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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

"Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of the fools"

Anger, the Bible says, is one of the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). The first instance of anger and its fruit is mentioned in the Bible in the book of Genesis chapter four where we read of Cain who got angry with his brother Abel because God was pleased with Abel as he had offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain (Genesis 4:1-8; Hebrews 11:4). Evidently Cain didn't like that his brother was doing better than himself, so he grew envious and jealous and bitter toward him so much that he killed him. This is true even today. It was not too long ago when we all had heard of a similar incident where a brother became so hateful of his brother that the very first thing he did in the morning was to kill his brother whom he thought was doing better economically and otherwise than he himself was. Hundreds and thousands of people are killed every year around the world in cases of road rage and domestic violence, because of anger. Not only did the wise preacher exhort at Ecclesiastes 7:9, "Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for the anger rests in the bosom of the fools," but further in Proverbs 14:17 he said, "A quick tempered man acts foolishly" and "An angry man stirs up strifes and a furious man abounds in transgression." (Proverbs 29:22). Those who are soon angry upon every the least provocation, deal foolishly. They say and do that which is ridiculous and so expose themselves to contempt, they themselves cannot but be ashamed

of it when the heat is over. Moreover, a person of angry, passionate and furious disposition makes men provoking to one another and is troublesome in the family and in the neighbourhood, blows the coals, and even forces those to fall out with him that would live peaceably and quietly.

Amongst other things Satan uses anger as a tool to destroy God's people (1 Peter 5:8). Remember, Moses was not allowed to enter the promised land, because he had erred in his anger at Kadesh (Numbers 20:1-12; Deuteronomy 3:23-26). In anger people shout and scream at one another, in most cases using foul and filthy words. Anger is the cause, in most cases, of severed relationship between husbands and wives, brothers and sisters and other family members and neighbours. Everyone of us, therefore, need to watch our temper. Self-control is one of the best ways to keep temper under check. The Bible teaches that self-control is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23; 2 Peter 1:5). That is to say that those who try to walk daily by the guidance of the Spirit of God manage to stay away from any and all wrong and sinful habits. And how does one do that? By reading, studying and meditating from God's word of the Bible which was written by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, (2 Timothy 3:16, 17), and then try to live each day by what it teaches. This is exactly what Paul meant when he wrote at Romans 8:1 and said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

Why We Believe In The Judgment Day

J.C. CHOATE

The Bible clearly teaches that there will be a judgment day. That means that we will have to give an account of ourselves, that we will be held accountable for all that we have said and done in this life. Most people don't like the thought of having to be responsible to anyone for what they have done. They don't like to have to answer to the police when they do wrong, and to be responsible to the government for their taxes. But it is a fact of

life nevertheless. Those who earn a living must answer to their employer; those who go to school or college must face examination day; those who are in the military must report to their superior officer, etc., and so on with all of us in our different walks of life. There is hardly any way to escape these responsibilities unless we are the boss, we are wealthy, or we are dead. But even the rich, the heads of the nations, and all living and dead must one day appear before the judgment bar of God.

The Hebrew writer says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9: 27). But who will be there? Paul tells us. Hear these words: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5: 10). Not only will there be a judgment; but all will be there, and all will have to appear before the righteous judge, Jesus Christ, and all will be judged according to their deeds whether they be good or bad.

Paul wrote the Roman Christians, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me; and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14: 7-12).

In speaking to the people of Athens, Paul said, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17: 30, 31). Please notice that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness. That means then that God will judge all, and that the judgment will be right. It will not be done in an unfair manner, and neither will he show partiality, or favour one over another. We do not know when that day will be, but God knows. It is the same with the Lord's return. Christ tells us of that

day that even the angels do not know, but only the Father in heaven. If the angels do not know, and only the Father knows, then how would man know? Certainly man does not know when Christ will come again and neither does he know when the judgment will take place. Furthermore, we are told that God will judge the world through that man whom he hath ordained, and he has given his assurance of this to all men in that he hath raised him from the dead, and of course that would be his Son, Jesus Christ.

