter so much? Why condemn good people for making a mistake in marriage?

Since, historically, very very few adulterous marriages have been dissolved in order to get one's life right with God, Jesus' statement probably was not make **to correct a bad situation**, but rather, *to prevent the broken marriage, in the first place*. By making such stringent laws, Jesus was protecting the husband/wife relationship, and the home and the security of its children, from becoming victims to thoughtless, easy, "no fault" divorces. He knew what a destructive thing a broken home can be in society, and when it is multiplied by the millions to the point that maybe half the marriages end in divorce, Jesus knew what

would happen. Look around you, America. See why Jesus strictly forbade the destruction of marriage and the home! See the abuse, crime, emotional breakdowns, anger, hatred, and unhealed wounds in the homes across the land. See the way broken homes have spilled out into society so that the very foundations of our nation are breaking apart, with lawlessness, immorality, and godlessness the norm among us.

Yes, the home matters that much! Everything of humanity and life—even spiritual life—is built on the foundation of the home! No wonder God would protect it with such stringent laws!

What You Can Do In 2003

FRANCIS DAVID

We wish you a very happy New Year. We as human beings like to have new things. We like new dresses, new houses, new vehicles and so on. When you were baptised you had a new birth. Many of you have grown up in maturity as Christians, but some are still weak and the growth has not taken place as it should have been. Anyhow, we can still make new resolutions and start again. Thanks be to God for another year 2003, and we call it new Year.

Sometimes, we think so much about the past, we forget that there are still things that we can do and start a fresh. Apostle Paul, while writing to Christians says: "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:13-14). Like Paul, you can forget the bad whatever happened in your life and think that you can go forward. There is a time now for you that you can repent of your past mistakes and wrong doing that you have committed and come to God asking for His forgiveness. God is always there to forgive us, if we come to him with genuine heart and mind. Have you gone too far from God? Are you slow now in your spirituality? Think again, you can come to Him, pray and

ask for forgiveness.

We read about David in Psalm 51 and in this Psalm he has asked God for forgiveness after he committed a serious mistake or sin. We know that he was forgiven all his sins and today if you like David come to Him with serious mind and repentance He will forgive you. We maybe doing some of the things which are displeasing God. You may ask what are those things? Please look into your heart and you will discover that through your unworthy walk you were disobeying Him and were displeasing Him.

Just think, how many times you have neglected the worship and services of the church. Maybe you have not taken this seriously. But God through His word tells us that we should not forsake assembling ourselves together. Hebrews 10:25 reminds us that: "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." What about our priorities? We might be giving more priorities to the material things or to our loved ones, but Jesus said: "Anyone who loves his father and mother more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (Matt. 10:37-38). We need to give first priority to God and His righteousness. (Matt. 6:33). We must give our best to God and not the leftovers.

In this New Year we must shun all kinds of Jealousy, grudge, hatred, envy against our fellowmen and the brethren. Peter says through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice, and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind." (1 Pet. 2:1). Apostle Paul says: "Therefore, Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption, Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." (Eph. 4:29-30).

Jesus Christ died for all people. He died for you and me and has offered the life eternal to those who come to Him and obey Him. We need to take this message of Christ to the people who are lost in sins. Jesus said you must go and preach. (Matt.

28:18,19; Mark 16:15,16). Paul one of the remarkable preachers said: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes . . ." (Rom. 1:16). What about you? Were you slow and slack last year in preaching and teaching the gospel? You can do it again, start and go forward and reward will be for those who are not weary in well doing. Let us pledge, that this year we will forget the past bad experiences, mistakes and all kinds of laziness, and will do the best we can to please the Lord. May God richly bless you in this New Year as you sincerely follow Him and do His will. If you have failed in the past, try it again and I tell you it will work.

Longing For God

THOMAS R. DOHLING

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? (Psalm 42:1,2).

A heartfelt longing for God emanating from the depth of the soul! A longing for the Loved One. A thirsting to be in the presence of the living God. Is this your longing? Does your soul pant after God?

