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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

"The free gift of God is the eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

More than two thousand years ago when Jesus Christ was born on this earth, in reality, God in Christ had come to live on earth. Through and in Him God made the eternal life of heaven available to all. (Romans 6:23). The wages of sin is death, and all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23). Not one was able or qualified to go to live with God. So God came down on earth from heaven to enable man to enter heaven through Him.

Jesus Christ was God of heaven. He was not a man, but he became a man on earth. One of the forty writers of the Bible described Him as the Word, Who was in the beginning with God and was God Himself. Furthermore, he says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 14: 1 and 14). Another inspired writer of the Bible wrote about Christ and said, "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 2:6-8). Thus, when Jesus Christ was born on earth, God was born on earth as a man. He became man

to save man. He had not come to live on earth, but He had come on earth to die for the humanity to save everyone from sin and to enable everyone to go to heaven through Him. Only God can save man from sin. While he was on earth He taught, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16). Therefore He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)

Salvation from sin and consequently the eternal life in heaven is a free gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8). God loves each and every person on earth. He sent His Son Jesus Christ on earth to die on the cross as the propitiation for the sins of all people of earth (1 John 4:10). God is impartial. (Romans 2:11). The apostle wrote "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all." (1 Timothy 2:5, 6). To redeem man from sin, the Bible says, God made Christ, Who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21). By the grace of God, according to Hebrews 2:9, He tasted death on the cross for everyone. He paid the price for our sins. (1 Peter 1:18, 19). After His death and burial and the resurrection, which according to 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 is the gospel, Christ commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person, and He said, he who believes and is baptised will be saved. (Mark 16:15, 16). God didn't make it difficult for us to be saved from sin. To be saved from sin is simple. God's salvation is available to all in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We do not have to do anything to propitiate for our own sins. On the other hand, what can we do? Christ, asked, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange of his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). God, in Christ, Himself is the propitiation for our sins; through His death on the cross, because He died for our sins. We do not have to cut or punish our bodies to pay for our sins. We do not have to offer any earthly offerings to appease God. Friend, God is love, and He has done it all for us! "The free gift of God", reader, "is the eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yet, God's gift of salvation from sin must be accepted by all by faith in Him and obedience to His will.

Obedience to the Gospel

J.C. CHOATE

Can one obey the gospel? There are those who say that this is impossible. But the Bible teaches the contrary. There are the facts of the gospel, which have already been observed, and we must believe them. Then there are commands of the gospel, and we must obey them.

To begin with, let us re-emphasize the facts of the gospel. Paul listed them in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 as being the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But what does this have to do with obedience? A great deal, as we are going to see. Listen to the Apostle as he writes to the Christians in Rome: *"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness"* (Romans 6:17,18). Please notice that they were the servants of sin and then they became the servants of righteousness. What brought about the change? Simply this: They *"obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered"* to them. In other words, they obeyed the gospel of Christ. But how could they obey facts? They couldn't and didn't. The doctrine here refers to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But once again: They had obeyed a form of that doctrine. In so doing they had died to their sins, had been buried with their Lord in the waters of baptism, and had been resurrected from the watery grave. This is all brought out in the first part of Romans 6. Let us read: *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized 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. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with,*

that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin " (Romans 6:1 -6). So that is the form of doctrine that they had obeyed as pointed out by Paul later in Romans 6:17,18. Not only so, but every time someone obeys the gospel of Christ he obeys this form of doctrine, or pictures the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection in his actions.

As we continue, we want to see what the commands of the gospel are and how they relate to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The Lord Himself commanded the apostles, *"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). Matthew's version is recorded thus: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:19,20). Now you will observe here that the Lord is giving the command that the gospel should be preached. Not only so, but He carries through to show that certain commands must be obeyed for the individual to be saved.

In carrying out the Lord's instructions the apostles are found preaching the gospel in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 2). They produce proofs and evidences to prove that Jesus was truly the Son of God. After the people were convinced of this, the record says they asked this question: *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37). Then to show that there was something for them to do, Peter replied, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38). Also, when the Lord appeared to Saul in Acts 9 he wanted to know what he should do to be saved. The Lord told him to go into the city and it would be told him. Later Ananias came and did just that (Acts 22:16).

