

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 36

October 2005

No. 6

EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

"Pray Without Ceasing"

Just as God speaks to man by His written words through the Bible, prayer is the natural expression of the faith of the child of God in the heavenly Father. Prayer means communion with God. But to pray to God implies a right relationship with God. When the man, in John chapter 9 and verse 31 said that "God does not hears sinners; but if any one is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him." His observation was right. Proverbs 15:29 rightly declares: "The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayers of the righteous." And Proverbs 28:9 says, "One who turns away his ears from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." One must maintain right relationship with God if he wants God to hear his prayer. One must be ready to hear and do what God says. No, God is not speaking personally and directly to anyone in any way today, such as through a dream or a vision. If that be true, then God's written revelation to man through the Bible is incomplete. But it is not. God has revealed and shown and given to man His whole will, whatsoever He requires of man, and whatsoever He wanted man to know, He has given in His Book the Bible. And the message of the Bible closes with these words: "For I testify to everyone who hears words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his

part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book," (Revelation 22:18, 19). Man need to understand that God is not adding to His written revelation anything more. And He does not want any man to do that. Be warned! Listen to the apostle Paul, as he wrote this warning to the followers of Christ which were at Galatia, he said, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than that what you have received, let him be accursed." No other gospel! No other revelation!! Bible is complete. Whatsoever God requires from man, He has already revealed all and everything in His Bible. If anyone, therefore, worship God according to His will and live according to His will, God will hear his prayer.

One must first be in right relationship with God, and then pray. And pray without ceasing, that is, have the prayerful attitude always. This is what Paul means in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. But if one is not willing to listen to God and do what God says, then God is not going to listen his prayer. For example: someone says, pray "the sinners' prayer" and God will save you. This is not correct. Because God has already revealed in the Bible what man must do to be saved. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). One must first be willing to do what God says one must do to be saved, and then God will hear his prayers.

The Facts of the Gospel

J.C. CHOATE

The scriptures clearly teach that Jesus Christ died, was buried, and then was resurrected from the grave. These incidents in the story of Jesus are referred to as the facts of the gospel. Paul mentions each one of them in writing to his Corinthian brethren, showing the relationship of their salvation to these facts:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). In other words, the gospel of Christ rests upon these truths. Had Christ not died, been buried, and resurrected from the grave, there would have been no gospel, and therefore no salvation. But inasmuch as He died, was buried, and was resurrected, then we do have a foundation for the gospel, and therefore it has changed the world.

Just now we want to consider the facts of the gospel, one by one, to see what they hold for you and me:

1. THE DEATH OF CHRIST

The Bible says again and again that Christ died. But listen to the word of God itself: *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).* *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9).*

For whom did Christ die? He died for every man as we have just noted in Hebrews 2:9. The scriptures also tell us that He died for sinners. Listen: *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).* But why did He die for sinners? To provide salvation and hope. We read, *"Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).* *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).*

That means that someone died for you and me. Just think about it. Although we were sinners, and enemies of God, and not

deserving of such grace and mercy, nevertheless, Christ was willing to leave heaven to come to this land of sin and sorrow and to die upon the cross that we might be saved and have the hope of eternal life (Romans 5:6,7). How wonderful! But just think, He likewise died for all of the world — yesterday, today, and tomorrow. How thankful we should be, and it should result in our obedience and faithfulness to Him. How could we dare do any less?

2. THE BURIAL OF CHRIST

After Christ died on the cross, the record says, "Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb" (Matthew 27:57-61).

In many ways there is nothing different or unusual about the Lord's burial, especially for that time. Men die every day and are buried. This is true around the world and has been true since the creation. But the Lord promised that if He died and was buried that He would rise again. He declared, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*" (John 2:19). Of course they did not understand Him then, but would they have believed Him if they had understood? What happened after His death and His burial? The disciples seemed to have entered into a state of shock, feeling that all was lost. Then what happened? Jesus came forth as He promised that He would.

3. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Had Christ died on the cross and then remained in the grave, the world would have forgotten Him, unless it might be for remembering Him as an imposter. Had He died and remained in the tomb it could be said that He was no more than any other man. But Jesus was different. He was the Son of God. He said that He would rise from the grave, and He did (Matthew 28). As a result of His resurrection, there is salvation, assurance that all will be resurrected, and the hope of eternal life.

