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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believe"

Today we are living in a most powerful world. Science and technology has brought to us so many power-packed wonderful things in this age, and has affected the lives of billions of people all over the world. Through cell-phones, television and computers, etc. we can reach today anywhere in the world within minutes. Who could have imagined that this would be possible just a few decades ago? Look at the powerful media and how it has changed our world of today. Travel has become so easy and so powerful that in a matter of just a few hours we can travel from one end of the world to the other end. So much progress has been made in the field of medicine and surgery that surgical operations could be manipulated in one part of the world from another country by an expert surgeon. They are talking today of chemical and biological weapons of mass-destruction, which are so powerful and destructive that can kill millions and perhaps billions of people in matter of no time. And as man diligently continue in search of more powerful inventions, we pause, and ask, Why has man not discovered something that can stop aging? Can man prevent death? Does man know what happen to the soul of man after death, or where does the soul go?

Evidently, man is limited to his power. Man can do somethings, but he cannot do everything. Man is not the creator, God is the Creator. Man makes things taking out from what God has Created. Man can do only so much as God allows him to do. Man cannot do everything. Man knows that he is in sin and that he need salvation from sin. Through the centuries he has wandered everywhere in search of salvation from sin. Myriad of religious systems have been invented by man everywhere in search of salvation. But has man found on his own any remedy for salvation from sin? Does he know where is he going after death? What will become of his soul? Does he have the assurance of entrance into God's heaven? Does he know if his sins have been forgiven by God, against whom he has sinned?

Every man and every woman on this earth need to hear what the Bible through the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:16, that the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is power of God to salvation for everyone who believes in Him. Man does not have the power to forgive another man of his sins. Only God can forgive man, because all have committed sins against God (Romans 3:23). The gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation for everyone who would believe in Him. Explaining the gospel, the apostle Paul said, at 1 Corinthians 15: 1-4, that by the grace of God, Christ died for our sins and that He was buried in a tomb and then He was resurrected the third day according to the Scriptures. After His resurrection from the dead and before ascension into heaven Christ told His followers to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and he who believes and is baptized will be saved. (Mark 16: 15, 16). Man believes in Christ with the heart or mind, and allows himself to be buried in the tomb of the water of baptism, as the one who had died to sin, and then is brought out of the grave of water by the one who baptizes him in accordance to the command of Christ, to walk in the newness of life with Christ by following Him daily. (Romans 6:3-6). For salvation from sin every man needs God's power.

Living With One Another

J.C. CHOATE

The world is full of people. There are over seven billion souls already living on the earth. Not only that, but the population is steadily growing at an alarming rate. Most of this vast number of people are living in Asia.

All of this makes us aware of man's needs physically and spiritually. It also makes us realize that all of these people must live together, even in very crowded conditions. And that means that they must learn how to get along with each other. When nations find it difficult to have good relations, then we can understand why man has so many problems when it comes down to a personal level. Of course we are reminded some times that nation, only reflect what is going on in our local communities, except it is just on a larger scale, and that is probably right. If we can't get along with each other personally, then how can we expect whole countries to go along without ever having any problems?

Someone has said that no man is an island. That just simply means that no one can be self-sufficient living to himself, and never needing anyone's help. To the contrary, we need God and we need one another. Man is a spiritual being, and so he needs God; but he is also a sociable being, and that means that he needs those around him.

Having spiritual needs then we must come to know of God and his Son, Jesus. We must read and study the Bible so that we may not only come to believe (Romans 10:17), but that we may learn what his will is for us, and then to obey that will. With a proper relationship with the Lord, then this will also make it possible for us to have a good relationship with our fellowman.

Living in this world we have our parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and people in general to live with. If we are married then we have our husbands and wives, our children, and so on. Even as Christians and members of the church, we must have dealings with one another, and this demands that we have the proper attitude, and that we respond to our brethren, regardless of circumstances, with a Christian spirit.

Our Lord has given us a perfect example to follow, but he has

also given us teachings and principles that will help us to live together, and to get along with one another. (1 Peter 2:21).

Christ said that the number one thing that should be found in our lives is that of love. He said that we should love God, and that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. (Matthew 22:36-39). He also said that we should love our enemies. Can you believe that? He said, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you". (Matthew 5:44). Just imagine what a different world we would have today if everyone did this? Is it possible? Of course, it is. All we need to do is just do what the Lord asked us to do. Christ said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another". (John 13:34).