In Acts 8 we have Philip preaching Christ to the eunuch and the record says that the eunuch wanted to be baptized. But listen to the conversation that followed: *"Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So he commanded the chariot*

to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:37-39).

Now what are the commands of the gospel? First, it is necessary for one to hear the gospel preached. Second, one must believe in God, and Christ, as the Son of God. Third, he must repent of all of his sins. Fourth, he must confess with his mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And fifth, he must be baptized, buried in water, for the remission of sins.

Continuing with these thoughts, in obeying the commands of the gospel, one dies to his sins. That is, he has heard the gospel and has come to believe the Lord to the extent that he is willing to repent of all of his sins or to turn away from them. Thus, this represents death to sin. Then following death there is a burial. This is a burial in water. We have already observed Philip and the eunuch going down into the water that the burial might be performed. Also Colossians 2:12 and Romans 6:4 tell us that baptism is a burial in water. After the burial comes the resurrection. Acts 8 says that Philip and the eunuch came up out of the water. Romans 6 also talks about a burial and a resurrection and then a planting and being raised to walk in newness of life. Thus, in one's obedience to these simple commands, we have the individual symbolizing the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. Not only so, but every individual who obeys Christ so pictures that death, burial, and resurrection.

In John 3:3-5 Christ speaks of being born of water and of the Spirit. This is just another way of saying the same thing, for when one is buried in water, then there is the coming forth or a birth from water, which is a resurrection from the watery grave. As such, one goes forth to walk in newness of life, since he is now a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Commands are to be obeyed, and those who obey the commands of the Lord are rewarded accordingly. But please be reminded of the fact that not one of the commands of the gospel can be by-passed as being unnecessary or unimportant. Only after compliance with each command does the Lord save a person,

add him to the church, give him all spiritual blessings, with the hope of eternal life.

Although the gospel is for all, and must be obeyed by all accountable beings for salvation to be had, yet Paul laments, *"But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?'"* (Romans 10:16). This within itself would imply again that one must obey it to be saved. But what about those who do not? He says, in this case, *"And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power"* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). So according to this, ignorance of God on the one hand and failure to obey the gospel on the other, will bring the same results; the vengeance of the Lord. Christ said that those who obey the gospel will be saved, but those who believe not will be condemned (Mark 16:16). All of this is to say that there will be no escape for those who neglect their salvation (Hebrews 2:2,3).

Total Commitment

FRANCIS DAVID

When we talk about total commitment, it means to dedicate or to pledge our self for a cause. A lot of time we take decision or want to do something, but we do not take it seriously and not fully involve ourselves to do that thing. It is really sad. If we see in our day today lives, it is seen that we make a commitment to do something but soon we forget. What about as husband and wife relationship? As a husband are you committed to your wife or as a wife are you committed to your husband? A lot of times problems arises because of lack of commitment to each other.

In old testament times the priests were committed to offer their service to God throughout the day and they were committed for that kind of work and they did it faithfully. The Communist are

dedicated for a cause and one cannot be a Communist if he or she is not committed. Same thing could be to our Christian life. At the time of our baptism, we made a commitment to follow the Lord always and do whatever he asks us to do. We are called to serve God with our all dedication. Apostle Paul says, "...Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1).

All of us know about Mahatma Gandhi. He was committed for a cause. He sacrificed his life for the freedom of India from the clutches of British Empire. He fought for freedom. He had one solitary purpose in life. He was totally committed for a cause. He shook the British Empire and they had to leave our country. There were others who sacrificed their lives for this freedom, and such were Jawahar Lal Nehru, Maulana Azad and Sardar Patel. Their lives were full of commitment.

Jesus our Lord had twelve apostles. Most of them were untrained, uneducated, but they were powerful and had a commitment for a cause. They were totally involved to tell the name Jesus to the people who were lost in sin. The Bible says they were the ones who put the world upside down. Paul said the gospel had been preached everywhere. They did not have modern day facilities, but they had one thing and that was a total commitment for a cause and therefore they were able to take the gospel to so many people. If we as Christians have vision and a total commitment we can do the same. There is power in the gospel (Romans 1:16), and we must take the gospel to the lost. The church can take the gospel to the lost if its committed for a cause. As a Christian, have you dedicated your life to the Lord? If Christians have zeal, enthusiasm and commitment they can take the gospel of Christ to the maximum people.

