

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 38

November 2007

No. 7

EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"

There is no other time of the year when Jesus Christ is remembered more, throughout the world, than in the last week of December every year. A particular date has been fixed by men to celebrate Christ's birthday on that day, and after that event passes away things slowly get back to where they were; in other words, Christ is forgotten. Those who had seemingly become religious and godly in December, again go back to live their lives as they did before the December event. Yet, it should not surprise the reader that there is not a word in the entire Bible about remembering Christ's birth. In fact, no man on earth really knows in which month of the year and on what date of the month Christ was born on earth. All that the Bible says about Christ's birth is: "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of the Herod the king." (Matthew 2:1). "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." (Luke 2:7). Don't you think that had God intended for us to celebrate the birthday of Christ His Son, in any manner, He would not have kept the date from us, and that He would have certainly given some instructions as to its celebration? As big as men on earth think of that day, if it was really so, God must have said something about it. But no, He didn't. And God did that for a

purpose; because He knows how man has a tendency to venerate or glorify a day. The words Christmas, Santa Clause, Christmas tree, Holy Crib, etc. are not even once mentioned in the Bible. In fact, Christ would say, as He did in Matthew 15:8 & 9: "These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

The fact of the matter is that people need to understand the Person of Christ; who He really was and why did He come on earth? and why and how one should remember Him. What does the Bible teach? Speaking of Christ, the Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1 and 14). Jesus Christ, one of the Persons in the Godhead, who as God existed from the beginning (Genesis 1:1 & 26; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9), became flesh and came on earth to save mankind from sin. The apostle Paul put it more beautifully in his letter to Timothy, when he said, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. (1 Timothy 2:15). Therefore, great emphasis is placed upon His death in the Bible. His death brought hope of salvation from sin to whole humanity. His death brought to us life and liberty and freedom from sin and hope to live in heaven with Him for evermore. He was born on earth to die as the propitiation for the sins of the world. (1 John 4:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10). His death was essential for us to live in heaven for evermore.

While nowhere in the Bible we are commanded to remember and celebrate Christ's birth. Yet again and again, in the Bible, we are shown and commanded that we should remember and celebrate His death by observing the Lord's Supper, which Christ Himself had instituted, just a few hours before His death, saying **do this in remembrance of Me.** (Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19). Speaking of the Lord's Supper, Paul said, in 1 Cor. 11:23-26: "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you; that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup

after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." As in the beginning the followers of Christ came together on every first day of the week (Sunday) to break the bread (Acts 20:7), the church of Christ, Christians, everywhere even today do the same. They come together on every Sunday, or the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper, and thereby remember Christ and proclaim His death. We need to remember Christ throughout the year, and not just once in a year.

Have You Been Scripturally Baptized?

J.C. CHOATE

The religious world defines baptism as being immersion, sprinkling, and pouring, with, or in, water. Others say that baptism is in the Spirit only.

Most religious leaders say that baptism has nothing to do with salvation, that it is merely an outward sign that one has already been saved.

The Bible defines baptism as a burial in water. Paul says that we are *"buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead"* (Colossians 2:12). To the Romans he wrote, *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"* (Romans 6:3,4).

We have one example in Acts 8:26-39 of Philip preaching Christ to a man from Ethiopia. He understood what Philip was preaching well enough that when they came to a pool of water, he asked what was keeping him from being baptized. The inspired text does not record for us what Philip taught the eunuch about baptism, but it is obvious that he did deal with the subject, and that the eunuch understood its importance, because of the question he asked. Philip answered that he could be baptized,

but only if he believed in Christ with all of his heart. The eunuch replied, "*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*" So, right then and there—not waiting for days or for some confirmation by humans—they stopped the chariot and both Philip and the eunuch went down in the water so that the Ethiopian man could be immersed with his Lord for the forgiveness of his sins, just as Jesus had promised in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15,16.

Now with this man's baptism in mind, we ask, "What did Paul say about baptism?" That it is a burial in water. That is exactly what the eunuch experienced on that desert road so long ago.

Again in Romans 6, Paul shows that baptism pictures the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. Just as Christ died on the cross, the sinner dies to his sins. As Christ was buried in an earthly tomb, the sinner is buried with Christ in the waters of baptism, and as Christ was resurrected from that earthly tomb, one is resurrected from his watery grave to live for the Lord. Paul explained it like this: "*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*" (Romans 6:17,18).