Second, Christ taught that we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us. (Matthew 7:12). This has been called the golden rule, and indeed it is. But again, he went beyond that when he said that we should even do good to them that hate us. (Luke 6:27). Paul said, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith". (Galatians 6:10).

Third, we are to be willing to forgive those who sin against us or who do us wrong. Christ taught the disciples to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors". (Matthew 6:12). He went on to say, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses". (Matthew 6:14, 15). Peter asked the Lord how many times he should forgive his brother, if he should forgive him seven times. Then we read, "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven". (Matthew 18:22). In saying that, Jesus was saying that we should not put any limitation on how many times we will be willing to forgive one, if he asks that we forgive him.

Fourth, we should always be honest in our dealings with one another. Paul said, "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men". (2 Corinthians 8:21). That means that we should always tell the truth and never lie.

As you can see, the Lord has given us numerous ways that will help us with our dealings with one another. Here are some

thoughts from the apostle Paul: "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good". (Romans 12:9-21).

The apostle Peter wrote, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it". (1 Peter 3:8-11). And on and on we could go, but surely you see then that the principles and teachings that Christ gave to his people, and for all others who will accept them, are those things that are for the good of man, and for his fellowman.

Our Eternal Abode

THOMAS DOHLING

"We seek the city that is to come" (Heb. 13:14)

In Revelation chapter 21:1, 2 we read:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.

"And there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city,

New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

"And I heard a loud voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God.'

Then verse 7 says, "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."

Further we read, "Come! I will show you the bride, and the Lamb's wife" [v. 9b]. We detect eager excitement in the angel's voice! John records, "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. And her light was like a most precious stone... clear as crystal" [v. 10, 11].

"And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

"And the city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it, and the Lamb is its light."

Do we as Christians have this vision in mind? Ah, dear readers, I wish all of us had this vision firmly fixed on our minds. The New Jerusalem is called the Bride of Christ. She is the figure of the Church which is the Bride of Christ.

The apostle and saints in the first century and down through the ages had this vision always fixed on their minds which is why all else seemed trivial and worthless as compared to being with the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb and basking in the light of Their Presence. This is what has been promised in the Bible.

We see from our study that the "New holy Jerusalem" has "the glory of God!" The Church is now glorified! "Her light was like a most precious stone... clear as crystal." No more impurities, no sin stains, but robed with God's glory! "The Lamb's wife!" How glorious! How humbling! How thankful we should be to God for this wondrous deed that He has done for us in, through, and by the Lamb, our Lord, Saviour, Redeemer, and King Jesus Christ!

Christians, as we savor this vision, let us look forward with eager anticipation to being a part of our eternal abode.

God desires that all his human creatures be a part of the holy city. Those who are not yet in the church of Christ can't be a part of the new city! Wouldn't that be sad? Come now, those of you who

are still undecided, come into the church that Jesus built. The church will be transformed into the new holy Jerusalem! Be a part of the body of Christ! Christ Jesus has done all the hard work. We implore you to be reconciled to God in Christ Jesus. Repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Lord & Saviour of your soul and be immersed in water and your sins will be forgiven as you rise up to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus, gaining entrance into His body—His church. Don't delay for time is ebbing away. Won't you respond to God's love by deciding today to abide in God's marvelous Presence now and forever?

A Man of His Word

DAVID THURMAN

Who can you trust? Is there a person in your life that you could count on no matter what? In your life is there a spouse, or a family member, or one of those close friends that never lets you down? If you have someone like that, you are truly blessed. If you don't have that, you can be blessed by One who will never let you down:

Jesus is there for you, because He is a man of His word. He keeps every promise He makes. You can count on Him no matter what is going on in your life. Listen to some of His promises: *"Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God. And Jesus cried out and said, 'He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me. And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me. I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. And if anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me'"* (John 12:42-50). Jesus is a

man of His word. Notice the promises and expectation we hear in these verses.

Jesus Requires Living Faith

This text begins with the fact that some men believed in Jesus. These were men of distinction in their communities. They were known to be good men, men who knew the law of Moses and lived it. That is how men became "rulers", that is, leaders in their synagogues. These spiritual men realized Jesus was all He claimed to be. They could see He was the Messiah.

