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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

After mentioning the works of the flesh, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and such like, in Galatians 5:19-21, next the apostle Paul mentions "fruit of the Spirit, "which are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Here are mentioned two kinds of people: Those who engage themselves in doing works of the flesh; and those who are bearing fruit of the Holy Spirit of God. In Romans 8:1, the Bible says: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Those who are in Christ Jesus, are Christ's followers, Christians. They will not be condemned for their sins on the day of the judgment, because Christ has already accepted their punishment on Himself. And they are in Christ, by believing in Him and by obeying His commandment to be saved (Mark 16:16) they have put on Christ (Galatians 3: 27). Further, they do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Now, if someone says, "I am a Christian," and yet continue doing the works of the flesh, that person cannot be recognized

by God as a Christian. In Matthew 7:16 Christ said plainly, "by their fruits you will know them." A Christian cannot engage in the works of the flesh, and if he does then he is no longer a Christian. A Christian is one who walks by the directions or guidance of the Holy Spirit. "For those who live according to the flesh," says Romans 8:5, "set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." Now what does this mean?

Does this mean that the Holy Spirit is going to make me jump around and roll on the floor? Or does this mean that the Holy Spirit is going to force me to swing my hands up in the air, or speak in tongues, that is, utter some senseless words? Absolutely not. To walk according to the Holy Spirit of God means to do and practice what He teaches by or through the written word of God in the Bible.

All scriptures," says 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, "is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Again, we read in 2 Peter 1:20,21: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of men, but Holy Men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

When one read and study the Bible or hear what the Bible says, and then practices those things, does them in daily living, this is how one walks according to the Spirit. There are nine fruit of the Spirit mentioned in the Bible, in Galatians 5:22 and 23, they must be seen, must be obvious, in the life of a Christian. These very fruit set apart a Christian from others.

The Gospel Call

J.C. CHOATE

In the religious world today there are many different ideas as to how God calls an individual to salvation. We will mention some of the major ones. First, there are those who teach that God speaks to them directly through a wee small voice. Second, others say that Christ comes to them in a dream or in a vision. And

third, there are those who believe that the Lord calls them through some special experience. Now in all three of these, it is claimed that this is the Lord's way of saving them or that of imparting some special message to them. But does the Bible teach this? Here is a warning. Be suspicious of those who are always hearing and seeing things.

The first thing we want to find out is this: Does God speak today? If so, how does He speak? This is easy when we turn to Hebrews 1:1,2: *"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds."* So according to this, God speaks today and He speaks through His Son. This is also pointed out in Matthew 17:5 at the transfiguration of Christ. Listen to God: *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"*

The next question is: Does God speak directly to man today or does Christ speak directly? This is cleared up when we read these verses: *"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name"* (John 20:30,31). Now why are these written? That we might believe. But where are these things written? In the New Testament. Therefore if we will read and study its contents we may know the Lord's will.

Again, we read: *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). Question: Does faith come any other way? If it does, the scriptures do not say so. It is true that there are those who talk about hearing this, seeing that, having an experience, etc., but God's word does not teach any such. Rather, it teaches that faith comes by hearing the word of God. Therefore, there is but one Bible and there is but one faith (Ephesians 4:5).

Because faith comes by hearing the word of God, that is why we are taught the importance of studying the word (2 Timothy 2:15), searching the scriptures (John 5:39), etc. As a matter of fact, that is why there is so much emphasis on the scriptures themselves, indicating their inspiration and all-sufficiency (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Then the scriptures tell us that the gospel has been placed in earthen vessels. Listen to the Apostle Paul: *"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us"* (2 Corinthians 4:5-7). What is he saying here? He is simply saying that the Lord had chosen human beings, individuals like Paul, to take the gospel to their fellow men. Think now about the various cases of conversion in the book of Acts. Give one example of where the Lord ever told one individual what to do to be saved. You can't. For instance, in Acts 8, the angel of the Lord sent Philip to preach Christ to the eunuch. Question: Why didn't the angel go himself and leave Philip in Samaria to continue to preach to the people there? Simply because the Lord had put the gospel in earthen vessels and therefore it was up to man to deliver the gospel message. Again, in Acts 9 we have Saul asking the Lord what to do to be saved and the Lord told him to go into the city and there it would be told him what he should do. Later on Ananias came and told him (Acts 22:16). Question: Why didn't the Lord tell him? Because it was not His will to do so. And so with all of the other cases of conversion in the book of Acts. That is the reason we know that the Lord is not speaking directly to people today apart from the scriptures or appearing to them to tell them what to do to be saved. Even if the Lord were here He would not tell a person what to do (Acts 9), and should He do so it could not be different from the gospel already proclaimed (Galatians 1:6-9), so there would be no purpose in His coming to do that which He has already commanded man to do (Mark 16:15,16). In other words, the Lord will not do for man what he can do for himself.

