

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 37

May 2006

No. 1

EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household"

In Mark chapter sixteen and verse number sixteen Jesus, the Saviour said, "he who believes and is baptized will be saved." Jesus, the Saviour mentioned two different and distinct things one must do to be saved, i.e., to believe and be baptized. Was Paul, the apostle, teaching entirely different from Christ when he said to the Phillipian Jailer at Acts 16:31, as has been stated above? Paul didn't mention baptism. He said, believe. Also, Paul said to the Jailer that not only he, when he would believe, would be saved but also his household. Was he saying to him that not only he will be saved but also his family will be saved based on his belief or faith in Christ?

How does faith come? One must hear or read or see to believe. The Bible teaches, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17). Therefore, in the very next verse number 32 of Acts chapter 16 we read, "Then they," that is Paul and Silas, "spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house." Not only to the Jailer but also to those who were in his house. Jailer's faith in Christ was his personal faith. Faith is personal. You can't believe for me and I can't believe for you. Jailer and all in his household heard the word of God preached to them in their house by Paul and Silas, so the

faith in them was produced. Now, what happened? in the very next verse, that is, in Verse number 33, we read: "And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, And *immediately* he and all his family were baptized." Jailer had earlier beaten up Paul and Silas and had put them both in the jail because they were preaching the gospel or the good news of Jesus Christ in his city. He didn't believe in Christ, at that time, he opposed him. But now he had heard the gospel of Christ. He was sorry for what he had done to Paul and Silas who were preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. So he washed their wounds. What next? "And immediately he and all his family were baptized." Yes, reader, in the same hour of the night!

Did Paul and Silas preach differently than what Christ had commanded? No. They had told the Jailer and his household to believe in Christ and be baptized to be saved from their sin. They didn't teach "only believe in Christ to be saved." But they taught, as Christ had taught, to believe and be baptized to be saved. Each one, in the Jailer's family that night, who had heard the soul saving message of Jesus Christ and had believed in Him was baptized *immediately in the same hour of the night*. Because Christ, the Saviour, had commanded His followers to "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). To assume that babies or little children were also baptized that night, is to not only assume too much, but is also to accuse Paul and Silas of doing something that Christ had not commanded. For Christ had commanded to baptize those who would believe in Him. Baptism was never intended for babies or little children. One must believe in Christ, after hearing of Him, that He had died on the cross as a propitiation for me. And, then one must be baptized, immersed in water, for the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 2:38). God's plan of man's salvation is unchangeable. Listen to Christ: "He who rejects me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." (John 12:48). Not by what a "Pastor" or a church teaches, but what Christ has said Himself or through His apostles will be the standard of judgment. Have you done that what the Saviour required? Think seriously!

Facts About God

J.C. CHOATE

First, Who is God? What is his nature? Where did he come from? Christ tells us that he is a Spirit. He says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24). That means that he is not like man with a physical body or one who has a physical image. John wrote, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:12). As to God himself, we read that he was in the beginning, that is, when all things were created. He was not a part of the creation, but he was the one that created all things. We read in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." He is therefore without beginning or ending. He has always been and will always be. He is eternal. He is deity. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-seeing, and all-hearing. The Psalmist David declared, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." (Psalm 90:1,2). He continues, by saying, "For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." (Psalm 48:14).

Second, Is there more than one God? The Scriptures tell us again and again that he is but one, that he alone exists. Paul says that there is "... One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:6). When God gave the ten commandments to Moses, he said, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God. ..." Exodus 20:2-5). Hundreds of years later when Paul was at Athens, he said, "... Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE

UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." (Acts 17:22-29). Yes, there are many gods and goddesses, man-made gods and goddesses, in this world. They come in all forms and sizes. They are made out of wood, stone, and other materials. Some men claim to be god. Many worship nature, animals, or the moon and stars. But they are all without life or will die in time. They cannot respond to man's needs. They do not have the ability to save one. We are therefore not to worship them. There is but one true and living God, and he is the one that made us all. He lives, blesses, and can save. Only in him do we have hope.