Many of us just play with our Christianity. Jesus has commanded us to go and preach the gospel. (Matthew 28:18-19; Mark 16:15), If we take his command seriously, we will try to think of ways and means to do this great job. Let us serve our God with whole of our being and not half heartedly. Many of us are serving him half heartedly which is very dangerous. We must learn from Jesus who said, "Serve God with all our hearts, with all our soul and with all our minds. (Matthew 22:37). We cannot serve

two masters, if we do this, then we may either hate one and love the other. (Matthew 6:24). Let us be the devoted people and take our commitment seriously.

What about our own Christian lives? How are we running the Christian race? The writer of Hebrews says, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. (Heb. 12:1). What about us? What about our commitment? Are we slowing down? Are we backsliding? As Christians are we regular in worship services and other services of the Church? When we slow down, the devil steps in and he is very happy about this. He wants to see this. The devil shows us the attractions of the world. He says, you are too tired, too busy and you don't have to go for worship on Sunday or for Bible study. Just sit at home and don't stay back for Church activities, because there are some good programs on TV, you must watch those, don't miss that. Let us return back to the Lord and be totally committed to him for his great cause. Let us repent and say "I will serve the Lord with whole of my being."

God Rewards Those Who Seek Him

CLEM THURMAN

"Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Heb. 11:6). Faith is the means by which we access the salvation which God offers us through Jesus Christ. As we read, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). But, in spite of the fact that many recognize that we are "justified by faith" (Rom. 5:1), many of those fail to understand what kind of faith is required. In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the inspired writer describes the kind of faith God accepts. After giving a partial description of that faith (v. 1), he lists examples from the Old

Testament Scriptures and shows how their faith was rewarded, and why.

Jesus said, *"No man can come unto me except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day"* (John 6:44). The apostle Paul shows how faith is involved in the process of our responding to the call of God: *"God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel"* (2 Thes. 2:13-14). Let us look at that faith.

"BELIEVE THAT GOD IS"

If we would come to God, we must *"believe that he is"* (Heb. 11:6). That simply means we must believe in the existence of God, but that faith has many implications. Moses wrote, *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth . . . In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is"* (Gen. 1:1; Ex. 20:11). In spite of all the fanciful theories of men, including the faith of evolution, the faith that God created this world and everything in it is still the only faith that adequately explains the universe. *"By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear"* (Heb. 11:3).

Where did man come from? Where are we going? And why? God answers, *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . So God created man in his own image"* (Gen. 1:26-27). With all of man's learning, through science, philosophy and psychology, man is left groping in the dark for answers to the above questions. Only by real faith in God can man even begin to understand himself.

To believe that *"God is,"* we must also believe in the salvation which He offers. When Israel left Egypt, then saw the Egyptian army about to overtake them at the Red Sea, they complained to Moses, *"Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?"* But Moses answered: *"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord"* (Ex. 14:11,13). God saved them. Much later, the apostle Paul wrote, *"This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim. 2:3-4). God so much wants us to be saved that *"He gave*

his only begotten Son" (John 3:16).

Paul wrote of God's desire to save man, *"While we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. . . God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:6-8). Too many think of God as simply waiting until we make a mistake so He can condemn us. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The man of faith, whom God accepts, is he who believes that God is the Saviour and that He wants to save us.

"HE REWARDS THEM THAT SEEK AFTER HIM"

When God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:26), He had a purpose for man. The apostle Paul, speaking to people in Athens who had no knowledge of God, revealed clearly that purpose. *"He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth. . . that they should seek God"* (Acts 17:26-27). That purpose has not changed. Notice again our text, *"He is a rewarder of them that seek after him."* But just what does it mean to seek after God? It is not as though He were hiding from us. Then why seek Him? The answer is found in our text, and the verses that follow. We must believe that God rewards our seeking, and we seek by believing God and, doing what he tells us. Look at Abraham: *"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went"* (Heb. 11:8). Where did he go? Seeking after God! Abraham was not "seeking" in a physical sense, searching for him in the land of Canaan. Abraham was seeking God by doing what God told him.

