

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## *EDITORIAL*

### **What Does the Bible Teach?**

***"Then the dust will return to the earth as it was,  
and the spirit will return to God who gave it"***

No matter whether one believes in God or not, the truth yet remains that everyone will return to the earth physically, and everyone will return to God spiritually, to face Him in His judgment, as the Bible teaches in the above cited passage from Ecclesiastes 12:7. Likewise, in another place, in Hebrews 9:27, the Bible says, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." The greatest of all questions on earth, therefore, before each one of us is this: Am I prepared to go and face God in His judgment to receive my reward? Will it be heaven or hell?

Christ once told the story of a man who was extremely rich on earth. He had everything abundantly whatsoever one need in this world. So he began to think that he has so much and now he can live life eating, drinking and making merry. But in that very day, Christ said, when he was thinking that he lacked nothing, God spoke to him and said, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you then whose will those things be which you have provided?" Then Jesus said, "So is he who lays up treasures for himself and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:13-21). This man was rich and famous, had all the respect and honour and power and health and wealth that one want to get in this world. He was rich and a "big fellow" in his own perception of himself, but he was a poor, wretched, fool in the eyes of God, whom he had to

ultimately face to receive his reward at the end of his earthly life. He was a fool in God's account because he had thought he had everything, yet from heaven's standpoint he didn't have nothing, because he had made no preparation for this journey from this temporary world to the world of eternity. While on earth he never thought where he would live after leaving this earth. He had made no provision for the life beyond earth for his soul. He was, as God said, a fool, indeed!

Man is a dual being. He is both physical and spiritual. This is how God made man in the beginning. Man's body was created out of the dust of the ground, but God Himself gave man the spirit or the soul. (Genesis 1:26,27; 2:7). Before creating man, God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." (Gen. 1:26). Man was created a spiritual being, and therefore, like God, Who is Spirit, man will exist forever, speaking spiritually. But man, whom God had created in His own image, pure and sinless, separated himself away from God because of sin and disobedience. (Isaiah 59:1,2). The point is man in his sin, with sin, cannot hope to return to God to live with Him forever in heaven. Man's greatest need, therefore, on the earth is to become reconciled with God before the dust part of his return to earth and spirit to God.

To fulfill this most important requirement of man, Jesus Christ, one of the persons in the Godhead, left heaven and came on earth. Man is God's offspring. He cannot see man going to live in hell eternally because of his sin, therefore He did what He did for man in Jesus Christ. One of the writers of the Bible expressed this good news of God to man in these words: "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8). Speaking of Christ the Bible says, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21).

As long as man is alive on earth, every man and every woman has the opportunity to choose and accept this most profound truth of God's book. But the moment the earthly life of a person comes to an end, man's destiny will be sealed forever, it will be either hell or heaven. To choose to be in heaven with God in eternity is to choose Jesus Christ who is the propitiation for our

sins, as says the Bible at 1 John 4:10.

I am afraid though most people do not care for God and for the life to come. Most do not care whether they go to heaven or to hell. Most people live in unbelief and follow a god of their own imagination by performing rituals and following traditions of men. Yet, the fact remains that God has spoken His mind. He has provided the way for man to escape the wages of sin and enter heaven. Who cares? Do you?

## ***The Need For Repentance***

**J.C. CHOATE**

Repentance is a Bible subject. It is seldom discussed, but sorely needed throughout the world.

Christ taught that one must repent of his sins in order to be saved and to be a member of his church.

The word repentance suggests a change, a turn, being willing to give up that which is bad and wrong, quitting bad habits, and going in another direction. It means to have a change of heart or change of mind concerning one's life. It means to turn and go in the opposite direction. In other words, when one repents of his sins then that means that he gives up his sins in order that he might follow Christ.

Christ preached that one must repent or perish. (Luke 13:3). Paul said, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30). Peter proclaimed, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9).

But how does repentance fit into the gospel, in obeying the gospel? As we have just read, the Lord has definitely commanded that one and all repent, that is, that they turn from their sins. But is this all that is required of those who want to be saved? No, this is just a part of what the Lord requires of one. Let's take a closer look.

The gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ died for man's

sins, that he was buried, and that he arose from the grave. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Now the Lord would have us to believe those facts. We surely couldn't expect him to save us if we did not believe them. But if we believe that God is, and that Christ is a resurrected Lord, then what more does the Lord require of us? This is where repentance comes in. Since the Lord died on the cross that we might be saved from our sins, he certainly will not save us if we are determined to continue to live in them. Therefore we must repent of our sins, or turn away from our wrong doings, if we expect the Lord to forgive us. When Peter and the apostles preached to the people on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem, then the record says that they were cut to the heart, or became convinced that Christ was the Son of God, and then they wanted to know what else they should do. The answer came immediately: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38). Now what if they had been unwilling to repent of their sins, and some of them had taken part in the Lord's crucifixion? Do you think for a minute that they could have been saved anyway? Not indeed. The only possible way that the Lord could have saved them was for them to repent of their sins, and then to be baptized for the remission of their sins, even as they were told.

Again, in Acts 3, after Peter had preached to another large crowd of people there in Jerusalem, he concluded with this exhortation, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:19). Repentance then was a very essential part of their obedience. They could not be forgiven of their sins, or become members of the Lord's church, without complying with this command.

Going on through the Book of Acts, and considering one case of conversion after another, it is evident that each one that obeyed the Lord had to repent of his sins. This included the Samaritans and the Ethiopian in Acts 8. Then there was Saul, who had previously made havoc of the church, Cornelius, who was a good man, but was not saved until Peter went to him and preached the gospel so that he might obey the Lord, and so on with the other cases of conversion recorded in the book of Acts. Now all of these people heard the same gospel, obeyed the same commands,

were all saved alike, and all became members of the Lord's church. Among other things, all of them repented of their sins. No where in the scriptures do you read of anyone becoming a child of God, and a member of the Lord's church, without repenting of his sins. That means then that not one soul can be saved apart from repentance.

Another way of explaining what takes place in repentance is stated in Romans 6. There Paul says, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Romans 6:1-6). Now please notice what Paul said. He explained that when one obeys the Lord that he dies to his sin, and that is repentance. He talks about the old man being crucified that the body of sin might be destroyed. So then once repentance takes place, or when one dies to his sin, then next comes the burial. The individual is buried in this case, along with his sin, in the waters of baptism. In his obedience then he comes into contact with the blood of Christ which cleanses him from his sin. Then finally, he comes up out of the water, which is described as a resurrection from that watery grave. In doing all of this then one pictures in his obedience the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

On another occasion, Paul said, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17). Putting away the old thing there has reference to repentance, and one becomes a new creature through the new birth that takes place through baptism. (John 3:3-5).

In Colossians 3 Paul talks to the Christians there at Colosse about putting off the old man of sin and putting on the new man of righteousness in Christ. In other words, in obeying the Lord to

become Christians then they had to repent of their sins.

Now if that is what the Lord required in the first century, then what does he expect of you and me? He would have us to do the same thing. That is, if one wants to be saved today then He would have him to believe in Him, to repent of his sins, to confess him as the Son of God, and to be baptized for the remission of His sins. Now when one does this then the Lord has promised to save that person and add him to his church.

What about you? Have you repented of your sins? Have you obeyed the Lord? Are you a Christian? Are you a member of Christ's church? If not, you can become one.

## ***True Christianity***

**JOHNNY RAMSEY**

We cannot over-emphasize the deep need for conviction in religion today. It has been truthfully stated, "Where there is no conviction, there can be no conversion." There was never an era of history that cried out for stalwart men of conviction any more distinctly than our present age. The demand is intense. We must have spiritual backbone in the religion of the Son of God. Devotees who "turn neither to the right hand nor to the left" as they pursue the Way of Truth — this is the need. In the midst of immorality, we need men like Joseph. To discourage idolatry, we need legions like Joshua. We need builders like Nehemiah and destroyers like Jeremiah (Jer. 1:10). When tempted to bow down to sin, we must be like Mordecai, a true man of conviction. When the way out is error, we must say with Micalah, "*As the Lord liveth and speaketh unto men, that will I say*" (1 Kgs. 22:14). The whole phalanx of God's army must manifest the determination of righteousness shown in the lives of Job, Daniel, Abraham, John the Immerser and the apostle Paul. The very epitome of pure conviction was, of course, Jesus the Christ.

Is your religion one of convenience or conviction? In the twentieth century, it takes real courage to obey the truth. Conviction is a must in living the life of a Christian. To preach the

gospel, to oversee the flock, to discipline the wayward, to help the needy, to encourage the weak — all of these activities demand men and women with determination. Christianity is a system of faith (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 2:16). In Heb. 11:1 we read, "*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*" When our faith in the Lord grows, our conviction glows brighter. Let us then study the Word more often (Rom. 10:17), pray more fervently, depend upon Jehovah's providence constantly and then launch out into the deep waters of true Christianity.