Before going further, let us notice some verses of scripture that speak of the Lord's resurrection. *"And declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"* (Romans 1:4). *"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death"* (Philippians 3:10). *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"* (1 Peter 1:3). *"There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not for removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 3:21). *"Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him"* (Romans 6:9). *"For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living"* (Romans 14:9).

Inasmuch as Christ died, was buried, and was resurrected from the grave, He is now our Lord and our Saviour. He reigns at the right hand of God (Acts 2), and has promised to come again one day (John 14:1-3).

With the death of Christ, His blood was shed that men might have the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7). It is through one's obedience to the gospel of Christ that one comes into contact with that blood and thus his sins are remitted or blotted out (Acts 2:38; 22:16). In the lessons that follow we will see more clearly how this is done.

Be assured, one and all, that as a result of the Lord's resurrection, He lives today. As His obedient followers, we likewise live and will reign and live with Him forevermore, even throughout all eternity.

All Spiritual Blessings

FRANCIS DAVID

Apostle Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing

in the heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1:3). There are a number of blessings in Jesus Christ, such as we are made alive in Christ, freedom from sin in Christ, New creature in Christ, No condemnation in Christ, and Salvation in Christ.

Abraham was blessed with blessings from God. God made promise to him. In Gal. 3:8, we read, as apostle Paul says, "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham before-hand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." Then we read in verse 16 that, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed" who is Christ. We receive the spiritual blessing when we are baptized into Christ. We read as Paul says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ." (Gal. 3:26), and the next verse says, "For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ." All are blessed in Jesus Christ if they are baptised into his death, and this is what we read in Romans 6:3-4, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Jesus our Lord removed the Old law, and through His blood we have been made near. The Scriptures say, "For He himself is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of division between us." Today we have hope of eternal life through death of Jesus Christ.

Many claim that they are in Christ Jesus, but actually they have never come to Him. They have not done what Christ has asked them to do. We are in Christ when we obey Him. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16). We are saved when we are baptised into Christ. We become new creature in Jesus Christ, and this is a spiritual blessing. (2 Cor. 5:17). We were far from God, but Jesus made it possible to reconcile us to God and it was only possible when God gave his Son. Again we read in Col. 1:19-21. "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by

wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death. There is salvation in Christ in our lives there is no reconciliation with God. There is salvation in Christ, and this was only possible through Jesus Christ. Paul says in 2 Tim. 2:10, "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

There is another wonderful blessing which is found in Jesus and that is that we are complete in Jesus. We don't have to look here and there. Whole completeness is found in Christ our Lord. In Christ we have hope, assurance. The Bible says, "Blessed are the dead who die in Christ." (Rev. 14:13)

Dear friends, if you are not in Jesus, you are invited to come and receive all spiritual blessings by obeying His commands revealed in the New Testament. You must believe in Him, confess him as the Son God and repent of all of your sins and be baptised for the forgiveness of your sins, and by doing this, you will become the part of His spiritual kingdom, the church. It is important to come to Him in order to receive these blessings.

A Famine in the Midst of Plenty

DILLARD THURMAN

"I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:48-51).

In view of the wondrous feast which Jesus offered to man, it is passing strange that men would deliberately turn from this spiritual food to browse in garbage cans! Yet that is the picture of this present generation, as they turn from food for the soul to ruminate on that which is low and sensual. Crime, fraud, murder and lasciviousness occupy the headlines of the newspapers, and have become the diet of both young and old. Lurid stories of crime and corruption are read with such devotion and relish that no time

is left for perusal of the word of God! Filth magazines pour into homes where the Bible lies unopened throughout the week. The *"bread of life"* has been refused for garbage!

