

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## *EDITORIAL*

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

***"Every one shall die for his own iniquity, every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge."***

Man, from the beginning, has the tendency of not accepting his own sin. Like Adam and Eve did in the garden of Eden, man has always tried to make others responsible for his own wrongs. The Scripture cited above is from the book of Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 31:30 the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah told people that they were absolutely wrong in their perceiving of sin in this manner. It is true, as the Bible speaks in Romans 3:23, that all have sinned and have become separated from God because of sin. But sin is not inherited. Men and women are not in sin today because Adam and Eve had sinned in the beginning. But every accountable person; has personally sinned and therefore is a sinner. From James 1:14 & 15 we read, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown brings forth death."

If there was no sin in man, then there was no need for Christ to leave heaven to come to earth. The sweetest message of the Bible from God to man is: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." (John 3:16) The one who was with God and was God, left the Godhead the Divine Nature, and became man. (John 1:14). Since all on earth are in sin; only God is able to save man from sin. God has provided the way of

salvation from sin to man in Christ. The Bible at 2 Cor. 5:21 reads: "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." There is no other way for man to be saved from sin. Only God can save man from sin. And God has provided the way for man to be saved from sin and thus to have the hope of going to heaven. Christ said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Before returning back to heaven, Christ had asked His disciples to go into all the world to preach the gospel or the good news of man's salvation everywhere. Just as everyone has sinned personally and individually, everyone must hear the message of salvation personally. Each person, likewise, must believe in Christ and repent of all wrong and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins, as we read from Mark 16: 16 and Acts 2:38.

How sad it is, however, that due to ignorance millions of people throughout the world believe that they should get their infant babies baptized. Why?? One is baptized, according to the Bible, to be saved from sin or for the forgiveness of sins as already mentioned from Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38. Are children born with sin in them? Whose sin? Remember, what Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 31:30. Another prophet in the Old Testament made this statement to set it straight: "The soul who sin shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall he upon himself." (Ezekiel 18:20).

Christ, on one occasion, told his disciples, "Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven," (Matthew 19:14) . Again, He said to them, in Matt, 18:3, "Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." What was Christ teaching? If there was sin in little children, why did Christ say that of such is the kingdom of heaven? Can one enter heaven with sin? Or was Christ asking His disciples to become like the sinful little children to go to heaven? What does this mean? In fact, Christ was teaching that little children are without sin, and that all people must become like them to go to heaven.

There is no such thing ever taught in the Bible as the doctrine of the original sin, according to which men believe that all are born into the world with the sin inherited from Adam. This tremendously

dangerous doctrine through the years has caused untold number of people all over the world not to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins when they grow old enough to believe in Christ and to repent of sins; because they think they were already baptized, as they were sprinkled, in the name of baptism, in their infancy. They live in their own deception, and leave this world being deceived and lost in sin. How sad and pitiful. People need to read Bible and do what it teaches. Do not just listen to men and believe and do what they say, God's written word, the Bible, will judge all men in the last day, and not what man says.

## ***Why We Are Here***

**J.C. CHOATE**

Who are you? Where did you come from? Why are you here? Where are you going? Did you know that there are a lot of people who can not answer these questions? They don't know who they are, where they came from, why they are here, or anything else. They are just simply here, going blindly through this world.

Of course many in today's world believe in evolution. They think that life came from some small organism. They reason that life kept evolving until there was an ape-like creature, and then man finally came forth. How absurd for intelligent people to teach that, and how ridiculous for anyone to believe such. Think about a human being lowering himself to the point of actually believing that he came from an ape or a monkey. Unbelievable! Then there is the big bang theory that is presently going around. Out there in space millions of years ago there was a big bang, and out of all of that came life and the earth as we know it today. Again, how absurd. But regardless of what you begin with, where did that come from? It doesn't matter how far they go back, they have to begin with something. We believe that the matter is cleared up when you begin with God. But they think that you have to make a big story up to put God into the picture. Listen, God makes a lot more sense than beginning with a small organism or a big bang, but not telling where that first organism came from or what caused that big bang. No wonder so many people are confused today about themselves.

A few years ago a man by the name of Arthur Hailey of the

U.S.A., who had retired as an officer from the military, got interested in the history of the black man and where someone like himself had come from. He got to gathering facts, and this led him all the way back to Africa and to the little country of Gambia. There he learned of his ancestors, the kind of conditions that must have prevailed at that time, and how they must have lived. He traced them as they were taken as slaves to the States, and what happened to them there, how freedom was finally won, and then on up to his birth. That book became a best seller in the States and around to world. It was so popular that even a TV series was made to tell the story to the biggest TV audience in history up to that time. The book, and the TV series, was called, ROOTS. This led thousands and thousands of others to become interested in their roots, and to attempt to trace their ancestors back to Europe or from wherever they may have come.