## *Forgiveness for Christians*

OWEN D. OLBRICHT

Not only have all sinned (Romans 3:23), but all still do and will sin, even followers of Jesus. John wrote about Christians, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us ... If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:8, 10).

### **Attitudes Toward Forgiveness for Christians**

Four attitudes have emerged concerning forgiveness for Christians:

- God does not recognize or take into account the sins of Christians. For this reason they have no need to seek forgiveness because God overlooks every sin they commit; thus, because of the grace of God, they do not have to be concerned about their sins.

- The grace of God continually forgives the sins of those who are walking in the light. He sees their sins but immediately forgives them. They do not need to do anything in order to be forgiven but should simply thank Him that He has forgiven their sins. Some have compared this to the windshield wiper on a car. In like manner, as the water is immediately wiped from the windshield, God also immediately and automatically removes the sin of a Christian.

- Every sin must be recognized and repented of before God will forgive. If a Christian should commit a sin and be killed before

he repented and asked for forgiveness, he will not be forgiven; as a result, he will go to hell.

- Christians are to repent and ask forgiveness of their sins in order to be forgiven. If they fail to realize some sins so as to repent and pray to be forgiven, the grace of God will cover those sins because of human inability to know every sin committed. Perhaps sins of omission are more often overlooked than sins of commission.

### **What Does the Scripture Say?**

Only the fourth attitude is true to New Testament teaching concerning forgiveness for Christians. Certain conditions are to be met before cleansing from sin will take place.

- Forgiveness is necessary. If a person dies in his sins, he cannot be with Jesus (John 8:21), or if he is defiled, he cannot enter the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:27). Through Jesus' cleansing blood, Christians can be without "spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but... should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27) and "holy, and blameless and above reproach in His sight" (Colossians 1:22).

- Forgiveness is conditional for Christians. Those who will be cleansed of sin are those walking in the light (1 John 1:7) and continuing in the faith (Colossians 1:21-23) as a member of the Lord's church (Ephesians 5:25-27). They must remain in Jesus; if not, they will be cut off and cast into the fire (John 15:6). Those who have been baptized into Jesus are the ones who are in Him (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27). In order to remain in Jesus, they must continue to keep His word (1 John 2:3-5).

- Reconciliation must take place. Because sins separate people from God (Isaiah 59:1-2), Christians have the responsibility to do what is necessary to be reconciled to Him (2 Corinthians 5:20-21). Paul was writing to the saints in Corinth (1:1) when he stated, "Be reconciled to God." Because many in the Corinthian church were involved in sinful practices, they needed to make things right with God in order to have the righteousness of God.

- Christians who sin must repent in order to be forgiven. Many in the Corinthian church had become involved in evil things. Paul berated them because they had not repented of their condition (2 Corinthians 12:21), which must mean they needed to repent. They needed to do this in order to be reconciled to God (5:20-21).



Peter wrote to those who were Christians (2 Peter 1:1) that God "is longsuffering to us-ward" (many manuscripts and translations have "you") and was desirous for them to repent and not perish (3:9 KJV). John wrote to five of the seven churches of Asia Minor that they needed to repent or God would punish them (Revelation 2:5, 16, 22; 3:3, 19).

Paul wrote that his previous letter to the church in Corinth had caused some of them to repent. Such repentance could bring about their salvation (2 Corinthians 7:8-10). Take note of the fact that this was written to Christians - not to non-Christians.

The book of Hebrews mentioned the possibility of Christians becoming unable to repent, thus in danger of being burned (Hebrews 6:4-8). The necessity of repentance is also implied because those who "go on sinning willfully" will be consumed with fire because they have insulted the Spirit of grace (10:26-29 NASB). If a person intentionally continues to sin, he is not repenting of those sins. Christians who repent are those not continuing to sin willfully.

Simon is an example of the necessity of repentance. He was told, "Repent... and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart" (Acts 8:22 NIV). Repentance requires not only resolving to discontinue a sinful practice but also the responsibility to right the wrong committed, if possible. This principle is clearly presented in the Old Testament (Leviticus 6:4-5).

- Prayer for forgiveness is required. Simon was told to pray to be forgiven. John wrote, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9 NKJV). Even the Old Testament taught forgiveness for those who repented and turned from their wicked ways and prayed for forgiveness (2 Chronicles 6:36-39; 7:14).