The reason so much emphasis is placed upon the importance of the preacher taking the gospel to others is because the gospel has been placed in earthen vessels. Christ said, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:15,16). Again, we read, *"For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they*

call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written; 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!' (Romans 10:13-15). Then, finally, *"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"* (2 Timothy 4:2). You can see then that the Lord has chosen to reveal His will through this medium. It is all very simple.

That being true, Paul wrote his Thessalonian brethren: *"To which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Paul says that the Lord called the Thessalonians by the gospel. That is, Paul preached the gospel to them, they heard it and obeyed it, and therefore they were called to Christ in this manner. Another way of putting it, Christ called them to salvation through the preaching of the gospel.

What about today? How are we called? We who are Christians have likewise been called by the same gospel. That is, the gospel was preached to us, we heard it, believed it, obeyed it, and the Lord saved us. As we take the gospel to others, the same thing happens again and again. The Lord is not calling one person one way and another person another way. Rather, He is calling one and all by and through the one gospel.

Yes, God speaks today but He speaks through Christ. Christ speaks but He speaks through the word. Those who obey Christ have the responsibility of preaching and teaching the gospel to others. By this means the Lord works through the gospel preacher or teacher to reveal His will and to invite the lost to come unto Him (Matthew 11:28-30).

Our first duty is to preach the gospel and our second duty is to assist those who want to obey the Lord (Matthew 28:19,20). This is why Paul made this statement: *"For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God"* (1 Corinthians 1:17,18). So he is saying that he was not sent just to

baptize people. His first duty was to preach the gospel and naturally he was ready to baptize those who wanted to obey the Lord.

Have you heard the gospel before? If not, then you are now receiving the gospel call — the call to come unto Christ. Obey Him and He will save you.

The Message of the Cross

FRANCIS DAVID

In 1 Cor. 1:18 apostle Paul says, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." When we talk about the cross we are not talking about the two pieces of wood, or a jewelry wear around the neck, and also its not the cross that you see at church buildings. In Corinth while talking to the people, Paul clearly mentions that message of the cross is a foolishness to those who are perishing, why? because they did not understand the real meaning of the cross or the value of the cross of Jesus. But why it is the power of God for those who are saved? It is because they know the real value of the cross. Paul the apostle knew what cross was meant for him, His success in life was cross, his relationship with cross and Jesus was unique. He was really convinced about the cross because he understood what cross is for him. He had a great value for the cross. His preaching was always about the cross. The cross was an actual experience for him, it was not a theological story for him, and that is why he says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

When he was traveling to the road of Damascus, he found himself in a very humiliating situation, when he had an encounter with Jesus. When he had this experience with Jesus and his cross, his life was completely changed. He was convinced and he realized that cross of Jesus is number one for him in his life. He understood the reality of the cross. There were two kinds of people in Paul's days. There were some who did not care for the cross or message of the cross and there were some who valued it and gave importance to the message of the cross. The foolish

admired Paul but they rejected the message of the cross. They did not care for Jesus' death. They rejected his plan of salvation. They opposed the gospel, which is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

There were other group of people who really understood the meaning of the cross. They knew it is the power of God. It was a magnificent and remarkable power. Why the cross of Christ is so valuable and powerful? Because it tells man that we are created in the image of God. (Gen. 1:26-27). It tells man that he is a sinner and separated from God. (Rom. 3:23; Isa. 59:1-2). Hence, the cross reveals that man greatest need is salvation of the soul, salvation from sin. That is why we see God so loved the world and gave His only begotten Son for the whole world. (John 3:16). His Son died on the cross of Calvary to redeem us from our sins. The cross of Jesus reveals the love of God for all humanity. He loved us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8).