We are told that when Paul stood before Felix, that he preached to him. Felix and Drucilla were living in adultery, and the record says, "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." (Acts 24:25). Knowing the kind of life that Felix was living, then Paul had the courage to warn him of the price that he would have to pay, that he would have to answer to God for all of his deeds. No wonder then Felix trembled. It frightened him. It is sad, however, that he did not take heed, but sent Paul away with the promise that he would call for him, if he should have a more convenient season. As far as we know, he never did call, and therefore, died in that condition. How sad !

On speaking to the religious people of his day, Jesus said, "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matthew 12: 34-37). That means then that one must not only be aware of what he does, but he also must be conscious of his thoughts and what he says. All of these things are tied together and indicate the kind of person one is. But regardless of what one does or says, he should keep in mind that one day he will be held accountable for all of that. Just knowing that should make one more serious, and cause him to think twice before he acts or speaks.

The Apostle Paul says that the day will come in which God

will judge even the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. (Romans 2: 16). The Hebrew writer reminds us that "the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4: 12, 13). Paul said, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." (1 Corinthians 4: 3-5). Again, Paul said, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom." (2 Timothy 4: 1). Paul went on to say concerning himself. "Hencefore there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Timothy 4: 8). Notice that Paul speaks of the Lord being the righteous judge and the one who will give him a crown of righteousness at that day, meaning the judgment day, and he says that not only would he be given such a reward, but also it would be for all others who love his appearing or who have prepared for his coming.

The Hebrew writer speaks of God as being the Judge of all (Hebrews 12: 23) and then in Hebrews 13: 4 he says that "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

In Matthew 25 we have Christ saying, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." (Matthew 25: 31-33). Here the Lord is picturing the judgment as it will take place some day. It will be at his coming and all nations

and all people will be gathered before him. At that time he will separate the good from the bad as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. The sheep on his right hand will represent the righteous, Christians, the church. The goats on his left hand will represent the wicked, the deceived, and unfaithful Christians. And after the judgment has taken place, the record says that the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matthew 25: 46).

Now in summing all of this up, please notice what we have found:

1. The judgment of God is coming some day, but it will be after death, or on the return of the Lord.
2. All will be there on that great day. Imagine all of the people who have ever lived, or who will ever live, being there on that day. No one will be able to hide or escape. No one will be overlooked. This will include the young and old, the good and bad, the rich and poor, the king and the servant.
3. God will judge through his Son, Jesus Christ.
4. It will be an impartial judgment in that all will be judged by their works whether they be good or bad.
5. Every idle word, every deed, and every secret thought will be judged on that great day.
6. This judgment will be final. There will be no second chances. It will be a righteous judgment.
7. On that day the righteous will be given eternal life and the wicked will be sentenced to everlasting destruction in a Devil's Hell.

Are you prepared to meet the Lord at the judgment? Remember that Christ said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12: 48). Christ also said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth;

they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." (John 5: 25-30).

My friends, you can prepare for this great judgment day by believing in Jesus, repenting of your sins, confessing your faith in Christ, and by being baptized in water for the remission of your sins. On doing that the Lord will save you and add you to his church. Then as a Christian, if you will serve the Lord and remain faithful to him unto death, then when you stand before him one day, you will be able to hear him say to you, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joys of thy Lord." Wouldn't that be wonderful? Think about it, and prepare while you still have the time and the opportunity. We pray that you will.

Continued Vigilance

DEAN FUGETT

Speaking of political freedom, a former statesman said, "The price of liberty is continued vigilance." Can the price of our spiritual liberty be any less? We know what it cost to make us free from sin. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). "Redeemed by the blood of the lamb" is a theme we well know. We glory in that precious bought freedom. Paul said concerning that liberty, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). We are exhorted by Peter to "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

