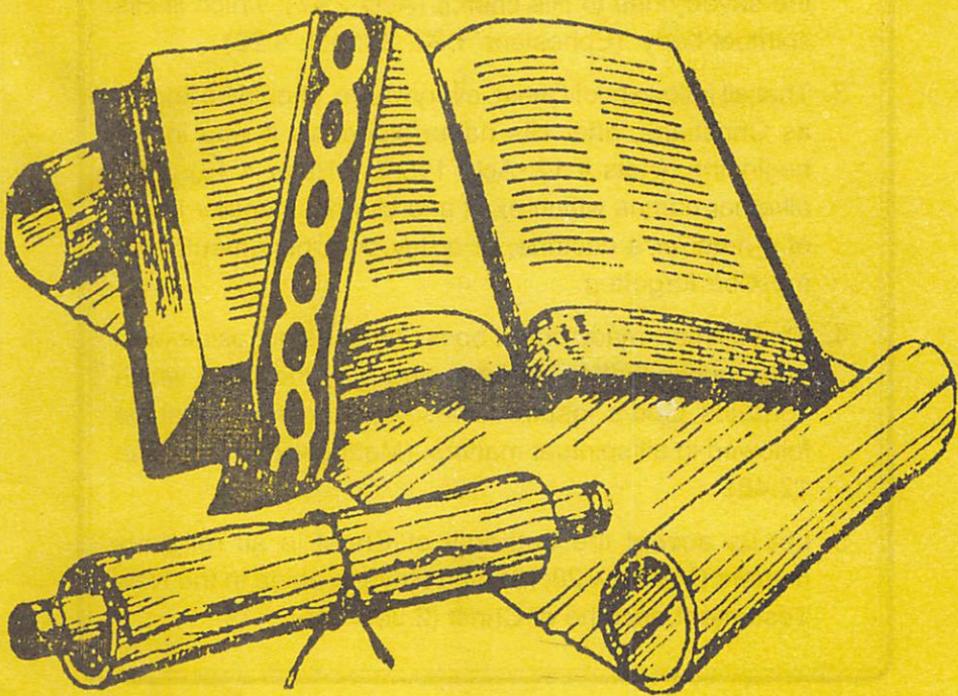


THE BIBLE TEACHER



LET THE TRUTH PREVAIL

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18). That congregations of His one church everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the church. (1 Corinthians 1:10).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must be told to believe in Christ, to repent of wrong, to confess Christ the Son of God, and to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands of salvation are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4; 5:22).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, after His name alone, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 38

December 2007

No. 8

EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

***"For God so loved the world that He gave
His only begotten Son"***

When the Bible says at John 3:16 that God "so loved the world," it didn't mean that God loved the things of the world, as man does, but it means that God loved all people in the world. The Bible introduces man to one eternal God as the loving Father. God who created one man and one woman in the beginning (Genesis 1:27; Acts 17:26), didn't create man divided in different castes. God doesn't look at humans as being low or high. God looks at all people as His children, because He is their creator and maker. Every child that has ever been born on this earth has been born by the power of God. God, therefore, cares for every single human being. He loved and cared enough for all people on earth everywhere that He gave His only begotten Son to die instead of everyone. Because God knows how terrible is hell. Because God knows that all people on earth are separated from Him because of Sin and as such they will live forever separated from Him in hell. God had made man, in the beginning, in His own likeness and after His own image, like God, man was sin-less in the beginning, and like God man is a spirit being. Man is soul, who will never go out of its existence. The body, which was created from the earth (Genesis 2:7), will perish, but not the soul. Man from the beginning of his creation, has been destined to live for ever, because God made man in such a manner, in His own image. God knows the worth of man. God knows the value of each

human being. Therefore the Bible gives man the good news of God, that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

God want all people to come to Him and live with Him. But because of sin man cannot go back to God. Therefore, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Jesus Christ is presented to us in the Bible as the Son of God. He is not literally a son, as we know of a son of a human being. He is called the only begotten Son of God in the Bible to emphasize the value of the only begotten son to a father. That God had only one Son, so valuable, so important, so precious to Him, but yet to save man from sin and to give man the opportunity to escape the punishment of sin and come back to God in heaven, God gave His only begotten Son for the world.