Man has a problem of sin. He needs to come to the cross to escape from sin. Sin has done much damage in our lives. We know there are many tragic results of sin. Because of sin the souls are in danger. It is because of sin we see many broken homes, divorces, families divided, and all kinds of bad situations. It is really sad. If we truly understand the meaning of the cross we will be in safe situation physically and as well as spiritually. We must go to Calvary and see Jesus hanging on the cross for us, and though he was innocent, without any sin, our sins were laid on Him. Sin is an abomination in the eyes of God. Sin is not a toy to be played with. We must take sin seriously, if we don't then it will destroy us. Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). Sin separate us from our God, and prophet Isaiah says it is iniquity. (Isa. 59:1-2). The cross tells us that we can be reconciled to God. We can have victorious life through Jesus Christ. (Rom. 7:24-25). There was only one possibility and that was God's Son had the capacity to bear the sins of all on the cross. He became the atonement for our sins. We sing the song "What can wash away my sins?" "Nothing but the blood of Jesus." "I must needs go home, by the way of the cross," There is no other way but this. Today, if you think that you are struggling in sin, you have an opportunity to come to the cross of Jesus. He is able to save you from your sins and make you a new creature. The cross of Jesus has the power

to change your life and to save you from eternal damnation. Are you willing to obey the message of the cross? You can obey the gospel of Jesus which is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (I Cor. 15:14), and the strength of the gospel is in the cross of Jesus. Today you can do so by believing in Jesus, repenting of your sins, confessing Christ as the Son of God and by being baptised in the watery grave for the remission of your sins.

Christ Jesus, The Lord

DAVID THURMAN

In a world of chaos and crisis, many seek stability and safety. These people are looking for something to hold on to, something that won't change, that will last throughout their lives. As governments change, iron curtains fall, and the economies fluctuate, people seek something they can grab onto and hold on.

Maybe in your life you are seeking something to hold on to, as well. Perhaps you are experiencing, or have gone through, a crisis in your home or your job or your health. Maybe you need something solid to stand on, something that will not be shaken or moved. God offers you that foundation. But to stand on the solid ground God provides you must come to accept three important principles about God's Son. You must acknowledge that He is Christ Jesus the Lord.

HE IS THE CHRIST

"And Simon Peter answered and said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (Matt. 16:16). Peter was the first human being to realize and openly admit that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ sent by God to redeem His people. This was no small admission for Peter. Jesus was a mere carpenter from a small town in the middle of nowhere. Jesus had no "professional credentials" to prove His status or authority. Jesus walked in the power of God doing good for all people. In that lifestyle Jesus revealed Who He was to His followers. They realized He was the Christ.

To be the Christ is to be God's Anointed or Chosen One. The Christ (or Messiah) was to redeem Israel and lead God's

people in victory. To accept Jesus as the Christ is to believe that God sent Jesus to be the Christ. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). To find stability in life, all you must do is accept, by faith, that Jesus of Nazareth was more than a historical figure. He was the Chosen One of God sent to lead you back to God.

This may require a larger faith than you realize. To accept Jesus as the Christ you must accept that He was One with God. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God"* (John 1:1-2). To find solid ground you have to reach beyond mere acceptance of Jesus as a real person. Instead, you must stretch out in faith to accept Him as divine.

Further, to believe in Jesus as the Christ eliminates all other roads to God. Jesus Himself said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and life, no one comes to the Father but through Me"* (John 14:6). His disciples believed this. Later, Peter would say, *"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). If you want a solid rock on which to build your life, you must reject all other names and rest solely on the Christ sent by God. There is only one way to God and that is through the Christ, the Son of God.

"YOU SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS"

When the angel spoke to Joseph about the birth of Mary's son he told Joseph to *"call his name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sin"* (Matt. 1:21). Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew word, Joshua, which means "salvation". By naming the unborn child, *"Jesus,"* God was declaring the baby's role in life and beyond. He would *"save His people from their sins."* To find a foundation in life that will not shift you must accept this truth, as well. Jesus is not only Christ, He is Savior.