Please note that Paul said that they had been the servants of sin but that now they had become the servants of righteousness. What had made the difference? They had obeyed the Lord. The *doctrine* to which Paul referred was *the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The form of the doctrine was their death to sin, their burial in the waters of baptism, and the resurrection from baptism.* As a result of their obedience from the heart, they had become the servants of righteousness. Note: the change in masters had not been accomplished by "faith alone" but by obeying God in faith, or with their whole hearts.

Notice also that their baptism was described as being "into the death of Christ". That is, they were baptized into the benefits of his death, having their sins washed in the blood of Christ. Through this process, they were forgiven and experienced the new birth into the family of God.

Was there something special or even magical about the water itself? No, there is no power in water. The power is in faithful obedience to God. *God* says the washing away of our sins takes place in the waters of baptism (Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Peter

3:20,21). *That* is the power in the water—that it is the element in which we can obey God and have our sins washed in the blood of His Son.

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 we read of *the facts of the gospel*: the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. We are told that we must *obey the gospel*, but we cannot obey *facts*. Instead, there are **commands** that must be obeyed. These include **believing that Jesus is God's Son** ("... if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" John 8:24); **repentance** or turning away from a life of sin ("... unless you repent you will all likewise perish" Luke 13:3); **confession of faith in Christ** ("If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" Acts 8:37); and **immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins** ("Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" Acts 2:38).

Obedying these commands enables one to picture in his own obedience the obedience of Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. The command He made to His disciples was, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*" (Mark 16:15,16). Peter and the apostles, in preaching the first gospel sermon, told those who had become believers to, "*...repent and be baptized for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38). Peter also said in 1 Peter 3:21 that baptism saves us, just as Noah and his family were saved by the water when it bore the ark up above the destruction of the flood. Certainly these passages are not teaching that "baptism only" saves or that the waters of baptism have saving power in and of themselves, but every person in the New Testament who dealt with the subject of baptism taught that it is necessary for salvation; that as one obeys the gospel of Christ in faith and obedience, culminating in baptism, he is saved by the cleansing blood of Christ.

It is so sad that the majority of believers in Christ oppose the simple act of baptism because they have been told over and over again that water does not save or that baptism does not save. It is true that the denominational concept of baptism is not the scriptural concept, and therefore it cannot save anyone. But the New Testament clearly teaches that no one can be saved without

the new birth—and the culminating act of the new birth is baptism.

While the majority in the religious world reject Bible baptism and deny that it is in any way involved in salvation, most will then require people to be “baptized” according to the denominational ideas of baptism in order to become a member of their denomination. If baptism is not necessary for salvation, why should men make it necessary for church membership? Why should it have any importance at all?

Let each one who claims that he is saved without being baptized take this test: **When were you saved? How long after that were you baptized?** If you say you were saved at one point and then one day, two days or two weeks later you were baptized, how does that harmonize with the commands we have already read in Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, and other passages? Also, Galatians 3:27 states clearly that we are baptized into Christ. So if you say you were saved one day and then baptized two weeks later, it means that you were saved **outside of Christ**, before you entered Him. *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3:26,27). **Do you really believe that anyone can be saved outside of Christ?**

Have you been scripturally baptized? You may have become a believer, you may have even been immersed in water. But if you have not become a believer in Jesus Christ, repenting of your sins, confessing Him as your Lord (not confessing that you are a sinner), and if you have not been baptized to have your sins washed away in the blood of Christ, then you have not been scripturally baptized and — according to the Scriptures — you are **not saved**, you are **not in Christ**, and you have not been added to the Lord’s church. If this description fits your situation, maybe you feel angry as you read these words. Maybe you are thinking, “It is wrong to judge. Who are you to say I’m not saved? that I’m not in Christ, and that my sins have not been forgiven?”

And you would be right if **I were the one doing the judging and the one saying that you are not saved**. But the irony is that you, yourself, are the one saying these things about your own spiritual condition. How? You are saying that you are not saved because you are denying the very words and commands of our Savior. In His very face you are having the audacity to say that what He commanded is not necessary, and that you have the

knowledge and authority to claim salvation without being baptized into His death. You have pitted yourself against Christ and the writers of the New Testament. Their very words will be there to judge your condition in the last day: *"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. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak"* (John 12:48-50).

