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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

***"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men,
and the weakness of God is stronger than men"***

Speaking of Jesus Christ, the Bible says that He is the Son of God who left heaven to come to the earth by the will of God, and took upon Himself all the sins of the world and died on the cross instead of all sinners, men and women of all the world, who ever lived and shall live until the end of the world, so that through Him all could have opportunity to enter heaven, those who have ever lived their lives on the earth by following God's will. The Bible speaks of Him as the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16). Christ Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

From man's standpoint it seems foolish to believe that God could have a Son. It is also beyond man's comprehension to believe that God brought His Son into this world through a virgin, who the Bible says, gave birth to God's Son by His power. Also, man finds difficult to believe that how one person, Jesus Christ, could have died for the sins of the whole humanity.

The problem is, man try to perceive God as a man. Man want to capture God in his own imagination by making images and forms of God in various ways. Man want to place God in houses and buildings made by his own hands. Man thinks of God as a man and tries to please and appease Him by feeding Him and offering flowers and other things before Him. So man is absolutely

on the wrong track. He is trying to follow God and understand God and worship God of His own imagination. Man need to repent, as the apostle Paul said, "We ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone something shaped by art and man's devising." (Acts 17:29). God is Spirit, the Bible teaches (John 4:24), He is not the God of flesh and blood. He is not a man. He is the Spirit God, who in the beginning created the world out of nothing. He is the God, with whom all things, yes, all things are possible, because He is not a man, but He is God. We cannot understand God with our own wisdom. He is the one who has revealed Himself to man, as the Bible says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1). There are many things we don't understand about God, but we see what He has done. Those things which we see and feel and observe, helps us to understand the presence and the power of God. Just think of a small seed for example. Just a small, seemingly dead and lifeless seed, man takes and bury it under the ground in the earth, but a little later it comes out of the ground with a new body, it bears flowers, and fruits. How does this happen? We don't understand. But we see it happening all over the earth all the time.

Speaking of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for the sinners, the apostle Paul said, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Corinthians 1:18,25)

When Christ was returning back into heaven after accomplishing God's assigned mission for man's redemption on earth, His last words to His disciples were: "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). While Christ put both belief and baptism before being saved, to man it seems foolish to get baptized to be saved. There are countless people who believe in Christ, but refuse to be baptized to be saved or for the remission of sins as the Bible points out at Acts 2:38. But what seems foolishness to man, therein lies the wisdom of God. For baptism portrays the gospel of the death and the burial and the resurrection of Christ fully (1 Cor. 15:1-4), as one is lowered in the grave of

water, in the act of baptism, as one who has died to sin and has been buried, and comes out of the tomb of water to walk in the newness of life, as Romans 6:3-5 suggests. Man cannot challenge God's wisdom.

Why Baptism Saves

J.C. CHOATE

Most people are confused concerning the role that baptism plays in their obedience to the Lord. Many of them do not see baptism as being of any importance at all. As a matter of fact, they think that it is possible to be saved without being baptized. But the question is, what does the Bible teach on this subject?

Baptism is a Bible subject. The word baptism itself is defined as being a burial or an immersion. Paul said, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." (Colossians 2:12). Again, he said, "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." (Romans 6:3,4).

Not only is baptism defined to be a burial, but the scriptures say that it is a burial in water. An example of this is to be found in Acts 8 when the record says that after Philip had taught the man from Ethiopia, and he had confessed Christ as the Son of God, then "they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8:39).

Now that we know what baptism is, then what is the importance of it? First, it is a command of God. After Peter had preached to Cornelius and his household, then he asked, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." (Acts 10:47,48). Second, it is said that baptism saves. Again, Peter says, after showing how

Noah and his family were saved by water, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 3:21). Third, Christ included baptism in the great commission: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned". (Mark 16:15,16). Fourth, baptism is for the remission of sins "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). Fifth, baptism washes away sins. Saul was told, "And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16).

Going on, and sixth, baptism puts one into Christ. Paul said, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3). To the Galatian Christians, he said, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:26, 27). Seventh, baptism puts one into the body or the church, To the church at Corinth, Paul wrote, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13). And eighth, baptism produces the new birth. We read, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:3-5). Here Christ was teaching Nicodemus concerning the coming of the kingdom or church and what one would have to do to enter into it. Later on we read that baptism puts one into the church. Likewise, we are told that baptism puts one into Christ and on entering Christ he becomes a new creature. Finally, baptism is a burial, and therefore when one is buried in water, and then he comes up out of that water, then a birth takes place. That is the new birth that Christ spoke of in John 3:3-5.