A FAMINE OF HEARING GOD'S WORD

Some of man's darkest days are centered in days of famine and dearth. Pestilence and disease have ridden on the heels of such universal want and hunger. Yet nothing of these dark periods compares with the tragic condition foretold by the prophet Amos: *"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord"* (Amos 8:11). This famine has to do with the soul of man, and not merely his flesh. In this famine the soul is starved! The word "famine" denotes a scarcity of the things mentioned. But what Amos described was not a scarcity of temporal food, *"But of hearing the words of the Lord."* This prophecy was given hundreds of years before the time of Christ, and may have been fulfilled in previous generations, but possibly no generation has fulfilled this more than that in which we now live. With Bibles plentifully distributed throughout this land, there is still this terrible famine of *"hearing the words of the Lord."* We are told that church membership is increasing, yet Bible illiteracy is on the increase. It isn't uncommon to hear folk freely admit that they know little or nothing about the word of God, and they are doing nothing to remedy the situation.

SOME PEOPLE WILL NOT LISTEN

Jesus described the situation in these words, *"For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted and I should heal them"* (Matt. 13:15). Thus, conversion was made dependent upon their *"hearing the words of the Lord."* And salvation is dependent upon both. For this reason, there must be a willingness to hear the words of God and render obedience to them.

One of the signs that presage this spiritual famine is the desire for a "watered-down" message. The prophet Isaiah described the situation in his day, *"This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say*

to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us" (Isa. 30:9-11). There could not be a more pointed description of many in our generation, people who just don't want to be bothered by what God says!

God needs preachers who will hew to the line! Soft-soap and compromise has infiltrated the denominational world to such an extent that they hardly stand for anything, and their members now demand that kind of preaching. Unless we raise up some preachers like Elijah, Jeremiah, Amos and others, who will tell like it really is, the same bane may well overtake the family of God! God has denounced the "policy preachers" with these words: *"The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully"* (Jer. 23:28). The faithful proclaimer of God's word cannot speak the smooth, comforting words of deceit! He must speak words of truth and soberness.

THE PHYSICAL APPROACH TO SPIRITUALITY

God's great lamenting prophet looked upon times such as these, and cried out, *"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"* (Jer. 5:30-31). Stringent demands are made on any preacher who strives for popularity from the world. His must be a "watered-down" gospel to offer a "cut-rate" salvation that is palatable to worldly-minded people. If he should revert to the gospel terms of obedience, he will soon find that the time has *"come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables"* (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Any sectarian preacher who may question this has only to put it to the test! Let him start preaching exactly what Peter preached on Pentecost, then report the results!

But this may be the most serious aspect of our present famine: there are signs that within the body of Christ the very thing we condemn on the part of others is attacking us! Whereas we deride the "social gospel" which is preached in modern denominations, we fall prey to the "social program" idea in the

church of the Lord. The soul is being approached by way of the stomach. People seem to believe that will build greater interest in the work of the young people, and others! Then there is the practice of having the audience to come to get healed from all kinds of diseases with the avowed intention of building greater attendance. These shallow, pretentious steps are designed to "out-do" the world in making an appeal to those in the world. If the gospel is elevated by those who believe it, it will then offer the right inducement of its study. I do not oppose any program which offers fellowship, but I rigorously oppose such shallow, physical things to attract people to Bible study and other spiritual things. It cheapens the Bible in the sight of those we are striving to win.

LET'S GET BACK TO PREACHING THE WORD

Another reason why this famine grows more pronounced is that we have lowered the standards of the preacher. There was a time when folk looked upon the preacher as a man of God - in the pulpit, on the street corner, in the home - fearlessly proclaiming the Lord's gospel and denouncing every departure and compromise. But many of our time would erase this picture and paint in its stead a "refined gentleman, polished in cultural ways, one who is liked by all people in the community and respected by other religious leaders." The call is for a man with charming bedside manners, a gifted after-dinner speaker, and one who fits easily into the social circles of the city. This means that the preacher is expected to forego necessary study-time to meet the requirements a half-converted people have laid down for him.

Nothing sickens me more than to hear someone exclaim, "Oh, our preacher can't preach very well, and it embarrasses him for anyone to ask a Bible question when he is unprepared, but he is the best worker we have ever had." That man ought to be given a pair of overalls and a shovel, and told to go make an honest living! The work of the preacher is to preach the word! If he can't (or won't) do that, he doesn't deserve to be called a preacher. The Lord's church, and the community of the world, need a man who can and will preach God's truth. I would be ashamed to neglect God's word while claiming to be a preacher, even if a lot of "goats" left the fold due to the preacher not pampering them in needless visitation.