Do you want to be saved? Listen to the Lord. Believe in Him and obey Him. God's grace will then save you. It is as simple as that.

Have You Been Crucified With Christ?

FRED L. DILLON

Paul, in writing to the churches of Galatia, exclaimed positively that he had been crucified with Christ! (Galatians 2:20).

What did he mean? Surely he was not speaking of a physical crucifixion, though Paul suffered extensively for preaching the Gospel. He was imprisoned many times, scourged with whips so many times he could not count, stoned and left for dead on one occasion, and ship-wrecked three times during perilous journeys on the sea. But despite all these misadventures, he was believed to have been beheaded at Rome—not crucified, though we do not have the actual account of his demise.

Paul surely was speaking figuratively or symbolically when he spoke of his crucifixion with Christ. This symbolic crucifixion was not attained only by Paul when he was told to "arise and be baptized and wash away his sins" (Acts 22:16), but every person who is "baptized into Christ" (Romans 6:3-7; Galatians 3:27) is also "crucified" in the spiritual sense.

Explaining the action of baptism to the Romans, Paul showed that "if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death,

we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that the old man is **CRUCIFIED WITH HIM**, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Romans 6:5-6).

THIS STATEMENT REFERS TO BAPTISM

In likening baptism to crucifixion in this passage, Paul is completing his own explanation as given in verses 3 and 4—"baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized **INTO HIS DEATH?**".... "Buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST

While Paul likens baptism to crucifixion in his letter to the Romans, he calls it "the circumcision of Christ" in his epistle to the Colossians. Note Colossians 2:11-13: "In whom (Christ) also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ"

HOW, PAUL?

"Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead, And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with Him, having forgiven you of all trespasses" (Colossians 2:12-13). Thus, the New Testament is clear that baptism is the essential action wherein one "dead in sins" is washed or cleansed in the action of "putting off the old man" and "putting on the new man." Galatians 3:27 says, "For as many of you as have been baptized **INTO CHRIST** have put on Christ." This action, of course, must be preceded by belief or faith (Mark 16:16), by repentance (Acts 2:38 and 3:19), and also by confession (Acts 8:37 and Romans 10:10)—all of which are "unto salvation" (moving toward salvation), whereas baptism is the final act, placing one "into" the spiritual body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). This is why Peter reported to "the elect according to the foreknowledge of God" that "baptism doth also now **SAVE US** (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the **RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST**" (1 Peter 3:21).

THE TRUTH STILL STANDS

Over the years, many religionists-both Catholic and Protestant-have attempted to belittle the meaning or purpose of baptism in their teachings. First came decisions by Catholics to change baptism from immersion in water to sprinkling or pouring, beginning with what they termed "clinical" baptism for the sick. This was followed by the doctrine of infant baptism for those who had no sins, since they were not accountable persons (able to make their own decisions). Later, as Protestant groups evolved from Catholicism, men not only disregarded the mode of baptism but decided it was really not even essential, and thus followed the doctrine of salvation "by faith only," stemming from the teachings of Luther and Calvin.

WE NEED TO GO BACK

In faith and obedience to God and His Word, we must go back to the Scriptures in our teaching on salvation, the church, acceptable worship, and Christian living. In so doing, we find that baptism is an essential command (Matthew 28:18-19; Mark 16:16, and Acts 2:38). We also discover that baptism is an action which puts one *into* Christ, where he or she has a part in His death (crucifixion), His burial, and His resurrection-raised to walk in "newness of life" (Romans 6:3-5). The circumcision of Christ is not the Old Testament ordinance of the Jews, begun with Abraham, but the action of the sinner being baptized for "*remission of sins*," as instructed by Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38), when 3,000 "*gladly received his word and were baptized*" (Acts 2:41).

What is in the Name Christian?

JUSTIN GUIN

When we were born we were given names that were chosen just for us by our parents. Some of us were named after past relatives or friends who were special to our parents. In the Bible we read about men and women who were named by God for a specific reason (cf. Gen. 32:28). There is one name that many of

us wear that is given to us by God. This is the most precious name we can wear because it was given to us at a high price (cf. Acts 20:28). It is the name Christian. In order to wear this name faithfully it demands some things of us.