We are very jealous of our freedom. We resent any threatened encroachments. All kinds of safeguards are in place to protect our personal freedoms. We have heard repeatedly about the "Constitutional" protection of our personal freedoms. Court cases are abundant that have reaffirmed the personal rights and freedoms we hold dear. But, how strange that we would give ourselves so easily into the snares of some who would deprive

us of our spiritual freedom in Christ. This freedom we have from the Law of Moses, this freedom in Christ, is not freedom from all and any law, but freedom from the KIND of law contained in the Old Testament. The freedom is freedom from the bondage power of sin through the justifying power of Christ. The law we are now under is one which frees us from that which was before. Any statements of freedom command our attention. This is why some today can gain a following so quickly. They promise liberty. Those who speak of freedom and oppose encroachments claim a ready audience and receive accolades. But we must remember that the greatest tyrant claims that his subjects have the greatest freedom and liberty.

Peter warned of those who promise liberty but are themselves the slaves of corruption (II Peter 2:19). Paul warns of some who attempted to "spy out" their liberty (Galatians 2:4).

Be vigilant, lest you lose your liberty to those who promise liberty.

The Riches of Christianity

EDSEL BURLESON

It is said that Patrick Henry, the great patriot, incorporated these words in his will: "I have now disposed of all my property to my family. There is one thing I wish I could give, and that is the Christian religion. If they had that (and I had not given them one shilling), they would be rich." The Christian religion is the most astonishing system ever known. Babcock wrote "Christianity is not a voice in the wilderness, but a life in the world. It is not an idea in the air, but feet on the ground, going God's Way. It is not an exotic to be kept under glass, but a hardy plant to bear twelve months of fruits in all kinds of weather. Fidelity to duty is its root and branch. Nothing we can say to the Lord, no calling Him by great or dear names, can take the place of plain doing of His will. He may cry out about the beauty of eating bread with Him in His Kingdom, but it is wasted breath and a ruthless hope, unless we plow and plant in His Kingdom here and now. To remember him at His table and to forget Him at ours, is to have invested in bad securities. There is no substitute for plain, everyday goodness."

Someone has given the following wonders of Christianity.

1. It is perfect; nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it.
2. One person can go into the wilderness and set it up and operate, and a hundred persons in one community can find employment in it.
3. It will work in a room 16x16 feet, or in a township six miles square.
4. It will work among Christians, and it will go among the heathen and turn them from darkness into light.
5. It will work in the day, and do equally as good work in the night.
6. It is broad enough and deep enough to employ men of the greatest talents, and yet it will triumph in the hands of yeomen and herdsman.
7. It will receive and use, and disburse all the money that can be put into it, and yet it will run with very little money.
8. It can be operated by the rich, but it will be difficult for the rich alone to carry it; if by one class alone, much better by the poor alone; a few poor men can run it to great success.
9. It is the strongest brace and the surest support to the youth that the author can give; it is a blessing to the strong man, and a comfort to the aged at the sunset of life.
10. It is the most sympathetic to the poor and downtrodden, and yet far more denunciatory to the wicked than any human government ever known.
11. It is the only system which proposes to unite the people of the earth, the people of every nation and clime and language, and make them one family.
12. Christianity is the best system that God could give to men in this life, and it is the only system that will lead us safely into the world to come. But its perfection must be regarded at all times by all peoples. It must be received just as the author gave it.

Christianity is a new way of life. This is what Jesus was saying when he described disciples as "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" (Matthew 5:14-16).

This is what Paul was saying in II Corinthians 5:17—

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

This is what Paul was saying in Romans 8:9—"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Christianity is not something that occupies a small corner of our lives, but is something that permeates every aspect of our lives.

Broken Homes.

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Jesus tells us to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). It would be impossible to obey this injunction and marry a follower of Satan. Someone has said it well: "He that marries a child of the Devil may expect trouble with his father-in-law." The writer of Proverbs tells us emphatically that the house of the wicked shall be overthrown (Proverbs 12:7; 14:11). The urgent warning of the prophet Isaiah unto King Hezekiah is appropriate to each one of us: "Set thy house in order, for ye shall die, and not live" (II Kings 20:1).