In Matthew 28:19, 20 Christ says that those who obey the

Lord must be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and last of all Paul speaks of one baptism in Ephesians 4:5. There had been other baptisms, but by approximately A.D. 64 he said that there was but one baptism. That one baptism is the one that we have defined and discussed in this study,

As you read through the book of Acts, you will note that there are some eleven cases of conversion mentioned there. In every case, baptism was required of those who were obeying the Lord.

The Bible no where teaches that baptism only saves. Neither does God's word talk about water salvation. Still, baptism is essential to salvation on the basis of the scriptures that we have already noted. First, one must hear God's word preached. Then it is necessary that one become a believer in God, and Christ as being the Son of God. Next the scriptures teach the necessity of repentance or that one turn away from his sins. That is to be followed by confessing that Christ is the Son of God. And then finally, one must be baptized, buried in water, for the remission of his sins, to enter Christ and his church. Just as one cannot be saved without faith, or repentance, or confessing that Christ is the Son of God, "neither can one be saved without being baptized. (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11: 6; John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32; and Mark 16:16).

It is through obeying these commands of God, and baptism in particular, that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is pictured. Christ died, was buried, and then was resurrected. In obeying the Lord then one dies to his sins, is buried in the waters of baptism, and then is raised or resurrected from that watery grave to walk in newness of life. So every time scriptural baptism takes place then the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is being symbolically portrayed. Furthermore, each one that is scripturally baptized is saying to the world that he believes in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This is a powerful lesson within itself.

Have you been scripturally baptized? If not, you need to be. And remember, when you obey Christ in the waters of baptism then he will save you and add you to his church.

The Contrast Of "Believe" In The Bible

SAMMY COOPER

There are at least two ways "believe" is used in the Bible. One is in a general sense of acknowledging the fact of certain things being true or real. For example, in James 2:19, James says, "You believe there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble." The term "believe" is used in this text in a general sense in that the demons would acknowledge the fact of the existence of God but this acknowledgment did not cause them to turn from their evil ways.

In John 12:42-43, it is written, "Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they would not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praises of men more than the praise of God." In this reference there are those who acknowledge the truth of Christ's existence but did not have enough faith to abandon their secular positions to submit themselves to the will of God.

Another way "believe" is used in the Bible is to have enough trust or confidence in God and Christ to place one's destiny in their hands. An example of this is found in Matthew 7:21-23, where Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name and done many wonders in Your name? And I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." Jesus explained that just the acknowledging of the Lord's existence and even doing many good works in His name is not enough. Certainly it is very necessary to acknowledge the existence of the Lord, and it is true good works are required but these alone will not allow one to enter the kingdom of heaven but these things must be done according to the will of God. In Hebrews 11, we read about some great Bible characters who believed in God and their faith in God caused them to do the things God commanded.

In order to get perhaps a clearer understanding of the kind of faith or trust needed to please God, look at the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:35-38. Luke wrote, "Then Philip opened

his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See here is water, what hinders me from being baptized?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and he baptized him." It should be clear that the eunuch's believing was more than just an acknowledging that he believed what Philip had taught was true. But his believing what Philip had taught caused him to have a desire to be completely pleasing to God by being baptized.

There is another question to be answered which goes along with the difference in "believe" and that is the contrast between the terms "faith" and "the faith." When referring to "faith" in the general sense, faith would be defined as: unquestioning belief that does not require proof of evidence. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The writer says that acceptance of the things presented is based upon the presentation of facts and not on evidence which could be viewed. The writer continues in Hebrews 11:6, stating, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Also in Romans 5:1, Paul says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

When referring to "the faith" the reference is to the gospel, the truth, or the body of truth. Paul wrote in Colossians 1:21-23, "And you, who were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight, if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister." Paul also makes reference to "the faith" in Titus 1:13,14 where he says, "This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth."