Third, How do we know that God exists? There are two ways. First, we may know by the things we see all around us, the creation itself, the world and all things therein, even ourselves. Speaking of those who had rejected God, and had begun to worship the creature more than the Creator, Paul said, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20). Second, God has spoken to us through his word as revealed in the Bible. The Hebrew writer said, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." (Hebrews 1:1,2). Then Paul said, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking

vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Please notice that the Lord is coming back one day to punish two types of people, and those would be the ones who do not know God and those who have not obeyed the gospel. All should know that God exists because of the creation itself. Then if one comes to believe in God, he needs to seek to know God's will, and he may do this by going to God's word, the Bible, to learn of the gospel, or the good news of Jesus Christ, and how one can be saved by obeying that gospel. If one learns of that gospel, and fails to obey it, then the Lord will come to punish him. If he believes in God, learns of the gospel, and obeys that gospel, then the Lord has promised to save him in this world and to give him the hope of eternal life. (Mark 16:15, 16).

Fourth, What are some other facts about God? For one thing, he is said to be the essence of love. John wrote, "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love". (1 John 4:8). On another occasion, John recorded these words: "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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:16, 17). Now while God loves man, and has shown his love for man, what type of love does the Lord expect us to have for him? Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." (Matthew 22:37). But what will one do if he loves God? Christ, his Son, said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15).

We would conclude then by saying that God lives today, that there is but one God, that we should believe in him, obey him, and serve him, so that we may be saved in this world and in the world to come. The Hebrew writer says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6).

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

V.E. HOWARD

Perhaps there is no subject in the Bible so grossly misunderstood as that of the Holy Spirit. Ignorance of the Bible teaching on this important subject has caused true Christianity to be exchanged for "saw-dust trail," "get religion," and "get the Holy Ghost" feeling religion. Yet, not one time in the Bible was anyone ever told to "*get*" religion, or "*get the Holy Ghost!*" We are told to practice religion, but not "get it." Many honest and sincere people have been misinformed.

PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is a divine Being who was with the Father and Son in the chambers of the high court of heaven before the worlds began. He is an intelligent speaking personality; not a ghost, clouded in mysticism, making mysterious descents from Heaven, striking the souls of men, causing them to fall out prostrate on the ground, or at an altar, losing their physical and mental balance. Such superstition might be associated with ghost tales, but not rightfully with the Holy Spirit and His work. Many honest souls, under the spell of emotionalism, have even lost consciousness and have been made to believe that they were saved by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit and now experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

PERSONALITY, NOT MATERIALITY

The Holy Spirit is not recognized in a bodily sense. "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39), declared the Master. We should not become confused about personal identity of the Spirit.

There is a difference in personality and materiality. Actually, personality does not pertain to materiality. Bodies which are purely material have no personality. They are dead bodies! "The body without the spirit is dead" (James 2:26). Only the spirit gives evidence of personality. That which is spiritual is not material. Personality becomes distinct and pure to the degree it is uncontrolled and unhampered by that which is material. Personality is the revelation and function of spirituality. The Holy

Spirit is not a physical being. He is a distinct personality, a distinct personal being. When men claim to be witnesses of material manifestations and revelations of the Holy Spirit, they are false witnesses. The Holy Spirit can not be identified as materiality. When men claim that they saw the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Spirit appeared to them in identity form, they are mistaken. The Holy Spirit does not appear unto man in such material manifestations today.

PERSONAL WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The personality of the Holy Spirit is evidenced by the work of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is said to do things only a person can do:

1. The Holy Spirit teaches. Jesus said, "And He shall teach you all things" (John 14:26).
2. The Holy Spirit reproves. When Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to the apostles He said, "and when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).
3. The Holy Spirit is a guide. In giving this promise Jesus told the apostles, "he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).
4. The Holy Spirit, characteristic of a person, speaks. Continuing His promise of sending the Holy Spirit, Christ declared, "For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak" (John 16:13). Paul declared, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly. . . ." (1 Tim. 4:1). The Holy Spirit, therefore, is a person who hears and speaks!
5. The Holy Spirit is one who is affected as a person. He may be grieved (Eph. 4:30). He may be vexed (Isa. 63:10). The Holy Spirit may be lied to (Acts 5:3). The Holy Spirit may be resisted or rejected (1 Thess. 5:19).