Why is the writer expressing such a longing? Think for a while. We long for water when we are thirsty; we long for food when we are hungry. We long for rest & sleep when we are tired and comfort when we are hurting. We also long to be with the ones we love. The writer knows and understands the One he is longing for. He knows that the One he is thirsting for so deeply as to long to be in His presence is the One Who loves him deeply.

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise livingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD (Jeremiah

9:23,24).

The Sovereign Lord, the Creator of the universe, desires that we understand and know Him; that we know and understand that He, the Lord, acts out of lovingkindness, judgment (fairness) and righteousness (or faithfulness, fairness, and justice). He desires people to do these things (or be like He is).

What greater 'quest' in life could one have than the aim of finding God, of knowing Who He is and of meeting Him face to face and to hear the word of God from God Himself!

Here are some individuals who had a burning desire to know God and to stand accepted and approved before Him:

Paul-2 Corinthians 5:9 'we make it our aim . . . to be well-pleasing unto Him.' **Moses**-Exodus 33:18; **David**-Psalm 42:2; **Abraham**-Hebrews 11:10 'he looked for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.'

Is your hope set on seeing God as God is? Of standing before the Creator and having the Creator express His approval concerning you? (1 John 3:1-3).

All our lives we rush after "self" satisfaction. We long for and chase after things that do not and cannot satisfy—material things (mammon). In our mad, headlong rush for material satisfaction, we leave behind "our aim . . . to be well-pleasing unto Him" (2 Cor. 5:9). While Satan gleefully gloats over our failures, we grieve the Holy Spirit of God by such actions (Ephesians 4:30). Do we realize that we are hurting God by our deliberate indifference toward Him? The Bible says, "study to show thyself approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15) and we deliberately miss Bible study with the church and remain ignorant about "rightly handling/dividing the word of truth"!

I. What's Your Goal In Life?

What are your goals and ambitions in life? What keeps you going, what do you live for, what drives you on? What is it that you desire to accomplish, see, experience or feel more than anything else in life? What are you hotly pursuing? Of all the various goals and ambitions that people have like get rich, get married, climb Mt. Everest, go abroad, buy your dream house, buy a car, etc. Of all the ambitions that fill the human mind, **WHAT WOULD BE THE ULTIMATE QUEST? THE ULTIMATE SEARCH? THE ULTIMATE AMBITION?**

II. The Ultimate Goal is to Find and Know God

JEREMIAH 9:23-24 '... BUT LET HIM THAT GLORIETH GLORY IN THIS, THAT HE HATH UNDERSTANDING, AND KNOWETH ME...'

ACTS 17:27 'THAT THEY SHOULD SEEK GOD. THOUGH HE IS NOT FAR FROM EACH ONE OF US' Seek-to-see in order to find, to 'search for God.'

III. How Do I Find God?

For many the question is, 'How do I allow myself to believe in God'? I can't see God or feel Him or taste Him. I have never heard His actual voice from Heaven. I want to believe in God, but where do I start looking for Him? I think many people desperately want to find God, but they are at their wits end as to where to start this grand search. We can find God by faith.

(To be continued.)

Can We Really Live For Jesus?

JOHNNY RAMSEY

There are those who teach that it is not possible for human beings to live up to the standard of godliness that Christianity demands. The devil would like for us to accept that heresy so as to discourage us from even trying to live for God. Do we have certain propensities within us that prohibit a closer walk with God? Did our Creator make us with an inbuilt spiritual deficiency that makes it certain that we shall fail in our pursuit of holiness? Or, are there helps along the way that enable us to glorify the Saviour? In the language of Rom. 4:3 we sincerely ask: *"What saith the Scriptures?"*

In the beauty of Psalms 119:76-80, we find some wonderful sources of consolation and joy: *"Let, I pray thee, thy lovingkindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant. Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live; for thy law is my delight. Let the proud be put to shame; for they have overthrown me wrongfully: but I will meditate on thy precepts. Let those that fear thee turn unto me; and they shall know thy testimonies. Let my heart be perfect in thy statutes,*

that I be not put to shame." From this we take comfort in the following:

1. God's judgments are right
2. God's merciful kindness comforts
3. God's law is my delight
4. God's precepts are my meditation
5. My heart rejoices in His statutes.

