

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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Vol. 39

April 2009

No. 12

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## *EDITORIAL*

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

***"For our citizenship is in heaven"***

The blessed and the glorious hope of a Christian is that he knows that his citizenship is in heaven. For God has made this provision for those who are in His Son whom He had sent from heaven to become the propitiation for the sins of the whole world through His propitiatory death on the cross by the will and foreknowledge of God. Those who are in Christ are the new creation of God, says the Bible at 2 Corinthians 5:17. They are heaven bound. They are in this world but are not of this world. They belong to heaven. Therefore, said, the Holy Spirit inspired apostle of Christ: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." (Philippians 3:20,21).

How does one become a citizen of heaven? Christ revealed this at the very outset of His ministry in His conversation with a ruler of the Jews whose name was Nicodemus. Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to Him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:3-6).

When Christ was going back into heaven after His death and burial and resurrection. He commanded His followers to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15,16). Only the saved will have the right to enter heaven. And to be saved the Saviour put the condition to believe and to be baptized. When one is baptized, according to the Bible, one is lowered into the grave of water, as we have the example of the eunuch who was baptized in water by Philip in Acts chapter 8:35-39. Philip buried eunuch in water and brought him out of the water. Thus eunuch was born of the water and the Spirit. Eunuch had heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, through Philip, eunuch had heard the message of the Holy Spirit and he had obeyed that message of the Holy Spirit, as he went down into the waters of baptism and came up out of it, to walk in the newness of life, as the apostle Paul later wrote in Romans 6:3-5. "All Scriptures" we read in 2 Timothy 3:16, "is given by the inspiration of God." Every book of the Bible was written by men whom God's Holy Spirit had inspired to write (2 Peter 1:21).

One is born again, born of water and the Spirit, therefore, when one hear the gospel of Jesus Christ as it is given in the pages of the Bible by the Spirit of God, and believe that message and goes down into the water to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and comes out of it to walk in the new life as a new man. Those who had heard the gospel for the very first time in the city of Jerusalem in the beginning were commanded to do the very same thing (Acts 2:38), and the apostle Paul himself was asked to do the same. (Acts 22:16). The new birth of the Bible is not some thing that is better felt than told. It is not a feeling. But it is an assurance that comes to one who hear and believe and does what the Spirit of God says in the Bible. Remember, Christ taught, "Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven." (Math. 7:21).

## *Why Christianity Is So Different*

J.C. CHOATE

Christianity is to be found around the world. Believers in Christ number in the millions and millions. As its members carry

forth its message, then its numbers continue to grow.

Christianity is based on belief in Christ—not being just another man, another holy man, or even another prophet, but as being the Son of God, the one who died for the sins of the world, and the one who came forth from the grave to live forevermore. Peter and the Apostles confessed Christ as being the Son of God. (Matthew 16: 16-18). Even God from heaven acknowledged Christ as being his Son. (Matthew 17: 5).

Christianity is the only religion in the world today that has a living leader. The leaders of all of the other religions have died, not to come forth again. Christ said that he would come forth again, and he did. (John 11: 25; Matthew 28: 1-6). Had he not kept his promise, then he would have been a liar and a deceiver. Had he not come forth then Christianity would have never developed. But Christianity lives, and the church lives, and the hope of a general resurrection lives, all because Christ lives.

Christianity is a very popular religion. It has done more to change the world for good than any other religion or belief. The international calendars of the world base their dating system on the life and death of Christ. The laws of the nations have been mainly influenced by the moral teachings of Christ. Most countries recognize the Sunday weekend, and this of course is from Christianity, that is, based on the fact that Christ came forth from the grave on the first day of the week, and that the Lord has commanded his people to meet on the first day of the week to remember him, and to worship God. (Matthew 28: 1-6; Acts 20: 7).