For sure, it is interesting to go back into the records, if there are such, and learn of your forefathers, but if you could keep going, you would finally return to Noah, and even to Adam and Eve, since all people came from them, and since they came from God. (Genesis 1:26, 27).

As we study the Bible we find that God not only made man and woman, but he made them for a purpose, and that was so that they might be his children. He had planned for them to live all eternity in the garden of Eden. Everything was there for them, even the tree of life. But God did not want to force them to worship him, or to leave them without a choice. So he told them that they could partake of every fruit in the midst of the garden except for the tree of good and evil. He told them that the day they partook of that fruit that they would die. Of course we know the story, how that Satan, the old serpent, came to Eve and told her that she would not die, but that God knew that the day that she partook of it that her eyes would be opened and that she would become as a god. She listened, and partook of the fruit, and then she gave to Adam, and he ate. As a result of this, their eyes were opened, that is, they became knowledgeable they knew right from wrong, and now they were sinners. They died spiritually that day and were driven from the garden and away from the tree of life. (Genesis 2, 3).

God then promised to send His Son into the world to redeem man from his sin. This was accomplished when Christ came, lived among men, and was eventually crucified upon a cross to die for

the sins of the world. In doing that, he made it possible for man to return to God, to be children of God, to have all of the Lord's blessings in this world, and one day to live with Him for all eternity. We may read of this in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the New Testament portion of the Bible. This is God's inspired record of what took place. This helps us then to know what happened and what was done to restore man to that elevated position of being children of God.

The Hebrew writer put it like this: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him, And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Hebrews 2:9-15).

John said, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3: 1-3).

But how do we become children of God or the sons of God? We do that by believing in God, and believing that Christ is the Son of God, by repenting of our sins, by confessing that Christ is the Son of God, and by being baptized to have our sins washed away. (John. 14:1-3; Acts 2:38; Matthew 10:32; Acts 22:16). Then Paul 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). The same baptism that puts

us into Christ and makes us the children of God, also puts us into the church. (1 Corinthians 12:13). In Acts 2:47 we are told that the Lord added the saved to his church.

So who are we? Physically, we can trace our ancestors back to Adam and Eve and to God who created them. Spiritually, when we obeyed God we were saved and the Lord added us to his church. At the same time we entered Christ, we became God's children. Likewise we are called Christians. (Acts 11:26). Then as children of God, as members of the Lord's family, the church, we have the hope of eternal life. If we are faithful to the Lord unto death (Revelation 2:10) then we will go to live with the Lord for evermore. In life and death, and in heaven, we will praise the Lord for all eternity.

## *Should We Trust The Bible To Be Our Only Guide To Heaven*

**BOB DANKLESEN**

### **THE BEST FORM OF COMMUNICATION . . . THE WRITTEN WORD**

There has been no other book in history that has been so carefully examined by its critics to see if it might be exposed to be a book of mere human origin. Many have said to me, "Who wrote the Bible? . . . men . . . not God!" It is important to investigate the facts when researching any subject to substantiate any claim made by its author. This is true in any field whether it be medicine, science, or historical claims in the field of archaeology.

For example, today physical evidence proves the earth to be a globe moving through space at a rate of 12 miles per second. Yet many theories, some utterly ridiculous, have been proposed by man without a hint of evidence to back up the claim. They compare in no way with the accurate description in God's word. "He hangeth the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7), and ". . . the circle of the earth . . ." (Isaiah 40:22), written hundreds of years B. C. do not reflect the thinking of that day or the thinking up to the days of Columbus in the 15th century.

Long after the Old and New Testaments were written, men believed that the cause of sickness was a result of an individual

possessed by evil spirits. Yet the Bible identifies the exact animals that carry disease in their flesh, and if not properly cooked, could result in Trichinosis, pork worms, or some other sickness (Leviticus 11). It also teaches quarantine for those having the symptoms of a contagious disease (Leviticus 13:4-46). When one considers that this information was written over three thousand years before bacteriology became a science, it should cause one to look more seriously into this book. (Verbal communication can be altered as it is passed along. Written communication, when copied accurately, and preserved will not be). The Bible claims and demonstrates them both (Psalm 12:6, 7; II Timothy 3:16).