This means you have to admit that you have the need of salvation. *"There is none righteous, not even one"* and *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:10 & 23). Paul tells us that no one is righteous before God and that all of us are sinners. To look to Jesus for stability, you must, accept that you are a sinner, unworthy of God's grace and mercy. You must

acknowledge the fact that your life has not pleased God due to your sins. You must reject the idea that you (or anyone else) has lived a "pretty good life" and will be saved because you "are a good person". In fact, *"the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23). To see Jesus as Savior is to admit your helpless need for cleansing. You must accept that you will die in your sin unless Jesus forgives you in His blood.

To build your future on the Christ Jesus, you must also own up to your responsibility before God. We live in an age where everyone passes the buck by saying, "I come from a dysfunctional family" or "my company laid me off" or "I was forced to grow up in poverty without opportunities". These things may be true. Your family may not have been any good. Your company may have stabbed you in the back. You may have had a rough time getting ahead due to circumstances beyond your control. But in order to find real stability in life, you must accept your own role before God and stop blaming others. *"So then each of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Rom. 14:12). Paul wants us all to know that we are responsible to God. No one else will stand in our place before God. That is why you need a Savior, so that Jesus can intervene in your behalf. No other person will be held accountable for your life and your actions. Only you will face God. You need to accept your sin and your dependence on the Savior, Jesus the Christ so that you can face God without fear.

To accept Jesus as Savior, you must also come to grips with your guilt. Too many in our world rationalize and excuse their actions. "Everyone is doing it" or "I had the right to do it so I did" and on the reasoning goes. Recently, an armored car overturned in Florida and hundreds of thousands of dollars in coins and bills were spilled over the roadway and ground. Hundreds of people took the money. Offered amnesty if they returned it, only a meager few came forward. To see Jesus as Savior is to admit that wrong is wrong and that you are guilty. To be saved by Jesus is to realize the depths of your guilt and to accept the need for your values to change to be like His. You cannot have a savior without being saved from something. The more you know Jesus, the more you will feel and acknowledge your guilt.

HE IS THE LORD

A stable life is also established by accepting Jesus the Christ as your Lord. Many people want the mercy God offers. Many want to escape the guilt they feel or even are afraid of the fires of Hell. But accepting Jesus as Christ means also accepting Him as Lord. For Jesus to be Lord you must surrender your entire life to His direction and to His will.

In a world that is being built more and more on democracy and human rights, the concept of Lordship may seem foreign. A Lord is one who has control, power, authority over all aspects of his subjects' lives. To be Lord is to be all-powerful over the kingdom that Lord rules. To accept the Lordship of Jesus is to accept His values and His will in all things.

In Christ you have been given freedom. Jesus is *"the truth"* (John 14:6) and *"the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). In coming to Jesus the Christ for salvation you have been set free from sin and its guilt. You are no longer under *"the wages of sin (which) is death"* (Rom. 6:23) but instead are set free by the gift of God in Jesus, His Son. However, your freedom does not mean you can go on living your life your way. You have been set free to serve another Lord, to meet His expectations for your life. *"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it"* (Rom. 6:1-2). Paul says we cannot continue the lifestyle we used to have. We have died to sin in accepting Jesus and therefore are not free to sin. Having been cleansed, we are free to serve God once again. *"Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God, that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness"* (Rom. 6:16-18).

This requires a total change in lifestyle and attitude. *"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may*

prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:1-2). We are told to offer our bodies to God. That includes our appetites, our interests, our pleasures. We are even told to change from the inside out. We are to first have our minds renewed. We cannot live in the past selfishness and expect to have renewed minds. But if Jesus is to be Lord in your life you must offer Him both your mind and your body for His service.

DIE TO SELF TODAY

As you can see, three little words can carry much power. "Christ Jesus the Lord" is a simple phrase, but it can change your life. As your world undergoes upheaval, you can cling to a Messiah that never changes. As you experience setbacks, struggles or stress, you can cling to a Lord that will renew your life from the inside out. As you face pain and hurt and even guilt for your own mistakes, you can come to God through a Savior that died for you. To accept Jesus as Christ and Lord, merely do what Paul described. *"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life"* (Rom. 6:3-4). You can find stability in your life by submitting to Jesus the Christ. Surrender today!