But, they had a problem with Jesus. If they confessed their faith in him, they would lose their status as rulers and would be forced out of their synagogues. Their privileges, their respect, their prominence would all be forfeited. So, even though they believed, they kept quiet so they could keep the praise of men.

That is why Jesus insists that faith in Him is not just faith in a Messiah, but in the God Who sent Him. And that God requires a living, obvious faith. That is, He wants us to put Him first, and declare our faith in Him. This declaration should go beyond our words and include our lives. Jesus and God want us to live our faith so that others can see that we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. *"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does"* (James 1:22-25). In other words, there is no such thing as a closet or hidden believer. We should live our faith, doing the word of God, regardless of the approval or criticism of men.

Jesus Reflects God's Nature

The Lord makes a startling claim. He says that if you have seen Him, you have seen God. If you come to know Jesus, you have come to know God. Just as *"God is light, and in Him is no darkness"* (1 John 1:5), so also Jesus came into the world as a light so that people could escape darkness.

Claiming to reflect God's nature is a remarkable claim. As Jesus says, *"I and the Father are one"* (John 10:30). Jesus wants

us to realize that we can know God. Although God is a Spirit (John 4:24) and God is so holy He cannot stand our sin, yet we can come to know Him when we come to know Jesus.

Jesus reflects God's nature in every way. *"And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together"* (Col. 1:15-17). Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the Creator of all things, the One Who holds all things together. When you see Jesus, you see God. When you trust in Jesus, you trust in God. If you fail to live for Jesus, as these rulers did, you fail to live for God.

Jesus Reaches Out to Save

Jesus came to bring light so we could escape darkness. He did not come to bring judgment, but instead, He came to save the world. This tells us a great deal about God and Jesus. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"* (John 3:16-18).

First, we learn that God sent Jesus to save an already condemned world. We stood guilty before the Lord. He did not send Jesus to make us feel worse, but to save us. We learn that God loves us enough to send His Son to reflect His nature among sinful people. Jesus did not come to judge you, but to save you. He knows that you are already condemned due to your sin. But, you can escape the judgment of God by putting your faith in Jesus and letting Him save you.

The mission of Jesus was not one of criticism, condemnation and judgment. It was a mission of love, reaching out to unworthy, undeserving, unlikeable people. *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:8). We should never think of Jesus as our critic, but our Savior. We should know that we can come to Him for salvation, that is why He came to us.

Jesus Repeats What God Says

When Jesus spoke, He was speaking for God. Jesus did not speak on His own, but taught the word of God as given to Him by God. Jesus was careful to say only what God wanted said, because God's message is eternal life. And, Jesus knows that the word that He spoke will be our judge.

Yes, Jesus came to save us. But, how He lived, what He taught, what He commanded, will be our judge if we reject Who He was, what He taught and how He lived. This is sobering when we consider it. Jesus is a man of His word. He has come to save us, but if we choose to ignore or reject Him or hide our faith in Him (as these rulers were), we will face a judge. And that judge will be the word of the One we rejected. And, Jesus will keep His word, even in judgment.

"Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent; to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:9-10). Paul says it well. Our task in life is to act our faith by pleasing Jesus in all things. Because, it will be the Lord's teaching that finally measures us. When that happens, we want to be safe in His grace, walking in His light, living for Him, so that we have nothing to fear. *"By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:17-18a).*

So: Listen to the Word of God

Since you will be judged by Jesus' words doesn't it make sense to listen to Him? And listening is much more than knowledge. It is living according to His word. These rulers believed, but their lives did not reflect that faith. *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).* Listen to Jesus' words and do them, and then you have nothing to fear in the judgment.

Live For Jesus

This is really the bottom line of this passage. Some believed in Jesus, but would not live for Him. They would not do what He asked by confessing Him as the Messiah. They wanted their own

status more than they loved Jesus. You need to listen to Him and you need to live for Him. That means doing what He says as He says. *"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned'"* (Mark 16:15-16). If you want to live for Jesus, you must die to yourself and be baptized. You will be saved, and you will have nothing to fear in the judgment. These are the words of Jesus. Will you listen to them? If you want to live for Him, be baptized, today!