The most important event in history, although rejected by most in the world, was clearly described hundreds of years before it happened. Isaiah claimed, "For unto us a child is born. Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulders. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). This prophet wrote some seven hundred and forty years before the event was to occur. The virgin birth of Jesus was revealed in Isaiah 7:14. His death for our sins was unfolded in the Fifty-third chapter. The fact that they nailed his hands and feet had been clearly told by David, the Psalmist, one thousand years B. C. (Psalm 22:16-18). It also states here that they would cast lots for his clothing and that is exactly what happened (Matthew 27:35). David also confirms the resurrection of Christ in Psalm 16:9, 10. (See Acts 2:25-31). This resurrection to an exalted place in heaven is expressed in the Second Psalm and reaffirmed in Acts 13:27-41.

All these events were uniquely revealed hundreds of years before they happened to demonstrate that the Bible was written by inspiration and not through ideas set forth by mere men (II Peter 1:20,21).

### **TRANSLATIONS AND THE ORIGINAL WRITINGS**

Living in the age that we do, it is easier to produce translations because of the availability of manuscripts which have been preserved or found, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Greek and Hebrew scholars are able to compare the early writings with each other and use the best modern word to convey the message of the originals.

When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the 1940's, the entire book of Isaiah was intact. The Hebrew scholars felt this

would be an excellent opportunity to correct and update this book. Careful examination of the manuscript revealed that corrections were not needed and thus, the project was dropped.

God made it clear that His word would not be lost, but would endure forever (Psalm 119:160; Isaiah 40:8). He also has stated, "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness . . ." (II Peter 1:3). John 20:30, 31 tells us that the scriptures were written to produce faith in Jesus so that they might come to have eternal life. Some day we will all be judged by Jesus (II Corinthians 5:10) concerning our response to His word (John 12:48). Therefore, we are warned not to go beyond what is written, and to contend for the faith once for all given to the saints (Jude 3).

### **SOME SHALL DEPART FROM THE WORD**

Despite all the warnings not to add to or take from God's word throughout the Bible (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18, 19), man has departed from it (II Timothy 4:1). Paul states, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables (II Timothy 4:3, 4). Peter also states that these false teachers would twist to their own destruction his writings as well as the rest of the scriptures (II Peter 3:15).

### **HOW HAVE PEOPLE DEPARTED FROM GOD'S WORD**

Some have outright rejected the Bible as one's sole guide to heaven by producing other books which they claim are either latter day revelations or are documents produced by the church which further explains the Bible. Everyone of these books claim or imply that the Bible alone cannot be understood and thus, they are "helping" the reader to better understand God's will today.

When one picks up the Bible, God is communicating to him in written form (II Peter 1:21). God guided those who wrote by inspiration, and He had Paul pen, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16, 17). When He says something in the Bible, it is true as it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18).



Man, on the other hand, believes he can improve on what God has already revealed and so he produces creed books, catechisms, manuals, articles of faith, constitutions, disciplines, and a host of other guidelines to produce new religious philosophies. Others have produced books they claim are inspired such as: "The Book of Mormon", "The Great Controversy", "Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures", and even traditions produced by the leadership of the Roman Catholic church. When contrasting the teachings of man with God's word, the Lord makes it clear that He will not recognize as authority the teachings of man (Mark 7:6-9).

### **DISTINGUISHING TRUTH FROM ERROR**

Jesus said, "Sanctify them by your truth, your word is truth" (John 17:17). This produces faith, "So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Since God's word is truth, anything in opposition to it would be sin (Romans 14:23b). For example, the Bible clearly condemns homosexuality (Romans 1:18-32; I Corinthians 6:9-11). Yet recent denominational conventions have voted to not only accept the life style, but to allow men practicing this vile act to preach in their pulpits. When one talks to a person in a group endorsing such a practice, they will say "we use the Bible at our church." One must remember that to have a Bible on a table at the front of the building does not usher one automatically into a right relationship with God.

### **"THE BIBLE DOESN'T SAY YOU CAN'T"**

The Bible would be several times larger if for every command there was a list of "don'ts". When a mother sends her child to the store for bread, she does not need to list all other items on the shelves and tell him not to purchase them. When she lists what to get, it eliminates all others automatically. Even when the Bible does give some negative commands, they are often avoided or explained away. For example, Paul wrote to the church in Corinth that women were not to preach in the assembly, yet many groups allow women in the pulpits (I Corinthians 14:34, 35). Often when God gives a negative command, it is disregarded. Paul said, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

## **A BIG DANGER**

It is amazing to see so many different sects claiming that the Bible is their only guide. Yet they have set human guidelines which must be followed, and then once those standards are met, a group can follow any false concept beyond those limits and still be considered a brother in the faith. Let me illustrate this:

A large number of fundamental protestant religions are insistent that believers must properly understand the Godhead. Their literature extensively portrays a completely accurate rendering of the nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and this should be. However, this seems to be the only criteria upon which they extend fellowship to neighboring denominations. They are quick to deny fellowship to groups having latter day prophets and "way out" teachings on God, and yet, even they are perplexed over a group that claims to have a latter day prophet and yet understands properly the nature of God.