Zeal For God

JOHNNY RAMSEY

The apostle Paul showed the need for ardent zeal when he wrote, *"But it is good to be zealously sought in a good matter at all times"* (Gal. 4:18). Indifference toward truth will only please Satan. The compelling aura of Christianity demands our very best effort. Negligence in matters divine is far too common in our society today. Living for Jesus ought to produce in us the highest excitement and most loyal devotion. It is beneath the dignity of the gospel for us to be casual about the cause of Christ and the souls of men. An old song backs up the familiar adage: "Anything worth while is worth fighting for." And, so, we sing:

*Valiant endeavor and loving obedience,
Freely and joyously now would we bring.*

When we are not ashamed of the gospel (Rom. 1:16), we do not fear the schemes of evil men against us. Devotion to God will overwhelm the vagaries of men who have a disdain for holiness and commitment to spiritual values. We dare not allow sinful neighbors to halt our plans of evangelism or to compromise our dedication to the Savior who died at Calvary. We can never turn back to easy street, but we must accept the challenges found in the "desert of sorrow and sin." We shall echo the sentiment of Peter and John found in Acts 5:29, *"We ought to obey God rather than men."*

When we stand up for God in this severely hellish world, it will build conviction and confidence in our hearts. It will spur us on to greater heights when we really believe, and we will just have to speak up: *"But having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak; we also believe, and therefore also we speak"* (2 Cor. 4:13). A gospel hymn demands our focus:

*He is our sun and shield by day,
Our help, our hope, our strength and stay,
He will be with us all the way,
Our God is love.*

Zeal for God can be developed by prayer and Bible study, and by personally telling others of the glad tidings of salvation. When we reach out to others and restore some erring brother, it will be a blessing that pays dividends for our souls. How sad is the lethargy and unconcern that pervades the lives of far too many of us in the church today! Let us look deep into our hearts and determine that our enthusiasm for divine matter will be renewed and magnified, in order that God may be glorified more and more. Someone has given us these powerful words:

*No vision and you perish,
No ideal and you Are lost.
Your heart must ever cherish
Faith at any cost.*

There is no greater cause than that of Christianity. Zeal for God is a bargain at any cost!

Why Would Anyone Want To Be A Christian?

JOE T. SPLVY, SR.

When your soul leaves your body there will be a lot of questions asked concerning you. Such questions as, "Was he young? Was she pretty? Was he a great athlete? Was she really as intelligent as everyone thought? Did she have as many beautiful clothes as most people thought?" May be asked. But the most important question that will be asked at that time will be, "Was he/she a faithful Christian?" By putting an emphasis on the word "FAITHFUL", what would be the answer concerning you if you were to die today?

There are those who would even ask such a question as, "Why would anyone want to be a Christian? What good is that? What's in it for me?" How would you answer such a question?

Here are some answers or reasons one might use for being a faithful Christian:

(1) In a selfish way it is good to be a Christian because it pays to be a Christian! Psalm 1:1-3 extols the virtue of being a follower of God (in this dispensation, a Christian), accounting him as "bringing forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things (physical necessities) shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

However, it might appear that the highest of the selfish reasons for being a Christian is found in Paul's tender words to young Timothy, ". . . there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give unto me at that day; AND NOT TO ME ONLY, BUT UNTO ALL THEM ALSO THAT LOVE HIS APPEARING" (II Timothy 4:8). Yes, selfishly, it pays to be a Christian, for the RIGHT REASON!

(2) Ethically, we know it's right to be a Christian! In Acts 4:19, 20 Peter said, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Is it right to heed men

more than God? Would that be ethical? Jesus asserts that when one has done "all those things which are commanded" you have to conclude, "we are unprofitable servants" for we have just done what it was our duty to do (Luke 17:10). One should desire to be a Christian because ethically, it's right!

(3) Socially, it's right to be a Christian! This is true because it grants to us the very best fellowship in this world and in the next world. By being a Christian who seeks to follow God's will, one finds that Jesus is always a constant companion, "... and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). How is Jesus "with you alway"? Only inasmuch as we follow his instructions (the Bible), as he followed the will of his Father. If we cease to walk with him by neglecting his will, by being unfaithful to his cause, then we cease to have fellowship with him! (Amos 3:3; 1 John 1:6-9). Socially, we have fellowship with the spiritual Israel, Abraham's seed (Galatians 3:26-29).