Speaking of Christ, at another place, 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 as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1,14). Jesus Christ was God, co-equal with God in heaven, another Person in the God-head, He came down on earth to save man from sin. Because God so loved the world! Teaching how humble a Christian should be, Paul wrote in his letter to the Phillippians, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2: 5-8). In Jesus Christ, God Himself, so to speak, came down on earth to save man from sin and its consequences. Because God knows that man is in sin, and that because of sin man will go to hell; and too God knows that man cannot do anything to save himself from sin. So God came down on earth from heaven in Jesus Christ to save man. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The invitation is for all. In other words, God has given the power to every man and woman on earth to choose for themselves where they want to go and live in eternity after the life of this earth is over. We, each one of us, have the power to choose heaven or hell. God shows no partiality. God loves all.

Humanism at Work

J.C. CHOATE

The Bible clearly teaches that God created the universe, the earth, and all that exists. It tells us of the creation of all living things, crowned with the creation of man and woman (Genesis 1,2).

If the written account of creation is not convincing enough that there is a God, we need only look at our marvelously designed bodies, consider our minds, raise our eyes to see the details of any particular thing that exists, and if we are honest we will be forced to admit that only a Supreme Intelligence could bring these intricate things into existence. How can an intelligent, thinking being come to any other conclusion? With all the information available to us today, for anyone to reject divine creation there must be a deep-seated *desire* to deny the existence of God. The sad thing is that those who deny God also want to force their beliefs — or *lack* of belief, in this case — on everyone else. Often, this is done through the instruments of *withholding information* and *ridiculing those who would disagree*: those who believe in God are portrayed as being ignorant and blind to modern science.

In the mid-thirties, "Humanists" formed themselves into a religious society with a manifesto. Here are some of the major points from that first document:

"FIRST: Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created. [The promotion of atheism.]

"SECOND: Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as a result of a continuous process. [Promotion of the belief of Evolution.]

"THIRD: Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected [Denial of the soul] .

"NINTH: in the place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being. [But when there is tragedy or disaster, do you ever hear of atheistic and humanistic organizations rushing in to help the devastated? Watch for them—they're never there. All of their effort and money are

spent promoting humanism and atheism.]

“TENTH: it follows that *there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes* of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural.

“ELEVENTH: Man will learn to *face the crises of life in terms of his knowledge* of their naturalness and probability. Reasonable and manly attitudes will be fostered by education and supported by custom..... Certainly *religious institutions, their ritualistic forms, ecclesiastical methods, and communal activities must be reconstituted as rapidly as experience allows*, in order to function effectively in the modern world **[Every-thing pertaining to God and religion is being removed from the public eye, except when held up for ridicule.]**

“FOURTEENTH: The humanists are firmly convinced that existing *acquisitive and profit-motivated society* has shown itself to be inadequate and that a radical change in methods, controls, and motives must be instituted. A *socialized and cooperative economic order* must be established to the end that the equitable distribution of the means of life be possible. *The goal of humanism is a free and universal society, in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good.* Humanists demand a shared life in a shared world.” **[The replacement of individual effort and its rewards with an enforced system of socialism.]** (Quoted from The Humanist Manifesto I, 1933; Italics and added statements in brackets, mine. JCC)

In the seven decades since its beginning, Humanism has worked cunningly and deceitfully, gradually taking over our educational system, most of the media, and much of the entertainment world with its world-wide influence; and its effects can be seen in every walk of life.

In our schools, only Evolution can be taught today. There can be no prayer, no mention of God. Nothing of a religious nature is allowed—except the tenets of the religion of Humanism. As a result, our children grow up hearing only the fabrication of the creative abilities of mindless evolution. Their faith is further attacked in colleges and universities, with professors deriding any who would defend the idea of God.

But the classroom is not the end of the battlefield. Children and young people are daily exposed to materials on the Discovery Channel, The History Channel, National Geographic, etc., that

promote the teachings of Evolution. Statements are made as **truth** and **fact**; not to be questioned. Programs are shown that are often total fabrications of pre-historic animals and people, living — as they say — millions of years ago, and they describe details of their lives and behavior that are absolute fairy stories, but presented as fact. So of course, nothing in the presentation is to be questioned.

These and other channels often advertise some program with an intriguing name or religious question, suggesting that information will be presented that will be supportive of the Bible as God's word. "Mysteries of the Bible", "The Gospel of Judas", "The Da Vinci Code" and many other such programs have been aired. But, almost without fail, the end goal is to undermine the faith of the viewers.