Why We Believe in God

J.A. THORNTON

Can we prove the existence of God? We cannot to the man who will not accept evidence. But to the person who will not accept evidence, we cannot even prove that he has a mind! You cannot see your mind, not touch it or taste or smell or hear it. Therefore, you do not have a mind! This would be the way some would reason as far as the questions of God and religion are concerned. But we know we have a mind because we have evidence.

What is the evidence that there is a God?

We believe in God because it is more reasonable than atheism, the only other alternative. Atheism cannot be proved. To prove that there is no God, a person would have to be equal to God Himself. He would have to know everything, else how could he know that the only thing that he does not know is that there is a God? He would have to be in every place, else the very place he is not, God might be.

The existence of God is more reasonable than atheism because God is eternal. **Something is, therefore something has always been.** *Something cannot come from nothing.* There are two things in existence — mind and matter. Mind is superior to matter. Since this is true, then mind or intelligence existed before matter. The universe is proof of this because it is too orderly to have been formed by the process of an accident.

Did the electric system of our city have a maker? Did the

telephone system have a maker? In the human body we have a nervous system more intricately complicated than any electrical system man has devised. Can it be an accident? There must have been an intelligence behind it.

It is more reasonable to believe in God than in atheism. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). With this statement of fact, we can explain the entire universe without another assumption. This is not true of atheism. We must believe in *God or atheism*—there is no other alternative. If God is, then the Bible is His word telling us where we came from and where we are going. We must follow it and be judged by it someday.

Reverence in its Working Clothes

JOHN GIPSON

I've been thinking about Goethe's statement that "The soul of the Christian religion is reverence."

Off of the top of my head, my first thought had to do with Moses as he stood before the burning bush which was not being consumed. God said, "*Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground*" And he said, "*I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*" And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God" (Exodus 3:5,6).

Then my mind jumped to a crisis in Israel—the death of king Uzziah. A young man saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and he said, "*Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!*" (Isaiah 6:5). Isaiah then heard the voice of the Lord: "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*" And out of reverence Isaiah responded, "*Here am I! Send me*" (Isaiah 6:8).

Racing ahead to Luke 5:8, I thought of one of Jesus' mighty works. "*But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'*"

I know these brief reflections on reverence are limited, but they

are sufficient to convince me of the importance of at least three things:

- [1] We should feel a holy fear in God's presence;
- [2] We should be acutely aware of our sinfulness; and,
- [3] We should respond to God in willing service.

If you want to see reverence in its working clothes, look at the apostle Paul as he declares, "*For to me to live is Christ*" (Philippians 1:21).

Preaching Christ

WAYNE BARRIER

The Gospel of Christ must be taught for man to understand his responsibility to God. Biblical accounts of conversion to Christianity are often described as the result of early evangelists "preaching Jesus or preaching Christ" (Acts 8:35; 9:20,31). What does this teaching or preaching include? Obviously, it involves teaching the plan of salvation. To be saved and added to the church (Acts 2:38-47), believers were willing to obey the apostles' instruction for them to repent and be baptized for remission of sins. What was taught to encourage these believers to become obedient unto salvation? In general terms, three things seem to be included in this initial teaching.

First, early evangelists stressed the fact that Jesus is the long-awaited Savior, spoken of by the prophets throughout the ages. The fulfillment of the scores of prophecies regarding the coming of a Savior can be easily understood when the Bible is thoroughly studied. Details regarding time, place, circumstances, and events are totally accurate. No prophecies are found to be in error. Peter's sermon in Acts 2 includes numerous references to prophecy concerning Jesus and the establishment of His kingdom. Fulfilled prophecy is powerful evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.

Second, John states that those taught concerning the "signs" revealed by Jesus will be encouraged to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, in believing, they can have life in His name (John 20:30,31). The "signs" John refers to include accounts of the supernatural power demonstrated

by Jesus, and later by the apostles. Jesus healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, controlled the elements of nature, and raised the dead. His power was displayed throughout His ministry. The apostles were given special "powers" on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) at the instruction of Jesus (John 14:16). This power is evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.

Finally, the account of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus was persuasive teaching that often motivated hearers to obey. The death of an innocent man of such love and compassion is a moving story. Even more motivating is the account of His victorious resurrection. Victory over death and the confines of earthly human existence was demonstrated and promised to all. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2:1-9 that preaching of Christ and His crucifixion is the power of God.