Jesus taught, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matt. 6:33).

Do you know why most of the world is lost? It hinges on Matt. 6:33. Instead of seeking first the kingdom of God, the vast majority of people all over the world are seeking food, clothing and shelter first and putting God last. As a result, they don't come up very well on food, clothing and shelter! Jesus challenges us and gives us the best insurance policy ever issued, now or to the end of time, in Matt. 6:33. Not many people take the Lord seriously on that promise. It is a tragedy how that high ethical standard is ignored!

HE HAVE THE PROMISE OF HELP FROM HEAVEN

It is challenging to live a life of purity and spiritual integrity, but we get substantial help from the God of heaven. When we live such a life we receive many benefits and blessings: God's promises, provisions, protection, providence, power, prayer and propitiation. Once these matters are explored in the sacred text, we can fully see that Jehovah has not asked us to do the impossible, but rather enables us to follow in the footprints of our Redeemer!

Promises

The wonderful promises of the gospel age surround us. Peter writes, *"Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue"* (2 Pet. 1:2-3). These promises encourage us to know that the Lord will never forsake us (Heb. 13:5) and will bless us with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3), as

long as we continue to walk with him.

Provisions

When our lives are lives of purity and spiritual integrity, the Lord will provide us with all of our needs. James wrote, *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of lights"* (James 1:17), and the apostle Paul added, *"And my God shall supply every need of your according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:19).

Protection

When we walk with God, we can look for and expect constant protection from above as long as the world stands: *"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matt. 28:20). He will be with us in all situations (Psa. 91) and provide avenues of escape, regardless of severe trials and the chicanery of the devil. *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it"* (1 Cor. 10:13). The psalmist wrote, *"Our help is in the name of Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth"* (Psa. 124:8).

Providence

Those who live a life of spiritual purity and integrity are in the hands of One who is able to deliver us (Dan. 3:17). While we are upheld by His arms, no harm can befall us: *"The eternal God is thy dwelling-place, And underneath are the everlasting arms. And he thrust out the enemy from before thee"* (Deut. 33:27). Under His wings, we are kept safe: *"Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings"* (Psa. 17:8). In the constant care of God, we are continually sustained and granted peace and spiritual success (Isa. 26:3). We are caused to soar as eagles, regardless of earthly problems and human failures: *"But they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint"* (Isa. 40:31).

Power

The power of God motivates us to holiness and sanctity that gets the attention of an unbelieving world (Heb. 7:16). In Acts 4:13 we read of the reaction of unbelievers to the lives of the

apostles: *"Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."* And the apostle Peter caps it all when he writes that we have *"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* (1 Pet. 1:4-5).

Prayer

The Tremendous concourse of prayer keeps us close to the throne of God and gives us confidence. The Scriptures says, *"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us"* (1 John 5:14). We understand that the door of heaven is always open to us when we ask according to the will of God: *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"* (Matt. 7:7).

Propitiation

The propitiation of the blood of Jesus Christ has the efficacy to cleanse us and to draw us near to the great reservoir of strength that motivates and cheers us on to higher ground. *"My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world"* (1 John 2:1-2). Those who teach that it is not possible for people to live up to the standard of godliness that Christianity demands are wrong. Yes, we can live the life the Bible sets forth because we get so much help from the Saviour. May we never turn back.

THE POWER OF A LIFE OF PURITY

Christianity demands our very best because it is demonstrated by purity of life. The basic, fundamental values of the religion of Christ can best be seen in His life: *"One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin . . . Him who knew no sin he made (to be) sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him"* (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor 5:21). It was said of Jesus, *"He went about doing good"*

(Acts 10:38). So do His followers, because Christ *"suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps"* (1 Pet. 2:21). The same values seen in the life of Jesus are seen in the dedicated demeanor of His fervent disciples.