Warning Sign of an Apostasy

DILLARD THURMAN

Quite often we have been warned, "The church of the Lord is never more than one generation removed from apostasy!" Along with that is another one: "Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom." So Paul cautioned: *"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"* (1 Cor. 10:12). If it were impossible to fall, this warning would not have been sounded! Even our Lord warned of this: *"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many"* (Mt. 24:4-5). There are still those who would kick the Bible out if it differed from their church dogmas!

ATTITUDE WE MUST HAVE TOWARD THE BIBLE

Before one can get very far toward pleasing God, he must cultivate a right attitude toward His Word! David set an example for us in this: *"Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way"* (Psa. 119:104). We must not only seek understanding in God's word, we must also learn to hate that which is false, for that leads to damnation! *"Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way"* (Psa. 104:128). Accept a word from an O.T. Prophet: *"Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate"* (Amos 5:15) So saints were warned against false teachers, and their damnable doctrines: *"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works"* (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Don't be deceived merely because the "Pastors" who call are piously carrying Bibles under their arms! Don't be beguiled by their seeming knowledge of the scriptures; at least not until they meet some one who will nudge them off their "little well-beaten path" of warped proof-texts! Until they are willing to sit down in your home and meet a Christian who can "handle aright the word of truth," don't be influenced by such doctrines of men!

PAUL WARNED OF A FALLING AWAY!

Paul could see the ominous signs of departure looming on the horizon in his day: *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables"* (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

The fabled tales of healing practitioners have proved to be far more popular than any "book, chapter and verse" discourse of God's terms of pardon! Have you noticed that people refused to endure sound doctrine delivered out of God's revelation? Yet saints are not allowed to give up! God still says: *"This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth"* (Tit. 1:13-14). We should allow nothing to turn us from God's truth! Jesus said, *"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (Jno. 8:32). God has not offered any substitutes to which we may turn!

GOD'S SAINTS WERE SUFFICIENTLY WARNED!

The Lord saw fit to constantly warn His people against the sin of falling away. Harken to the writer to the Hebrew brethren: *"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). Once we have learned God's truth, we cannot turn from it with impunity! *"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened. And have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame"* (Heb. 6:4-6). Paul warns against the false teacher: *"Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had*

pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thes. 2:9-12). The downfall of many will be due to a lack of love for the truth; for otherwise they would not have turned to the error of pseudo signs and lying wonders!

How do false teachers gain their adherents? *"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of* (2 Pet. 2:1-2). Even as it was foretold, there are false prophets among the people unto this day; and damnable heresies still abound!

THE CURSE OF WORLDLY PLEASURE TODAY!

Especially in this age in which we live, it is difficult to turn the eyes from material things to the spiritual! But that is the challenge facing the child of God in every age: *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God"* (Col. 3:1-3). There must be a transfer of love and affection for each Christian. We are warned very pointedly, *"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).

If we love the world, we will grow to be like the world, and further from God! What has the world to offer? The lust of flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life—that is it! And all that soon passes away. But he that turns his love to God and does His will abides with Him forever! Yet Paul could see the departure which was coming even then: *"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God... Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away"* (2 Tim. 3:2-5). Do you wonder why the love for the

Lord fails in so many? Jesus gave the answer: *"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold"* (Mt. 24:12). We are engulfed in a world of wickedness, and often it snuffs out our spiritual life!

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO SAVE THESE SOULS?

Long ago God gave answer in another dispensation: *"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins"* (Isa. 58:1). The people and dispensation have changed: but the clarion call still rings clear! *"Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life"* (Acts 5:20). In the first, God was speaking through Isaiah; in the second, God was speaking through His Son to His apostles! Either way, it is our challenge as we face our present situation! We can't close our eyes when folk forget God and wallow in sin! We can't turn aside when they *"Kick out the Bible,"* as they claim salvation in false doctrines of men! Paul faced death courageously, and explained, *"Knowing I am set for the defence of the gospel"* (Phil. 1:17).

We don't have to wait until all people agree with us: we only need to be sure that we agree with the Lord. Don't wait until there are no false prophets to challenge you: *"For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God"* (1 Pet. 2:15-16). Paul charged Timothy to *"war a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck"* (1 Tim. 1:19). Surely this convinces us that the Christian warfare must still be waged aggressively! *"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness"* (2 Pet 3:17).

Beloved, we must ever be on the alert for the messengers of Satan! The devil delights in weakening the faith of God's children, so we encourage you! *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"* (Eph. 6:10-11). God has equipped us so that we can overcome! Let us face the problem of present day apostasy with faith and courage!