First, if we wear the name Christian it demands a decision. In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus teaches us that we have to choose between two paths of life. One path is easy and is the popular choice but the path a Christian chooses is not popular or easy. This choice is vital because it is choosing between life and death (cf. Deut. 30:19). Do you remember the words of Joshua to the children of Israel? He told them to make a decision whether they would serve false gods or they must serve the one and true living God. Through out the New Testament we read about people with the same decision (cf. Acts 2:37; 8:36) and we are faced with this decision today. We must choose God (cf. Josh. 24:15).

Secondly, if we wear the name Christian it demands discipleship. In Luke 9:23 we read "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me." In this passage we learn that discipleship takes two things. First we must be willing to humble ourselves by denying ourselves fleshly desires (cf. Gal. 5:16-17). Second we must be willing to make sacrifices as we bear our cross daily (cf. Gal. 2:20). We must realize we do not give up anything when we become His disciple because we will gain so much more in eternity (cf. Mk. 10:29-30).

Thirdly, if we wear the name Christian it demands dedication. When we bear our cross we must be willing to do it daily. Christianity is not a sprint but is a lifetime marathon that includes joy from our spiritual accomplishments and discouragement from our short comings. Being dedicated will be tough and Satan will do his best to destroy our faith, but we must remain faithful until death so we will be able to obtain our crown of life (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6-8; Jam. 1:12; Rev. 2:10).

When we become Christians we must be aware of the responsibilities it demands of us. It is our job to be a shining light and bring glory to God by our manner of life. It is an honor to be a servant of Christ and we must take this responsibility seriously. I encourage you to do your best to "grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (cf. 2 Pet. 3:18). What is in the name Christian? A purpose driven life (cf. Ecc.

12:13), fellowship with our creator (cf. I Jn 1:7), spiritual blessings (cf. Eph. 1:3) and eternal life (cf. Jn. 14:1-4).

Can a Christian Really Fall from Grace?

BOB DANKLEFSEN

A few years ago I was asked by a concerned Christian father to talk to his married daughter about her spiritual condition. She had become a member of a church which believed one could not fall from grace. When we arrived at this couple's home their preacher and a visiting head of a Bible Seminary from their church arrived also.

We soon began to discuss our differences on the subject of *Falling From Grace*. The Seminary Professor directed a question to me, "Do you believe that a Christian could so conduct his life so as to lose his soul's salvation forever?"

I answered him in this way, "My understanding of the scriptures may be wrong, and correct me if they are, but I see the Bible saying there are different kinds of servants of God. This is clearly revealed in the story of the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13. We both would agree that the type of soil, described here, the one who produced one hundred, sixty, or thirty fold, would certainly hear the words from Jesus, "Well done thou good and faithful servant . . ." (Matt. 25:21). His Christian service to the Lord is seen in Matt. 25:31-40 and II Tim. 2:23-26. Do we both agree that faithful servants who are fruitful will be in heaven with God?"

He answered with a nod, "yes."

I continued, 'The second type of soil is described as one who becomes a Christian but he only endures for a little while and in Luke 8:13 we read ' . . . who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.' So the Lord does point out that believers may fall away. However, I would rather look at the third type of soil and discuss this person. Describing him Jesus said, 'Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word,

and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful' (Matt. 13:22). This man has not left the church; he has become non-productive or unprofitable to the Lord. I know what I believe the Bible teaches concerning this type of person as to his future condition. But I would like to ask you, as you read about the unprofitable servant in Matt. 25:30, where do you teach he was cast — into heaven or into hell?"

He just stared at me and refused to answer even though I pressed him for an answer as I did the others.

Jesus made it very clear when he said in this passage, "And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This clearly describes hell.

It is interesting, this particular denomination has recently had a split over this subject. The discenting faction now teaches that one who has fallen away or is unprofitable to God goes temporarily to a place of punishment at death and then at the judgment hears, "Well done thou good and faithful servant" and is ushered into heaven.

PRESSURE CHANGES NEW TRANSLATION

When the translation committee of the New King James wrote the New Testament version of the scriptures they quote I John 3:9, "Whoever has been born of God does not practice sin . . ."

When the completed Old and New Testament of this translation became available, pressure from those promoting that one cannot fall from grace led the committee to restate this verse to read, "Whoever has been born of God does not sin . . ." in place of ". . . does not practice sin . . ." This teaching in fact has led to a couple of groups that teach that people who are involved in fornication are lost. But if they become Christians and then continue in this act, they are no longer looked upon as being in sin since a Christian cannot sin as they have been led to believe God teaches.