A home is not in order, in God's sight, until both parents and children realize their duty and obey it. There are certain obligations incumbent upon each if we are to make our homes "a foretaste of glory divine." Unless Christianity is real in our homes, we are in the process of raising children in an atmosphere of insincerity and shame. Nothing is more detrimental to future stability than a pretentious religion void of solid conviction and loyal devotion. Children can easily see through the veneer of pseudo-spirituality. And conversely, nothing is more faith-building to child than the opportunity view daily the dedication of parents in love with God and His word. Parents need to know the Lord, and the way of His salvation! It is not enough to know the book, chapter and verse; we must know the Lord! Paul said, "I know WHOM I have believed" (II Timothy 1:12). The word of Christ must dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16). Parents who claim to be Christians should constantly evidence the presence of Jesus in their lives (Galatians 2:20), and manifest the joy of serving the Lord, even as Paul wrote

in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice."

To have a home that glorifies God, parents need to be keenly aware of the power of their influence. Far too many of us are similar to the old caretaker of an apartment building. He was asked how he could possibly remember all the conflicting orders hurled at him each day. His answer is a classic reminder of so many folk who lack backbone to deal with their children; I just throw my mind in neutral, and go where I am pushed." The Bible tells us "train up a child in the way he should go," and nurture him "in the admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

We dare not sin against our children by failing to take a stand for godliness (Joshua 24:15; Matthew 6:33). One of the saddest verses in all the Bible tells us that "Eli restrained not his sons." The tragic results in the lives of those boys are chronicled in I Samuel. The sons of Aaron died a shameful death (Leviticus 10:1-2), as they followed the example of their father who had once been flippant toward God in the "golden calf" (Exodus 32:24). We cannot afford the luxury of sleeping on the job of parental responsibility!

Christ—Our Life

1 JOHN 1:1-4

THOMAS DOHLING

In 1 John 1:2, John the apostle refers to Christ Jesus simply as "the Life". It was Christ Who was manifested. John had established Christ Jesus as "the Word" Who is deity or God (see the gospel account by John). Christ (deity) appeared in human form. In 1 John 5:11, 12, we read, "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." So, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is our Life. When we share fellowship with Him, we share in life.

This Life is eternal, "the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—" (1 John 1:2).

Christ, our Life, was present in the very beginning at the creation. He is eternal. He had no beginning. He has no ending. He is not part of creation. In the beginning He is the source of creation. All life comes from Him. He is the spring, not part of the river.

The Life was manifested. The eternal Christ became visible. He appeared in the flesh. He became a man. Here is a great stumbling block—those who refuse to believe in God incarnate. Such are referred to in 2 John 7: "For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." When God became a man, He stripped away every pretence of man to be "god". We can no longer do our own thing; we must do what Jesus—the Son of Man and God—wants us to do. We can no longer pose as self-sufficient, because Jesus says we are all sick with sin and must come to Him for healing. We can no longer depend on our own wisdom to find life because Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

When God became a man, man ceased to be the measure of all things, and this Man (Jesus Christ) became the measure of all things. This is simply intolerable to the rebellious heart of human beings.

God has come in the flesh. In 1 John 4:2 we read, "By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God." Only the Spirit of God can break our rebellion against God and cause us to submit gladly to this one Man (Jesus Christ) as our absolute sovereign. Therefore, the confession that God has come in the flesh is John's doctrinal test of whether we are of God.

The confession of the Ethiopian eunuch is relevant to all who would be saved as recorded in Acts 8:36-37: "Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, *here is water*. What hinders me from being baptized?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'" He was expressing his belief in God incarnate.

Fellowship with the Father and His Son. We have fellowship with the Father and His Son (1 John 1:3) means that we have come to share their values. We believe what they believe and love

what they love. So we delight to spend time together. "What a fellowship, what a joy divine" we sing. We love to include Them in all that we do. We cherish the thought of sharing an eternity together getting to know Them better.

In John 1:3, we understand John as saying, "since our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, the only way we can cultivate fellowship with you is to proclaim to you what we know about the Son Whom we have seen and heard." Shared doctrine is the basis of Christian fellowship. Let us be like John. John says in effect, "here is what we believe of Christ; this is what we cherish."