Are We Saved Like The Thief On The Cross?

CLIFFORD DIXON

Jesus was crucified between two thieves. One, following the crowd, railed upon him and told him to save himself. The other rebuked the railer and asked to be remembered in Christ's kingdom. Jesus said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:39-43). Many, thinking that one can be saved by faith only, say, "The thief was not baptized, and he was saved; so I believe I can be saved without being baptized." We need to honestly appraise this situation: Can we be saved like the thief on the cross?

1. CAN YOU BE SURE THAT THE THIEF WAS NOT BAPTIZED? There went out to John all Jerusalem, Judea, and the region around Jordan, being baptized by him in the Jordan river (Matthew 3:5-6). Subsequently Jesus made and baptized "MORE disciples than John" (John 4:1). Could not the thief have been in that number and later turned to being a thief? We are not assuming that he was baptized; but those who claim he was not, must necessarily assume that he was NOT baptized, which they cannot prove.

2. WAS THE THIEF AN ALIEN SINNER? OR, AN ERRING CHILD OF GOD? Being an Israelite put him under the law of Moses and made him a child of God. The law of pardon for an erring child of God is different from that for an alien sinner. The erring child of God is to repent, confess his faults, and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22; James 5:16). The alien sinner must believe, repent, confess faith in Christ, and be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 10:10).

3. WAS THE WILL OF CHRIST IN EFFECT WHEN THE THIEF WAS TOLD HE WOULD BE IN PARADISE THAT DAY? For a testament or will to be in effect, there must be the death of the testator (Hebrews 9:16-17). Christ had not yet died; so his will was NOT in effect! When a man is yet living he can dispose of his goods in any way he sees fit and upon the conditions he wishes. But once he dies and his will comes into effect, his property is disposed of according to the will. On earth Christ told the palsied man, "Son,

be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." His critics accused him of blasphemy, to which Jesus answered, "For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" (Matthew 9:1-6). Christ forgave sins under various conditions and circumstances during his personal ministry. He told the sinful woman of Luke 7:36-50 that her sins were forgiven. He assured Zaccheus that salvation was come to that house that day (Luke 19:1-10). These, like the thief on the cross, were during the personal ministry of Christ and are no examples to us who live under the will or testament of Christ. We must meet its stipulations of faith, repentance, confession, and baptism if we are to be saved.

4. NOTICE THAT IF WE ARE SAVED LIKE THE THIEF ON THE CROSS THEN:

(1) The will of Christ would be of no effect, but one could be saved by the law of Moses. Yet the law could save no one (Hebrews 10:1-4; 7:18-19), whereas Christ is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by him (Hebrews 7:25). The way to Christ is in the New Testament.

(2) If we could be saved like the thief then one would not have to believe the gospel to be saved — for the thief did not believe the gospel. Paul says the gospel includes the facts of the death of Christ for our sins, his burial, and his resurrection; and that it is by these that we are saved (I Corinthians 15:1-4). None of these things had transpired when Christ told the thief that he would be in paradise that day. It is necessary today for us to believe the gospel to be saved (I Corinthians 1:18-21). That is different from the thief on the cross.

5. THE THIEF ASKED TO BE REMEMBERED IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. The kingdom of Christ, which is the church, was established on the Pentecost day of Acts 2. **What is said of salvation "by faith only" in the kingdom?** James 2:24 declares, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." The great commission of Christ, given after his resurrection, declares: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Christ does not promise salvation to those who believe only. The thief was never in the kingdom; but if he had

been, he would never have been taught, nor would he have believed, the doctrine of salvation by faith alone.

6. WHEN THE WILL OF CHRIST DID COME IN, as recorded in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles, empowering them to preach without mistakes and to confirm what they taught with signs and wonders. Peter preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, with the effect that the people were "pricked in their hearts" and cried out: "What shall we do?" Peter told them to, "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 2:1-38). Note that not one was exempt from repentance and baptism for the remission of sins. Not one was told that he could be saved by faith only. That is not the will of Christ to the alien sinner.

If you as an alien sinner would be saved, the terms are faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. Do not depend on being saved like the thief who lived under a different dispensation, law, and conditions, than do we.