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

The New Testament church, in its period of infancy, was characterized by a diversity of apostolic gifts of the Spirit, as revealed in the 12th, 13th, and 14th chapters of 1 Corinthians. The objectives of the spiritual gifts were clearly stated. The distribution of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit are unquestionably revealed by the inspired men of God.

The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, including the "gifts of healing," "gifts of miracles," "gifts of tongues" and "gifts of knowledge," were important in their time, but the apostle concluded that there is "a more excellent way."

These miraculous works of the Spirit were never intended to be permanent in the church. They were given in the infancy of the church to last until "that which is perfect is come." Having admonished the Corinthians to covet the "best gifts," Paul added, "Yet shew I unto you a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31).

Of all the gifts in the Corinthian church, some were to "pass away" and some were to abide. The apostle makes comparisons in these words: "Though I speak with tongues"—of chapter 12:10—"and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophesy"—no doubt, the "prophecy" of chapter 12:10—"and understand all mysteries"—no doubt, "the word of wisdom" of chapter 12:8—"and all knowledge; and though I have all faith"—no doubt, miraculous "faith" of chapter 12:9—"so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:1,2).

In these verses the apostle gives appraisal of the value of love over the miraculous gifts. There must be a reason. The gifts of the Spirit were transitory; they would "pass away." Love was superior, in contrast to the impermanent miraculous gifts, because it "abideth" forever.

Paul affirmed, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 1:11, 12), that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit would cease:

"Love never faileth: but whether there be prophesies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away" (1 Cor. 13:8 - American Standard Version).

The Holy Spirit does not dwell in man today in a miraculous way, as in New Testament times. If it were true, then man would be able to perform the same miraculous works of the Spirit, such as: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead" (Matt. 10:8); drink "deadly" poison without harm (Mark 16:18); speak in tongues (languages) never known by the speaker such that hearers would understand in their own peculiar languages (Acts 2:5-8).

NO DIRECT POWER OF HOLY SPIRIT

Miracles and healings have ceased because the means of

securing miraculous power to perform miracles have ceased. The New Testament reveals two means of bestowing miraculous power upon men chosen by God. One: The baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4, 43). Two: The laying on hands of the apostles (Acts 8:14-18; 19: 1-7).

According to Acts 1:2, 26; 2:4,14,43, the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 10:44, 45, it is revealed that a special miraculous "gift of the Holy Spirit" was "poured out" upon Cornelius and his household. Paul, as a special chosen apostle, was endowed with the Holy Spirit and was divinely guided by the Spirit (Galatians 1:11, 12). This last occurrence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which we have record of, was about the year of A.D. 33. Some twenty-three years later the apostle Peter wrote about water baptism which saves (1 Pet. 3:20, 21). The Holy Spirit, through Paul, declared there is "*one baptism*" (Eph. 4:5). Obviously, that is water baptism. The man of Ethiopia requested, "See, here is *water*: What doth hinder me to be baptized? . . . And they went down into the *water*... and he baptized him" (Acts 8:36, 38). We must, therefore, scripturally conclude that there is no baptism of the Holy Spirit now as a source for miraculous works.

The apostles who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit were the only ones in the Jerusalem church who could work miracles until they imparted this power to others (Acts 2:43 and Acts 5:12). The seven deacons could perform miracles only after the apostles laid their hands upon them (Acts 6:6). Stephen could perform miracles (Acts 6:8). Philip could perform miracles (Acts 8:6), but not until after the laying on of the apostles' hands.

Although Philip could do miraculous work, he could not impart this power to others. He went to Samaria, preached the gospel and confirmed the word with miracles. Many believed and were baptized into Christ (Acts 8:12), but it was necessary for Peter and John, apostles of Christ, to go from Jerusalem to Samaria and lay hands on the new converts and impart to them miraculous power of the Spirit to confirm the word by miracles (Acts 8:14-21).

Simon evidently recognized that it was through the laying on of hands of the apostles that miraculous powers were imparted to others (Acts 8:18). He "saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given" and he offered them money to purchase that power. Peter informed him that this "gift

of God" could not be purchased. Furthermore, he declared, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter" (verses 20, 21). From this text we are forced to the conclusion that the "gift of God," the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, were obviously received only by the early Christians "through laying on of the apostles' hands."