In 1 John 4:6, he says, "We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." Do you cherish what we do regarding Christ?

Joy in God's fellowship. John wants to share this joy that he has in God's fellowship. In 1 John 1:4 he says, "And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." Our joy in God's fellowship is complete in the joy that others have in God's fellowship. We pursue our own happiness in the holy happiness of others.

God loved us first. We love one another because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). It is a commandment of Christ Jesus. He said: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" [John 13:34-35].

Let us continue in this love as we yearn for fellowship with God and Jesus and with one another,

What Shall I Do With Jesus?

ALFRED A. MEEKS

Jesus had been praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was arrested by a mob of Jews—His own countrymen—and taken to the house of the High Priest. There He was questioned, accused, condemned, and sentenced to die. But the Jews had

no authority to put a man to death, so they sent Jesus to be tried by Pilate. He was the Roman Governor, and his permission was needed before a sentence of death could be carried out.

PILATE

Pilate questioned Jesus on two different occasions concerning the accusations of the Jews. He was convinced that Jesus was innocent of any wrongdoing. He then suggested that Jesus be chastised and let go (Lk. 23:16, 22). This suggestion was unacceptable to the leaders of the Jews. They had already decided to kill Jesus.

There was a custom of releasing a prisoner at Passover time. Pilate, finding no fault in Jesus, wanted to release Him. But again the Jewish leaders were not satisfied with this decision. They cried out, "...release to us Barabbas" (Lk. 23:18). Barabbas was in prison for insurrection and murder. The Jews preferred a criminal be released instead of an innocent man. Pilate then asked, "*What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?*" (Matt. 27:22).

Since that day almost 2,000 years ago, every person who has heard of Jesus has had to make a decision as to what he or she will do with Him. Let us look at what some of the people in the Bible decided to do with Jesus.

THE LEADERS OF THE JEWS

For hundreds of years the Jews, as a nation, had been looking for and expecting a messiah, a king, to establish a kingdom. This king was to sit on King David's throne and restore Israel to the position it had occupied during the days of King David and King Solomon. When Jesus came, He did not fit their idea of this messiah, so the leaders of the Jews rejected Him and demanded that He be crucified.

In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter told those Jews who were present, "*Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know; Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death*" (Acts 2:22-23). Not all of the Jews were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, but the

leaders were. Many of those who heard Peter on that occasion repented, were baptized, and received the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38-41).

What about you? Will you crucify Jesus again? If you have obeyed the gospel, then later turn away from Christ, you crucify Him again by not being faithful to Him who died for you (Heb. 6:6).

JUDAS ISCARIOT

Judas Iscariot was one of Jesus' apostles. He was also a thief (Jn. 12:6). He made a deal to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14-15).

Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. When He had finished, Judas came with a mob of people who were carrying swords and clubs. Judas came to Jesus and kissed Him. This kiss was the sign Judas gave to show the mob which one was Jesus.

Later, Judas was sorry for his action, and went out and hanged himself (Matt. 27:5). What Judas did was terrible, and he was sorry for what he did, but we have no record of his having sought forgiveness for his action. Judas, what will you do with Jesus? "I will betray Him."

Friend, are you willing to take the blessings bought for you by Jesus, and then turn your back on Him? He does not deserve such treatment. "What will you do with Jesus?"

SIMON PETER

A while before Jesus was arrested by the mob, He said, *"All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night..."* (Mk. 14:27). Peter said, *"Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be"* (Mk. 14:29). Jesus then foretold that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed twice (Mk. 14:30). Peter was sure he would not deny Jesus, but he did (Mk. 14:66-72).

After Peter denied Jesus the third time, he *"wept bitterly"* (Matt. 26:75). After these events, Peter became one of Jesus' strongest disciples. It was Peter who preached the main sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36). "Peter, what will you do with Jesus?" "I will deny Him, but then repent and become one of His most important spokesmen. I will even die for Him."