And, almost without fail also, when anyone representing "Christianity" is shown in a TV series, he/she is portrayed as a bumbling idiot, or a hypocrite, or an immoral and evil person.

Anti-Christian lawsuits are continually coming up worldwide in court and, 99% of the time, the liberal judge sides in favor of the atheist who brought the suit. Everyone today seems to have the "right" to voice and practice whatever he pleases, except those who believe in God and His word.

Because our world is being taken over by Humanism, its rules are becoming the thinking and behavior of our people. According to Humanism, there is no God; therefore, there is no such thing as "sin"; no "right" and "wrong", no "spiritual law" that must be obeyed, and no judgment to come.

As a result, human behavior is running absolutely wild. Look at the portrayals on some of the TV ads, showing young people in every state of unrestrained abandonment. Many live together without marriage; and the expectation is that all teenagers will have illicit relationships in their dating. In some countries more than half the marriages end in divorce, with all the pain, immorality, and evil that results. Millions of babies have been killed by abortion. TV, books,—even school textbooks, in some places—newspapers, and businesses are promoting homosexuality as a normal alternative lifestyle. Homosexual and polygamous marriages are on the horizon.

Let me ask you: As a people, are we **better off today** than we were fifty years ago, when we had strong homes and two-

parent families, when divorce was a tragedy, immorality and pregnancy outside of marriage were shameful, when abortion was illegal; when children were disciplined at home and at school and they learned how to behave with manners and respect toward their elders, teachers, and authorities of the land, when decency was required in dress in all ages, when binge-drinking and drugs parties were the rare exception among young people, rather than the "norm"; when neither vulgar language nor sexual activities were verbalized in public? Has Humanism made us better? Has the crime rate dropped? Are we more law-abiding?

Whether the world acknowledges Him or not, God does exist, He is the Creator, and He is aware of all that we are doing. In His Word He warns, "*Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people*" (Proverbs 14:34). Concerning the evil that people choose to do, He said, "... then take note, *you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out*". (Numbers 32:21)

"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

"Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight! Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink, Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away justice from the righteous man!

"Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, And the flame consumes the chaff, So their root will be as rottenness, And their blossom will ascend like dust; Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 5:20-24).

The time will come when the Lord Jesus will be "... 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. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

My friends, we must return to belief in God, acceptance of divine creation and of Christian principles as taught in the Bible. Of course, we have gotten so far away from God it is going to be difficult to turn things around. But if we don't, what future do we have? Are we bringing destruction on ourselves?

Did You Know There is An Appointment No Person Will Miss?

BOB DANKLEFSEN

Yes, the Creator of the universe said all of us have an appointment that not one person who ever lived on earth will miss. Here is the way the Hebrew writer stated it, ***"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,"*** Hebrews 9:27. Paul wrote, ***"For we must all appear before the Judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."*** 2 Corinthians 5:10. It seems that we all have an appointment. But why do we have this appointment? it can all be summed up in one word, "Sin."

Since the creation, man has found himself disobeying the Lord. The very command to not eat from the forbidden tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden should have been very simple to keep. Note God's statement, ***"And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die"*** Genesis 2:16,17. A person would have to have help to misunderstand this remark. Note what happens in Genesis 3:6, ***"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it, She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it"*** They did not believe God. Eventually, she and her husband kept their appointment with death.

Will I be all right with the Lord if I am a good moral person, even though I do a few things wrong? Let's see what God says, ***"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it,"*** James 2:10. Even the Old Testament conveys that sin separates one from the Lord. ***"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear,"*** Isaiah 59:2. Will this cause one to be lost? John 8:21 says, ***Jesus said***

to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come." Dying in sin is very serious according to the Bible. It means a permanent separation from the Lord. How does the Bible describe this separation?

SEPARATION FROM GOD

A vivid description of the separation at death is covered in Luke 16:19-31. Here Jesus tells of two people who died. The one who was prepared to meet God found himself in comfort. The other person: "... *The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'* But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'" Luke 16:22-26. Jesus continues to tell how the rich man wanted to have Abraham to send Lazarus back to earth to warn his five brothers who were not preparing for their appointment. Abraham told him that this was impossible and that his brothers would have to study the law and the prophets and follow the teachings of these. Today, one would appeal to the gospel of Christ and God's teaching on how to become a Christian. This story serves as a warning to us today to prepare for our appointment.