Much must be taught for one to become a Christian, but the starting place in teaching is to reveal these three truths. This approach is effective today, just as it was in the first century.

Man needs salvation. Jesus can and will save us.

Rainbows in the Storm

BILL DILLON

After the great flood in the book of Genesis, Noah and his family came forth from the ark to begin civilization all over again. God promised them, by means of the rainbow, that never again would the earth be destroyed by water.

The rainbow has always been a reminder that God's promises are real. We can trust God. His word is good.

There are storms in all of our lives. When they come, God's promises are as rainbows in the sky. They help to cheer us and encourage us when days are dark. They give us assurance that the storms will eventually pass.

Whether your burden is poor health, financial worries, the loss of a loved one, or some other trial, you can trust God to see you through. Perhaps your problems will not be solved the way you hoped, but God will always do what is best.

Some truths about Truth

RANDALL CASELMAN

Truth is defined as that which is real, genuine, certain, valid, factual. Truth is actuality, that which can be trusted because it is the things that are. In the Bible, truth is spoken of as an attribute of God. Twice Isaiah tells us that He is the God of truth. Titus 1:2 contends that God cannot lie. So, that which is revealed by God, inspired by God, breathed by God, is truth and can be trusted as genuine and valid. Note some truths about truth:

1. Truth can be known

Jesus said, *"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free"* (John 8:32). We can know truth by studying the Scriptures, which are inspired by the Holy Spirit and which testify about Jesus. John wrote, *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14). Jesus plainly stated that He was the truth in John 14:6: *"I am the way and the truth and the life."* Do we know truth?

2. Truth, when obeyed, sanctifies

Jesus prayed, *"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth"* (John 17:17). As we respond to the guidance of the Spirit, we are cleansed by truth. Paul tells us as much: *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless"* (Ephesians 5:25-27).

3. Truth sets us free and apart

What is sanctification? Being freed from sin and the eternal consequences of sin. Sanctification sets us free and sets us apart. You see, when we are washed with water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26), we are raised to walk in a newness of life (Romans 6:4). Paul goes on to say that we become instruments of righteousness, living sacrifices (Romans 6:13;12:1). Peter says that we are a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a people belonging to God (1 Peter 2:5,9). As we allow the Spirit of truth to lead us, as we keep in step

with Him, we produce His fruit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Indeed, this fruit sets us apart. Right?

4. Truth should set us ablaze

Remember Jeremiah? *"His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot"* (Jeremiah 20:9). If and when we are genuinely convinced that we have the truth of God in us, we cannot hold it back. Like Jeremiah; we are forced to proclaim His truth to others.

His truth sets us ablaze in another way also: it keeps us from sin. David wrote, *"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you"* (Psalm 119:11). Truth hidden in our heart regulates our attitudes, our disposition, and even our daily behavior.

5. Truth must be contended for

We are instructed to *"contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints"* (Jude 3). "The faith" refers to that body of truth once delivered. This truth is not only to be proclaimed, it is to be defended. Why? Because it is the good news of the Gospel that saves. In Colossians 1:5, Paul speaks of *"the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven, and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel...."* Indeed, we must contend for the faith, stand up for truth, fight the good fight, keep the faith—because we, as the church of God, are the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

What is truth? What is our relationship to truth? Do we know it? Do we know Him? Are we being led by Him? Are we bearing His fruit? Are we obeying truth? Are we walking in the light? I pray that we are. *"So if the Son sets you free,"* Jesus said in John 8:36, *"you will be free indeed."* Indeed!

Splitting—Hairs

T. PIERCE BROWN

To most of us "splitting hairs" is probably in the same category as straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel (Matthew 23:24). Since the Bible does not use the expression, "splitting hairs," it may

mean all sorts of things to various people. Whether it is good or bad may well depend on the person whose "hair" is split and which side of the hair he has left. However, let us look at some things in the Bible that some people then and now might classify as "hair splitting."

Did Paul obey the Law or not? In Acts 21:23-24, James and the elders told Paul to take some men who had taken a vow and show the Jews "that thou thyself also walkest orderly and keepest the law" (kjb). Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:20, "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law." In his mind there was a clear distinction between "keeping the law" as a matter of national culture and "keeping the Law" as a matter of Christian responsibility or having to do with salvation.