When you are with people who are not Christians, do you act and talk like they do? Do you ever deny being one of His

disciples? Weep bitterly, and repent. Be one of Jesus' most steadfast followers.

SAUL OF TARSUS

A young man named Stephen was appointed by the Jerusalem church to help with their benevolent work. He is described as *"a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 6:5). Stephen was also a preacher. He had a confrontation with a group called *"the Synagogue of the Freedmen"* (Acts 6:9). As a result of this meeting, they *"cast him out of the city and stoned him"* (Acts 7:58).

Stephen died. *"And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul"* (Acts 7:58) *"Now Saul was consenting to his death"* (Acts 8:1). Saul continued his persecution of the church, *"entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison"* (Acts 8:3).

Saul, not being satisfied with persecuting only the church in Jerusalem, obtained letters from the High Priest giving him authority to bring back to Jerusalem any disciples found in Damascus (Acts 9:1-2). But a great thing happened to Saul while on his way to Damascus. A light from heaven shown about him. He fell to the ground, and a voice from heaven said, *"Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me?"* Then Saul asked, *"Who are you, Lord?"* Then the Lord said, *"I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads"* (Acts 9:3-5). Read the rest of the story of the conversion of Saul in Acts chapters 9, 22, and 26.

After his conversion, Saul preached the gospel and became known as the Apostle Paul. He spent the rest of his life telling people how to be saved from their sins. He also wrote almost half of the books of the New Testament. *"Saul, what will you do with Jesus?"* *"At first I will persecute Him. Then I will be one of His followers, and will die for Him."*

So, what about you? Do you persecute Jesus? If you persecute one of His disciples, you are persecuting Him (Acts 9:4-5). Saul became one of Jesus' faithful workers. You can become His faithful worker too, if you are willing to obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9).

March of the Penguins

ROYCE FREDERICK

In icy Antarctica, one of God's amazing creatures, the emperor penguin, displays incredible behaviour! It was recently captured on film and shown in an excellent documentary called *March of the Penguins*.

Every winter, thousands of emperor penguins leave their home in the ocean and march about seventy miles inland. They face extreme cold and blizzards on their hazardous journey. Walking and sliding in single file over the ice, they eventually come to their destination. It is a desolate place where there is no food.

There they mate, and the females eventually lay a single egg. Then the exhausted females make the long journey back to the sea for food, so they can survive and later return to feed their young.

The males stay with the eggs. They cradle them on the tops of their feet at all times, even while moving about in the huddled mass of other male penguins. Just a few moments of contact with the ice would cause the egg to crack, destroying the chick. After two months of caring for the eggs, in the bitter cold and darkness of winter—and without food — the males begin to see their young hatch.

The males then share a small portion of their limited food reserves with their chicks. But the chicks will not survive long without a fresh supply of food from their mothers. The mothers make the long journey back to their family, and the starving males return to the sea for food. While the chicks are growing stronger, the parents take turns making the long journey to the sea for food and returning to feed their young.

Eventually, the young chicks grow strong enough to make the journey to the sea. They dive into the Antarctic Ocean, where they learn to hunt for food, and the cycle of life is complete.

WHY?

Why do adult emperor penguins put themselves through such terrible hardships?

Evolutionists say life came into existence by mere **chance**

—by accident. They say life then evolved by chance, through “survival of the fittest,” and produced all of the complex creatures on earth today.

We do see changes in animals and plants, such as changes in strength, colour, and size. And the “fittest” individuals certainly survive best and reproduce.

But chance cannot explain the origin of cells, tissues, organs, and organisms. As someone has said, “Survival of the fittest does not explain arrival of the fittest.” Before anything can be tested for “survival” ability, it must first be designed and made.

The march of the penguins is totally contrary to their personal survival.

For an adult penguin, the logical choice for survival would be to stay near the source of food. The rational choice would be to hunt in the sea, eat, and avoid the dangers of starvation and the bitter cold. The march of the emperor penguins to produce the next generation is an act of personal endangerment, not survival.