Eternal Punishment

JOHNNY RAMSEY

The last paragraph of Mk. 9 forever proves the reality of conscious anguish — eternally — for the evil. The apostle writes; *"The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night. . . And they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever"* (Rev. 14:11; 20:10). At this juncture, opponents of clear-cut Bible teaching beg the issue by talking about the mercy, love and grace of God who just could not be so cruel as to send men to a place of eternal suffering. Such sounds good to folk who seem to forget that all we can know about Deity is what the Bible reveals. Jesus, in Lk. 16:19-31, enunciated the famous story about a rich man and beggar named Lazarus. If it be argued that this is just a parable, it would make no difference because God never illustrated truth with a non-truth. In other words, the thirty parables of Jesus are all accurate in every part as He told earthly stories with heavenly meanings. In Lk. 16 we learn that after

death sinners are awake, alert, conscious and *"in torment"* (v. 23). Jehovah is a God of love and mercy, but He is also a God of wrath, honesty, justice and integrity. If God states that the wicked are punished, you had better believe it!

The apostle Peter warns that evil ones are in chains (torment) waiting for the day of judgment to be punished. Warnings are given to get our attention for the merciful purpose to cause us to avoid the consequences of eternal separation or banishment from the presence of the Redeemer and the redeemed! If eternal punishment is contrasted with eternal life in Matt. 25 and 2 Thes. 1-and it is-how could it be consistent to say that the righteous enjoy heaven endlessly but the wicked just cease to exist?

Jesus warns us, *"Fear not them that can destroy the body, but are not able to destroy the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell"* (Matt. 10:28). This makes no sense at all if the souls of evil ones cease to exist and receive no punishment at all. The apostle Paul speaks of the *"goodness and severity of God"* (Rom. 11:22), even as the prophet wrote, *"The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked"* (Nahum 1:3). For those who reject His will to live as they please, *"Our God is a consuming fire... it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Heb. 12:29; 10:31). Those who refuse to believe in eternal punishment in hell evidently do not accept the Bible and dreamed up a God unknown to the sacred text. The very word *"judgment"* not only includes a verdict, but also condemnation and punishment for the guilty.

If the wicked are annihilated, there is no punishment of the wicked, but simply the extinction of the ungodly. Where does the Bible say that sinners will go away into eternal extinction? The Bible says, *"These shall go away into eternal punishment"* (Matt. 25:46). These are the ones who had been told, *"Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels"* (v. 41). Satan's work is calculated to cause many to be lost forever in a realm characterized by fire and brimstone (Matt. 5:22). When Adam and Eve sinned, they died: that is, they were separated from the presence of God (Isa. 59:1-2; Eph. 2:1,5). Compare Gen. 3:3 with Rev. 20:14-15, where sinners ultimately receive *"the second death"* which is eternal separation from God in *"the lake of fire"* (Rev. 20:10,14). To deny the reality of hell is to overlook the power of the devil and to take all the sting out of his arguments. Satan is

too clever to try to entice men with shameful debauchery if there is not punishment for licentiousness. Where would the thrill of temptation be if the Bible taught that regardless of our decisions in life, everyone will be blessed eternally anyway?

What Will You Leave Behind?

W.A. HOLLEY

From time immemorial men and women have been leaving this old world. It is not a question of whether we shall leave, but when we shall depart.

There is an appointment which we all must keep (Hebrews 9:27). A great Judgment Day is coming (Acts 17:30-31; Romans 14:12; II Corinthians 5:10-11). We will enter eternity prepared or unprepared (Amos 4:12; John 14:1-6). Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.

Since we are responsible people, responsible for the acts we perform, for the words we speak, and for the choices we make, we should be willing to do some serious thinking (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19; Joshua 24:15). In one sense it is possible for one to influence others here on earth even after one is gone into the next world (Hebrews 11:4). Even though Abel has been dead for centuries, he still speaks to modern man. So can you speak even after you leave this world.

Dear Reader, what will you leave behind? We shall raise a few questions:

(1) Will you leave behind a life filled with sinfulness? a life which was devoted to lawlessness and disobedience to God and man? It is written of Jehoram, a king of Judah that he "departed without being desired" (II Chronicles 21:20). Jehoiaxim is described as dying without anyone to lament his memory. We quote: "But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy coveteousness, and for to shedding innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiaxim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah, my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with

the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (Jeremiah 22:17-19). Here is a man of high rank who died in disgrace, receiving no honorable burial at all.