Christianity advocates the highest moral principles known to man. It teaches honesty, paying one's debts, giving a day's work for a day's pay, and respect for one another. It stands for moral purity, promotes the family system, upholds marriage with one husband and one wife, and with them being faithful to each other unto death. It recognizes God as head of all, with man head of his wife, but with both man and woman having their own responsibilities, and bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Christianity is a religion and religion means service that is rendered to God and man. James said, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1: 27). To visit the fatherless and the widows

here means more than just paying a social visit. It means to care for the needs of these people. Christians then have the obligation, as they are able, to see after the needs of others. Paul said, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Galatians 6: 2).

Those who represent Christianity believe in God as the creator of all things (Genesis 1: 1), and they believe that Christ is God's Son who was sent into this world to live among men, and to die on the cross for the sins of the world. Christ said, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8: 24). Christians believe that the Holy Spirit inspired numerous ones over hundreds of years to pen down God's word, and therefore all scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is therefore the word of God. (2 Peter 1: 21; 2 Timothy 3: 16, 17; Matthew 24: 35). We believe that Christ established his church, and only one church, and that all the saved have been added to it. (Matthew 16: 18; Ephesians 4: 4-6; Acts 2: 47). We believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and that this good news is to be preached throughout the whole world. Christ said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16: 15, 16). We believe that those who obey the Lord are saved, become Christians only, worship God on the first day of the week, and are to live daily for Christ (Matthew 7: 21; 1 Peter 4: 16; John 4: 24; Acts 20: 7; Luke 9: 23).

Christianity advocates unity of all believers in Christ (1 Corinthians 1: 10), and that all are one in Christ. Paul wrote, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3: 26-28).

One cannot be physically born into the Lord's family. Christianity does not grow therefore through physical birth but through spiritual birth. (John 3: 3-5). In other words, the Lord sent his disciples to teach people about him, to reason with them, and to convince them that they need to believe in Christ, to obey him, so that Christ can save them, and make them his followers. Paul reminds us that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans

10: 17), and the Hebrew writer says that without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11: 6). Again, the Hebrew writer said concerning Christ and those who would be his, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Hebrew 5: 8, 9). That means then that infants or children cannot be Christians or members of the church. They must grow up to know right from wrong, to hear the teachings of Christ, and to decide for themselves whether they will believe and obey Christ or not.

Christianity teaches that all will eventually be resurrected, that there will be a judgment for all, and that all will live eternally either in heaven or hell. Christ said, "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." (John 5: 28, 29). We also read this: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9: 27). Paul declared, "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). After the judgment takes place, then the wicked will be delivered into everlasting punishment but the righteous will be rewarded with life eternal. (Matthew 25: 46).

There are also things that Christianity opposes. It opposes Satan, the world, and the works of the flesh. (1 John 2: 15-17; Galatians 5: 19-21). More specifically, it stands in opposition to war, bribery, smoking, gambling, drinking, the illicit use of drugs, abortion, homosexuality, and all other such things. It rejects the caste system, idolatry, and all false teachings, and those who would exalt themselves as gods before men. It does not believe in reincarnation and neither does it forbid its members from eating meats. Paul says that some people forbid to marry and command to abstain from meats "which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving; For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." (1 Timothy 4: 3-5).

As those who follow Christ, we oppose all forms of Christianity that is not set forth in God's word. In other words, much of that which the world looks upon as Christianity is false

Christianity. Because of this then true Christianity gets a bad name. We hear about Christians fighting, Christians doing this and Christians doing that, all of which is bad and wrong. Again, this does not represent true Christianity. The Christianity of the Bible, and those who would practice such, are known only for the good that they do and thus making the world a better place in which to live. God's word, therefore, teaches against man-made Christianity, denominations, sects, and bodies of men.

Christianity has nothing to fear as long as people have the opportunity to read, study, and make their own decisions. We believe that Christianity is logical and sensible. Furthermore, look at those who believe in Christ and those who do not, and see what religion is doing for them. You will surely be able to see that Christianity, when practiced, by far changes its people for better, and leads them to a better life physically and spiritually. They are also a happier people because they have more to live for, and they have everything to look forward to.