WHAT IF I NEVER FOLLOW GOD'S WAY?

We have already seen what happens immediately after death. But what happens in the future concerning the judgment? it begins with a resurrection of all who are in their graves- Acts 24:15. "... *For we will all stand before God's Judgment seat So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God,*" Romans 14:10,12. Account for what? "*But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will*

be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned," Matthew 12:36,37. The Hebrew writer says, **"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account,"** Hebrews 4:13. One must be perfect to make it to heaven on his own. But no one is perfect, Romans 3:10,23.

Where will those who die in sin go in eternity? Listen to God's description, **"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life,"** Matthew 25:46. How does God describe hell in the Bible? One thing that discourages the reader is the fact that hell is eternal. A person could possibly tolerate going there if it only existed for the length of one life time. But even after a billion life times, it is just the beginning of the separation from God. Paul wrote, **"He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This Includes you, because you believed our testimony to you,"** 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10.

Hell is also described as being a place of torment. **"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels,"** Matthew 25:41. John records, **"And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name,"** Revelation 14:11. Another description of the abyss is total darkness. **"But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,"** Matthew 8:12. **"These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them,"** 2 Peter 2:17. Intense pain felt by one on earth can bring about weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus himself describes this as he tells about the doom of the unprofitable servant, **"And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,"** Matthew 25:30. No hope for the future is offered to the lost, **"Brothers,**

we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope,
1 Thessalonians 4:13. Probably one of the most difficult things for a person who dies in a lost state is their memory of the past. Abraham said to the rich man, ***"Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony,"*** Luke 16:25. After the rich man realized his own dilemma, he suddenly remembered his five brothers back on earth.

WHAT IS THE ANSWER

TO THE DILEMMA MAN IS IN?

The answer can also be summed up in one word, gospel. But what is the gospel? According to Jesus it is something everyone is to hear. ***"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,"*** Mark 16:15. The definition for gospel is good news. When one has an appointment with both death and eternal destruction, he needs to hear good news. Since a person cannot live so as to reach a point where God will say, ***"You are now good enough for Me to accept."*** God chose a better way to reach out to His creation. Knowing that man would sin, even Christians sin, the Lord sent His Son to earth to experience all the temptations that you and I face in life. There has not been a temptation that you have faced that Jesus has not already experienced as seen clearly in Hebrews 4:15. Jesus voluntarily left heaven and put on human flesh so that He could encounter all we experience in life, including both problems and pleasures. Jesus by being both God, Hebrews 1:8, and man, 2:14, can relate to God and to His fellow human beings. Hebrews 2:17,18 says, ***"For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."*** What a comfort it is to realize that the Savior knows our feelings and frustrations and wants to help us. He experienced temptation to sin in Matthew 4:1-11. He felt pain and loneliness as He meditated on His

impending death, Luke 22:39-46. Certainly, He was tempted to express anger as He was beaten and spit upon. Listen to Matthew's account, ***"Then the people there spit in Jesus' face. And they hit Him with their fists. Other people slapped Jesus. They said, 'Show us that You are a prophet, Christ! Tell us who hit You!'"*** Later, Jesus cried from the cross, ***"Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing!"*** This is truly love. He wants to forgive you too!

Jesus was killed on a cruel cross, buried and raised the third day to show us victory over death, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. This is called the gospel. For some day we too will die and be buried and Jesus promises us that we will all be raised from the grave at His second coming to be judged, John 5:28,29. The important thing then will be to have that right relationship with Him so that we can be in heaven. One of the most precious things is that Jesus is now in heaven speaking to the Father in defense of Christians. Note what John said in 1 John 2:1, ***"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense-Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."*** But what about those who have not obeyed the gospel? We have already seen that God will punish those who have not obeyed.

HOW DO I ACCEPT CHRIST AS MY SAVIOR?

One is really lonely when he does not have Jesus as his personal Savior. God has arranged for us to have Jesus as a personal friend. This comes through obedience to the gospel. In fact if a person goes through life believing the gospel but never obeys it, he will suffer eternal destruction away from God, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. How does a person obey the gospel? This begins with a change of heart. The desire to turn from sin and serve Christ is referred to as repentance. You have met people who no longer want to listen to or tell dirty jokes or use bad language or get involved with someone immorally. Paul encourages us to change as expressed in Romans 2:4, ***"God has been very kind to you. And He has been patient with you. God has been waiting for you to change. But you think nothing of His kindness. Maybe you don't understand that God is kind to you so that you will change your hearts and lives."*** in the same letter Paul says that we should confess Jesus as Lord,

Romans 10:9,10. In verse 16, he makes it clear that not all will obey the gospel.