God tested Abraham, and his faith, by telling him to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice (Gen. 22). Abraham had been told by God, *"In Isaac shall thy seed be called"* (Gen. 21:12), but he still proceeded to do what God said. How could he? Faith: *"By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; even he to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead"* (Heb. 11:17-19). Why was he willing to sacrifice Isaac? He was seeking after God, by faith! That is the kind of faith we must have.

The Bible says, *"Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness"* (Rom. 4:3). James wrote of this event, *"Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God"* (James 2:20-23).

SEEKING FAITH ALWAYS OBEYS

Look again at Abraham. He left his country and his kinsmen to go to the place God told him, because he was seeking after God (Heb. 11:8). When God told him to offer Isaac, he did it, because he was seeking after God (Heb. 11:17-19). Look at others who follow the exact same pattern: *"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain"* (Heb. 11:4), *"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death. . . for he hath had witness borne to him that. . . he had been well-pleasing unto God"* (Heb. 11:5). *"By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet. . . prepared an ark"* (Heb. 11:7).

With a dozen more examples in the rest of the chapter, the pattern never changes. Because people were seeking after God, they believed God enough to do what he told them. Noah built the ark, not because he expected to be able to sail to where God was, but because that act of obedience was *"seeking after God."* The same principle is true with us.

The inspired writer of Hebrews had already written of Jesus, *"Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation"* (Heb. 5:8-9). Whom does the Lord save? The answer is there: *"Them that obey him."* Obeying God is, by faith, seeking after God. Jesus said, *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 7:21). And He is still asking of the world today, *"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46). Faith that makes us *"well-pleasing unto God"* (Heb. 11:6) is faith that *"seeks after God"* by doing what He says! As

Paul wrote, what avails is *"faith working through love"* (Gal. 5:6).

The Bible plainly says, *"Faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. . . Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only"* (James 2:17,24). Only a living faith can make us acceptable with God. A dead faith can never save us. The apostle Paul wrote, *"Ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness"* (Rom. 6:17-18). Peter, inspired of God, echoed that theme when he wrote, *"Ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth"* (1 Pet. 1:22).

The faith that makes us acceptable to God is faith that obeys Him, and that is the only kind of faith that God rewards. Remember, *"He is a rewarder of them that seek after him."* May all of us be constrained to accept, by faith, all that the Lord tells us - and do it. That is saving faith. *"And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him"* (Heb. 11:6).

Living for Jesus

JOHNNY RAMSEY

How would you explain or describe the life of a Christian? There are twenty-one epistles in the New Testament which are dedicated to this matter. Romans through Jude contain classic data on the subject of Christianity translated into human conduct. We are richly blessed with such clarity of information in practical language for daily existence in the midst of a vile world that is insensitive to holiness and purity. Not many people in our age exhibit a desire to glorify God in the devotional words of Psalms 96:1-2, *"O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day."* The essence of a life devoted to Christ is a grateful heart that will gladly submit to a daily walk with God (Luke 9:23; Romans 12:1-2). An old and challenging song reminds us:

*I am so wondrously saved from sin,
Jesus so sweetly abides within,
There at the cross where He took me in:
Glory to His name!*

Once we realize how vain and futile life would be without the loving Savior, we will seek ways to magnify Deity. The power and grace of the Lord reminds us of this bulwark verse of Scripture: "*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*" (Rev. 1:8). How could we be so foolish as to launch out into a dark world devoid of the sacred light of His marvelous guidance? A compelling hymn captures this sentiment perfectly:

*Without Him I could do nothing;
Without Him I would surely fail.
Without Him I would be drifting
Like a ship without a sail.
Without Him how lost I would be!*