Too many times the world receives a faulty impression of the way of the cross because of our failure to portray the ethics of godliness. In Paul's letter to the Philippians, we learn anew of the intense value and power of a life that magnifies Christ and shares the message of the Redeemer with others (Phil. 1:20-21). Oh, what demands the gospel places upon devotees of the Saviour! There is an enthralling stanza of a seldom-used gospel song that ought to ring in the ears of every Christian:

*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,
All His wonderful passion and purity,
May His spirit divine, All my being refine,
Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.*

THE POWER OF A LIVING HOPE

Christianity is great because it brings hope, optimism and joy into the daily walk of children of the heavenly Father. Trusting in the Creator (Prov. 3:5), instead of earth's vain trinkets, gives us the enrichment that only the hope of heaven can bequeath to us. Hope includes faith, but it also is assurance. We have that because of the resurrection of Jesus: *"God . . . begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"* (1 Pet. 1:3).

Christians never look back to a life of sin, but ever press on to the beautiful home of the soul. As parents, we choose early in life to etch indelibly into the mural and fabric of our children's lives that we, *"Look for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God . . . look for a better country, that is, a heavenly"* (Heb. 11:10,16).

*A careful man I ought to be,
A little fellow follows me.
I do not dare to go astray,
For fear he'll go the self-same way.*

Let us all rise up to meet the challenge of Christianity. With a firm commitment and deep resolve, we will one day, by the grace of God, when the saints go marching into glory, join in that heavenly chorus.

God Gives Five Great Duties

CLEM THURMAN

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all that ye do be done in love" (1 Cor. 16:13-14). Corinth was a unique city. It was a "port city" on a narrow neck of land that connected the mainland of Greece with the Pelloponese Peninsula. Composed of Roman, Greek and many other peoples, the morality of the city was one of the worst in the entire Roman empire. But, at the preaching of the gospel by the apostle Paul, they had become Christians and the Lord had added them to His church (Acts 2:47; 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:1-2). But many of their old habits continued to surface in their new lives.

This letter to the Corinthians lists a terrible catalogue of sinful conditions. They had been guilty of dividing the believers into "denominational" groups (ch. 1-3). Not only was there fornication being practiced by members of the church, but the others simply tolerated it (ch. 5). When brothers in Christ had differences, instead of settling them within the fellowship, they went to law before unbelievers (ch. 6). They had many different problems about marriage relationships (ch. 7). Idolatry and their Christian liberty seemed to conflict (ch. 8). Paul defended his apostleship and right for support of preachers (ch. 9). The Lord's supper had been corrupted and its real purpose ignored (ch. 10-11). There was jealousy over *"gifts of the Holy Spirit"* and problems over their proper use (ch. 12-14). The climax was their denial of the resurrection (ch. 15). After Paul had addressed the above problems, he then wrote the words with which this article begins. "Five Great Duties."

1. "WATCH YE"

The Lord constantly warns us to *"watch."* As we journey

through this life toward eternity, we have some company: *"Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom withstand steadfast in your faith"* (1 Pet. 5:8-9). Just as the devil was deceitful in his tempting of Eve (Gen. 3), so he is with us. We must constantly be on guard, *"That no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices"* (2 Cor. 2:11). We dare not let down our guard, even for a moment.

To *"watch"* means to be diligent, as Peter wrote, *"Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence . . . Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble"* (2 Pet. 1:5,10). Webster defines this word *"diligence"* as: *"Constant, careful effort."* In writing of our entering into heaven, a warning is given: *"Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it . . . Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience"* (Heb. 4:1,11). Constant, careful effort is necessary. No one goes to heaven by accident.

Jesus warned the disciples: *"Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh"* (Matt. 24:42). In a similar vein, the apostle Paul wrote, *"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night . . . so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober"* (1 Thes. 5:2,6). We must heed the admonition, *"Look therefore carefully how ye walk"* (Eph. 5:15).