Even though they will not agree with a group that may pray to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as long as they accurately understand the God of the Bible, they will consider them brothers.

### **TRUTH EXTENDS TO MORE THAN JUST THE NATURE OF GOD**

I've often asked those who consider accuracy on the Godhead the only test of fellowship, "How many doctrines of devils can one follow and still be in fellowship with God?" They usually answer correctly, "None." Then we turn to I Timothy 4:1-3 and we read it together. Here it clearly describes doctrines of devils as: forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from certain foods. Paul wrote concerning two men who had turned from the truth and were claiming the resurrection had already taken place (II Timothy 2:17, 18). Paul encourages us to present ourselves approved by God by rightly dividing the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15). Although these groups accurately understood the Godhead, they had turned from the truth.

### **GOD'S PLAN TO SAVE MAN**

When the Bible is taken as a whole it brings to its readers a message of concern from its author. The theme is: someone is coming, someone has come, and someone is coming again. This is the story of the Christ, his death for all men, his resurrection from the grave to ascend to heaven, and his return (I Thessalonians 4:14-17). Those who accept Jesus' death in their stead

realize that faith is produced after hearing the gospel (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8, 9). This faith leads one to repentance - turning from the practice of sin to follow God (Acts 17:30, 31). Those who have decided to make him Lord will confess him as the eunuch did in Acts 8:37. And it will cause one to want to obey the gospel (I Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 6:3-5). When one is immersed beneath the water he's simply demonstrating his faith in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:17, 18). The point of difference in the religious world is: does one receive salvation from sin before or after he obeys the gospel? Again, if we accept the whole counsel of God, the Bible answers this question. ". . . when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thessalonians 1:7, 8).

Most religious groups teach that one is saved simply by belief alone prior to their obedience to the gospel. The scriptures again are clear on the subject. Take for example the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who became the great apostle Paul. Almost all people are taught that he was saved from sin on the road to Damascus. However, when the entire account is read, we find Jesus telling him to go to Damascus where he would be told what to do to become a Christian. Ananias said, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:6-16). God places forgiveness after one has been baptized. Since He is the Creator, He should have the choice concerning when He will save a person.

### **MANIPULATING GOD'S WORD TO AGREE WITH PRECONCEIVED IDEAS**

Here are two basic reactions given when a Christian shares the gospel plan of salvation. One person may become defensive and say, "What about John 3:16, this says nothing about baptism?" The Christian can point out that it also mentions nothing about repentance, yet most teach repentance is necessary to receive salvation. It is not fair to use one part of God's word against another.

The kind of heart the Lord is looking for is the person who will state, "I did not know that God's word taught that a person was not saved until he was immersed (I Peter 3:21). I would like to turn to the Lord and be baptized so that my sins will be forgiven"

(Acts 2:38). This is the attitude the Lord referred to in II Timothy 2:25, 26.

### **WE WILL BE JUDGED BY GOD'S WORD**

Jesus said, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Paul said he received the gospel by revelation from Jesus (Galatians 1:11, 12). He warned us, "Now brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, 'Do not go beyond what is written'." (I Corinthians 4:6).

If you really accept the Bible as your only and final authority, then you will want to become a Christian as the scriptures teach. Since Jesus purchased the church with his own blood, (Acts 20:28), you will want to assemble with his people (Heb. 10:23-26). If you inquire you will probably find a church of Christ in your area. When I first obeyed the gospel, I remember stating to the bishops of our congregation, "I'm going to study the Bible more intensely than I ever have in the past. If this is not the church described in the Bible, I will locate those who do and worship with them." I am still in the Lord's church and now rejoice that I am able to give an answer from the Bible for everything that I practice in my service to God (I Peter 3:15). If you would like to follow the scriptures as your final and only guide to heaven, or if you would like to see more evidence to confirm the Bible as our only communication from the Creator, please write to us.

## *Heirs of God*

FRED L. DILLON

### **CHRISTIANS ARE "HEIRS OF GOD"**

The Apostle Paul, received the Gospel by the revelation of Jesus Christ Himself (Galatians 1:12). Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit of God, informed Christians at Rome that they were not only heirs of God, but joint-heirs with Christ!

The Apostle Peter went even further to describe to these beneficiaries that they had *"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."*

(1 Peter 1:4). Imagine! An inheritance that would never corrupt and a reservation in heaven itself!