Perhaps no other Bible chapter better gives the gist of the solid sojourn of the Christian to the degree and depth of the 12th chapter of Romans. This dynamic section reminds us that the followers of Jesus lead a sacrificial, surrendered, selfless and satisfying life before God and men (vs. 1-8). The high ethic of the gospel system leaves no room for conceit, laziness or retaliation (vs. 9-20). We focus on serving the Lord and helping those about us (vs. 14-21). Living for Jesus forbids self-pity and mercenary goals. The redemption of the lost becomes our magnificent obsession (2 Cor. 4:13). Trivial matters fade, and spiritual emphases naturally engulf our waking thoughts. Producing the "*fruit of the Spirit*" (Gal. 5:22-23) subdues the carnal activities that overwhelm the vast hordes surrounding us. We are seekers of treasure far beyond silver and gold, due to the enormous value of souls.

The rich dividend for the man who truly seeks God's kingdom first (Matt. 6:33) is the glorious improvement it produces in his own

walk on the earth. Someone wisely stated, "The highest reward for man's toil is not what he gets for it but what he becomes by it." The "peace of God which passeth understanding" (Phil. 4:7) permeates the pilgrimage of those who follow Christ even when persecution enters their lives. Any noble endeavor is worth the consequences which such action may bring. It is far better to endure hardship as servants of the One who died at Calvary than to escape tribulation because of cowardice (1 Pet. 4:16).

Living for Jesus may mean that we will someday die for Him. Revelation 14:13 emphatically tells us that will be the epitome of blessedness: *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."* As this passage shows, there is just no way that a faithful Christian can lose. These twenty-one epistles — Romans through Jude — beautifully show us the splendid hope that our Redeemer grants us!

You Can't Live Tomorrow Until Tomorrow

ELWOOD HOLT

It was wise advice when one man said, those who desire to go hopefully and cheerfully through their work in this life should "take short views; not plan too far ahead: take the present blessing, and be thankful for it." Friends, this sums up in a very wonderful manner the correct attitude toward life. We would learn a great lesson if we would only learn that to successfully live, is to live one day at a time. Oh, how many of us try to live tomorrow before we get to it! Many are living in the future altogether. They never think of present duties. But the present — today — is our golden day of opportunities. Tomorrow may never come. We know the time will come when there will be no tomorrow. We shouldn't plan too far ahead. It is alright to think about tomorrow, the next day, or even next year, but we are not to depend too heavily on tomorrow. We need to say that we are not to "bank" on tomorrow. If we lean heavily upon it we will forget what our present duties

are. Solomon said, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow" (Proverbs 27:1).

Jesus said, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:34). It is good that we do not know what tomorrow has in store for us. It will be a day of sadness and tragedy for millions. It will be a day of success for many. What will it be for us? We do not know. God, in his great wisdom and love for us, has withheld from us what is to be in the future. I know some things I want to do if I live. I have some plans, but I realize that I do not have to carry them out. It may not be the Father's will for me to do even what I want to do. My life may be cut short; yours may, too, but while we tarry we are to take advantage of the time we now, have — today. Forgetfulness preys on the mind of many of us. We should train our minds to remember the important things we are to do from day to day.

Friend, "Take the present blessing." Have you ever sat down and counted your many blessings? Do you think you have none? Friend, you are sadly mistaken if that is your feeling in the matter. David thought once that he was friendless . . . that he stood alone. He even said, "no man cared for my soul" (Psalm 142:4). But, David was wrong. And we are wrong, too, when we think nobody cares. We may be neglectful at times, but we care for our friends and loved ones. We may not go to the sick room as frequently as we should, but surely we care. When we are despondent, we need to tabulate our many blessings. Begin, count them one by one, and in the words of the song, you will see "what the Lord has done." I sometimes think my lot in life is a hard one until I look about me and see the lot of others. I read a little motto on the wall once, "I complained because I had no shoes, until I met the man who had no feet." So we could be much worse off.

Oh, we worry about what we are to eat, wear, and where we will live — worry, worry, worry. That seems to be the word that most aptly describes the present day attitude of the majority. In view of it the Lord still says, "In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6). "In nothing be anxious" simply means, "Don't worry about things you can't help." Most of our troubles never happen anyway. We are prone

to make mountains out of mole hills. We need to gather up all our worries, troubles, distresses, tribulations, heartbreaks, and take them to Jesus. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" we are told in I Peter 5:7. Do we believe this? Jesus is the great burden bearer for the whole world.