There is another view which can be laid before our eyes. Jereboam was so wicked that only one of his children—a young child—would receive an honorable burial (I Kings 14:10-13). Parents, what examples do you set before your children? (Ephesians 6:1-4).

(2) All should leave behind the power of a good example. This is exactly what Jesus did for us. "... Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Peter 2:20-25). Our friends, our neighbors, our brethren in the Lord need our good examples (Matthew 5:16). It is in this manner we let our light shine before men. In fact, others can "see" us after we are gone.

(3) Dear Readers, will you leave behind you a genuine, devoted Christian family? Noah was "a preacher of righteousness" (II Peter 2:5). This preacher was instrumental in saving his own family ~ saving himself and seven others (I Peter 3:20-21). Was Noah a failure? Not at all! We would do well if we can manage to save our own families!! Pray that you can do as well as Noah did! One should not become so interested in saving others, that he forgets to save himself! We urge all fathers and mothers to become Christians today (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 15:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:36-38; Romans 6:3-4).

(4) Church leaders, will you leave behind some well-trained leaders of the Lord's church who will be able to carry on the work of the Lord? Listen to Paul: "And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:2). Elders should understand that they will need successors; they should go about seeing that there are trained men who can carry on the Lord's church after they have retired, or died (I Timothy 3:7; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4). Leaders of God's people are always necessary. Work, therefore, to have qualified men ready to assume their duty and responsibility.

(5) Friends, neighbors, will you leave behind words of wisdom and instruction planted in the minds of your children and grandchildren which can sustain them in a crisis? This is seed-

planting time! Each is building meaningful memories now. Will your children remember some word of advice, or instruction, or suggestion after your departure? How often do you recall what your father or mother said?

(6) Is the world made better as a result of your having lived here? Or, is it made worse? Is the church of the Lord in your community made better because of your efforts and your life? Or, has the church been made worse? Have you sown discord? Have you sown peace and harmony? How will you be remembered? as a sorehead? a grouch? a fault-finder? a peacemaker? (Proverbs 6:16-19; Matthew 5:9; Philippians 1:27; I Corinthians 1:10).

(7) Joshua left a wonderful example! "And Israel served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and had known all the work of Jehovah, that he had wrought for Israel" (Joshua 24:31). These wonderful words are incorporated in the Holy Bible for our learning (Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:11). Hence, Joshua must have been held in high esteem at the time of his death, being 110 years of age (Joshua 24:29).

(8) If you have never as yet obeyed the gospel of Christ, you may be leaving behind your last opportunity to hear and obey the truth of God (I Peter 4:17; II Thessalonians 1:7-9). There is no second chance for those who are dead. "Purgatory" is the figment of the imagination; it has no support in your Bible. In a figure, Solomon stated it in these words: "... If a tree falls toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be" (Ecclesiastes 11:3).

"A Peculiar People"

MIKE BRUMLEY

What was it about that band of people whom God called his own that made the children of Israel so special? It was simply that the Lord took them—small in number, weak in power—and made a people of honor and greatness. Their wealth, their power, the opinions of other nations had nothing to do with it. It was Israel's relationship to God that made her the mighty nation she was.

A constant theme of Scripture is that in every dispensation, the people of God are unique, separate, distinct, and honored. Peter wrote: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a **peculiar people** ..." (1 Peter 2:9). A better translation is that we are "a people for God's own possession." We are "peculiar" only because of our relationship to God.

Occasionally, we drift away from the concept of a "peculiar people." Sometimes we do not want to be different. Our personal and social lives never vary from the lifestyle of any other religious group. And we often do not want to be "peculiar" in the eyes of the religious world. Our idea is that they should look at us as one of them; a religious group not very much different from them. We want to be non-denominational from the standpoint of fitting in well with them. Do we ever come close to thinking that the best thing that can happen is for us to loose our distinctiveness, our uniqueness, our "peculiar" ways?

Whatever we can become is because God possesses us, making us a "peculiar" people. His ownership of us sets the standards. His will for us determines our conduct. His calling to us sets us apart. If there is to be any true greatness for us, it will be because we are God's, honored by and proud of that relationship, distinctive and peculiar.