### **BUT HOW?**

In order to be an heir of God, one must be a child of God—a member of the family of God. To accomplish this status, a person must be “born again” into the family of the heavenly Father—the church! In 1 Peter 1:23, the Apostle states: *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the WORD OF GOD, which liveth and abideth forever.”*

This is the birth of “water and Spirit” which Jesus described to Nicodemus in John 3:3 and John 3:5. This is essential before one can see the kingdom of God. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, tells us we are *“all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus—for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”*

Thus, the birth of water and Spirit! In this, there is *“neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus—and if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed and HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE.”* (Galatians 3:26-29).

### **HOW DO WE OBTAIN THIS FAITH?**

The Romans were such a dedicated body of Christians that Paul said, *“Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”* (Romans 1-8).

He wrote a long letter to the Roman Christians and reminded them (in Romans 10:17) how they got their faith: *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”*—just as Peter had proclaimed their new birth was dependent upon the Word—the Gospel—which will endure forever. (1 Peter 1:25).

They had to *hear-to* listen to God and learn the doctrine of Christ. They could never depend on the traditions or doctrines of men. *“Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”* (Mark 7:7-9). The doctrine that will suffice is the New Testament—the *“perfect law of liberty.”* (Hebrews 9:15-17; James 1:21-25). It must be received with meekness and it can and will save our souls.

### **BUT THIS FAITH MUST OBEY**

This Inheritance we seek is first given to us when we are baptized for remission of sins and receive the “gift” of the Holy

Spirit—the “earnest of our inheritance” (described in Ephesians 1:14). In order to be baptized *“into Christ”* (Romans 6:3-5 and Galatians 3:27); one must *repent of sins and confess Christ* (Matthew 10:32-33)—like the eunuch did in Acts 8:35-38. Once Philip had “preached unto him Jesus,” he was ready to be baptized into God’s family—the church of our Lord; **but repentance and confession were required.** That’s why we read of his statement to Philip, *“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”* Immediately, Philip baptized him and this “heir of God” went on his way rejoicing!

### **AS AN HEIR OF GOD I AM CONSTANTLY SUBJECT TO GOD’S WILL**

The reading of a will is a most vital requirement before one can know or understand its provisions. The will of God for us today is the New Testament of Christ (Hebrews 9:15-17). Jesus is the author and mediator of that will.

This will and God’s will are exactly the same today, since Jesus came to “do Thy will, O God.” (Hebrews 10:7, 9-10). He sealed that will with His own blood and by so doing brought redemption and forgiveness of sins to those who will be a part of God’s family (Colossians 1:13-14 and Ephesians 1:7).

Jesus made it clear in the sermon on the mount: *“Not every-one that saith unto Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.”* (Matthew 7:21). This *will-or testament*-not only requires the new birth of water and Spirit into God’s family, but a faithful life as well.

### **GOD’S CHOSEN VESSEL MAKES IT CLEAR**

To the young preacher Titus, Paul’s own son after the “common faith,” these words of encouragement were given: *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”* (Titus 2:11-14).

# **The Strength of Love**

**JIMMY CLARK**

*"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned"* (Song of Sol. 8:6-7). These passages give the heart of the message of the book of the Song of Solomon. Love is the most powerful motivator known to man. Where love is found, there is a distinctive display of strength. Consider three descriptions of love in this section that show the strength of love.

## **1. POWERFUL AS DEATH**

The text states specifically, *"love is strong as death"* (Song of Sol. 8:6). Solomon wrote of death, *"There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it"* (Eccl. 8:8). Another side of love's strength in view of death is seen in the words of Jesus. *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). John wrote further, *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins"* (1 John 4:10). Death has its overpowering hold over mortal man. In like manner, love is to be so strong. A husband is to love his wife in such a way that he would give his life for her even as Christ did for the church (cf. Eph. 5:25). A wife and mother is to love her husband and children in such strength that personal sacrifice is equally demonstrated (cf. Titus 2:4). All agape (love) is focused on the strength of love to the sacrifice of death.

## **2. PERSISTENT AS A VEHEMENT FLAME**

Solomon wrote, *"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it"* (Song of Sol. 8:7). Here is a great illustration of the enduring nature of love. While all the outside forces are trying to put it out, love will not allow such to happen. It is as Paul, by the Holy Spirit, said of love, *"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity*

*never faileth*" (1 Cor. 13:7-8). Love does not wait for convenience and favorable treatment to express love. Love shows its strength in the face of opposition. This would be seen in the labor of seven years by Jacob for Rachel while *"they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her"* (Gen. 29:20). This would be seen in Hosea taking Gomer back (cf. Hosea 3). Love burns brightest in the face of difficulty.