Let us pray to God for forgiveness of our ungrateful attitudes. We need to cry out, "God be merciful to us" for we have erred. Then we need to use the present time. It is seed time. The harvest will come, by and by. Every day and every hour of the day, is a talent of time. God expects us to use it, to improve it, and will call us to account for it in the last days. We cling to this world as if it will never have an end, and neglect preparation for the next as if it will never begin.

The Incredible Power Of Our Thoughts

JON ATKINSON

Psychologist William James said: "The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind." The way we think is one of the greatest factors in determining the quality of our lives. Solomon stated this truth centuries ago: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). In the parable of the talents two of the servants doubled their allotment, but the man given only one talent buried it in the ground and made no gain. When his master questioned him, he replied, "I was afraid." How often fear paralyzes us and keeps us from attempting to live boldly. We are our own worst enemy. That little voice inside our head whispers to us, "It can't be done." We set our own limitations. Our thinking colours our whole outlook on life. The message of the following poem written by an unknown author is certainly true:

If you think you are beaten, you are.
If you think you dare not, you don't.
If you like to win but think you can't

It's almost a cinch you won't.
If you think you'll lose, you're lost.
For out in the world we find
Success begins with a fellow's will;
It's all in the state of mind.
If you think you are outclassed, you are.
You've got to think high to rise.
You've got to be sure of yourself
Before you can ever win the prize.
Life's battles don't always go
To the stronger or the faster man.
But soon or late, the man who wins
is the man who thinks he can.

The apostle Paul said, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). Believe in yourself and in the God within you, and you can do more than you ever thought possible.

The Lowly Sparrow

JOE E. GALLOWAY

In his book **Beyond Survival: A P.O.W.'s Story**, Capt. Gerald L. Coffee, U. S. Navy (Ret.) relates the joy a plain little sparrow brought to the lives of himself and his fellow prisoners. He was in one of a succession of Vietnamese prisons, having undergone a great deal of torture and deprivation. Then one day when his building was being cleaned a sparrow's nest was torn down, tumbling a recently hatched sparrow into the cell. Soon the entire cell block of 16-18 men were busy feeding the fledgling bits of bread and rice, trying to assist its crippled body so it could learn to fly, and in keeping it warm. It was missed terribly when it died. In our normal lives it is difficult to understand how such a lowly, baby sparrow could have meant so much to several grown men.

Yet, in Matthew 10:29 Jesus showed that the heavenly Father knows when even one sparrow falls on the ground. The

lesson to his disciples was, "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (10:31). How reassuring it should be to each one of us that God is aware and cares about our needs!

The greater context of Matthew 10 shows that Christ's followers would often be hated and persecuted for his name's sake, some even unto death. In many instances being faithful to the Lord in preaching or practicing his will would even cause close members of one's family to turn against him. Still, the assurance is that God understands and cares! As Romans 8:31-32 expresses it: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

There is an additional lesson to be learned from God's concern for even one sparrow: since God cares for even the lowly sparrow, he certainly wants each human being, created in his own image, to be saved. This desire of God for human salvation is plainly stated in I Timothy 2:4 and II Peter 3:9.

God wanted lost humanity to be saved so much that: (1) He made plans for our salvation through Christ and the church before the world began (Ephesians 1:4; 3:10-11). (2) He was willing to give his only begotten Son to make salvation possible (John 3:16; I John 4:9). (3) He revealed in the New Testament clearly and exactly what we must do to be saved (II Timothy 3:15-17). (4) He gave command that this saving gospel be preached to every person under heaven (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:18-20).

God cares for us more than the sparrow. He has done his part to make salvation possible for each of us. Yet we must (1) make the final choice by obeying his will. "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9). (2) We must do our best to see that all of lost humanity also hears the message of salvation. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:2).

John 3:16

BOBBY KEY

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The death of our Lord displayed two things: 1) How much God loved man; He gave His only begotten Son in behalf of a sinful world, and 2) How much God hates and detests sin; sin is so bad, that only the death of God's Son could serve as a sacrifice for it!