Like Israel of old, our honor and glory can never come from wealth or power or the opinion of other religious groups. Like Israel of old, it will come to us when we as a church belong to God, with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Things We Cannot Do Without

HUGH FULFORD

A camel driver in Egypt asked a group of tourists if any of them knew how long a camel could go without water. One man spoke up and said, "Two weeks." The camel driver replied, "Actually, a camel can go all its life without water; of course, if it doesn't get water in two weeks, that is all its life!"

From a physical and material standpoint there are only a few absolute necessities of life. Obviously, we must have good water,

clothing, and shelter. Paul said that with these we ought to be content, (1 Timothy 6:8) though I doubt if most of us would be.

We have become so accustomed to such a plethora of luxuries that we actually think these luxuries are necessities. While none of us would want to give them up, we can get along without electricity and running water in our houses, automobiles, television, computers, cell phones, and a host of other things that make life so easy. Many of us did without all of these things in the early days of our life, but we have survived!

From a spiritual standpoint, there are some things we can do without, and it would be enlightening to list some of these. While they make our service to the Lord more effective, we do not have to have church buildings, song books, full-time "located preachers" educational ministers, involvement ministers, youth ministers, youth camps, children's homes, or homes for the aged. These things are not wrong, but they are not indispensable. Through the ages, the church in various locations has functioned without some or any of these.

On the other hand, there are some matters that are absolutely necessary for our spiritual well-being. They are things we cannot do without! Consider some of them.

1. Without Christ we can do nothing. This is the plain statement of Christ. (John 15:5)

Jesus is the great indispensable, the "Absolute Essential" to a relationship with God. Unless one believes that Jesus is the Messiah that person will die in his sins. (John 8:24.) He is the only Way to the Father. (John 14:6.) There is salvation in no other. (Acts 4:11,12.) For the Christian, Christ is our life. (Colossians 3:4.) Brother Marshall Keeble used to say, "When you take 'Christ' out of 'Christian' all you have left is . i.a.n. and that simply means, 'I ain't nothing'!"

2. Without shedding of blood there is no remission

The writer of Hebrews emphasizes how that "according to the law almost all things are purged with blood" and then states, "and without shedding of blood there is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22.)

We often emphasize the human response that must be made to the gospel, and we must make this emphasis. But faith, repentance, confession, and baptism could not save us, apart from

the shedding of Christ's blood. "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Hebrews 9:10.) Indeed, we have been redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:19.)

3. Without faith it is impossible to please God

This is the bold and emphatic statement of the inspired penman. (Hebrews 11:6.) "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Verse 1.) This simply means that faith puts something under our feet that we can stand on and provides us with reliable testimony of things invisible to the physical eye. Faith is the summation of our response of our response to God. (Ephesians 2:8,9.) By it we are justified and have peace with God, and by it we have access into the realm of grace. (Romans 5:1.) As the people of God, "we walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5:7.)

4. Without works faith is dead

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:26.) Jesus asked, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46.) That which really avails anything, said Paul, is "faith working through love." (Galatians 5:6.) Abraham was justified by an obedient faith and so are we. ((James 2:21-24.)

5. Without chastening we are illegitimate children

"But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate (bastards, KJV) and not sons." (Hebrews 12:8.) God chastens us that "we may be partakers of His holiness. (Verse 10.) Therefore, we ought not "despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when we are rebuked by him." (Verse 5.)

6. Without holiness no man can see God

Continuing his discussion of God's chastening and its purpose ("that we may be partakers of His holiness," (Hebrews 12:10), the writer proceeds to state the absolute necessity of holiness. "Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." (Hebrew 12:14.) Christians live under the mandate of

holiness (separateness from the world). "But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15,16.) Our words, actions, and attitudes should reflect the holiness of life to which God has called us.

7. Without love we are nothing

Regardless of what else may be true of us, without love we are nothing. Eloquence of speech, possessing the gift of prophecy, understanding all mysteries and all knowledge, having all faith, giving all of our goods to feed the poor, or even suffering martyrdom itself avails nothing if we do not have love. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3.) Truly we should "owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law." (Romans 13:8.) Love for one another is the most convincing evidence that we are disciples of Jesus. (John 13:35.)

Yes, there are many things we can do without and still serve God, but we cannot serve Him without the seven foregoing things!