(4) Prospectively, there is no life that promises AND DELIVERS such a great wealth of promises as the life a Christian lives! Paul said that godliness is profitable "unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8). An auto commercial on TV asks, "Who could ask for anything more?" John said, "this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (1 John 2:25). Who can ask for anything more than the promise of eternal life? "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory . . . thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54,57).

Yes, "why would anyone want to be a Christian?" The answer seems so clear and plain; because selfishly, it pays to be a Christian; ethically, it is the right thing to do; socially, we gain the very best fellowship available; and prospectively, it presents promises that are great and sure! A more important soul-searching question might be, "Why would anyone NOT want to be a Christian?"

Now once again, if it was your funeral and the question was asked, "Was he/she a FAITHFUL Christian," what would be the right answer?

Real Power

JOE T. SPIVY, JR.

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (I Corinthians 1:18).

The world has many images of power. It is manifested in the ability to "hire and fire," to affect public policy, or to demand personal attention. The physical signs of one's power can be seen in the title they possess, or their Visa card! Power is expressed in terms of military might, economics, and education.

While power is understood and expressed in a variety of ways, there is one which stands unrivaled. There is no source or form of power which is even comparable. We speak of the gospel, the "power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). The gospel may be shunned by many and considered powerless by a world that will believe in only what it can see with its eyes, yet, none can match its attributes.

What other message is eternal? While world powers rise and fall, human philosophies move in and out of favor (i.e., communism in eastern Europe), the gospel stands eternally. This great message of God "shall never pass away" (Luke 21:33).

Man struggles to fend off the old enemy, Death. The gospel, with its awesome power, has overcome the horror and terror of death. No longer must one be eternally separated from the presence of God. Through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, and man's response to that act (Romans 3:3-5), death's power is ultimately negated (I Corinthians 15:54-57).

One's spiritual citizenship, and hence his eternal destination, can be altered by the gospel. Its power can liberate from the bondage of sin and deliver one into the kingdom of God. Through the gospel, a way is made for adoption into the family of God (Romans 8:15, 16; John 1:12, 13).

Lives which have been ruined by the power of Satan, those who have lost their way, can find direction and redemption through the message of the gospel. Lives can be changed radically from a course of self-interest and domination by Satan to one of walking with God. Your life can be changed to the point that it can be said,

"Christ (now) lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

The gospel! The greatest power on earth! The power to become and overcome! Yet it is power that is wasted until it is used! As Paul said, it is "the preaching of the cross" which is the "power of God" (I Corinthians 1:18).

Fear To Whom Fear

DAVID WADE

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Romans 13:7). What does Paul mean by the statement, "fear to whom fear"?

First, we need to understand that there are several Hebrew and Greek words employed in scripture that are rendered in English as "fear." These words generally fall into two major categories of meaning. There is that fear, terror, or fright of anticipated evil or retribution. There is also the concept of reverence, awe, and respect such as the reverence or "fear" of the Lord.

Illustrating the first category, Adam, exclaimed, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself (Genesis 3:10). Isaac "feared to say, She is my wife" for he anticipated that the local ruler of the Philistines would want Rebekah for himself and would kill him to get her (Genesis 26:7). When King Saul saw the great Philistine army, "he was afraid and his heart greatly trembled" (I Samuel 28:5).

The antidote to such fear of retribution or evil is found by trusting in the Lord, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid" (Psalm 112:7-8). "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me" (Psalm 56:11, cf. Hebrews 13:6).

Jesus put the terror of fear in proper perspective when he said, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into

hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (Luke 12:4-5). This greater fear is to be shown unto God.

Conversely, we are to fear God with reverence, awe, and respect. "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). "Fear God. Honour the king" (I Peter 2:17).

There are many attendant blessings that accompany godly fear. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7). "Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief" (Proverbs 28:14).

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Timothy 1:7). "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (I John 4:18). "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Corinthians 7:1).

We are to render "fear to whom fear." If our thoughts and deeds are evil, we will feel fear or terror for both God and man. As one anonymous writer put it, "He who fears God need fear nothing else, and he who fears not God needs to fear everything else."

It Is Within Our Power!

DEMAR ELAM

The feeling of being in control of a situation can be an enormously satisfying experience. To have something to accomplish that you know is within your power is confidence-building. All Christians should be filled with a sense of confidence as they live the Christian life from day to day. Why? Because it is within our power to lift up Christ before the world.