The Bible teaches that alien sinners must be baptized in water to have their sins blotted out (Mark 16:16). Some object to this plain teaching by asking, "What about John 3:16?" A preacher recently said, "Baptism has nothing whatsoever to do with our salvation because John 3:16 says: 'Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'" The same reasoning would prove that repentance is not essential to salvation. Repentance is implied in John 3:16; so is baptism, because the Bible teaches in other verses that both repentance and baptism are included in what John 3:16 calls believing in Him (Acts 2:38; 17:30).

Baptism alone does not save any more than faith alone saves. Baptism must be preceded by the kind of faith that causes one to repent of his sins and to confess his faith in Jesus. Every time baptism and salvation are mentioned in the Bible in the same verse, baptism precedes salvation. The expression, "that whosoever believeth in him," does not refer to just one act any more than, "he gave his only begotten Son," refers to just one act. "That he gave" is a summation of all heaven has done in the scheme of man's redemption. This clause embraces every act of God and all the ordeal of Calvary. Everything that Jesus endured is summed up in that He "gave his only begotten Son."

"The Son of God gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (Galatians 1:4, 5). Every spiritual blessing in heavenly places is

found in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Eternal life is in the Son (1 John 5:11).

"Whosoever believeth in him," is a summation of all that man is required by heaven to do, not only in becoming a Christian, but in living the Christian life. When sinners refuse to do the will of God, it is a clear sign of unbelief. If we fail to enter heaven, it will be for the same reason Israel failed to enter the promised land. "So we see they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19).

The people on Pentecost Day, (1) heard the gospel, (2) believed the gospel, (3) repented of their sins, (4) were baptized for the remission of their sins, (5) were added to the Lord's church, and (6) continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:36-42). After they had obeyed these truths, it is said, "All who believed were together, and had all things common" (Acts 2:44).

Believers shall be saved; believers that are obedient to God. This is the kind of belief referred to in John 3:16. Believers in Acts the second chapter were saved and became members of the Lord's church when they obeyed the gospel. It is not possible to separate the believer from gospel obedience.

"Let Us Be Therewith Content"

EDSEL BURLESON

An old man who had recently suffered a stroke said, "Oh, I'm feeling fair-to-middlin' these days. No pain, I'm eating and sleeping right well, and able to drive to town, fetch the groceries and go to church."

And as an afterthought he added, "Of course, my mind is gone, but I don't miss it much."

Paul knew the secret of contentment. Whether times were hard or easy, he made adjustments. Even when circumstances became very difficult he said, "... for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." He then added, "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).

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines contentment as "Having the desires limited to that which one has; satisfied." In reality, contentment comes from inside one's own heart and is not greatly affected by outward circumstances. Two people can have almost identical troubles and difficulties, and yet one is contented and the other isn't. Two may be afflicted with similar bodily ailments, one is happy and pleasant and the other is sad and gloomy. Two may suffer financial setbacks; one is thankful for what he has left and takes courage while the other complains that all is wrong and gives up. The difference is on the inside.

Several years ago Calvin Henry wrote an article which should prompt each of us to look with more contentment on our circumstances. He said, "The other night I was feeling rather dejected about a certain 'failure' in my life, when consolingly I thought to myself, 'I still wouldn't trade places with any of my neighbors.' Then I asked myself a painfully difficult question: 'with whom would I trade places?' I thought about it a good long while.

"I could think of many people having certain advantages of position or personality which I might envy. One man's money - another's power - one's success - another's charisma. But each person I thought of also had certain things in his life that I wouldn't want to trade for - family problems, or burdens of responsibility, or the hopelessness of a life without faith. Would I really want to trade places with any of these people? And I need to remember that they all are certain to have other problems of which I am totally unaware. To trade places would be to take a 'surprise package.'

"Finally (after ruling out anybody living nowadays) I decided that the apostle Paul - to me the almost ideal Christian - is the one with whom I would trade places. But wait a minute! Am I prepared to be an apostle Paul? To face the same loneliness? And heartaches? And persecutions? Somehow I don't feel cut out to be Paul. God made me to be me. And somehow even with all my frailties, he has prepared me to fill a special role in his great scheme of things."