We can see the same sort of hair splitting in his dealing with circumcision or eating meats offered to idols. He says in Galatians 5:3, "For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law." Yet, he was circumcised and had Timothy circumcised. However, neither he nor Timothy was required to do the whole law. I do not consider him guilty of splitting hairs if that term implies some improper action or teaching, but there is little question that some who might do the same sort of thing today would be accused of it.

We are taught to abstain from meat offered to idols (Acts 15:29; 21:25). But in 1 Corinthians 8:8, we are taught that it does not matter if we eat it. But verses 9-13 teach us not to do it in some circumstances. We are not "splitting hairs" if we make these fine distinctions that the Holy Spirit showed are appropriate. We are only "splitting hairs" in any bad sense when we assume distinctions that God did not clearly show and then bind our assumptions on others.

A beloved scholarly brother says, "Worship, being respect and veneration and homage, is an emotion, a thought in the mind and is wholly internal." I do not think it is "splitting hairs" when I reply to him, "Worship is not respect and veneration and homage, but is the payment or demonstration of respect, veneration and homage." If I owe you Rs. 1000, I may think of paying you, even go through the motions as if I were paying you, or hand you a worthless cheque which appears to be paying you; but unless I

deliberately pay you I have not paid you. I have respect for God all the time, but I am not paying him respect at all times. Surely one can understand that I can love my wife all the time, but I am not showing love for her all the time. When the Bible says, "Fear God. honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17), surely it is not hard to see that one may honor the king at all times in his heart but not show or pay him honor until it is done by some outward act. One difference in honoring the king and honoring God is that one may honor or pay respect to God only in the heart, and it is acceptable worship, for God knows when that honor is paid to Him in the heart. The king does not, so it has to be by an outward act. However, if one can honor a king by an outward act, one can also honor God by an outward act, but the payment of homage or reverence, whether internal or external, is what the Bible speaks of as worship. True or acceptable worship must be in the heart, but that does not mean it must be confined to the heart and can only be in the heart, for it should be evident that a person can demonstrate or pay homage or reverence to God by some outward actions. Of course, if he worships God with the lips but his heart is far from him, it is vain and unacceptable worship, but it is worship, for Jesus said so (Matthew 15:8-9). This is not improper "hair splitting" but simply distinguishing between things that differ.

In 2 Kings 5:17-18 Naaman promised that he would worship only the Lord, but when his master went into the house of Rimmon with him and he bowed himself, he would be going through the outward act but would not in his heart be paying homage to Rimmon. This may be "hair splitting," but apparently God accepted it, realizing that a servant can show respect to his master by bowing when he bows, but true worship must be in the heart and from the heart. We may call this hypocrisy, and it may be at times, but it is not necessarily so. That is, if we go through some actions and pretend to show reverence to God (or man) and really do not, but we are trying to fool someone "and for a pretense make long prayers" (Mark 12:40), then it is hypocrisy. If I went into a home in Japan and the custom was to take one's shoes off and they did it to show respect to some god of their imagination, I could still take my shoes off to show respect to the host without being a hypocrite. If I were in Israel today and the law was to not drive on the street in observance of the Sabbath, I could observe that law without compromising my teaching that I am not under the Sabbath law as

a Christian. This is why Paul could act like a Jew or one without law as the occasion demanded. If that seems to be hair-splitting, so be it.

When Jesus said in Luke 11:42, "But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." His statement of woe was not because they were very careful to count one dill seed out of each ten or something of that sort. That might be considered by some as "splitting hairs" to think that God would require them to be careful to tithe. That was not the case as Jesus clearly says, "These ought ye to have done." Their condemnation was because they left other things undone that were more important or basic.

There is nothing in the Bible or in proper logic that would show it is wrong to consider the mote in your brother's eye. We may be splitting hairs if we claim that it is wrong to try to correct any fault in your brother until you correct all your own faults. This is not the teaching of Jesus or of the Holy Spirit. In such a case, one could never "reprove, rebuke, exhort" (2 Timothy 4:2) at any time. Jesus is teaching that it is wrong and hypocritical to call attention to a small fault in your brother when it is evident that you are not concerned with a much bigger fault in yourself.