The deficiency in Bible knowledge stems in part from Bible

teachers' failure to instill a love for studying God's word. Any who loves to study the Bible will cause others to love its study. And if the teacher doesn't have a love for the Book, those under his tutelage are not likely to crave Bible knowledge. Give us more people who inspire others to study God's Book because of their devotion to it, and love for its Author!

Power in Acts

JOHNNY RAMSEY

The fifth New Testament book, Acts, is powerful, pungent and pulsating. That section of the Bible tells us of the establishment of the Christ's church, cases of conversion and an historical background to many of the epistles that follow. Perhaps the finest contributions which Acts provides, however, are the brilliant sermons contained in its vibrant, action-packed pages. It is significant that such preaching converted thousands out of paganism, Judaism and shameful lifestyles. The gospel is truly God's "dynamite" to save (Rom. 1:16)! In surveying the dramatic scenes of insightful proclamation from Peter, Stephen, Philip and Paul, one can readily conclude that boldness was a characteristic of every sermon. There was no apology for defending truth and exposing error. A constant call to repentance was evident in every lesson, and the exaltation of the Savior, Jesus Christ, was the basic foundation of the messengers of God. The spirit of Ps. 9:1-2 was the impressive urgency of the evangelists: *"I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most high."*

Reverence for Scripture evinced itself repeatedly as proof-texts from the Old Testament Scriptures buttressed proper application to first century audiences. Just as Jesus had opened the word of God to the Jews in Nazareth (Luke 4:16) and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:32), so did His servants open the word of God to interested hearers. They unfolded the gospel system in Jewish synagogues (Acts 13:26-28) and in the midst of idolaters in Athens (Acts 17:22-31). On the very day the church began in Jerusalem, Peter clearly informed the massive

crowd of what an ancient prophet had written centuries before, *"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days ..."* (Acts 2:16-17).

The exposure of sin was a dominant theme throughout the book of Acts. Notice these passages:

Acts 2:38, *"For the remission of sin"* Acts 3:19,
"That sins may be blotted out" Acts 22:16,
"And wash away thy sins."

Yes, the Lamb of God, who came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10) had come to redeem you from Satan, sin and hell. What a message of redemption, joy and hope! Victory was attainable in the midst of a wicked, perverse and debauched society. Jesus Christ was preached as the only way back to God, *"Neither is there salvation in any other"* (Acts 4:12).

*Only in Thee, O Savior mine,
Dwelleth my soul in peace divine,
Peace that the world through all combined
Never can take from me.*

Acts reflects many facets of the success of the Christians. They loved one another dearly, the truth deeply and the souls of men intently. They were patient in the midst of persecution because they sincerely trusted in the providence of God. Someone has challenged us with these words, "There are two ways to get to the top of an oak tree: catch that first limb and climb - or, find a good healthy acorn, sit on it, and wait!" In our day of instant coffee, instant potatoes and other "fast foods," we tend to forget the parable of the mustard seed, and that God gives the increase. Our task is to sow the seed and cultivate the soil. The One who knows the hearts of men (Acts 1:24) will take over from there.

In the sermons found in Acts, there is a preponderant urgency concerning the final Judgment. On Mar's Hill in Athens, the great apostle Paul promised to the crowd that ultimately they would appear before the tribunal of heaven to answer for their choice made on earth: *"The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath*

ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). Could it be that we have allowed a pseudo-sophisticated society to dampen our enthusiasm for such a majestic theme? Tillet S. Teddlie wrote,

*Someday you will stand at the bar on high,
Trembling you will fall on your knee,
Facing the sentence of life or of death,
What will your sentence be?*

If there is one emphatic message of Acts, it is the glorious reminder that the past misconduct in our lives can be overwhelmed in the blood of the Lamb! The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14). Jehovah God desires to cast our sins "*into the depths of the sea*" (Micah 7:19) and forever blot them out of His memory (Heb. 8:12). Great enemies of the gospel were converted; even the carnal Corinthians heard and believed the message of redemption and were baptized into Christ (Acts 18:8). What a viable demonstration of heaven's concern for lost humanity!