Unthinkable Things From the Foot Of the Cross

W. DOUGLASS HARRIS

Some actions are made unthinkable by their very nature, such as tunneling through a mountain with a toothpick, clipping the wings of a cyclone with scissors, sweetening an ocean of quinine with a pint of sugar, lighting a darkened city with one small candle, etc. In the same way when one figuratively stands at the foot of the cross of Christ, by nature there are some things unthinkable. Paul expressed surprise and amazement that some of the Galatian Christians were returning to Judaism after the crucifixion of Christ had been portrayed before their eyes in such a vivid way. (Read Galatians 3:1.) What are some things unthinkable in the light of the crucifixion?

1. THAT RELIGIOUS DIVISION IS DESIRABLE

Prayers are heard in religious circles thanking God that there

are so many churches that one can attend the church of his choice, which is equal to saying this is a desirable way. But can one stand at the foot of the cross and be honest in saying such? Does not such reveal either ignorance or lack of concern for the Lord's prayer in John 17:20,21? Did not the shadow of the cross loom over this prayer? Is not a prayer thanking God for division in defiance of Paul's inspired command? (Compare 1 Corinthians 1:10.) Notice Paul's question to the Corinthians: "Was Paul crucified for you?" (1 Corinthians 1:13.) It is impossible to view the crucifixion of Christ in the right way and say that religious division is desirable.

2. THAT THE COST OF LOYALTY TO CHRIST IS TOO HIGH

Pitiable excuses are offered so often for not being more loyal in daily living for Christ, in attendance, giving, etc. There are demands that are made to be sure and the cost should always be considered, but when the crucifixion is clearly viewed, can one say that God's demands are too severe? Peter and John met this test and passed without hesitation. They were offered safety by the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem if they would not speak any more in the name of Christ. " (Acts 4:18, 19; 5:28,29.) How could they have done such and be loyal to Christ?

What did the cross demand of Jesus? Answer: Read Philemon 2:5-8 and Hebrews 12:2-4. Faithfulness to His Father's will was Christ's first duty. (Matthew 26:38-44.) He faced the hostility of a blood-thirsty mob, suffered three mock trials, and died an ignominious death, but was His loyalty too high? In view of His excruciating death by crucifixion is the cost and demand of loyalty to Him too high?

3. THAT THE CHURCH IS LESS THAN "ALL IMPORTANT"

I refer to the church that Christ purchased with his blood. (Acts 20:28.) And He purchased ONLY ONE. (Ephesians 4:4; 1 Corinthians 12:20b.) He died that He "might reconcile them both (Jew and Gentile) in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." (Ephesians 2:16.) In the light of Christ's teaching, that one body is all-important. That one body is the church. (Colossians 1:18.) Its all-importance is seen in the concern His apostles had for it; they suffered incredible persecution, even martyrdom for it. It is seen in all the letters addressed to the

churches of the first century. It is seen at the foot of the cross by what Christ gave Himself for. (Ephesians 5:23.) It is seen in the way Paul impressed the elders of the church at Ephesus with its importance by telling them He purchased the church with His life's blood. (Acts 20:28.) Could He have paid a higher price to bring it into existence? He paid too much, if it is not all-important.

4. THAT SIN IS TO BE LIGHTLY REGARDED

When the cost for the cure for sin is viewed properly—Christ crucified—it is terrible testimony as to what sin is and what it does. His blood was shed for the remission (forgiveness) of our sins and the redemption of our souls. (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7.) Sin is not just a headache, but is rebellion to God. (Compare Hebrews 9:22; Romans 5:6-8.) It is no wonder that Paul said: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." When Paul surveyed the motivations of the One who was crucified for him, the world no longer had any allurements for him.

5. THAT THE VALUE OF THE SOUL IS NOT LESS THAN OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE

Note these attention-arresting statements of the Lord: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36,37.) The soul should be given more concern than the body. (Matthew 10:18.) Man's soul is the only possession he will carry with him beyond the grave. Inspiration says that to convert a sinner from the error of his way is to save a soul from death—eternal death, or eternal separation from God. (James 5:19,20.)

CONCLUSION

In the text suggesting our topic, Paul directed a question to the Galatian Christians to help them keep their religion straight. (Galatians 3:1.) He calls them foolish and thoughtless suggesting that they were not using their minds. Is not the same true now by our failure to see the crucifixion of Christ in its proper light and to attempt to justify the unthinkables discussed in the preceding?

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