If a Jew decided to find out what God meant by "do no work on the Sabbath day" and from a study of His will discovered that if his neighbor had an ox or an ass in the ditch (Luke 14:5) and he helped pull it out, he is not doing work on the Sabbath day, but if he sets up a business of pulling animals out of ditches and goes around on the Sabbath day engaging in that business, he would be doing work; this would not be splitting hairs. So, when they saw Jesus heal a man on the Sabbath and accused him of doing work, they might be thought of as splitting hairs.

To some, I might be splitting hairs if I refuse to mow my lawn on the Lord's day, but if my neighbor has hay in his field that is about to be spoiled by rain, I would help him get it in the barn. We have never washed and hung out clothes on Sunday, but if a neighbor is sick and has a washtub full of diapers that need washing, we would wash those diapers on Sunday. I make a distinction between those two kinds of things, but I do not bind my "hairsplitting" or distinctions on you. That is, I do not mow my lawn or wash and hang out my clothes on the Lord's day because I think

it is inappropriate to use the Lord's day simply for doing work that I can do on some other day. I simply want to do all I do for the glory of God, and I have an idea that to some it would seem that I did not respect God if I did that. If you do decide to split hairs try to make sure you split them in accordance with what God has revealed, not some guess of your own.

The Lord's other Prayer

A. CRAVENS MOORE

Much has been written about the model prayer Our Lord used to teach His followers. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told His listeners, "After this manner therefore pray ye" (Matthew 6:9 kjv). In Luke 11:1 after Jesus had finished a prayer, one of His disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples," and Jesus instructed those with Him in the manner in which God the Father should be approached. Before our culture became so politically correct, almost every child in elementary school memorized and recited "The Lord's Prayer."

In fact, I can remember as a young child discussing "The Lord's Prayer" with a Bible school teacher because of a concern about saying this prayer in public school. Whenever I came to the part, "Thy kingdom come," I was torn because I knew that God's kingdom had come in power on the Day of Pentecost. That wise woman told me, "You can do one of two things. You can remain silent for that portion of the prayer or you can in your own mind have reference to heaven which surely is God's kingdom also."

"The Lord's Prayer" still speaks to God's children in so many ways today, and the principles taught in it should be taken to heart again and again. Many of those same requests that Jesus made in that prayer should be made by God's people today.

Yet it is "The Lord's Other Prayer," filled with so much love, power and promise, that speaks even more loudly across the ages. The entire 17th chapter of John is taken up with this prayer, this wonderful petition that Jesus made to the Father.

Sometimes this prayer is called the unity prayer, and in it Jesus does pray for harmony and for singleness of purpose (John

17:21-22).

This prayer was offered shortly before the betrayal, arrest and trial of our Lord. The Crucifixion and burial would soon follow as would the glorious Resurrection.

In this prayer the Savior of the world prayed for Himself, for His chosen apostles and for all who would believe on Him in the future (John 17:20). I love this prayer because that last group includes me. Jesus prayed for me!

It would only be hours later that Pilate would ask the King of the Jews, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). In this prayer Jesus had already answered that question. "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth" (17:17).

In this prayer, too, Jesus caught a glimpse again of all that He left when He came into the world on a mission to save mankind. "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:4-5). Jesus knew He was going home at last. The agony in the garden and the pain and humiliation of the Cross were yet to come, but our Lord was going home!

Jesus the Christ prayed that we might share in that glory the Father had given Him (John 17:22). In addition, our Lord prayed that we might eventually be with Him. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (v. 24).

In this prayer Christians are reminded that although they may be in the world they do not have to be of the world—they can and should live apart from the wickedness that exists there, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15).

This prayer was very specific and dealt with areas heavy on our Lord's heart as He neared Calvary. We cannot copy this prayer in quite the same manner as we can "The Lord's Prayer," but we can read it over and over and be comforted time and time again. Jesus came to this world, and before He went back to heaven, He prayed for us that we might one day join Him.

Every instance in which Jesus prayed is worthy of attention and study. Without doubt, much can be learned from the way that the Savior talked to our Father. Praise should be ascribed to God

the Father and Jesus the Son, and thanksgiving should be given for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, especially for "The Lord's Other Prayer."

Foundation For Marriage

DAVID TARBET

In the Garden of Eden God established the foundation for all society—the home. Only because of disobedience did mankind fall from that original design and intent for the home and, in the fall, both men and women suffered loss of happiness. It is vital that we go back beyond the cultural standards of our modern society, back beyond the traditions of our forefathers, and even back beyond later changes imposed upon God's original intent by the hardness of human hearts (Deuteronomy 24), to the original plans of God as described in Genesis chapters one and two.