APPLYING THE BLOOD OF CHRIST TO THE LOST

Jesus' blood was shed to cleanse us from all our sins, Ephesians 1:7. His blood was shed in His death. The Lord instructs that we need to get into His death where the blood can cleanse us. Paul tells us how to get into Jesus death in Romans 6:3,4. When we reenact the death, burial, and resurrection in baptism, God puts us into Christ where all sins are forgiven. After the Jews heard the gospel in Acts 2:22-36; they really felt hurt about killing the Son of God, verse 37. They asked what to do to right the wrong done by them fifty three days earlier. ***"Peter said to them, 'Change your hearts and lives and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ Then God will forgive your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,"*** verse 38. Those converted now had a new family that would later be called Christians, Acts 11:26. We learn in Acts 20:28 that Jesus had purchased the church with His own blood. They were together often, sometimes daily, Acts 2:46. They were happy and they had a purpose in life for the first time. They knew they had an appointment with physical death, but not eternal death or separation from God. John's letter to the church at Smyrna said, ***"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death,"*** Revelation 2:11. On the other hand God said to the lost, ***"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death,"*** Revelation 21:8.

Some day we will all kneel before Christ. Paul so aptly wrote, ***"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the***

name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
Philippians 2:5-11.

IS THE MESSAGE ABOUT CHRIST FOOLISHNESS?

Once again Paul wrote, *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."* For it is written: *"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the Intelligence of the Intelligent I will frustrate. Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God,"*
1 Corinthians 1:18-24. Christ purchased the church with His blood. We in the church of Christ want you to have eternal life.

We all have an appointment with physical death unless the Lord should return in our life time. However, the second death cannot hurt a faithful Christian. What about you? When your appointment time comes, where will you be?

A Commodity Called Truth

FRED L. DILLON

The once popular saying, *"Truth is stranger than fiction!"* fits so many people of today. For the vast majority, the truth of God's Word has never been heard, learned, believed, or obeyed. Yet truth is real and genuine. There is *the truth* about everything! Truth is not relative, as the atheist or agnostic would believe.

"God's Word is truth" (John 17:17) and the only truth that can make men free from sin and death (John 8:31-32).

Truth is what actually occurs or what is real-as opposed to

fiction. Though you or I might disagree about any event that occurs in life, the actuality of what happened exists apart from either of our opinions. Two drivers may have a car accident. Each may give a different account of the mishap, but neither account changes what really occurred.

Through God's Word, which has maintained itself for thousands of years, men can know the truth—the truth about *salvation*, the truth about *the church*, the truth about *worship*, and the truth about *godly living*. How? By continuing in God's Word (John 8:31-32). Christ is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). No one can come to the Father except through His name (Colossians 3:17).

God gave Jesus *all authority* in heaven and on earth, and made Him head over "all things" to the church, which is His body (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). No human can claim to be the head of the church. None of mankind can be mediator between man and God except Jesus Himself (I Timothy 2:5). Jesus was sent to bring truth into the world. After His resurrection, He sent the Holy Spirit to finish the task (John 16:13). Through the Holy Spirit (John 14:26), Jesus provided the Word of truth (Hebrews 4:12) and through this "engrafted word" we can save our souls (James 1:21-25).

The Word of God does several things when received into good and honest hearts:

1. *IT CONVICTS MAN OF SIN* (Acts 2:37 and 2 Corinthians 7:10), bringing godly sorrow to the hearts of those who transgress God's law, the New Testament.
2. *IT CONVERTS MEN*, bringing about a change of life and direction through repentance and confession (Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Romans 10:9-10).
3. *IT PURIFIES THE SOUL* (I Peter 1:22-25), causing one to be "born again"—not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever.
4. *IT SAVES THE SOUL* (James 1:21) by washing away our sins in the blood of Christ (Acts 22:16; Colossians 1:13, 14).