The apostles have been dead more than nineteen hundred years now. The last persons upon whom the apostles laid their hands and conferred miraculous power have been dead now about nineteen hundred years. When the last apostle died and the last person upon whom the apostles laid their hands died, miracles by power of the Holy Spirit ceased. Regardless of all the fantastic claims, men do not receive the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit today!

HOLY SPIRIT, A GIFT

There is a great difference in miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit as a gift.

The Holy Spirit is received by those who obey the gospel. The apostles declared, "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32).

The apostle John wrote, "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (1 John 3:24).

The Christian abides in Christ by keeping his commandments. Christ and the Spirit abides in the Christian as he keeps the Lord's commandments.

HOLY SPIRIT NOT SEEN

To deny that the Holy Spirit dwells in a Christian because he has not been seen of mortal man would be equal to a denial of God, whom man has not seen. The apostle John concluded: "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:12,13).

Although man cannot see the person of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Christian any more than he can see the person of God, we do see the fruits and work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit may be seen in the child of God by the fruits of the Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22,23)

Christians who hate, bite and devour each other, holding malice and envy in their hearts, give public testimony to the fact that the Holy Spirit does not dwell in them.

Where *love* rules in the hearts of God's people, the Holy Spirit, Christ and God are the persons on the throne of the soul.

Joy is the spice of a Christian's life. God's people should be the happiest people on earth. The miserable, unhappy, ever complaining member of the church does not bear evidence of the indwelling spirit.

Peace is the fruit of the Spirit dwelling in the Christian. Our Lord declared, "blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the Sons of God" (Matt. 5:9).

Some of God's children seem to have been born in the "objective case" and "kickitive mood"; they object to almost everything and kick about almost anything. They do not seem to be happy unless promoting unrest, disturbance or trouble of some kind. A constantly disgruntled person, who is always in trouble in the church, does not have the Spirit of Christ.

Longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control are winning attributes of the Christian who has the Holy Spirit dwelling in his heart. Not only will the Christian, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, be saved, but other souls are influenced to be saved by the fruits of the Spirit revealed in the Christian's life.

NOT OF THE SPIRIT, NONE OF HIS

A most declarative statement is made by the apostle Paul when he said, "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9).

The Holy Spirit must reign supremely in the Christian's heart; otherwise, he is none of Christ's. Where Christ and the Spirit reign, the deeds of the body are put to death and the fruits of the Spirit are revealed in righteousness.

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:10,11).

The apostle concludes: "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God . . . The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, That we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:12-16).

SPIRIT DWELLS IN CHILD OF GOD

The Holy Spirit dwells in the child of God as long as the child of God has room for him. He does not share his dwelling with the devil. The Holy Spirit is the royal guest in the body of a Christian and, as the diety of God, he has the right to dictate the terms and conditions of his abiding in the human temple.

To the Corinthian church Paul wrote: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19,20).

The child of God and the Holy Spirit live in the same house. The temple of God must remain Holy. The body is only the dwelling place of the soul of man. When man moves out, by reason of death, the body is dead; the temple is unoccupied. If the Holy Spirit is forced to vacate the temple, because of sin and unrighteousness, spiritual death is the result.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16,17).

INDWELLING OF HOLY SPIRIT A GIFT

The apostle furthermore declared, that the "love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5).

A Christian cannot afford to forfeit his right to have the Holy

Spirit occupy the holy chambers of his soul, but the Spirit does not dwell where sin dwells. Jesus, the Son of God, warned man of those things which defile man, when He said: "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile man. . ." (Matt. 15:18-20).

From this divine declaration we must conclude that man is responsible for all the deeds of his body. All actions and deeds of the body, good or evil, proceed from the heart. When the Holy Spirit reigns on the throne of the Christian's heart, the deeds of the body born in the heart, will be none other than the fruits of the Spirit, which are good and not evil.

HOW DOES THE SPIRIT DWELL?

A question of much concern to many people is, how does the Holy Spirit dwell in a Christian? Does the Spirit dwell in a child of God independently of the word of God?

Today I am alive. My spirit dwells in me. If you ask me how? I cannot fully explain, but there are some conditions for the abode of my spirit in this mortal body. When I die my spirit will no longer dwell in this body. Likewise, there are certain conditions upon which the Holy Spirit dwells in the body of a child of God.