Throughout the animal kingdom, sexual reproduction cannot be explained by evolution. Chance cannot explain how sexual organs originated. They had to work right the first time. Chance cannot explain instinct and reproductive behaviour — why parents often endanger themselves to produce and protect their offspring.

For emperor penguins, The reproductive process is irrational, dangerous, and sometimes deadly. But it is part of their design.

There is only one possible explanation. God made the emperor penguins. All life was designed and created by God. Through His wisdom and power, God gave emperor penguins the physical means and the instinct to perpetuate their species.

“The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and all its fullness, You have founded them. The north and the south, You have created them...” (Ps. 89:11-12).

“For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God” (Heb. 3:4).

Just and Justifier

DAVID THURMAN

God knows that we are sinners and that we cannot avoid sin. Because of that, He came up with a way to hold us accountable for our sin, while being merciful to our sin. *"Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus"* (Rom. 3:19-26). God realizes we all have sinned, but He found a way to save us, anyway. To grasp this, we must first notice that God is just in all His ways. As such, the Lord must judge our sin for what it is, and our sin must be paid for.

GOD GAVE US A LAW

Paul tells us that the law of Moses proves that men are sinners. The law teaches us about sin, about good and evil, about the nature of our God. But, the law could not make us righteous. It could and did hold us accountable by showing us our sin and condemning our sin. But the law could not save us.

The law made us conscious of our sin. It reminded us over and over again of our guilt. *"Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year"* (Heb. 10:2-3). So, the law could criticize us and condemn us, but it could

never eliminate the sin problem in our lives.

GOD WATCHED EVERYONE SIN

God reminds us that *"all have sinned"* and that all of us *"fall short of the glory of God."* As God watches human history unfold, He sees that every person who ever lived, with the exception of Jesus, has sinned and come short of God's expectations. Instead of bringing glory to God by living righteously (as Jesus did John 17:14), we have failed to honor God or obey Him or bring glory to Him.

This may hurt your pride, but you are a sinner. And, you may not like this either, but you will be a sinner. None of us can ever claim to have overcome sin. *"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves; and the truth is not in us"* (1 John 1:8). Whether we think we are Christians or not, or even if we know we are saved by the grace of God, we can never say that we have escaped the ability to sin. All of us are sinners.

GOD DEMANDS SIN BE PAID FOR

God sent Jesus to die for our sins to demonstrate His justice (Rom. 3:25). That is, God had to condemn sin. He could not just pretend it did not happen or that it did not matter. God cannot be a God we can rely on if He fails to stand for righteousness and judge sin.

God must hold man accountable if He is to be a God who can save us. The only way God can avoid dealing with sin is by changing His nature and then He would not be a God we could count on. So, to be faithful to Himself, God demands that each and every sin we have committed be paid for. The punishment is simple: *"For the wages of sin is death"* (Rom. 6:23a) and *"The person who sins will die"* (Ezek. 18:20a). Sinners deserve to die for the guilt of their sins. So, a death must take place to pay for sin. But, God is not only a God of justice, He is also a God of love. So, God found a way to be both just, and to justify those He loves.

GOD OFFERS SALVATION OUTSIDE PERFORMANCE

None of us can come to God and impress Him with our righteousness. *"For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away"*

(Isaiah 64:6). Isaiah says it well. Our sins stand out, while our good works seem like dirty clothes. Not one person can stand before God and claim salvation based on how good he or she has been.

"Now a righteousness, from God, apart from law, has been made known" (Rom. 3:21). God watched our efforts to keep His laws and what He saw was that we all failed. We all sinned. So, he found a way to extend mercy apart from our performance, so that we can be saved by Jesus and not by our efforts.

GOD OFFERS GRACE FREELY

We are *"justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24).* There is no price for us to pay, no cost to us. We commit sins, but Jesus pays for them so that we are freely saved. As Paul put it in a verse just noted, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).*

God understands that even at our best we cannot be good enough. So, He sent Jesus to die so that we could be freely saved by His grace, and not our performance. Our task is explained by Paul. We are to have *"faith in Jesus Christ"*; to have *"faith in His blood"*; and *"faith in Jesus"* (Rom. 3:22, 25, 26). It is up to us to trust the sacrifice of Jesus for our salvation, realizing it is His gift that saves us, not our goodness.