Preaching that emanates from Acts needs to be revived, and the shallow pulpits reeking with human philosophy and sophistry erased. The result would then beautifully ring out:

God Glorified
Christ Praised
Scripture Honored
The Church Strengthened
Heaven Overflowing.
May these great goals be realized!

Three Steps To Heaven

GENE OVERTON

THE STEP OUT OF SELF

Going to heaven should be man's main business. Jesus said that if one gains the whole world but loses his soul he is a failure. (Matthew 16:26.) Going to heaven does require some doing on

man's part. Faith without works is dead. (James 2:24.)

The first, and perhaps the most difficult step, is the step out of self. In stepping out of self, one must deny self. (Matthew 16:24.) It is said of the Macedonians that they gave themselves to the Lord. (2 Corinthians 8:5.)

This first step involves the putting off of the old man and putting on the new man. (Colossians 3:9-10.) One who steps out of self no longer trusts in himself, but he trusts in the Lord.

Solomon wrote: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not upon thine understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord and depart from evil." (Proverbs 3:5-7.)

This step out of self requires discipline, without which no one can go to heaven.

THE STEP INTO CHRIST

One must get into the body of Christ, his church (Colossians 1:18), because this is where all spiritual blessings are available. (Ephesians 1:3.) Believers who will repent can be baptized into Christ. (Acts 2:38, Galatians 3:27.)

Baptism is essential because it is the act by which we get into Christ where there is redemption by his blood and all other spiritual blessings. Those who are buried with Christ in baptism are raised to walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3,4.) Therefore this step brings the obligation to live a life for Christ.

The apostle Paul wrote: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:1,2.)

THE STEP INTO GLORY

In order to make the final step into heaven, one must die or be transformed, because flesh and blood cannot inherit heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:50.) One must die in Christ in order that heaven may be his home. (Revelation 14:13.)

Also, involved in this step is the matter of going through the judgment. All will have to experience the great and final judgment; not one will miss it! (2 Corinthians 5:10.)

All of our hours are given to us in which to prepare for the judgment. Those who fail to use this life as a preparation time for that day of all days are complete failures.

From the judgment, the unrighteous will go away into everlasting punishment and the righteous will go into eternal life. (Matthew 25:46.)

I hope you will teach others the great gospel truths in this article. You might get others started toward heaven! What better thing could a young man or any person do?

Is It Impossible To Fall?

JIMMY W. GARNER

Is it impossible for a child of God to fall from grace and be lost eternally? Such is needless! God does not want any of his children to finally be lost in eternal hell! Holy Scripture describes our God as being "...long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9.) In the seven brief letters written by our Lord to the seven churches of Asia, He exhorted those in sin to "repent" so that He could save them. (See Revelation 2:5, 16, 21, :3,19.)

In Jesus' parable of the soils, He said that the seed which fell on the rocky ground represented those who "...hear, receive the word with joy, and have no root, which for a time believe, and in time of temptation fall away." (Luke 8:13.) Notice that these individuals received the word with joy, yet they later fell away. They were once saved, but fell away from their saved state and were lost again!

THE VINE AND BRANCHES

Jesus taught a marvelous lesson on the vine and the branches in John 15. He taught that his followers (children of God) are branches. He declared: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." (John 15:6.) It is very clear in this passage that it is possible for one in Christ (a branch)

to be cast into the fire, or, in other words, to be lost, and be cast into hell fire.

A CASTAWAY

Paul wrote that unless, even he, an apostle, exercised self-control, that he could become a cast away. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Corinthians 9:27.) Paul acknowledged that unless he exercised self-control, it was possible for him to be a castaway, or rejected by the Lord. He exhorted and warned the Corinthian Christians, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12.) He plainly and pointedly declared that it is possible for a child of God to descend to a lost state-to fall from grace. "Christ is to become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." (Galatians 5:4.)

THE ISRAELITES IN THE WILDERNESS

The writer of Hebrews penned these sobering words about the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness: "But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter in because of unbelief." (Hebrews 3:17-19.)