### **3. PRICELESS AS COMPARED TO A VALUABLE SUM OF WEALTH**

Again Solomon wrote, *"if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned"* (Song of Sol. 8:7). The Hebrew word for *"contemned"* is from the word meaning *"to condemn, to despise, to trample with the feet"*. The old expression *"Every man has his price"* does not hold true here. Too many have followed the deceitful trail that materialism brings love. Solomon wrote of love in another place, *"Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith"* (Prov. 15:17). The treasure of love is more valuable than all the wealth of the world.

## *Nigh Death*

VANCE HUTTON

We do not like to ponder the subject of death but we are without doubt almost daily forced to think about it. Some people live with death ever so close every day. Those who live in war torn countries, crime stricken communities, or in failing health, deal constantly with death being ever nigh. Wisdom demands that we all realize that every person must live with death being nigh because no person can live with the assurance of even the remainder of any given day. Certainly, many never think in such terms but the possibility is ever present. Death is a great enemy (1 Cor. 15:26) and the king of terrors according to Job and David. It takes people we love from us and destroys hopes and dreams. We long for the land where death is removed (Rev. 21:4). Let us notice the thought of death being nigh because of three things.

### **I. NIGH DEATH BECAUSE OF LIFE'S UNCERTAINTIES**

Isaac spoke of not knowing the day of his death (Gen. 27:2).



David spoke of a step between him and death (I Sam. 20:3). Solomon wrote of not boasting of tomorrow because of not knowing what a day might bring (Prov. 27:1). James wrote of the futility of assurance of a year on earth when one does not know what will be on tomorrow (James 4:13-15). The Bible often speaks of the young dying, often unexpectedly like Eutychus in Acts 20. People die without warning signals every day. We see it all around us. We might think this happens always to someone else and we are exempt. Friend, we are someone else to everyone else! Death is ever before me. It is always at the door. Accidents, crimes, poor choices of our own and of others, and health related problems keep death ever nigh for all people no matter what age.

## **II. NIGH DEATH BECAUSE OF LAW'S REQUIREMENTS**

God has decreed that all shall die. It is an appointment that all shall keep (Heb.9:27). In Rom. 5:12, Paul wrote of the law's penalty for sin and that being death. In the beginning, God told Adam and Eve that death would follow sin (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1-19). Thus we read in I Kings 2:2 and Josh. 23:14 that death is the way of all the earth. We must needs all die (II Sam. 14:14). Man born of woman is a few days and full of trouble. He flees as a shadow and continues not (Job 14:1-2). The days of our years are three score and ten and possibly fourscore and we are cut off (Psalm 90:10). The young can die and the old must die. No man shall escape it (Ps. 89:48). It must be soon for some and not long for any.

## **III. NIGH DEATH BECAUSE OF THE LORD'S WORK**

The Bible speaks of some who were nigh death because of serving the Lord. Some were persecuted unto death, some to nigh death, and some hazarded their lives for the name of the Lord (Acts 15:26). Paul was left for dead after being stoned in Lystra (Acts 14). Paul refers to Epaphroditus as being sick nigh unto death (Phil. 2:27) and then says that for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death (Phil. 2:30). Jesus spoke of denying self (Luke 14:26). We have known missionaries to die in foreign land separated from medical care they could have received at home. The Bible speaks of presenting the body as a living sacrifice and using the members of our body as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:12-13, 12:1). This might bring us nigh death for the Lord's work.

Let us all be ever ready for death (Acts 21:13). Paul presents this picture of himself in II Timothy 4. Let us prepare ourselves to die in Christ (Rev. 14:13). Then, the fear of death is removed. There is a land where death shall be away. May the Lord truly bless as we live nigh to death.

## *Why The Church Of Christ Is Right*

**CHARLES BOX**

In the beginning of Christianity only one church existed. Jesus made and kept a great promise concerning His church. "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Mt. 16:18.) The church of Christ is the body of Christ. His will is that His body be united. (Jn. 17:20-21.)

### **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST WAS FOUNDED ON UNITY AND ENCOURAGES UNITY**

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. 1:10.) Religious unity is God's desire and religious division is sin in the sight of God. Jesus prayed for unity. His desire is for all His followers to be one. (Jn. 17:20-21.) Something is very wrong when different churches teach and practice different things and yet each claims to be right. The church of Christ is right because it promotes unity and love.

### **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS RIGHT BECAUSE IT TEACHES THAT THERE IS ONE WAY TO HEAVEN**

There is just one way to heaven. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (Jn. 14:6.) Jesus is the only way through that narrow gate. (Mt. 7:13-14.) The way to heaven is the way of love and obedience to Jesus. All religious ways do not lead to heaven. Obey the gospel now! (Acts 2:36-42.)