The Christian's awareness of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not based on his "feelings" or "better felt than told" experience, nor by physical manifestations. A child of God knows that the Holy Spirit dwells in him just as he knows that Christ dwells in him and just as he knows his sins have been forgiven. This is by faith. Paul concluded, "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:14). The same apostle declared that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

FILLED WITH SPIRIT-FILLED WITH WORD

In Ephesians 5:18 Paul exhorts, "Be filled with the Spirit." Yet, the same apostle admonishes, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16). To be filled with the Spirit, therefore, is to have the word of Christ richly dwelling in a Christian.

We are not to confuse the exhortation to be "filled with the Spirit" with the promise of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." One might fill a jug with water, yet not "baptize" the jug in water. John

the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from birth (Luke 1:15), yet he was not baptized with the Holy Spirit and worked no miracles (John 10:41). The baptism of the Holy Spirit was a promise to the apostles which was fulfilled on Pentecost recorded in Acts 1:2 and Acts 2.

John, the apostle, declared that the Spirit is the truth: "It is the Spirit that beareth witness because the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6).

Our Lord declared that God's word is truth (John 17:17). Paul affirmed that the gospel of Christ "is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16).

Any theory of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit through miraculous intervention, separate and apart from the word of God, would nullify the cross and set aside the whole scheme of redemption, revealed by the Holy Spirit through the apostles in the New Testament. When God spoke through Christ, His Son, by the Holy Spirit, he moved and directed the minds of the apostles, giving the world one message of salvation—the heaven-born, spirit-filled message of the cross, offering conditions of pardon and promises of salvation to the obedient. The Holy Spirit moves the mind and convicts the soul of man today, but not independent of the word of God. When man hears and obeys the gospel he hears and obeys the word of the Spirit. The word of God has always been the revelation of the Spirit, which man is obligated to hear and obey.

The Holy Spirit revealed WORDS to the apostles. It was not just a matter of influence. Christ promised, "He shall guide you into all truth for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, THESE SHALL HE SPEAK ..." (John 16:13).

The word of God is the "*sword of the Spirit*." The Holy Spirit uses the WORD, like a sword, to "convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). The Spirit uses the sword, the word of God, which is LIVING AND ACTIVE, and sharper than any two-edged sword" which pierces "even to the dividing of soul and spirit" and is "quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

The Bible, a material book made of paper and ink, is not the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit uses the Bible, which is the WORD of God revealed by the Spirit, to convict, to exhort, to guide, to save. The apostle James admonishes, "Receive with meekness

the *implanted word, which is able to save your souls*" (James 1:21). The Holy Spirit dictated the "implanted" word.

Even in the miraculous age of the church, from the very beginning, the indwelling Spirit directed the apostle Peter, who had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, to speak the WORD which brought conviction and obedience to the hearts of the hearers—"THEY THEN THAT RECEIVED HIS WORD WERE BAPTIZED ..." (Not direct operation of the Holy Spirit, but Spirit-directed and Spirit-inspired WORD) Acts 2:37, 38, 41.

It is recorded that: "WITH MANY OTHER WORDS he testified and exhorted them, saying, save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40). The Holy Spirit used "WORDS" to convict and convert the lost!

The Corinthians, in whom the Holy Spirit dwelled, learned of Christ, the glory of the cross and the power of His resurrection through the gospel, the WORD, preached by Paul and not by some direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Read carefully Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 15:1-4.

LIFE IN THE SEED

The Holy Spirit gave the regenerating life to the word of God, which is the "seed of the kingdom" and is the perpetuator of life in the born-again child of God (1 John 5:7; Luke 8:11). The child of God is begotten by the Spirit through the word of God. Jesus declared, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Peter declared, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit . . . Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:22, 23).

The Holy Spirit, as a person, does dwell in the body of a child of God, having begotten life through the seed, the word of God. Man's own spirit dwells in the natural body, having been begotten through the seed which produces natural life. It is not within the realm of human wisdom to fully understand how this is possible regarding spiritual life or natural life. Nevertheless, it is a fact! Just how God in His providence, through the Spirit, may overrule and direct the lives of His children, we are not prepared to say. Surely that is God's part. Our part is to follow the direction of the dictates of the Spirit through the word of God and trust Him. Men may speculate on how God, in His providence, through the Spirit, may

overrule and direct the life of His children we are not prepared to say. Surely that is God's part. Our part is to follow the direction of the dictates of the Spirit through the word of God and trust Him. Men may speculate on how the Spirit intervenes on behalf of the child of God, but that does not change the fact that the body of a Christian "is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you" (1 Cor. 6:19).