Christians are failing on many battlefronts today because they

are not lifting up Christ to the world. In speaking of his death, Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). There is, however, another sense by which Christ can be lifted up; and this lifting up is completely within our power. Christ needs to be exalted and lifted up in our present times. Jesus declared that he would draw all men unto him and that his death would be the means of accomplishing this objective. Because Christ was lifted up upon the cross of Calvary and died for our sins, we have the privilege of lifting him up before the world today as the source of redemption from sin.

We also can be lifted up. How? "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:10). Each person struggles with the problem of humility in this wealthy, self-centered, and pride-filled world. Our growth numerically and spiritually has been hindered by our failure to lift up the Christ. Many of the ills that plague our great brotherhood would vanish overnight if we would begin lifting up Christ.

The world is looking for Christ. Many many not be aware of their search, their yearning, their longing, but it is there within each man. What man will not tell you that he desires more out of life than he has? Even faithful Christians have yearnings: we are restless souls from here to eternity. We shall not fully rest until we rest with him!

We must not fail to see our opportunities and to use them fully. Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (Numbers 21:9) to save those who looked upon it, so also we must lift up Christ that whosoever believes on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:14-16). No, we must never "lift up" Christ to crucify him afresh, but rather "lift" him up as the crucified. Christ is light, life, and liberty to those entrapped by the snare of Satan; and we as Christians must not fail to lift him up.

It is within our power! We have control of the situation and need to act confidently in daily Christian living. Let each of us lift him up in our speech, in our morals, in our attitudes and in our actions. Let us live in such a way that all will know what Christ has meant to our lives. We can lift him up so that others will not doubt our love.

Let us all lift up the Christ! It is truly within our power.

Forsake Not God's Law

Proverbs 4:2

CECIL MAY, JR.

Christians are saved by God's grace through faith in the blood of Christ (Romans 3:24-25). We cannot boast that we have justified ourselves, through law or any other way. If we can save ourselves, faith is unnecessary (Romans 4:14), and Christ's death is vain (Galatians 2:21). If we think we save ourselves, we go down to our houses unjustified (Luke 18:9-14).

Always there have been some who misuse the doctrine of grace as an excuse for sin (Romans 6:1-2). Similarly, some may erroneously deduce from the inability of law to justify sinners that Christians, justified by faith, are not subject to God's law. True Bible doctrine is not an encouragement to anyone, anytime, to forsake God's law.

We must not forsake God's law, because without law we would know neither sin nor grace. Law shows sin to be sin (Romans 3:20). Sin is defined by law (I John 3:4). If there is no law, there is no sin; if there is no sin, there is no need for grace.

We must not forsake God's law, because it is for our good. God does not capriciously forbid things good for us. He loves us. He gave his law to show us the way that is best for us. He commands us to love because love is better than hate. Forgiveness is better than vindictiveness and malice. Honesty is better than lying and cheating. Committed love for one mate is better than promiscuity. Honest work is better than stealing. When one forsakes God's law, he hurts himself.

We must not forsake God's law, because to do so is to reject God's favor and grace (Proverbs 28:9). Law cannot justify sinners, because obeying one commandment cannot earn forgiveness for breaking another (James 4:17; Luke 17:10). Law justifies only the righteous (Galatians 3:10-12), and in that very sense, "There is none righteous" (Romans 3:10). However, the only kind of faith that can appropriate grace is obedient faith (James 2:24). A faithful Christian may stumble, and God by grace can lift him up and not

impute his sin to him (Romans 4:6-8). As long as he walks in the light, the blood of Christ keeps cleansing him (I John 1:7). But one who sins and refuses to repent (Acts 8:22), commits sin unto death (I John 1:7; 5:16). One who willfully sins rejects Christ's sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:26). God's law is never broken with impunity. Whenever one sins, his sin must be covered by the blood of Christ, or he must pay its penalty himself.

It is a great disservice to encourage anyone to forsake God's law. Good doctrine never does that. God says, "For I give you good doctrine; forsake ye not my law" (Proverbs 4:2).