### **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST RECOGNIZES CHRIST AS ITS ONLY HEAD**

De-nominations recognize the Pope, Presidents or others as

head and they also have headquarters in different places on earth. The church of Christ has only one head and He is Jesus. "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." (Col. 1:18.) Denominations find their authority in conferences, conventions and boards. The church of Christ finds its authority in Christ and the Bible. Christ as head directs the Body, His-church.

#### **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS RIGHT BECAUSE IT TEACHES BELIEVERS TO BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST FOR REMISSION OF SINS**

Salvation comes only to those who are born of water and the Spirit. (Jn. 3:5.) The Bible plainly teaches baptism as essential to salvation. (1 Pet 3:21.) Baptism puts us into the death of Christ where His blood was shed. (Rom. 6:3-4; Jn. 19:33-34.) Baptism is essential to salvation. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mk. 16:16.)

#### **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS RIGHT BECAUSE IT TEACHES THE TRUTH CONCERNING THE LORD'S SUPPER**

The first century church observed the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week. "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." (Acts 20:7.) Many modern churches observe the Lord's Supper monthly, once a quarter or even yearly. Those who follow Jesus must remember His death by observing the Lord's Supper every Lord's day (Sunday). This solemn memorial reminds us that one day Jesus will come again. (1 Cor. 11:23-26.)

#### **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST WILL NOT COMPROMISE THE TRUTH FOR SAKE OF NUMBERS OR WEALTH**

Christians must heed 2 Timothy 4:2-4. "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." Truth cannot be compromised for the sake of gaining or keeping wealth. God's truth must be preached,

believed, obeyed and practiced. Only the truth sets people free spiritually. (Jn. 8:32.)

### **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS RIGHT BECAUSE IT TEACHES THE GOSPEL PLAN OF SALVATION**

Sinners are taught to hear the gospel (Rom. 10:17), believe in Jesus as the Christ (Jn. 8:24), repent of sins (Acts 17:30), confess Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10), and to be baptized into Christ. (Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-4.) "Faith only" is not enough. The Devil had "faith only." (Jas. 2:19-24.) Only those who obey, from the heart, the gospel can claim salvation. "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." (Rom. 6:17-18.)

The Bible is God's pattern. Those who do as the Bible says are right. Let us all have the courage and conviction to learn of God, believe Him and obey His will. This is the one and only desire of the church of Christ.

## ***"Open Thou Mine Eyes"***

**CLEM THURMAN**

David, the sweet singer of Israel, prayed to God, "*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law*" (Psa. 119:18). In every age of the world, God has wanted His people to have their eyes open. The idea of "open eyes" is simply that of being able to see, understand, appreciate. There are so many things we take for granted, things that we seldom, if ever, really see. God intends for us to see what He reveals for us. He intends for us to know: "*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32).

To Abraham God said, "*Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever*" (Gen. 13:14-15). Some thirty years after the cross, and the establishment of the church of the Lord, the apostle Paul wrote to Christians, "*Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because*

*the days are evil*" (Eph. 5:15-16). The same apostle described the commission which Jesus gave to him in these words: *"To make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things. . . might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God"* (Eph. 3:9-10).

What are some of the things which God wants us to see? In those Scriptures above are listed four things He wants us to see. Let us look at them.

### **SEE THE WONDROUS THINGS OF GOD'S WORD**

David wrote, *"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law"* (Psa. 119:18). This is truly a poverty stricken age, from the standpoint of biblical knowledge. God's prophet of old cried, *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"* (Hosea 4:6), then later added from God: *"I wrote for him the ten thousand things of my law; but they are counted as a strange thing"* (Hosea 8:12). What a terrible condition! God's people, who should know His word, count it *"as a strange thing"* because they don't know what God said. They don't recognize His word as opposed to man's. Jesus said, *"No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me"* (John 6:44-45). We must apply ourselves to learn His word - read and study it (Eph. 3:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:15) - if we would see the *"wondrous things"* therein.

The apostle Paul, in Eph. 1, shows some of the *"wondrous things"* of the gospel. He writes that God *"hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"* (v. 3). God *"chose us in him"* (v. 4) to be *"sons through Jesus Christ"* (v. 5), *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"* (v. 7). He goes on to show that God makes known to us *"the mystery of his will"* (v. 9) in Christ, *"In whom also we were made a heritage"* (v. 11). This is all made known to us through *"the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation"* (v. 13). Because of such blessings, the apostle then writes of his prayer for believers: *"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know*

what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (v. 17-18). Such "wondrous things" of Jesus Christ are revealed to us in the gospel of Christ.