WORD OF GOD SPIRITUAL FOOD

Man is born into this world through life in the seed by which he was begotten. Unless that life is sustained by proper nourishment and treatment the spirit will move out of the body. We call it death. The child of God is "born again" by the Spirit giving life to the seed, the word, by which he is begotten. The spiritual life must continually be nourished by the word of God which sustains and perpetuates life and growth of a Christian. Unless the child of God receives proper spiritual nourishment and engages in proper spiritual exercises and activities, he will die spiritually. The Holy Spirit moves out!

The apostle John surely refers to the spiritual life of a child of God declaring that this new begotten life is sustained and maintained "because his seed abideth in him" (1 John 3:9). The apostle positively does not mean in this scripture that a child of God cannot sin, for the same apostle in the same epistle, chapter one and verse eight, declares: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The child of God, however, who does "walk in the light, as he is in the light" has the assurance that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7,9). This spiritual life is predicated upon the promise that "his seed remaineth in us." If the seed is not nourished to active spiritual growth the child of God will die spiritually. He will be lost!

SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Christian has the seal of promise by the Holy Spirit which is an earnest of inheritance:

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased

possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:13,14).

The apostle made the same declaration to the children of God at Corinth: "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:22).

The earnest of the Holy Spirit is the seal of promise, the guarantee deposit, from the highest power there is, an omnipotent God, assuring the child of God of his eternal inheritance and final redemption. The child of God, therefore, must not grieve the Holy Spirit, nor force him out of the dwelling place occupied by both the Christian and the Holy Spirit. Paul admonished the Ephesian Christians, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT A REALITY

It is the Holy Spirit dwelling in the body of a Christian that will quicken the mortal body on the resurrection day: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (Rom. 8:11,12).

The indwelling Spirit enables the Christian to put to death the deeds of the body. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13).

Our access to God is affected by the indwelling Spirit. The indwelling Spirit, which generates life to the child of God, has a distinct relationship to the word of God through faith. Hear the apostle! "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2:18). But access by the Spirit is predicated upon faith in God through His word, "... by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2). This grace, to which we have access by faith, appears unto man teaching him. The apostle wrote: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11,12).

One of the great difficulties in understanding the fact that the Holy Spirit is a person, who dwells in the child of God, is the fact that so many people do not recognize the Holy Spirit as a person,

but consider him as an influence, a power, or an ideology. But the Holy Spirit is a person—one of the Godhead, three-omnipotent, omniscient and eternal. If it be a matter of rejecting the reign of the Holy Spirit in the Christian, in his body, as a temple, because it is not "reasonable," then one would be forced to deny his own existence in the body; because no man on earth could identify the soul of man, the person who lives in the body, by any physical measurements or identities.

GLORY OF HIS PERSONALITY

The glory of the personality of the Spirit is described by David when he said: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 139:7-12).

The Christian may not fully comprehend the Spirit and his divine personality, but we can comprehend his message, his methods and the fruits of his power. The Holy Spirit is God's gift to His children that obey him. Lift high your own spirit to the mountain top of God's infinite power. Through His word, behold the glory of the divine Spirit who will live with you and abide in the same house with you, in your body, until the time shall come when He will transform our mortal bodies into the glorious image of Him who died for us that we might live with Him in eternity.

"A Famine in the Land"

CLEM THURMAN

"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day. And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning for an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,

but of hearing the words of Jehovah" (Amos 8:9-11).

I was just a small boy in those days, but I still remember the bleak days in western Oklahoma during "The Great Depression" of the 1930's. I never saw the "bread lines" of the big cities, but I saw fertile farming country turned into a wasteland by lack of rain. I saw the dust storms that literally rolled in and darkened the sky so that the chickens went to roost at noon! Tumbleweeds mixed with sand covered a three-strand barbed wire fence, but the cows didn't cross it, for there was no grass growing on either side of the fence. During those "Dust Bowl" days, when the whole nation was suffering, it seemed things had to be better somewhere else. So, many "Okies" pulled up stakes and headed for California - including many in my family. We didn't starve, but I can't say as much for some of the livestock on neighboring farms!