All of the male Israelites who were twenty years old and over except Joshua and Caleb failed to enter into the promised land. (See Numbers 14:24,29;2:32.) Six hundred thousand three thousand five hundred and forty eight Israelites failed to enter into the promised land! This number does not include the women and young people accountable to the Lord.

SIMON FELL

Simon was a sorcerer in the city of Samaria. (Acts 8:9.) When Philip the evangelist came to Samaria and preached the gospel of Christ, Simon, as many of the Samaritans "...believed and was baptized." (Acts 8:13.) Therefore Simon was saved because he did that which our Savior said to do, that is, he believed the gospel and was baptized. (Mark 16:16.) Later Simon made the wicked proposition to the apostles Peter and John to buy the gift of God with money. (Acts 8:19.) In doing this, Simon sinned. Peter said

that Simon's heart was not right and that Simon was in "...the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." (Acts 8:23.) Peter exhorted Simon to repent and pray that he might be forgiven the sin of thinking he could buy the gift of imparting the Holy Spirit to others. (Acts 8:22.) He had been saved, then he fell, and was lost if he did not repent and pray for forgiveness.

MADE SHIPWRECK OF THE FAITH

Paul specifically named two individuals who made shipwreck of the faith. "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I delivered unto Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme." (1 Timothy 1:19,20.) Those who make shipwreck of the faith become lost again. You cannot make shipwreck of something you do not have! •

HOW TO REMAIN SAVED

A wise and godly man once counseled someone who asked about how to remain saved so that he could go to heaven. This one replied: (1) Read and study the Bible regularly. Like David, hide the word of God in our heart. (Psalms 119:11.) (2) Pray every day to God. As children of God, it is our high and blessed privilege to pray to our Heavenly Father (Matthew 6:9.) (3) Attend all the public services of the church. By doing so we keep ourselves strong as we are exhorted by other Christians and as we exhort them to holy living. (See Hebrews 10:23-25.) (4) Have a sincere desire in our hearts to go to heaven. Our inheritance is reserved in heaven. (1 Peter 1:4.) If we will do as suggested above, we will not fall from grace. Yet, kind friend, you must first obey the gospel of Christ to receive the grace of God — to become a Christian. To become a Christian believe sincerely that Jesus is the Son of God, genuinely repent of every sin, confess Jesus unashamedly before men, and be baptized (immersed in water). (See Mark 16:16; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3.) Obey the Lord Jesus without delay!

Jonathan, A True Friend

BOBBY KEY

A true friend is a blessing. Most of us have one or two close friends on whom we can depend. One who doesn't have friends may be to blame. "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly" (Proverbs 18:24). Friends do not just happen; they do not come to us by accident. They are made by a sincere and genuine effort on our part.

It is difficult to have close friends when the following characteristics prevail: (1) When one insists on always having his own way, (2) When one is persistent in criticism of everything and everybody, (3) When one is not dependable, (4) When one is pessimistic about everything, and (5) When one is overly talkative, a blowhard, exaggerates every incident, and fails to keep confidences.

When David was a young man he was honored by the people, but despised by king Saul. Even though David married Saul's daughter, he just didn't hit it off with his father-in-law. He was actually afraid to be around his in-laws, and with good reason. His father-in-law attempted to kill him every time he came on the place. Now, such does not make for a good relationship!

Because of this family situation, David experienced the privation and loneliness of a hunted man. Soldiers were always at his heels, and several times he barely escaped with his life. His days were spent fleeing from one wooded section to another. He was denied the companionship of family and friends.

In one of the darkest hours of David's life, a true friend risked his own life in coming to comfort him. "And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God" (I Samuel 23:16). Now this is real friendship. The Bible says, "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (I Samuel 18:1).

After Jonathan died, David said, "How art the mighty fallen in the midst of battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hath thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (II Samuel 1:25,26).