### **SEE THE MANIFOLD BLESSINGS OF GOD**

Abraham was told to look at the land of Canaan, which God would give to him and to his seed after him. But we have much greater blessings to view than that! *"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are"* (1 John 3:1). Can you think of a higher calling, a greater blessing, than that! The world may ridicule the Christian, but God exalts him: *"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession"* (1 Pet. 2:9). We are chosen, elect, blessed - not because of our own efforts nor by our own worth, but by the cross of Christ.

While we were yet sinners, *"Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:8). What does a sinner need? A Savior! That is Jesus, and He is the perfect and only Savior. *"Tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin. . . Him who knew no sin, he made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him"* (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus is our High Priest (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15), always at the right hand of God *"to make intercession for us"* (Heb. 7:25). There is never a time, in this dark world of sin, when *"the light of the world"* (John 8:12; 9:5) is not there for us to light our pathway. As He said, *"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"* (Matt. 28:20).

God gives us *"every good gift, and every perfect gift"* (James 1:17). But this includes more than just the food, clothing, shelter and other physical things which we need to live in this world. He provides *"all spiritual blessings in Christ"* (Eph. 1:3). In Christ we have new life (Rom. 6:3-4), forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7), salvation (2 Tim. 2:10), hope (Eph. 1:18) and the assurance of *"no condemnation"* (Rom. 8:1). No matter what happens to us, or around us, we are promised: *"To them that love God all things work together for good"* (Rom. 8:28). So, the conclusion is stated, *"If God is for us, who is against us? . . . We are more than conquerors through him that loved us"* (Rom. 8:31,37).

### **SEE THE DANGERS OF THIS WORLD**

Paul wrote, *"Look therefore carefully how ye walk. . .*

*redeeming the time, because the days are evil*" (Eph. 5:15-16). The world of which Paul wrote was exceedingly wicked and evil. Let him describe the people of his day, and their lifestyle: *"Knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks. . . Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness . . . God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another. . . God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents"* (Rom. 1:21-30). That could well be description of society today, couldn't it?

We need to be aware of the dangers of the world in which we live, lest we be consumed by its temptations. The apostle writes, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world . . . the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the vainglory of life"* (1 John 2:15-16). Christ calls us to come out from the world, to live a different life than that which the world condones and glorifies. He said, *"If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"* (John 15:19). God's plea to us is to lift up our eyes and see the degradation of the world and its dangers for us, then, *"Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord. . . Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"* (2 Cor. 6:17; 7:1). Jesus tells us, *"Let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works; and glorify your Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:16). We are thus to live *"without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world"* (Phil. 2:15).

### **SEE OUR MISSION AND OPPORTUNITY**

The Lord Jesus died on the cross so that we could fulfill our purpose on this earth: *"He died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again"* (2 Cor. 5:15). Why did Jesus come to this world? *"To seek and to save the lost"* (Luke 19:10). What is our mission? *"Follow his steps"* (1 Pet. 2:21). It is that simple. That is

what Paul wrote, *"To make all men see"* (Eph. 3:9). That is why, in the Great Commission, Jesus told the apostles: *"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations . . . Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15-16). Christians, those who belong to Christ, are to be *"lights in the world, holding forth the word of life"* (Phil. 2:15-16). That is our mission in this world. That is the life of the Christian.

The early church did a pretty fair job of fulfilling that mission. With three thousand baptized into Christ on the day the church began (Acts 2:36-41, 47), they took the gospel to *"every creature under heaven"* (Col. 1:23) in that generation! How did they do it? Look and see: *"Daily, in the temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus as the Christ"* (Acts 5:42). When severe persecution arose, *"They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word"* (Acts 8:4). They were teaching *"in every house,"* not only in the city of Jerusalem, but everywhere they went. That was, and is, the only viable way to reach every soul in all the world. And that is what they did.

Sometimes we think we don't have much opportunity to share Jesus and His gospel with others. But the Lord speaks to us about that: *"Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest"* (John 4:35). The opportunity is there, if we have the faith in the Lord to see it. The apostle Paul, persecuted for preaching Christ in Corinth, was assured by Jesus: *"Be not afraid; but speak and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee"* (Acts 18:9-10). So Paul was able to write back to the Christians in that city later, *"A great door and effectual is opened unto me in the Lord, and there are many adversaries"* (1 Cor. 16:9).

Obstacles? Yes. Opportunities? Always! That is what Paul was saying to us. Jesus tells us, *"I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut"* (Rev. 3:8). It should be a natural thing for a Christian to tell others the *"good news"* that Jesus loves them, that He died for them, that He wants them to live here so that they can live with Him forever in heaven. Can we do that? Let us SEE the mission and the opportunity. *"It is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak; we also believe, and therefore also we speak"* (2 Cor. 4:13). Lord, open our eyes.

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