HOW DOES GOD VIEW CHRISTIANS?

It might be best to review briefly how one becomes a Christian before looking at the scriptures on the relationship of the Christian to his Lord. The Lord instructed those who are Christians to share the gospel with those who are lost. Even Christ began to make known the good news before his death (Matt. 16:21). Jesus would die for the sins of all people and be raised

to justify us (Rom. 4:25). After his resurrection, Peter told the crowd this same message (Acts 2:22-24). Those who became believers asked what to do (vs. 37), and were told to repent (turn from the practice of sin) and be baptized (be immersed briefly in water) and then they would be forgiven of all their past sins and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (vs. 38). Only adults responded to the gospel as they were asked to confess Christ before being baptized (Acts 8:36-39). So there obviously was an understanding of the commitment to Christ when one became a Christian.

Once one had obeyed the gospel they were made free from sin (Rom. 6:17,18) and could now enjoy the continued forgiveness of sin as they walked the Christian life (I John 1:7, 9). The New Testament does not state that Christians are pardoned from their sins, but rather says we are justified - declared not guilty, because of Jesus' blood (Rom. 5:9). This is the reason Paul wrote, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus .. ." (Rom. 8:1). Someday faithful Christians (I Cor. 4:1, 2), will appear before the judgment seat of Christ - faultless, (Jude 24). All this is offered to the saved because God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son (John 3:16).

As a person walks the Christian life he will make mistakes and sin (I John 1:8, 10). But because he belongs to the Lord, charges will not be brought against him (Rom. 8:33). Therefore, we can be comforted in the knowledge that God is not going to send a Christian to hell for just one offense or because he slips occasionally or dies before he is able to offer a verbal plea for forgiveness. Remember, the Lord has promised to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, (I John 1:7). A sin that a Christian is trying to work on but has not yet been eliminated completely is referred to as "sin that does not lead to death" (I John 5:16,17).

BIBLE WARNINGS CONCERNING DEFIANT SINNING

Even the Israelites were aware of the difference between unintentional sinning and deliberate breaking of God's laws (Num. 15:27-31). The Hebrew writer verifies this in Heb. 9:7. This same writer also recognized willful sinning could and would be found in Christians and warned them of the consequences of continuing in it (Heb. 10:26-31). It must be noted that the Son of God suffered severely to bring us this free gift of eternal life (Heb. 5:7; I Peter 2:21-24). He in turn instructed the New Testament writers to plead

with Christians to remain faithful or suffer the consequences of going back into sin (II Peter 2:20-22; Romans 11:22).

Jesus describes himself as a vine and the Father as the vine-dresser. If those in him do not bear fruit and abide in him they are cast out and burned (John 15:1-8). The Parable of the Lost Son makes no sense unless we understand that the son lost his relationship with his father but did gain forgiveness by coming back (Luke 15:11-24).

FALLING FROM GRACE

Often the question is asked by those sincerely wanting to know, "Can a person fall from grace?" To find where they are coming from I usually ask, "Where did you get the terminology 'Falling From Grace'?" They almost always answer, "I just have heard the term and wondered if it's true." I usually respond by saying that the only place I know that uses that exact terminology is Galatians 5:3, 4. What do you understand the inspired writer is saying here? Those who accept God's word as their final authority will need to look no further.

WHY DO PEOPLE BELIEVE OTHERWISE?

All doctrines foreign to God's word are conceived first in the mind of the one promoting them. Then this individual looks for supporting scriptures to back up his theory. One such scripture is found in Ephesians 1:3-5. In verses 4-5 Paul writes, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Note that it does not say that he predestinated the lost to eternal life but rather predestinated Christians to be with him in heaven. The condition for allowing us to be there is, "that we should be holy and without blame" and later in the letter he said that Christians who practice uncleanness will not inherit the eternal kingdom (Chapter 5:3-5).

Another statement made by promoters of this teaching is, "Once a person is born he cannot be unborn and thus once a person is born again he cannot be unborn again." This is true after a birth has taken place it cannot be reversed. However, the discussion should be on inheritance rather than birth. I have known several people who have lost the family inheritance which

better conveys the idea of being removed from God's inheritance. Revelation 3:5 clearly shows that a Christian can have his name removed from the book of life.