In Genesis one, we are informed that God created both male and female "in His image"—giving them a part of His very nature, that is, "authority" over the created world—over birds of the air, fish of the sea, cattle, and every thing that creeps on the earth. Adam and Eve were placed in the beautiful garden with a mutual responsibility to "keep it". The original home was an economic unity in which male and female worked together to use nature's resources for their mutual benefit and blessing. In the first marriage, both Adam and Eve felt a responsibility to bring out the best in all the created world around them. They shared a sense of divine accountability.

The first couple had a common dream: to multiply and fill the earth. They did not live a self-centered life, but anticipated the birth of children and were thankful when they received their sons and daughters as gifts from God. Children were considered a blessing, not a burden.

In marriage, Adam and Eve found the answer to loneliness. It was "not good" to be alone, but in family love, both discovered wonderful fulfillment and the answers to their heart-hungers. They were "one"—in ambition, in heart, in body, in spirit.

There was no question in Adam's mind but that when he was given his wife, he was given God's ultimate blessing, and he treated

her with respect. He was so excited when he discovered her! "At last!" he may have shouted. Marriage began with a commitment to make it last. There was to be no "third party", and both Adam and Eve understood this clearly. Marriage was not a "We'll try it, and if it doesn't work out, we'll call it quits" experiment. It was for keeps. And they were very glad to have it that way. In that kind of commitment they found security and completion.

The basic reason so many people are unfulfilled in marriage today is that they have lost the vision of the Garden of Eden. Sexual license, divorce, boredom, violence, and abuse inevitably follow a loss of appreciation for God's plan as expressed at the beginning of time.

Study

KEN TYLER

It is easy to become so involved in our daily activities that Bible study is stifled out. It takes a person who really loves the Bible to study it regularly. Without a genuine love for God's word, Bible study is a hit and miss affair, mostly miss. There are many verses in Psalm 119 that point out how much God's word should mean to the child of God. In this article, I want to draw your attention to a few of them.

First, the Psalmist said in 119:72, *"The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."* He said again in verse 127, *"Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above find gold."* Does God's word mean this much to you? So many have sold their souls for gold and silver. Please don't let this happen to you.

Second, the psalmist said in 119:129, *"Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them."* Is this how you feel about God's word? Do you consider it to be wonderful? Notice carefully that the Psalmist kept God's word because of what it meant to him.

Third, the Psalmist said in 119:131, *"I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments."* What a marvelous statement! He didn't run away from the commandments of God but longed for them. Do His words mean this much to you?

Fourth, several times in this passage the Psalmist mentions his love of God's word. Listen, "...I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved" (verse 47); "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (verse 97); "I have vain thoughts; but thy law do I love" (verse 113); "My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly" (verse 167). Are these statements characteristic of your feelings about God's word?

John 12:48 makes it plain that we will be judged by the word at the last day. I pray that all of us will love it, study it, and then obey it. The Bible is too valuable to be left lying around in our houses collecting dust. Be a good Bible student. You won't regret it.

Was Jesus Created?

WAYNE JACKSON

In Colossians 1:15 Jesus is called "*the first-born of all creation*". Does this indicate that Christ was created?

No, it does not. The Greek word for "first-born" is *prototokos*, and it can simply denote that which is "first or chief in rank. In the Old Testament, Ephraim (a synonym for the kingdom of Israel) was said to be Jehovah's "firstborn" (Jeremiah 31:9), yet technically Ephraim, God's son — from whom the appellation was derived — was younger than his brother Manasseh (Genesis 48:14). "Firstborn" was thus used of Ephraim because he was to be the greater of the two (Genesis 48:19).

In a prophecy that is obviously Messianic, and one that may form the background of Colossians 1:15, God announced: "*I will make him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth*" (Psalm 89:27). The future tense form of the verb excludes the idea of a literal origin. The Jews even referred to God, the Father, as "the firstborn of all the world" to denote His role as Creator. Paul may employ the term in a similar way in Colossians 1:15. The Second Person of the Godhead (i.e., Christ) is eternal (Micah 5:2; John 1:1).

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