- Forgiveness of others from our hearts is also a requirement for forgiveness. Jesus stated that if we will not forgive others neither will we be forgiven (Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25-26).

The New Testament clearly teaches that certain requirements must be fulfilled before a Christian will be forgiven.

## **Considerations**

Those who believe that God does not recognize the sins of

Christians or that He unconditionally forgives sins appeal to certain scriptures in order to justify their conclusions (i.e., Romans 4:7-8; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

These passages do not teach that God does not take into account sins without first forgiving them. In Romans 4:7-8, Paul was quoting Psalm 32:1-2: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him" (Romans 4:7-8 NIV).

The important statement is "whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered." The Lord no longer takes into account sins that are forgiven and covered by the blood of Jesus. He will remember them no more (Hebrews 8:12). This verse does not say what God requires before sins will be forgiven so that they will no longer be taken into account. To be saved all must hear God's Word (John 6:45), believe (Acts 10:43), repent (3:19), confess (Romans 10:10), and be baptized (Acts 2:38; 22:16) before their sins will be forgiven and before God will not hold their sins against them. Christians who sin must fulfill certain requirements. When sins are forgiven, God no longer takes them into account or keeps them in mind.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that God reconciled the world to Himself, no longer imputing or counting their trespasses against them (2 Corinthians 5:19). The important statement is "reconciled the world to Himself." Before God ceased counting the sins of people in the world, they were first reconciled. In order for them to be reconciled to God, they must obey Jesus (Hebrews 5:9) by fulfilling God's requirements for forgiveness. When they do this, the sins they have committed will be forgiven and no longer be remembered. Some people believe that obeying commandments to receive forgiveness is too rigid and legalistic. They ask the question, "What about the person who sinned but died before he could repent and pray?" God requires people to do what they can do, not what they cannot do (2 Corinthians 8:12). There must be a difference between a person who can obey but will not and a person who wants to obey but cannot. Confessing with the mouth is a requirement of salvation (Romans 10:9-10). Will God send to hell a person who, because of a physical handicap, cannot confess with the mouth? Grace must cover sins of those who are trying to do what God requires but cannot obey.

## Conclusion

Three of the four attitudes listed at the beginning of this article cannot be harmonized with New Testament teaching.

In response to the first attitude, God takes into account the sins of Christians: He had John write to five of the seven churches, "I know your works" (Revelation 2:2, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). He did not overlook their sins but demanded that they repent. As for the second attitude, God does not automatically forgive the sins of Christians. He requires an obedient response to His will before He will forgive. With the third attitude, God does not require people to do what they cannot do.

God's will for Christians is found in the fourth attitude. He has revealed what Christians are to do to be forgiven. His grace will cover what they cannot do if they are walking in the light, abiding in Him and seeking to do His will.

## *Ensnared by Temporal Things!*

DILLARD THURMAN

How fragile and weak appear the delicate strands of a spider's web-but how supple, strong and cruel to any caught therein! With deceiving strength it captures the unsuspecting, and e'er they are aware, their hope is destroyed! The doomed insect who alights on the web for rest finds his trust has been misplaced! We are warned that SIN is like that! *"Can the papyrus grow up without mire? can the reeds grow without water? Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish"* (Job 8:11-13). The hope of the hypocrite is like that of the insect in a flimsy spider's web!

Those who turn from God to capture this world's attractive lures soon find they are taken captives! Surely, the hope of the godless man shall perish, for he has no anchor of the soul! (Heb. 6:9). He has turned from the things eternal to seek his refuge in the temporal. He has rejected the "Rock of Ages" for the sinking sands of transient things. *"Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart*

*departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and uninhabited"* (Jer. 17:5-6).

### **A WARNING AGAINST TRUSTING IN RICHES!**

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus said: *"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful"* (Mt. 13:22). The care of this world negates what the word could have done; and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word so it can't produce fruit! Many have fastened their hopes on the spider's web of riches, and our Lord warned against this deceitful web, saying, *"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"* (Lk. 12:15).

"What is he worth?" can never be answered by giving a financial report! His worth is not measured by his bank account or anything earthly. There is far more to making a good life than just making a good living. So Jesus taught, *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"* (Mt. 6:19-21).