When David was alone and afraid, Jonathan came to him. When there was no other to help, Jonathan was there. "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad" (Proverbs 12:25). When David's heart was so heavy that he could hardly bear the load, his friend came and spoke the words which strengthened his hand in God. If one does not strengthen your hand in God, he is not a real friend. If one does not encourage you to do right, he is not a real friend. Some so-called friends weaken our faith in God; they cripple our faith; they discourage us from doing the right. "Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (I Corinthians 15:33),

What kind of friend am I? When is the last time I have strengthened one's hand in God? Do I encourage a weak brother to hold to God's unchanging hand? A word fitly spoken, a handshake, a hug, or a smile can help a discouraged friend.

There are some in every congregation whose hearts are pining away in secret anguish for the lack of a friend. "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of fearful heart, Be strong, fear not... God will come ... and save you" (Isaiah 35:3,4).

Make up your mind to go to some discouraged and dishearted person and admonish him to be strong and fear not. You can strengthen his hand in God.

We Never Seem To Be Satisfied

EDSEL BURLESON

Does your neighbor's grass always appear greener? It is very likely that a stroll across his lawn would reveal some very thin spots, some uneven areas, and perhaps gravel scattered here and there.

One of our greatest problems is being satisfied. Jim Shannon recently wrote in Bulletin Digest: "Have you ever noticed how difficult it is to be contented with material things? For instance, people who had to depend upon fireplaces for heat during the winter were eager to get electric heating when it became available. Now people with the electric heating consider it a luxury to be able to have a wood-burning fireplace in their homes. Also, many peo-

ple in rural areas have moved near the city for convenience, while city dwellers are desirous of a 'place in the country'." Paul said, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry both to abound and to suffer need" (Philippians 4:11,12).

Likely, if we would go a distance into our neighbor's yard and look back at our own, we would find our grass greener. A little boy was raised in mountainous country. He and his parents lived in a home built on the west side of a high mountain. Across the valley was another home built on the side of another mountain. Very early in life, the little boy began to notice that early in the morning the house across the valley appeared to have golden windows. The more he noticed it the more he begged his mother to let him go see the house with the windows of gold. Finally, when his mother felt that he was old enough to cross the valley alone, she gave him permission to go and see the house which had attracted his attention so long. Full of excitement, he rushed down the mountain, across the valley, and up to the house where the windows of gold had seemed to be. While he was making the trip, the sun was moving across the heavens. By the time he had reached his destination it was in the western sky. To his dismay there were no windows of gold; just ordinary windows like those of his own home. However, as he looked back across the valley, his own house now seemed to have windows of gold. What he had been seeing was the reflection of the sun. The golden hue of opportunity is everywhere, but many times we just haven't seen it. An unknown author teaches the principle clearly in these lines entitled "Opportunity."

I ask no one to lift my load,
No one my burdens bear,
I ask that all along life's road
I may my talents share.
If I my brothers keeper be,
My course in life is plain:
To note his need unceasingly.
And spare him every pain.
The talents which have graced my life

Were given from above;
That in this world of sin and strife
They'd shine like light and love.
What right have I to hide their power
While lives are sorely stressed;
My chance to serve is every hour —
Lord, help me give my best.

A soldier in the Civil War had lost his place in his company and rather timidly said to General Sherman as he came up behind the line, "Where shall I step in?" "Step in?" said the general, "step in? Step in anywhere. There is fighting all along the line." God has always expected the best from his people. In the great warfare against Satan and sin we must not miss a single opportunity to give God our best. Step in anywhere and work for God. There is fighting all along the line.

Boldness

RUSTY JOHNSON

Boldness is "a positive, courageous action in the midst of threatened negative results." There are many people in the Bible who demonstrated boldness in the face of danger. In the third and fourth chapters of Acts we can read Luke's account of Peter's boldness.

During an hour of prayer, Peter was going into the temple to pray. Before entering the temple, Peter saw a lame man begging for alms. Peter, using the gifts that God had given him, healed the man. As one would suspect, this caused quite a stir among the people in the temple, so Peter seized the opportunity to preach the gospel to them. The Jewish authorities, being disturbed that Peter was preaching to the people, placed him in custody.

The next morning Peter was brought before the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin is like a court with 72 judges. The court threatened Peter with bodily harm if he taught or preached of Jesus again. Peter responded by saying, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." That's the type of boldness we need to have.