An honest examination of self will enable one to take courage in his strengths and to improve or learn to accept his weaknesses. Many weaknesses can be strengthened, but some cannot. It is

most important that one learn to live with those weaknesses that cannot be removed. Paul had a thorn in the flesh. He besought the Lord three times to have it removed, but the Lord answered, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness." Paul learned to live with his problem, even gloried in his weakness that the power of Christ might rest upon him. (II Corinthians 12:7-10).

All would do well to contrast what they are with what they might have been but for the grace of God. Let us stop looking at the things we do not have long enough to focus on the things we do have! Do we have a regular job, reasonable health, loving family, plenty to eat, sufficient clothing? The majority of the people of the earth cannot claim such an impressive inventory.

Adjusting to the things we cannot change is far more desirable than complaining about them. Moses said, "And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord" (Numbers 11:1).

Love At Philippi

WINFRED CLARK

We do not know all about the people at Philippi, but there are some things that we do know. We know what kind of love Paul wanted these folks to have. We know that because he told us. Take time to listen to his prayer where he says, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement; That you may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:9-10). So we know the kind of love Paul desired for the church at Philippi.

1. HE DESIRED A PROGRESSIVE LOVE

Notice what he will say, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more" (Philippians 1:9). There can be no doubt about his desire that they might have a greater love. That it might abound or overflow it's banks.

Do we not sing a song, "More Love to Thee?" That song expresses a desire on our part to love more and more. This is

one of those things that a person can not over do. Didn't Paul say, "against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:23)? So there is ever room for growth in this area. This is true whether it be in the relationship to God, to man, to the truth, to the church, in the home, at work or in play. One will always have room to love more and more. This surely the thing Paul desired for those at Philippi.

2. A LOVE THAT IS PERCEPTIVE

Note that his prayer is that they may "approve things that are excellent;" (Philippians 1:10). The fact that he wants them to love does not mean that they will give their endorsement to everything that comes along asking for acceptance.

This is often needed when those so close to us may espouse that which is not in harmony with the will of the Lord. Our love cannot be blind to that which is not right even though it may be embraced by one we dearly love.

3. A LOVE THAT IS PRODUCTIVE

Notice what he will say, "that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruit of righteousness" (Philippians 1:10-11). Love is not merely something passive but is very active. It will produce some things in the life of one so motivated.

There will be sincerity. There is no sham but the character will be able to stand the test.

There will also be a life of service as one is filled with the fruit of righteousness.

Do You Charge To Forgive

BILL DENTON

A sign in a convenience store read, "Check Cashing Policy: To err is human. To forgive, \$10." It's a funny way to recognize the fact that we make mistakes; but it's also evidence of the way many people think about forgiveness.

To forgive is to accept within yourself the consequences of the sins of others. It means to accept the pain, the problems and

the burden that comes when someone sins against you. Forgiveness is neither easy nor a frequent gift.

This is what God did for us. "... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Peter 1:18-19, NKJ). What did God give for your forgiveness? It wasn't money or anything of wealth or value in worldly terms. He gave His Son. Jesus took upon himself the burden of our sins. "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21, NKJ). The prophet put it this way in Isaiah 53:4-5, "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."

We forget sometimes that God's forgiveness comes at a high price. Yes, that price was His Son. But there is more to the price. In that gift, God took the burden of sin that didn't belong to Him. My sins should bring the consequences home to me. However, God intercepted the consequences, bore the burden, accepted the pain and the suffering on my behalf. That's the good news found in Jesus Christ.

The problem is that we fail to understand how forgiveness works among ourselves. If you sin against me, practically speaking, how do I forgive.

It works much the same way as when God forgives. If I forgive you, I will accept within myself the pain caused by your sin. I must not require you to pay for it.

If I do, it is not forgiveness. When I forgive you, I actually pay for your sin. Then I put it away. I cancel it out and consider it done with.

This old world needs more forgiveness. IT always will. Why? Because it's not easy to pay for what others do. I find it easier to practice forgiveness when I remember how God managed to forgive me.

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