The apostle Paul wrote quite often to warn against this deceitful web: *"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows"* (1 Tim. 6:9-10). Paul added to this warning for emphasis: *"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life"* (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

We note the negative things in the first passage above: the

desire for riches brings one into temptation and a snare (the devil's web), to lusts leading to perdition; **love of money** is the root of all evil, and causes one to err from the faith and have many sorrows! The positive things enumerated: trust in God, not riches; be rich in good works; laying up a foundation for eternal life! Many have renounced trust in God for reliance on the world and its riches! James gave this timely warning: *"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days"* (Jas. 5:1-3). This aptly describes the end result of the deceitful web of materialism!

### **THE DECEITFUL WEB OF WORLDLY PLEASURES!**

Youth is a time for fun and frolic; for gaiety and sport: but is that all there is to life? Harken to the wise man; *"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."* (Eccl. 12:1). Solomon knew what he was saying, for no man "lived it up" more than did he! But he concludes: *"I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity"* (Eccl. 2:1). This web has ensnared many people who had eyes fixed on the bright lights of the Milky Way!

Paul warned that men would be *"lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."* (2 Tim. 3:4-5). I've known members who had me wondering about this! They attended the church services, yet they watched the X-Rated Movies and Strip-Tease shows! Solomon gave this still timely counsel: *"He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich"* (Prov. 21:17). Paul spake plainly on this: *"But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth"* (1 Tim. 5:6).

Countless millions of dollars are spent each week to bring happiness to pleasure-mad sports fans! Over-emphasized sports programs dwarf academic achievements of our great colleges and universities! An unlettered director of sports coach may be paid huge amounts! Religious services are often poorly attended, while

some questionable show plays to a full house! A questionable person disclosed the epitomy of successful living "is to be happy!" But God said, *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man"* (Eccl. 12:13),

## **THE VANITY OF DESIRE FOR POPULARITY**

Eternity alone will disclose the sum of what men have sacrificed to gain popularity! To please his spoiled wife, Herod beheaded God's servant, John the Baptist. Though warned by his wife, *"Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him"* (Mt. 27:19); yet to gain favor of the mob howling for blood, Pilate gave up Jesus to be crucified. He wanted to be popular with the Jews! But to this day, many likewise stand condemned, *"seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame"* (Heb. 6:6). And all to gain popularity among their fellows!

It is a tragic trap of a deceitful web to seek avidly after popularity: *"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God"* (Jno. 12:42-43). How many do we know who have denied the Christ to court the world's favor?

We need to heed God's warning: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever"* (1 Jno. 2:15-17). All too late, one who trusts in popularity will find what a snare the web of popularity is! Few bear in mind the words of Paul: *"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ"* (Gal. 1:10). After becoming a follower of Christ, ask, "Whom do I serve, and whom do I seek to please?"

## **SHOWING CONTEMPT FOR THINGS ETERNAL!**

Entangled with webs of the world, man shows contempt toward all things eternal! Spiritual things are trodden under as of no vital worth as he devotes his energies to becoming more entangled in the web of materialism. He heeds not the warning: *"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries"* (Heb. 10:26-27). After having been warned of the dangerous, deceitful web of Satan, one has no excuse for living in opposition to the will of God: *"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"* (v. 29).

Beloved, take every caution to avoid Satan's web, for it offers only bitter disappointments! Nor is it easy to extricate yourself from its clutches, which results in death! *"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire"* (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Friends, it is high time that we give serious consideration to the spider webs that threaten to destroy us eternally!

## **Submission**

**C.E. MANNON**

Submission should not be treated as an evil word nor should any Bible subject be considered unimportant. But to be in subjection, to submit to legitimate authority, is often perceived as demeaning and out of context with one's perception of freedom. A prime example is the women's liberation movement. Often

equated with feminism, that wives somehow become second class people when trying to honor the scriptural entreaty to "be in subjection one to another in the fear of the Lord." (Ephesians 5:21.) "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5) is the surest way to avoid second class citizenship!

Numerous scripture references enjoining subjection are not far away from those looking for them. More than being "in subjection to the Father of spirits" (Hebrews 12:9), we are best able to demonstrate this subjection in a tangible way by our "being in subject to the higher powers ... rulers who are not a terror to good works, but to the evil .. not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." (Romans 13:1-5.) So we pay our taxes and honor other civil obligations "rendering tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." (Romans 13:7.) Moreover, the apostle Peter enlarges upon his beloved brother Paul's instructions to Christians to glorify God by "submitting yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (1 Peter 2:13) provided there is no conflict in our obeying the ordinances of God. (Acts 5:29.)