NEVER SAVED IN THE FIRST PLACE

A few years ago I met with a couple who had claimed that they were saved in their teens and were now living together, although not married. They each confirmed that they were on their way to heaven but that they would not have the same bliss that I would have because I was active in service to God and they were now living in sin.

When discussing this event with those promoting the "once saved always saved" position, their response is not the same. Some say, "If they were truly saved, then yes, they will go to heaven." Others say, "well they were never saved in the first place." This is simply a dodge which falsely conveys that when people who genuinely come to God, but fall away later, were not forgiven in the first place.

GOD'S WARNING TO CHRISTIANS

The Lord has recorded numerous examples of covenant people who had fallen away. In I Corinthians 10:6-13 he lists several who had fallen and mentions that these serve as examples to prevent God's people from falling today. He further warns, "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (vs. 12). Paul said he had to watch his own life lest he become a castaway (1 Cor 9:27). The Hebrew writer makes it clear that a person may reach a point of no return (Heb. 6:4-6). Some of these that I have encountered actually believe that they are on their way to heaven even though they have served Satan for many years.

Although a person cannot earn the gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23), it is consistent with the teachings of the Bible that a Christian serve the one to whom he pledges allegiance (Rom. 6:6-18). The warnings to keep oneself unspotted from the world become meaningless if a person cannot lose his right to the tree of life. Demas once served with Paul and it had to hurt the apostle to write, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world: (II Tim. 4:10). Since the church was bought by the precious blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28), it is only consistent that he will save only the church (Ephesians 5:23).

I am so thankful that someone took time to help me find

eternal life. If we can answer any other questions concerning salvation or falling from grace, please write to us or contact the church of Christ in your area.

"Restore Such A One in the Spirit of Meekness..."

DALE GRISSOM

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). Restoring the erring is an area in which the church is badly failing.

It is reported that only fifty percent of new converts remain faithful for over five years. Brethren, this just ought not to be. We must do a better job of nurturing our babes in Christ — encouraging, teaching, loving, and bonding, making them feel a welcome and important part of the family of God.

The apostle Paul admonishes us to restore the erring in the spirit of meekness. How can we accomplish this if we don't care about our brethren? And how can we truly care for someone we barely even know? The church is the family of God, and as such we must work to develop a genuine love for each other. Only by spending time in prayer for each other, and by spending time getting to know each other, can we build that bond that God would have us to build. If we have the love we should have for our spiritual family we will be grieved when a brother or sister goes back into the world.

Every person who obeys from the heart the Gospel plan of salvation becomes a child of God, and God adds him to the church (Acts 2:47). He will always be a child of God. Though he may become unfaithful, he does not cease to be a part of God's family: he is instead a wayward child. Consider the children of Israel, how time and time again they were unfaithful. God grieved over their sins, yet forgave them each time they repented and turned back to Him.

Each of us must truly become our brother's keeper. We must work to set the proper example for others, and we must encourage

and build each other up. We must not be timid about talking to one another about matters that concern our souls and where we will spend eternity. May each of us determine to become more spiritually-minded and more sensitive concerning the needs of our brethren.

Christianity is a serious business; we are preparing for eternity. Let's be sure we don't take it too lightly — our souls are dependent upon it!

When Was Saul Saved?

FRANK CHESSE

Prior to his conversion, Saul (later called Paul) was an avowed enemy of Christ and Christianity. He described himself as doing *"many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth"* (Acts 26:9). He was a *"blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious"* (1 Timothy 1:13).

However, on the road to Damascus, he met and acknowledged Jesus as Lord (Acts 9:1-6). Many people believe that Saul was saved at that point. But even a casual reading of the text will reveal that such was not the case.

If Saul was saved at that very moment:

(1) He didn't know that he was saved. Instead of rejoicing in his salvation, he inquired of Jesus, *"What wilt thou have me to do?"* (Acts 9:6). Whoever heard of a man being saved and yet not knowing it? Saul's very question is proof of his recognition that something remained for him to do in order to be saved by grace and blood.

(2) God Himself didn't know it. Instead of informing Saul that he was saved by his "faith only", God instructed him to *"go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do"* (Acts 9:6). Note the terms "must" and "do". Contrary to the thinking of many, man has to "do" something to be saved. That's not human interpretation; that's just what God said.