Examine Yourself

KEN TYLER

Paul told the brethren at Corinth, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. . ." (II Corinthians 13:5). Self-examination is one of the hardest tasks of life. It is not easy to look at ourselves honestly and objectively. One quality we all need is to be able to see ourselves just like God sees us. I want to ask some questions in this article that will help us take a good look at our lives.

1. How long has it been since you prayed? The Christian loves to pray. He cannot live without prayer. It is like food and drink to his physical body. Prayer is something very special to the child of God. How is your prayer life? Examine yourself! Paul said, "Continue in prayer ..." (Colossians 4:2).

2. How long has it been since you studied the Bible? The Bible is the standard of our lives. Paul said, "... the faith ..." is the basis of our self-examination. "The faith" is the gospel of Christ. In Acts 6:7 we read that "... a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." They had simply obeyed the gospel. Knowledge of the word of God is the greatest need of the world. Do you study? Examine yourself! May we never forget that the Bible will also be the basis of the judgment (James 2:12; John 12:48).

3. Do you attend all the services of the church? When the

church meets, is something else more important to you than worship? When you seek God's kingdom first, you do not forsake or neglect worship (Matthew 6:33). The Christian loves to worship. Do you? Examine yourself!

4. What kind of life are you living? Do you drink, or use other drugs? What kind of movies do you watch? What about the magazines you look at or the books you read? Are you living in fornication? John said, "Love not the world ..." (1 John 2:15). Paul stated, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Are you different from the world? The Christian is. Examine yourself!

I hope the thoughts of this article will help all of us go to heaven. The Christian's desire is to examine himself and please God. I pray this is your desire today.

How To Become A Member Of The Lord's Church

GEORGE L. ROGERS

If you are wondering how to become a member of the Lord's church, read on. His church began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. (Acts 2.) You need not go beyond that time to learn how to become a member of the Lord's church.

After Christ's resurrection, he called his apostles to Him and gave them the Great Commission. Briefly it is, go, teach, preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46,47.) A complete view of all three is easily seen. Jesus said go carry the gospel to every person. The gospel tells of Christ, His life, death and resurrection. All are to believe this, turn from sin in repentance and be baptized for the remission of sins. If they do this, God will save them from sin and make them members of the blood bought church of our Lord,

THE JEWS ON PENTECOST

According to Acts 2, Peter preached the death, burial and

resurrection of Christ. Most of his sermon was dedicated to proving the resurrection of Jesus. After he convinced his audience that Jesus was the long expected Messiah and that they had killed Him, Luke says, "Now when they heard this they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do?" The answer, "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:37,38.) "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41.)

This is how the first members of the Lord's church were made. If you are thinking that you didn't become a member that way, please read on. Verse 47 says, "the Lord added them to the church." So, God adds men to the Lord's church. But don't be too sure the Lord added you to His church unless you did what they did on Pentecost. It is one thing to join a church, have your name on the church roll, and quite another thing to be added by the Lord to His church.

How can you be sure that God added you? This is only one example of conversion in Acts. The apostles had a remarkable unity of work. They were guided by the Holy Spirit. What they said and did as recorded in Acts 2 and in every other account in the Bible is right!

THE CORINTHIANS

In Acts 18:8, we see what the Corinthians did when they heard the "good news" preached. "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." Verse 12 of Acts 8 gives an account of Philip's labors in Samaria. "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ they were baptized both men and women." If you will check the other accounts in the New Testament you will see that all did the same things to become members of the Lord's church.

If you have time to check the individual commands of God that stand between the sinner and the Kingdom or church, you will be able to see the alien sinner's duty in coming to Christ.

OBEY THE LORD NOW!

The first thing a sinner must do is to believe on Christ. (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:21-24.) After one has been made a believer, he must correct his life by turning away from sin and begin to live for Jesus. This resolution is repentance, but the resolve must end in a reformed life. (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30.) The confession of Christ is made before baptism and is to be repeated throughout life as demanded. (Matthew 10:32,33.) The confession is made with the mouth. (Romans 10:9,10.) The act that completes the obedience is water baptism. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16.) When the alien sinner has completed this obedience he is saved by the blood of Christ and the Lord adds him to His church. (Acts 2:47.) He won't be added to a denomination but he will be added to the church Jesus gave His blood to build. (Matthew 16:18, Acts 20:28.) Please look into these matters, and if we can help, please call or write us.

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