Many are the compensations of this grace of submissiveness. (1) Our willingness to be subject to others will condition us to bring our own bodies (self-discipline) into subjection "lest by any means...we be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27); (2) There will be the guarantee of a greater respect for the authority and example of Jesus Christ; (3) Any eldership will be more immune to turmoil without abandoning their responsibilities; (4) A more honorable citizenship will be in evidence. (5) Divorce court will be less in demand and questionable marriages will decrease; (6) Moreover, we will spare ourselves and others of a domineering disposition that often prompts others to distance themselves from us and the potential we may represent for good.

While abusive relationships often make the news and need to be set right, no two wrongs can make one right! Towering high in human experiences are those examples of "love is patient" in submissiveness until the offending party has been brought low by coercion of conscience or the "avenger of wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Romans 13:4.) A careful examination of the punctuation in the familiar reference of Ephesians 5:18-21 reveals



one single sentence ending with "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." All God's children are to be submissive by his guidelines!

## *Providence Of God*

**ALBERT GARDNER**

The word providence is used by Tertullus before governor Felix in his accusation of Paul. "Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence" (Acts 24:2 KJV). The RSV gives the word provision, while the NIV used the word foresight.

Though the New Testament does not use this word to refer to God, when we use it we mean "divine guidance or care", so the idea of providence is in both Testaments.

Have you ever prayed for God to guide and protect you? Did He do it? That is providential but it is not miraculous. Some may think that God does not work because they do not hear a small still voice or some dramatic event in their lives. They have not considered how many dangers and pitfalls there are that God has helped them avoid. He sees it all, even when we are blinded to these dangers.

In Genesis 20: 1-6. Abraham told Abimelech, king of Gerar, that Sarah was his sister, so Abimelech took Sarah. "But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, 'Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife.'

It is a serious business when a man fools around with another man's wife. God says he is a dead man.

God withheld Sarah from Abimelech. We do not know how many evil things God has withheld from us that we do not sin. We pray that we may be faithful, and He helps us with guidance and care.

Genesis 31:1-7. The Lord told Jacob to "return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you." He called Rachel and Leah to him and explained what had happened with their father. "Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me."

Notice God said, "I will be with you." Jacob said, "God did not allow him to hurt me." This is divine providence.

Genesis 45:1-5. When Joseph made himself known to his brothers, he revealed his main purpose in being in Egypt.

"But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.

God knew about the famine and was determined to care for Jacob and his family because it was through Judah that Christ was to come. It is true, Joseph's brothers had an evil purpose in selling him into Egypt, but God had a greater purpose for the life of Joseph.

One can trace the life of Joseph and see that he had some really bad breaks, which God turned into good through His divine care.

Esther 4:14. When it looked like all the Jews would be killed, a person who could save them was Esther the queen, who was a Jew though the king did not know it. Mordecai sent a message to Esther that she acted on, to save her people.

"For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

You may be where you are for a purpose of God that you do not fully understand now, but you can be sure of divine guidance and care in your life. You must use every opportunity for the spreading of the gospel. Who knows but you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this!

Romans 8:28. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

Proverbs 3:5-6. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

Philippians 4:13. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Ephesians 3:20. "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us."

Psalms 37:3-5. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the

land, and feed on his faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."

As a child of God, keep on praying to God to guide, protect, lead, work things out for you and use you. And He will!

## ***We Need An Umpire***

**DAVID GURCHIEK**

In Job 9:33, Job said of himself and God, "There is no umpire betwixt us." (ASV.) The King James says, "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us." Other versions say "I need an arbitrator." Job wanted someone to stand between him and God, someone to put one hand on him and the other on God and work between them.

What led Job to make this statement? Job was on a roller coaster ride in life. Suffering tremendously and yet, at the same time, trusting God. As Job proclaimed concerning God, "though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." (13:15.) And while Job trusted God, he was frustrated and wanted an umpire, a go-between, a mediator.

Beginning in verse 25 of Job chapter 9, Job said "My days are swifter than a post." A post is a fast messenger who is running to post a message. He went on to say of his days that "they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships. As the eagle that swoopeth upon the prey. If I say I will forget my complaint, I will put off my sad countenance and be of good cheer. I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know that You (God) will not hold me innocent." Job was frustrated, and saying that even if he turned over a new leaf and got a positive attitude that he would not be left alone. Have you ever felt that way? Just when you think you might get a moment's peace, something else will happen.