I remember one Sunday in church, we studied the words of Jesus in John 6:48-51, *"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world."* Religion flourished in those days, maybe because we had nothing else to give us comfort or hope. That was a real famine. But Amos, in our text at the head of this article, tells of a far worse famine — of a different kind, not a lack of bread but of hearing the word of God!

FAMINE DESCENDING IN THE MIDST OF PLENTY!

It is the height of folly to turn from Jesus, *"the bread of life,"* to feed on the refuge of garbage cans, but that is just about what the prophet pictures. But is that much different from the degeneracy of the present generation, as manifested by the display of immorality in magazine,; and on the television? People seem entranced by "sports heroes" and Hollywood stars, who are idolized, no matter how depraved their values. The lurid stories of crime, corruption and immoral sex so occupy their thinking that there is no time left for feasting on *"the bread of life."*

When Samuel was just a lad, it was said of the altitude of people, *"And the word of Jehovah was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision"* (1 Sam. 3:1). The word of Jehovah

was very valuable, for there were no recognized prophets openly declaring the word of God, and none to whom the people had recourse. Israel had allowed this condition to develop, although God warned: *"Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumor shall be upon rumor; and they shall seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders"* (Ezek. 7:26). Because Israel had neglected God and His word, then the Lord neglected to hear and answer their calls for help!

THE SIGNS OF A SPIRITUAL FAMINE

The word, *"famine,"* denotes a scarcity of the things mentioned. But our concern is not for a scarcity of food for the body, but *"of hearing the word of Jehovah."* Those words of Amos were written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, but possibly no generation needs their warning more than ours. With Bibles freely accessible to all, and plentifully distributed throughout our land, we still have biblical illiteracy, and even among members of the Lord's church! It is not uncommon to hear people say, "Oh, I don't know much about the Bible." And they are right!

Jesus, *"the bread of life,"* said of the people of His day: *"By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should turn again, And I should heal them"* (Matt. 13:14-15). So, just who is responsible for this famine of hearing the word of the Lord? Our salvation is dependent on hearing His word, for: *"Faith cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ . . . And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him"* (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6). But who has failed to hear?

"WATERED-DOWN DIET" CAUSES THE FAMINE

One sign that presages any spiritual famine is a watered-down message. That was true with Israel under the Old Testament, and it was true in the times of the apostles. When Peter and John had been arrested for preaching Christ, then released, the saints prayed, *"And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness"* (Acts 4:29). Paul also asked for prayers. *"And on*

my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:19-20).

Even of old, the prophet saw the need for "straight" preaching: *"Now go,, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever. For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of Jehovah; that say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits" (Isa. 30:8-10).* He could not have more aptly described many in our day who plead for preachers to "go easy" and not "antagonize our religious friends." But God always wants preachers who will preach *"the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27)*. Compromise and evasion have swept through the denominational world, but it must not be allowed in the church of Jesus Christ! God's man must not speak smooth, comforting words of deceit, but must speak words of truth and soberness!

SHALL WE GIVE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT?

Another danger sign is seen when preachers give the people what they want. The weeping prophet looked upon such times as these and cried, *"A wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5:30-31).* Demands fall heavily on the shoulders of the preacher who is seeking the favor of the people to whom he is preaching! Thus, his preaching must be that of a "cut-rate" religion offered in a "watered-down" gospel that is offered apologetically, and which will be a reminder of the plaintive cry of the prophet: *"They have healed also the hurt of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14).*

The solution is simple, but often rejected: *"Thus saith Jehovah, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls: but they said, We will not walk therein" (Jer. 6:16).* As Paul wrote, *"The time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).* For any who

would question this statement, put it to the test by challenging people to obey what they did on Pentecost (Acts 2:36-41). The truth is still not very popular.

OTHER SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL FAMINE

There are various signs of spiritual famine creeping into our fellowship, seemingly not very important, but boding ill for the future purity of faith, doctrine and practice. For years we have decried the "social gospel" that has swept the denominations. Now we have a growing trend of social emphasis—even in evangelism! Instead of trying to win people with the truth, we use the techniques of entertainment, friendship, youth and social development to attract them. We have not yet fully adopted the social gospel, but we are in the process of developing programs that appeal to the physical and social desires of man.