The truth (the Word) must be preached when convenient or not (II Timothy 4:1-4). It must be used to rebuke sin. It must be used to exhort and correct men, turning them into the "strait gate" and "narrow way" which leads to life (Matthew 7:13-4).

Truth does not change. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). As Peter proclaimed in I Peter 1: 25, "The Word of the Lord endureth forever, and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." The truth for us today is the New Testament Gospel of Jesus Christ—His last will and testament (Hebrews 9:15-17). When Jesus died, He became the *testator* of the New Testament. His blood flowed in two *directions-backward* (to those who served God before the cross) and *forward* to those who do God's will from the time of the cross until the end of time. Without the shedding of blood is no remission of sin, and the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. That is why Jesus became the sacrificial Lamb of God—to take away the sins of the world.

The Gospel of Christ contains:

1. **FACTS TO BE BELIEVED**—*His death, burial, and resurrection*: (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
2. **COMMANDMENTS TO BE OBEYED** (John 14:15; Revelation 22:14).
3. **PROMISES TO BE RECEIVED** (2 Peter 1:3-4): "Exceeding great and precious promises."
4. **WARNINGS AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS** (I Timothy 4:1-4; I John 4:1-2; Mark 7:7; Colossians 2:8).

In light of all this, what must we do today? Simply, we must:

1. **HEAR THE TRUTH** (Romans 10:17). This will produce faith (Romans 10:17; James 2:24).
2. **BELIEVE THE TRUTH** (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6).
3. **OBEY THE TRUTH** (Hebrews 5:8-9; Revelation 22:14).
4. **LIVE BY AND LOVE THE TRUTH**. God makes it clear: "All liars shall have their part in the lake of fire, which is the second death (Revelation 21:8).

The beloved apostle John had no greater joy than to know that believers walked in the truth (II John and III John).

Hold to the truth, friends! Buy the truth and sell it not! guard the truth (Jude 3). Contend for it. Stand up for it. Never transgress, or go beyond, or come short of it. Prove the will of God (Romans 12:2). That way, we can enter heaven (Matthew 7:21). God's Word is truth. Never forget it!

No Regrets

DAVID R. PHARR

Life has great moments of joy which we cherish in our memory as long as we live. There are also experiences which we would like to forget. Almost everyone remembers certain events with regret. These regrets may be only mildly disturbing. In some cases, however, they may so frustrate a life that they lead to mental breakdown or illness. We may think that it would be grand if we could go back and undo the mistakes of the past, but we can't. However, while we are unable to erase what is past, we can determine to live now so that there will be no regrets in the future.

In Genesis 25:29-34 we read that when Esau was hungry he sold his birthright to his brother Jacob for something to eat. This was a rash, thoughtless act. In that ancient society the "birthright" of the oldest son provided for great advantages. Even though Esau was overwhelmed with hunger, there was no excuse for having dealt so lightly with something so valuable. How he came to regret this is described in the New Testament. *"Lest there be a fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears"* (Hebrews 12:16,17).

This story illustrates the need of making decisions and taking actions which will not later be the cause of regret. Esau could not change what he had done, though he tried diligently. No doubt the memory of his folly troubled him as long as he lived. A children's nursery rhyme illustrates this reality.

"Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
And all the king's horses and all the king's men
Could not put Humpty Dumpty back together again."

It is a certain and obvious truth that we reap as we sow (Galatians 6:7,8). The notion, however, that somehow the consequences can be avoided accompanies every temptation. Satan would have us believe that we need never regret our

transgressions. But there will be regrets in the day of Judgment. There are also regrets that come in this life.

One of the harvests which follows the fruition of sin is a lifetime of remembrance and shame.

Some are plagued by memories of dishonesty or of worldliness. Some look back with regret to periods of heavy drinking and of the lax behavior which attended such license. Others look back to immorality with great shame. Still others — near the end of life — remember years spent with too great a concern for material possessions, only to realize finally that they have thought little about spiritual things. The regret of some is that they know they have been self-centered and selfish.

Still others are disturbed, not by what is considered a major sin, such as lying, stealing, or adultery, but by the fact that they have failed to live their lives to the glory of God. They had the least concern for the things that mattered most.

As we have said, there is no way that the fact of our mistakes can be changed. We can, however, live henceforth so that there be no regrets. Memory of foolish deeds may disturb us, but that memory can be a useful tool in helping us make better choices now. If we have memories of regret about the past, think of the inward shame of future regrets when we realize that we learned nothing by our mistakes.