Job continued in verse 29, "I shall be condemned, why then do I labor in vain?" Have you ever felt like you were just going around in circles, trying your best and yet just not getting anywhere? Job was laboring in vain and he could not understand it ... he just wanted to be left alone.

He continued in verse 30, "If I wash my hands with snow

water (the purest of water) and if I make my hands never so clean you will plunge me in the ditch, my own clothes will abhor me." Ever notice how it seems to rain right after you wash your car? Job says if I wash myself, you will throw me right back in the mud and my clothes will not want to touch my filthy body.

And then Job said in verse 32, speaking of God, "for He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him that we should come together in judgment. There is no umpire betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon both of us. Let Him take His rod away from me and let not His terror make me afraid. Then would I speak and not fear Him, for I am not so in myself."

From time to time we may all be as frustrated as Job was in this passage. Notice that Job acknowledged the fact that there is a huge difference between Deity and humanity. As Job said in verse 32 "He is not a man as I am, that I should contend with Him." God said, "I am God and not a man." (Hosea 11:9.) We need to understand the fact that God is not the "man upstairs" as so many refer to Him! God is more powerful than we are. God is wiser than we are. God relentlessly asked Job questions, beginning in chapter 38, to show him (and us) that he was not qualified to advise God about how to run the world.

Job was frustrated because he was a man and God is Deity. It is not a fair fight and he needs an umpire. So do we. Job lived centuries before the coming of Christ. In time that umpire would come. Job wanted an umpire: we have one. Paul wrote that there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5.) Job was correct, between God and man there is a gap, our sins and iniquities have separated us from God. Paul said in Ephesians 2 that before we became Christians we were dead in our trespasses and sins. God is holy, we are sinful, so Christ came to bridge the gap, Christ, is our umpire. Christ was there before the creation of the universe and He also knew what it was like to be hungry and thirsty. He experienced how it felt to be alone and betrayed. And that is why Hebrews chapter two tells us that He is able to serve as our High Priest. He is qualified to do so. Job said, "I need an umpire." We have one. Christ can be our umpire, our arbitrator, our daysman, Christ can be our mediator. It is up to us... "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it." (Luke 8:21.)

# *The Message Of The Empty Tomb*

**W. DOUGLASS HARRIS**

Skeptics and unbelievers have never been able to explain convincingly the empty tomb which the disciples of Christ discovered on the third day after His burial. To contend that His disciples stole the body does not square with the facts at all. There were five death penalties associated with the disappearance of the body. Each of the following were punishable by death: (1) for the guards to go to sleep, (2) to break the seal, (3) to allow the seal to be broken, (4) to steal the body, and (5) to allow the body to be stolen.

Christ's disciples should not have been surprised by the empty tomb. He had told them it would happen. (Matthew 12:40.) Many may not have understood why the seal was broken and the stone was rolled away. It was not to let Christ out, but to let the witnesses in. Every precaution possible was taken by divine oversight to eliminate any appearance of deception or fraud.

Not only did that empty tomb have a message then, but for future generations—a message which is the dynamic of Christianity. What was that message?

## **1. IT PROVES CHRIST'S DEITY (ROMANS 1:3,4)**

He claimed in life that He was the Son of God; the empty tomb was the consummating proof of it. This is the only evidence that brought absolute conviction even to His disciples. (John 20:8,9; 24-29.) Peter used the empty tomb in his sermon on Pentecost as proof of His divinity. (Acts 2:29-33.) Others have been raised from the dead, but not to die no more as He was. (Romans 6:9,10.)

## **2. IT GIVES ASSURANCE TO OUR CHRISTIAN HOPE**

Christ's resurrection is the bed-rock foundation upon which our faith rests. (1 Corinthians 15:12-20.) Try to imagine the difference had He not been raised; we never would have heard of Him; there would have been no Bible or church established by Him and no grounds for our hope of a resurrection to another life. That empty tomb gives life, reality, and vitality to our hope.

### **3. IT IS PROOF OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL (2 TIMOTHY 1:10)**

Death reigned supreme until Christ conquered it. (Romans 5:17.) As far as human wisdom was concerned, life ended abruptly at the grave. Wonder about it and faint hopes of a life beyond this life were expressed by Job. (Job 14:14.) But his question was not answered until Christ arose. That grave is not man's end and is the testimony of the empty tomb. (John 5:28,29; 11:25,26.) Paul labors at length on the question in 1 Corinthians 15:35-57. For nearly two thousand years that empty tomb has proclaimed that Christ conquered death, and that by having faith in Him we can also.