GOD OFFERS ATONEMENT THROUGH BLOOD

Recall that sin calls for death, the shedding of blood in payment for that sin. For God to be just, blood had to be shed to pay for the sins we have committed. *"And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22).* Blood had to be shed to forgive us.

So, God chose His Son to come and die in our place, shedding His blood that we can be saved. This allows God to be just. Sin is paid for by the blood of Jesus. But it also allows God to be justifier, as He can now offer salvation to all who will put their faith in that blood. Before Christ, we were cut off from God because of our sin. In Christ, we can be one with God again, as we experience salvation through the atoning work of Jesus.

ADMIT YOU ARE A SINNER

For many people this is the hardest step of all. Our human

pride, our confidence that we are good people tells us to avoid admitting we are sinners. We hide behind things like "I haven't done any really bad things" or, "I'm not as bad as that person." Some of us even hide behind the fact we have gone to church all our lives and must be good people. But God sees us differently. He sees that we have sinned and failed to honor Him as God. To experience salvation through the blood of Jesus, you must begin by admitting you are a sinner.

ADMIT YOU CAN'T SAVE YOURSELF

Again, this is a problem for some people. Too often we want to prove we are deserving, we are good enough, that God is pleased with us since we have done so much for Him. But the Pharisees thought that way and Jesus condemned them over and over again. The fact is, we must admit our sin, and face the fact we need mercy. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us"* (1 John 1:9-10). See the steps John describes? Confess your sin (admit you are a sinner). God will forgive you faithfully. Hide your sin, pretend you are good enough, God's word is not in you.

ACCEPT THE FREE GIFT

You need to put your trust in what God has done for you through Jesus Christ. You need to be in the blood of Jesus, cleansed by Him. *"Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross"* (Col. 2:12-14). You can put your faith in the working of God by being baptized into His Son, where your sins are taken away. All you need to do is what Ananias told Saul to do. *"And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name"* (Acts 22:16).

Preparation for Worship—The Preparation of the Heart

RONALD D. BRYANT

How well do we understand the nature of worship? How many of us are possessed by an awareness of the greatness of the Lord God Almighty? That we tend to be casual, less than attentive, and are quick to resist even the concept of bowing down to another, is easily observed. That our assemblies are controlled by our preferences is readily evident. Consider the following: How much actual preparation for worship do we individually make? How much actual spiritual preparation is being made by those of us who are to lead in the spiritual aspects of our assemblies? What are our habits as regards the times of worship, the place, and the other obvious aspects of worship? Is it dull duty, or fervent devotion? How much of it is mechanical and perfunctory?

Worship includes the joyful and wholehearted ascription of praise to God for who He is and what He is in Himself. It is a loving response to God for His mercy and grace, and for His providential dealings. It is also the bowing down of an earnest and devoted heart, in deepest humility and reverence.

Worship flows from a source, and that source is love. Where love is meager, worship will be scant. Where love is deep, worship will overflow. God's servants often poured out their love and adoration in an overflow of praise and devotion. Their words point the way.

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20,21).

However, worship is more than words. David spoke of his soul waiting for God, *"My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him"* (Psalm 62:5). There is often a powerful, yet comforting silence between loved ones when words are

unnecessary. In our communion with God, to be awed into silence in His presence is also worship.

Long ago a puritan, Thomas Goodwin, said, "I have known men who came to God for nothing else but just to come to Him, they so loved Him. They scorned to soil Him and themselves with any other errand than just purely to be alone with Him and in His presence." While Goodwin's thoughts may be regarded as extreme by some, he does speak of an intimacy with God and a desire for fellowship with Him that we would do well to cultivate. Too many of us seldom or never devote full concentration to the experience of simply being in the presence of God.

FORM-IV

(See Rule 3)

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