(3) Saul didn't act like a saved man. Instead of expressing great joy and happiness over his salvation, he was *"three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink"* (Acts 9:9). That's a strange way for a just-saved man to act. Saul knew he was not

yet saved. He had asked what to do. God said he would be told, though giving him no specific time. Saul waited in darkness, in prayer and fasting for three anxious days.

(4) Ananias the preacher didn't know it. Instead of arguing that Saul was already saved by his "faith alone", Ananias went to Saul and told him what he needed to do (Acts 22:12-16).

(5) He was saved while still in his sins, for God, through Ananias, told him to "*arise and be baptized*". He was still in his sins, for he had to be baptized to have his sins "*washed away*".

Why does Scripture connect baptism with the washing away of sins? Because of some special power in the water or in the act of baptism itself? God forbid! The power to wash away sins is in — and only in — the blood of Christ! But when is man cleansed by that blood? When he completes his obedience to the Gospel in the act of baptism. Baptism is the culminating act of obedience that puts one into the death of Christ (Romans 6:3,4) where Jesus shed His blood (John 19:33,34) in order that the penitent believer might have his sins washed away by that blood.

What washes away sin? Only the blood of Christ (Revelation 1:5). **When** does the blood of Christ wash away sin? When one completes his obedience to the Gospel in baptism (Acts 22:16).

Saul was not saved by grace and blood until his faith moved him to complete his obedience in this divinely ordained act.

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.

Five Reasons God Hates Divorce

GLENN COLLEY

God hates divorce. The Bible says He does (Malachi 2:16). In my years as a preacher I have come to find this fact almost

too obvious to even state. What would a God be like who didn't hate it? There's a disgusting awfulness following the kind of bitterness that brings two people — who at one time kissed as they committed to a lifetime of devotion — to saying, "My lawyer will be talking to your lawyer."

Let me share with you just five of the reasons God hates divorce:

1. Because it is not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18-20). I heard an unhappy wife say once, "I'm staying with him. It's better than being alone...."
2. Because the loneliness of divorce creates new temptation (1 Corinthians 7:2,5). Paul here writes that while it isn't sinful to separate as you make the effort to work things out, the separation must be temporary. *"Come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."* Incontinency simply means lack of self-control. The Bible clearly teaches that not everyone is a candidate for re-marriage (Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:2,3), and therefore divorce may mean either living single for the rest of one's life, or remarrying and committing adultery in the process. It is inevitable that such an arrangement of aloneness would produce temptations.
3. Because it is a result of sin, somewhere (Matthew 19:9). Just because no adultery is committed doesn't necessarily mean that no sin is involved in a divorce. When one whose mate hasn't committed adultery asks for a divorce he is suggesting that he wishes to break his solemn vow to remain with this person "in sickness and in health, in adversity and in prosperity, and forsaking all others to be faithful until death do us part." Choosing to break a promise has always been the same as deciding to lie (Revelation 21:8).
4. Because your prayers will be hindered (1 Peter 3:7). Peter here discusses how to have a good marriage and ends with this motivation: *"That your prayers be not hindered."* People wrapped up in trying to divorce their spouses often create a distance from God.
5. Because of the responsibility to children (Ephesians 6:1-4; Titus 2:4,5). Too many today live as if they believe they have not only the prerogative of divorcing their spouses, but also to some degree, their children. Who can possibly measure

what happens to a child's heart when his parents split? Furthermore, how frightening to consider that marriage break-ups may be thus passed down from generation to generation.

There are strong reasons to hate divorce, and equally strong reasons to do all you can by the grace of God to remain married.

Following in the Steps of Jesus

CLEM THURMAN

"For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:21-24).

When the Son of God came into this world, He had a definite purpose: *"The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). If we are to follow Him, that must also be our mission in life. Satan is constantly at work in the world, *"Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Pet. 5:8). And most of the world is still in bondage to sin and the devil (Heb. 2:14-15). We need to realize that, *"The whole world lieth in the evil one"* (1 John 5:19), and it must be our purpose to seek to bring freedom from sin to those who serve Satan.

Jesus said, *"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered unto him, We are Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin. And the bondservant abideth not in the house for ever: the son abideth for ever. If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"* (John 8:32-36).

An account in the life of Jesus shows us some of what we should do to help set people free from sin. *"And they went away*

in the boat to a desert place apart. And the people saw them going, and many knew them, and they ran together there on foot from all the cities, and out went them. And he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:32-34). What Jesus felt on this occasion, we should feel. What he saw is what we should see. And what He then did is what we should do.