In most church bulletins we receive, we read much more of parties, showers, outings, and such than we do of special Bible teaching events. While these things are not wrong, in and of themselves, the emphasis leads in the wrong direction and paves the way for a spiritual famine. We need to preach again from the text, *"The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. And Jehovah spake unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, that thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves"* (Ex. 32:6-7). Unless we maintain the emphasis on the spiritual in our preaching, we are due for a famine like that described by Amos.

Jesus stated His purpose clearly: *"The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). If we would *"follow his steps"* (1 Pet. 2:21), that must be our mission. It is not the primary business of the Lord's church to minister to the physical and social needs of people, it is our business to save souls. Yes, we must minister to the physical and social needs, but these are only by-products of our real purpose.

The prophet Hosea declared, *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"* (Hos. 4:6). Our present-day lack of Bible knowledge is due in part to the failure of Bible teachers and preachers to instill a love for studying God's word in those whom they teach. Anyone who really loves the word of God will seek to instill that love in those whom he teaches. There will never be a *"famine of hearing the word of Jehovah"* if we, with the right

purpose of heart, *"Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"* (2 Tim. 4:2).

God's Providence

JOHNNY RAMSEY

The apostle Paul wrote, *"I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day"* (2 Tim. 1:12). He believed that God was able to protect him from ultimate harm. Like Joseph of another age (Gen. 37), the apostle Paul rejoiced in the providence of Jehovah. We should all remember Gen. 45, wherein Joseph reminded his brothers that God had sent him before them to preserve the seed of Abraham. At the end of that glorious first book of the Bible, Joseph declares that the Creator had overwhelmed their evil for good (Gen. 50:20).

The providence of the Lord works hand-in-hand with proper decisions of spiritual men. In Esther 4:14, a courageous Mordecai reflects upon a serious moment by telling Queen Esther, *"Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* Jehovah God provided the opportunity and two determined people cooperated with the sterling moment. The apostle Paul writes of this same principle. Concerning Onesimus, he challenges Philemon to receive the ex-slave back: *"For perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever, no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord"* (Phile. 1:15-16). God had provided the occasion, and Paul then used that occasion to teach a man the truth of the gospel and send Onesimus back to Philemon as a Christian.

In regard to the presence of the Lord in the lives of children of God, our Savior promised to be with them until the end of the world (Matt. 28:20) and to never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). Even beyond this, we learn will provide for us in the face of temptation: *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be*

tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

Some people get confused on the difference in a miracle and the providence of God. Providence is God providing for us in the natural realm, through natural laws and means. And God doesn't have to work a miracle—superceding natural laws - in order to answer our prayers or provide for our needs. For instance, God knows things in the natural laws that doctors have not discovered. We pray for someone whom medical men say will soon die. But the patient lives for many more years. Some will say "That is a miracle." Not so.

The Scriptures state that the purpose of miracles was to *"confirm the word"* (Mark 16:20) that was preached by the authority of Jesus. But the Bible has been complete, and confirmed, for twenty centuries. Miracles served as the scaffolding until the Bible was fully revealed. But once the Scriptures were completed (1 Cor. 13:8-10), the scaffolding came down, because the purpose of the miracles had ended.

Recently I read a newsletter report from the wife of a missionary. She had been quite ill, had prayed for healing, and her health was restored. She claimed this was a miracle. And folk often use "miracle" in that sense, but it is a false way. What if she had died, would that mean that God had killed her? Would her death have unconfirmed the Bible?! When we use shallow concepts, we undermine the power and purpose of the Lord.

We should always live in the fulness of a righteous faith in the Creator, as we trust in the Lord and in the power of His might and never lean on our own strength (Prov. 3). When we *"cast all of our care on Him,"* (1 Pet. 5:7) and seek the peace which heaven provides (John 14:27; 16:33), the providence of God pervades our soul. When the apostle Paul came to the solemn reality of death, in the last paragraph he wrote, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these great words: *"At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account. But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me . . . and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom"* (2 Tim. 4:16-18). Praise God for His providence!

□□□