We don't want to leave these thoughts without this assurance: No matter what our regrets may be — and even though we cannot undo the past — we can find perfect *forgiveness* through our Lord Jesus Christ. *"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18).

"Striving for the Faith of the Gospel"

CLEM THURMAN

"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of

your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27). When the apostle Paul and his company of fellow-workers for the Lord came to the city of Philippi, they found a remarkable city. Philippi was a "Roman City," built up to be a special garrison by the Romans to enhance the Roman Empire. The city thus had a diverse population - Jews and Greeks, rich and poor, slave and free, people of various nationalities.

Paul had just left the province of Asia, in what is now Turkey, and entered for the first time into the continent of Europe. Philippi was his first stop in Europe. But the church which he planted here had special place in Paul's heart. *"I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy, for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now"* (Phil. 1:3-5). In this same letter, the apostle later told these Christians, *"So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:12-13).

In Phil. 1:27, Paul gives five things that make up the ingredients of a successful church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look at them.

"LET YOUR MANNER OF LIFE BE WORTHY"

The Lord Jesus constantly warns us to watch our speech and life. He warns us, *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"* (Matt. 12:34). Our speech reveals both who and what we are, and also whose we are! As Paul wrote, *"Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear"* (Eph. 4:29). The apostle Peter also warns, *"Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings"* (1 Pet. 2:1). Christians are to speak in such a way as to edify (build up) those who hear. Corrupt speech and evil speaking will not only corrupt us, it will degrade the church.

But our entire *"manner of life"* must show that we belong to Christ. To become children of God we had to *"crucify the body of sin,"* be *"buried with Christ in baptism"* and then be *"raised to walk*

in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-6). Then let us live this new life as befits Him who died for us. *"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him"* (Col. 3:9-10). If we have been baptized *"into Christ"* (Rom. 6:3), then we are *"new creatures in Christ"* (2 Cor. 5:17), and we must live like it.

"THAT YE STAND FAST"

To *"stand fast"* implies the determination to *"stand against the wiles of the devil"* (Eph. 6:11). As the apostle wrote, *"That we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ"* (Eph. 4:14-15). Instead of acting with the capricious attitude of a child, we should be *"stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"* (1 Cor. 15:58). Stand fast.

Noah was given a big job: build a huge "ark" of about 500 feet in length, and preach to the folk of his generation about God's impending punishment (Gen. 6; 2 Pet. 2:5). But Noah, *"by faith,"* stood fast and did his job. Moses had the seemingly impossible job of leading a slave people out of Egypt and molding them into a great nation of people for God (Ex. 3 & 4). But Moses *"stood fast"* and did the job. The apostle Paul wrote: *"As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and builded up in him . . . Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong"* (Col. 2:6-7; 1 Cor. 16:13). To be a strong church, we must *"stand fast."*

"IN ONE SPIRIT, WITH ONE SOUL"

The Lord has always wanted His people to be united. Real unity. Notice His prayer, *"Neither for these [the apostles] only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me"* (John 17:20-21). If we are to succeed as the Lord's people in His work, we must have the unity which He desires. As Paul wrote, *"Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit,*

even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. 4:3-6). Look at the church in Jerusalem: "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers . . . And all that believed were together . . . And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved . . . And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul" (Acts 2:41-47; 4:32). That is the kind of unity for which the Lord wants us all to strive.

Many people today will argue that all of the denominations that exist are good, and even are necessary, so that each can have "the church of his choice." But that idea is a diametrically opposed to the prayer and the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ! Notice what the word of God says about denominations in 1 Cor. 1:10-13, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos: and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" The Lord wants all believers to be of "one spirit, one soul." To divide into denominations was wrong in Corinth 2000 years ago. It is still wrong today!

"STRIVING TOGETHER"

The word, "strive," means "fight, or contend." As Christians, we are in a battle - a spiritual battle. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds), casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

(2 Cor. 10:3-5). The apostle Paul exhorts us to *"war the good warfare"* (1 Tim. 1:18) as we *"resist the devil"* (James 4:7). The *"armor of God"* (Eph. 6:10-17) is both our defense and our offense in this battle.