How can you determine if you are bold? Answer the following questions and you should have a good idea if you are bold.

1. The most important goal for me at school is to make and keep friends.

2. I'm often embarrassed to admit to certain people that I'm a Christian.

3. I act differently at school from the way I do at church.

4. As long as life goes smoothly for me, I try not to get involved.

A yes answer to any of these questions may indicate a lack of boldness. God needs bold soldiers to carry out his work. Are you bold enough for the task?

Behold How Pleasant To Dwell Together In Unity

DEMAR ELAM

The Psalmist in the long ago said, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). It has well been said that "unity is that PRICELESS ingredient." Brethren, we must not allow any man or woman to destroy the unity of the Lord's people. Paul instructed the saints at Ephesus, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." ENDEAVORING demands a positive effort on the part of each Christian. Division in the religious world at large, or division in the local congregation, is condemned. It is contrary to the spirit and will of God. Division is destructive to the church, and to the souls of men. Unity needs to be the prayer and effort of every individual who wears the name of Christ. ENDEAVORING demands action, not just talk. Are you working in behalf of unity? Christians must put forth strenuous efforts to promote and maintain peace, harmony, and true unity among the members of the family of God.

Division within the church is a sin. God hates it (Proverbs 6:19)! To "sow discord" is to trouble the peace of a family (or church) by lies, misrepresentations — to strive to poison men's minds about the truth of God, or about the brethren. There is a need for peace today if we are to win the lost for Christ. PEACE is a requisite of unity. "So the church throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord and comfort of the Holy Spirit was multiplied" (Acts 9:31). The result of the peace that prevailed was that the church was "edified and multiplied." In Acts 4:32 we read, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul." In order to have such today we must, "... follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another" (Romans 14:19).

One who "soweth discord among brethren" creates the soil that produces division, whence springs infidelity and unbelief in the world. Division is carnal (I Corinthians 3:1-4). Division is a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-20). Please envision yourself standing before God in Judgment, having been a sower of discord among the family of God, having caused a division within the church that Jesus shed his blood and died to unite. Surely, the thoughts of such should be horrifying to any one wanting to follow after righteousness and be eternally saved. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). Every Christian should spend his time promoting unity. Are you a peace "maker"? or, a divisive element within the church? Let each true child of God endeavor to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Be careful never to allow yourself to become a part of any element that sows discord. God HATES one who "soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:19). Yes, it is even an ABOMINATION to him!

Does the Bible Teach Celibacy?

JOEL WHEELER

One of the most discussed subjects of the Bible is that which concerns the laws of marriage. Paul discusses and gives inspired

advice to help troubled Christians overcome the trials and temptations of this life. A question that has often been asked is what did Paul mean when he said "For I would that all men remain as I ... It is good for them if they abide even as I (I Cor. 7:7-8)." Was Paul condemning the marriage bond? Was he saying that it was wrong to marry or remain married? Let us examine what the scriptures say concerning this subject.

In Genesis 2:18 God said "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." Our Savior is recorded as saying "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh (Matt. 19:5)." The Lord ordained this bond of marriage from the very beginning in the Garden of Eden. In Hebrews 13:4 the writer records "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers (fornicators) and adulterers God will judge." Many other passages of scripture condemn adultery and fornication. I Corinthians 3:13, 18; Galatians 5:19; Matthew 5:32; Luke 16:18 are some Bible passages which condemn these.

The disciples on one occasion said "It is not good to marry (Matt. 19:10)." Jesus replied ". . . and there are some eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake (Matt. 19:12)." Some individuals forego the privilege of marriage in order to devote themselves more completely to the service of God. Never was celibacy a command from the Lord or any of his apostles.

Why then would the apostle Paul make such a statement in I Cor. 7:7-8? The answer to this question can be found in verse 26 of that chapter. It was because of the "present distress" which was persecution of the saints. Many husbands and wives were forced to choose between Christ and their mates in the first century. Many individuals renounced Christ because the persecutions and affliction of Jews and Romans were too great to bear. This is why the Lord said "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev. 2:10)."

One may remain unmarried if he so chooses but must restrain the sexual passions (I Cor. 7:9).

□□□