Someone said to a Christian: "We have proof in our religion that you do not have. When we go to worship we find the tomb of the founder of our religion, so we have proof that he lived. When you go to Jerusalem, you cannot be sure you have the burial place of Jesus. You have no tomb as we have." "True," replied the Christian. "We have no tomb in our religion, because we have no corpse. Our gospel ends not in a corpse, but in a Conqueror."

The firm believer in the resurrection to come can face life and all its problems; death and all of its hopes with a victorious faith and assurance. **THANK GOD FOR THE MESSAGE OF THE EMPTY TOMB!**

## ***Are Infants "By Nature" Children Of Wrath?***

**WAYNE JACKSON**

During a speech some time back before the American Humanist Association, television mogul Ted Turner leveled a blast at Christianity for its alleged doctrine that infants are born in sin. The fact is, though this teaching is popular with certain denominational groups, it is unknown to the Bible. However, a few biblical passages are perverted in a futile attempt to support the doctrine. In Ephesians 2:1-3, Paul wrote: "And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins,

wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

Here the apostle describes unregenerate people as being "by nature children of wrath." Calvinists appeal to this verse for support of the doctrine of hereditary total depravity. They feel the passage is affirming that humans are "by birth children of wrath."

Baptist writer B. H. Carroll contended that Ephesians 2:3 "knocks the bottom out of the thought that sin consists in the willful transgression of a known commandment." He argued that the allusion is to "original sin." (Pages 105-106.) This is the theory that all people are born tainted with the guilt of Adam's sin.

The assertion is absolutely false. There are several interesting observations that can be made in connection with Ephesians 2:1ff.

**1. In verse one the apostle plainly declares that spiritual death is the consequence of "your trespasses and sins." (ASV.)** Note the word *your*. This emphasizes personal sin. We are not spiritually dead as a result of Adam's transgression. Though the term "*your*" is not found in the King James Version (following the Textus Receptus), it is amply supported by evidence from ancient Greek manuscripts, early versions, and the writings of the "church fathers" in the post-apostolic period. (Salmond, page 283.)

**2. In verse three Paul affirms that all of us "were ... children of wrath."** The verb *emetha* ("were") is an imperfect tense form. The imperfect tense describes continuity of action as viewed in the past. Thus, here it depicts the habitual style of life which had characterized these saints prior to their conversion. Had the apostle intended to convey the notion of inherited sinfulness at the time of their birth, he easily could have expressed that idea by saying, "you became by birth children of wrath."

**3. It is also significant that the verb is in the middle voice in the Greek Testament.** The middle voice is employed to suggest the subject's personal involvement in the action of the verb. The language therefore stresses that the sinful condition of

the Ephesians had been their individual responsibility. Hence, combining the imperfect tense and middle voice aspects of the verb, we might paraphrase the passage like this: "you kept on making yourselves children of wrath."

**4. It is probable that the King James Version, and most subsequent translations, reflect a Calvinistic bias in the rendition, "by nature children of wrath."** The Greek word *phusei*, rendered "nature" in our common versions, can denote "a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature." (Thayer, page 660.) Edward Robinson observed that the term can be understood of a "native mode of thinking, feeling, acting" on the part of those who are "unenlightened by the influence of divine truth." (Page 771.) Clearly, these people, by habitual practice, had become worthy of divine wrath.

Hugo McCord's translation has an excellent rendition of this passage. It suggests that the Ephesians had "by custom" become children of wrath. Winer contended that their trespasses and sins had made them "natural children of wrath." (Page 270.) Moule suggested that the phrase rendered "by nature children of wrath" might be equivalent to saying, "left to ourselves we are destined to suffer the consequences of sin." (Page 174.) Thus, the Ephesians, in their unregenerate state, had become, by long practice of sin, deserving of the wrath of God. These thoughts are consistent with the immediate context and with the tenor of the Bible as a whole.

**5. It is worthy of note that if this passage teaches that babies are born totally depraved, one would have to infer necessarily that infants who dies in that condition are lost since they are clearly designated as "children of wrath" (compare the expression "son of perdition" - John 17:12.) Yet, this is a conclusion that even denominationalists are loath to accept.**

The Bible does not teach the doctrine of inherited depravity. The dogma is strictly of human origin. And it is a serious tragedy that those who profess to be friends of the Scriptures will teach this error, thereby subjecting the Christian system to unjustified criticism. Ephesians 2:3 does not teach inherited depravity.

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