But the real emphasis in Paul's statement is found in the word, *"together."* Our striving is much more effective as we work in fellowship with each other. The Bible speaks of our being united in effort as it describes the church as the *"body of Christ"* and each of us as members of His body (Rom. 12:4-5). Again, *"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. . . And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now they are many members, but one body. . . There should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof"* (1 Cor. 12:12, 19-20, 25-27). Members of the body of Christ have different abilities which are used in different kinds of jobs, but all work toward one goal in Christ.

"FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL"

We need always to remember to strive for the right thing. We must not contend for our own way or strive for our preferences. Instead, we are told, *"Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints"* (Jude 3). We would like to think that everyone is honest and sincere, and that there are no false teachers in the world. But that just isn't true.

God gives us warning after warning: *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. . . Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God. . . But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be accursed"* (1 John 4:1; 2 John 1:9; Gal. 1:8).

Jesus told the apostles, *"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:15-16). The apostle Paul said, *"I am not*

ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). That is what we must "*strive together*" for - the gospel of Christ. Early Christians certainly knew that. When persecution came, and the disciples had to flee the city of Jerusalem, "*They therefore that were scattered abroad, went about preaching the word*" (Acts 8:4). The Christians of whom we read in the Bible heard the gospel, they believed the gospel, they obeyed the gospel, they lived the gospel and they preached the gospel.

If we would be the church which Christ wants us to be, we must heed the admonition as the church at Philippi did: "*Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel*" (Phil. 1:27).

Was Jesus Created?

WAYNE JACKSON

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

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

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

Meek and Gentle

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Jesus was "meek and gentle" as the Bible states in 2 Cor. 10:1. Yet, our Savior was also bold and powerful in rebuking error. After Jesus repeatedly said, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," (Matt. 23), He then stated: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (v. 37-38). Jesus stated that He came to do the will of the Father, and that often included stern rebuke of false teachers (Mark 12:24). He could weep over the hypocrisy of the religious elite (Luke 12:1) and look upon cowardly folk with extreme displeasure: "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart" (Mark 3:5).

Christ surrendered to His death on the cross while praying for those men who put him there: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The Redeemer has deep compassion for lost mankind and could even love the rich young ruler who rejected Him (Mark 10). However, Jesus did not change the commands addressed to sinners who looked for some "easy street." Meek and gentle - yes - but never a compromiser of the truth of God! F.W. Faber blessed us with these words in the gospel song:

*Father of mercies, God of love,
Whose gentle gifts all creatures share,
The rolling seasons as they move,
Proclaim to all Thy constant care.*

The pattern of the way of life of Jesus Christ should compel our sojourn here below. God offers a challenge to us: "The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Num. 6:25-26). The more we know the Jesus of the Bible, and courageously follow His steps, the more 2 Pet. 1:2 will flow into our lives: "Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge

of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue" (2 Pet. 1:2-3).

Meekness is based on sheep who do not run ahead of the shepherd, but who go where He gently leads them into verdant pastures. Too many today try to make God their image, rather than follow the guidance of One much wiser than they will ever be! *"O Lord, 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).*

The apostle Paul reminds us of how he dealt with others, and how we should: *"But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children" (1 Thes. 2:7).* But that same nurse who is so gentle will hit hard on the back of a child who is choking, so as to save the life of one who is dear to her. We must boldly preach the gospel in order to save those we love. Our pattern is demonstrated for us by the Father: *"Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off (Rom. 11:22).* Jesus called those religious leaders hypocrites, but then died to save them. With a tear in our eye and a lump in our throat, we rebuke sin in order to save sinners.

Shepherds search for lost sheep with uncanny zeal. They knock scabs off sores and gently rub soothing oil to relieve disease and pain. The whole process is essential. Christ mentioned in Rev. 3:19 that He chastens and rebukes those near and dear to Him. An old song shows this perfect blend:

*Out of the depths of ruin untold,
Into the peace of thy sheltering fold
Ever Thy glorious face to behold,
Jesus, I come to Thee.*

The meekness and gentleness of Jesus Christ calls us home!



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Printed and Published by Sunny David for Church of Christ, B-350, Chitranjan Park, New Delhi and Printed at: Print India, A-38/2, Mayapuri Phase-I, New Delhi-110064. Editor: Sunny David.

Regd. No. 26921/71

Postal Regn. No.
DL(S)-17/3154/2006-2008
Licence to Post without Prepayment
No. U/SE/25/2006-2008
Posted at Lodi Road HO
on 10-11 December 2007

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