"HE WAS MOVED WITH COMPASSION"

When we meet lost souls, what do we feel? As we deal with our relatives who are lost, with our neighbors, with our co-workers, etc., what are our feelings as we realize they are lost? Jesus felt compassion. Some dictionaries give as the meaning of "compassion" the terms, "pity" or "sympathy." But the root of this word shows a much deeper meaning; **com** (with) - **passion** (feeling, suffering). Jesus had the ability to feel what other people were feeling, to "feel with" those who were hurting. That is compassion.

The Bible says of Jesus, *"Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted"* (Heb. 2:17-18). Depths of loneliness and despair, disappointment over false friends, sorrow for the ungodliness that surrounded Him, the pain of innocence suffering — all of these He knew, and he had compassion on those with like trials.

The Scriptures say pointedly, *"Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works"* (Heb. 10:24). That is what Jesus did. He put Himself in the other person's place, to see and feel life as he or she did. To "walk in his shoes" and feel what he feels, that is compassion. When we are moved with compassion, we will not be impatient, harsh, intolerant, prejudiced nor in any way unkind. We will truly follow the admonition, *"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them"* (Matt. 7:12).

"AS SHEEP NOT HAVING A SHEPHERD"

Having lived eight years in the Rocky Mountains, I have watched the sheep ranching with intense interest. I suppose that

nothing is more without purpose or direction than sheep without a shepherd. But this is the picture which Jesus viewed as He looked on the multitude. Man must have a sense of purpose and direction that results in achievement, for God created us that way: *"Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man"* (Eccle. 12:13). There is that which God put into every one of us, to *"seek after God"* (Acts 17:27).

In our society today, we see the evidence on every hand of the same conditions which Jesus saw. The so-called youth rebellion, the craze for a "cause" to which one can devote his life and the rabid interest in every kind of "underdog" social service - all these indicate a search for meaning to life that can only find its fulfillment in God. So many have "copped out" on society, because they can't find there what their souls hunger for. They are *"sheep without a shepherd,"* and cannot find their way.

The prophet wrote long ago, *"O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jer. 10:23). We cannot chart our own course, or guide ourselves by ourselves. We need a shepherd. In fact, we need *"the Good Shepherd"* (John 10:14). The real tragedy is that those who are *"sheep without a shepherd"* do not realize their need for the Shepherd, and it must be our mission to bring the Good Shepherd into their lives.

"HE BEGAN TO TEACH THEM"

Jesus felt for these people. He saw their need, even when they did not. And then He did something about it. I'm sure that there were those who were ready to criticize the Lord: "Why don't you heal all the sick people?" and "Why don't you use your power to throw off the yoke of the Romans?" He must have heard such, and many more criticisms, many times. But His work was more important. And it still is.

Jesus told the people on another occasion, *"Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed"* (John 6:27). The emphasis of the Lord has always been on the spiritual, not the physical. He never came into this world to end physical illness, nor hunger, nor political tyranny. He had the power, He could have done all that. But that was not His mission. He came *"to seek and to save the lost."* That

was, and is, His mission. And it must be ours, also.

Jesus once asked the question, *"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Mark 8:36-37). No matter how much could be done for all the people around us in this world in the social and physical realm, until we recognize and serve their spiritual needs, we have not really helped them:

The only course that will help lost souls with their spiritual needs is the one that Jesus took: *"He began to teach them."* The apostle wrote, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"* (Rom. 1:16). It is through the teaching of the word of God that we receive every spiritual blessing. As Paul said, *"And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified"* (Acts 20:32). If we would meet the real needs of people, not just the temporary or imagined needs, we must do as Jesus did: *"teach them."*

Jesus told the apostles, and through them He tells us, *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned"* (Mark 16:15-16). As the apostle Paul wrote later, *"To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God"* (Eph. 3:10). The only way to help people break the yoke of Satan is by teaching them of the freedom which Jesus Christ offers. If we really care about people, we won't just tell them how much we love them — we will tell them how much Jesus loves them and what He did for them.

Will we follow the Lord? Then let us learn the compassion which He demonstrated for us. Let us see the purposeless society as He sees it. Let us feel the loneliness, despair and lostness of those who are without Christ. And let us follow His example by teaching them the gospel of Christ, *"The power of God unto salvation unto all them that believe."*

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