2. "STAND FAST IN THE FAITH"

Notice that the Bible says, *"the faith."* To stand fast in the faith, we first must embrace the faith. The apostle Paul declares, *"There is one body, one Spirit, even as ye were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all"* (Eph. 4:4-6). Please notice that there is *"one faith."* There is no choice of faiths, any more than there is a choice of gods! Notice again what God says, *"Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints"* (Jude 1:3). This faith is not *"better felt than told,"* as some say. It is faith delivered from God: *"So faith cometh of hearing, and*

hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

But not only must we accept the one faith, we must *"stand fast"* in that faith. As Paul wrote, in the previous chapter of this letter: *"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, by ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord"* (1 Cor. 15:58). In our prayers, we are to *"ask in faith, nothing doubting"* (James 1:6). It is characteristic of children to change their minds, often. But we are told, *"That ye may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine"* (Eph. 4:14). Instead, let us *"stand fast in the faith."*

3. "QUIT YOU LIKE MEN"

These saints in Corinth had certainly been acting like children in many, many ways. They were "choosing up sides" with regard to which preacher they liked. They were fussing about nearly everything with regard to conducting the worship of God in the right way. So, now, they are told, *"Act like grownups."* Paul wrote them, *"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things"* (1 Cor. 13:11). This is what we all should do. The same apostle, writing as God directed, said: *"That we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ"* (Eph. 4:14-15).

One thing that will guarantee the failure of a congregation to grow and spiritually prosper is for members to remain in spiritual childhood. *"For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil"* (Heb. 5:12-14). As long as the members in a church bicker and quarrel, that church cannot grow as God wants it to grow. So, in effect, what God is telling

them is: "Quit acting like little children. Grow up!"

4. "BE STRONG"

Two things are vital for growth in strength: proper food and exercise. But this strength is not the kind that comes from "lifting weights" to build the physical body. The Lord is speaking of spiritual strength. As Paul wrote, *"Exercise thyself unto godliness: for bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come"* (1 Tim. 4:7-8). Again he wrote, *"Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"* (2 Tim. 2:1). To develop that kind of strength, we must have the right food: *"Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation"* (1 Pet. 2:2).

To *"be strong"* we must recognize that the source of our strength is not in ourselves. *"Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might"* (Eph. 6:10). The apostle Paul, speaking of Satan afflicting him, said: *"There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me . . . I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness . . . When I am weak, then am I strong"* (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

When we are doing the will of God, His power is at work through us: *"It is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:13). That principle certainly explains how young David could overcome the Philistine giant, Goliath. He explained how, in tending his father's sheep, a lion and a bear had each stolen a sheep, and he had killed them. He then added, *"Jehovah that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine"* (1 Sam. 17:37). He wasn't depending on his own skill and strength. He depended on God. This is still what faith is all about. That faith enabled Paul to say, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Phil. 4:13). When we are attacked by Satan, let us have the faith that asks (and answers), *"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? . . . Nay, in all these things we are*

more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:31,37). If we are serving God, we are on the winning side!

5. "LET ALL YOU DO BE DONE IN LOVE"

All of the bickering and fussing that these Corinthians had been doing would have ended quickly if this admonition had been obeyed. The great and first commandment is *"love God"* and the second is *"love your neighbour"* (Mark 12:30). The apostle had already shown in this letter that it doesn't matter what or how much we do, if it is not motivated by love, *"it profiteth me nothing"* (1 Cor. 13:1-3). The greatest motivation for any endeavour on earth is love. Jesus said to the disciples, *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). Then He demonstrated that love by going to cross and willingly dying for us.

One of the most compelling verses in the Bible is Heb. 10:24, *"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works."* The only way to *"provoke to love"* is to act from a motive of love. We can get people to love us, if we love them. And we can get people to love God, if we demonstrate that love in our own lives. The apostle John wrote, *"Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous"* (1 John 5:2-3).

When *"all we do is done in love,"* people will look at us in a different way. Jesus knew this, and told the disciples, *"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"* (John 13:34-35). With the childish attitude displayed by those saints at Corinth, they could hardly convince the world of the validity of Christianity!

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all that ye do be done in love."

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