If you are not a believer in Christ, then let me encourage you to consider Christianity. Read about it in the New Testament portion of the Bible. I believe that if you will then you'll want to become a Christian. Furthermore, you can become one by believing in God and Christ as the Son of God, by repenting of your sins, by confessing Christ with the mouth that he is the Son of God, and by being baptized for the remission of your sins. (Hebrews 11:6; John 14: 1-3; Acts 17: 30; Romans 10: 10; Acts 2: 38). When you do that then the Lord will save you and add you to his church and as such you'll be a Christian and a part of Christianity. (Acts 2: 47; 1 Peter 4: 16). Isn't that simple? It is so easy and uncomplicated. Please don't stumble over it.

## ***To Be Like Jesus***

**JOHNNY RAMSEY**

I once heard a man tell 300 young people that he did not know the Bible very well, but that he really knew Jesus. I told him, right after the lesson, that his statement was impossible, for all that he could ever know for sure about Jesus was in the Bible—which he admitted he didn't know very well. So many people claim

to know and love a phantom which they dreamed up. They even talk about loving what Christ loved. But their subsequent life-style proves they do not really love the Scriptures, the church for which Jesus died (Acts 20:28) nor the souls of men enough to tell them the truth on salvation and how to get to heaven.

1 Kings 2:3 holds a comprehensive view of what God has always required of His people: *"And keep the charge of Jehovah thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his ordinances, and his testimonies, according to that which is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself."* People can only tell we *"have been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13) when we think and act like Him.

#### In Christ We Have

A love that can never be fathomed,  
A life that can never die,  
A righteousness that can never be tarnished,  
A peace that can never be understood,  
A rest that can never be disturbed,  
A joy that can never be diminished,  
A hope that can never be disappointed,  
A glory that can never be clouded,  
A light that can never be darkened,  
A happiness that can never be enfeebled,  
A purity that can never be defiled,  
A beauty that can never be marred,  
A wisdom that can never be baffled,  
Resources that can never be exhausted.

Have you ever noticed how most of the great spiritual songs centre in the glorious life of Jesus?

*Jesus Is All the World to Me*

*Let the Beauty of Jesus be Seen in Me*

*Would You Live for Jesus?*

*Have Thine Own Way, Lord*

*All the Way My Savior Leads Me*

*Be With Me Lord*

*Anywhere with Jesus I Can Safely Go*

*If Jesus Goes With Me*

The more like Jesus we become, the nearer heaven will be and the distance from Satan will be greater! May we so live, emphasizing godliness, that a closer walk with God will be a blessing daily. *"Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Cor. 4:6). Read Acts 8:26-39 for a clear Bible example of how to become a Christian. Then read 2 Pet. 1:4-11 on how to maintain this relationship. *"My help cometh from Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth"* (Psa. 121:2). *"For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Phil. 3:20). To live like the Lord Jesus Christ is a genuine joy now with the hope for an even better tomorrow.

## ***"My Heart Is Fixed, O God"***

MAXIE B. BOREN

In Psalm 57:7, David penned these prayerful thoughts to Jehovah... *"My heart is fixed, O God."* What does the word rendered "fixed" in the KJV mean? What was David expressing? Most all the other translations, such as the NKJV, NASV, NRSV, NIV, and NEB render it "steadfast". The CEV translates it "faithful". Brother Roy Deaver, in a lecture he gave on this section of the Psalms, lists "confident and certain" as sort of synonyms or alternate definitions of "fixed".

In the context, David is praising God, concluding the Psalm in verse 11 with these words, *"Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth."* That seems to sum up the whole tenor of the thoughts expressed in this particular Psalm. Indeed, the psalmist had a fixation on God and His greatness, affirming that his own heart was fixed on Him. Undoubtedly, he had resolved to be steadfast in his devotion to the Creator, certain and confident as to the direction and goal he himself was taking while living on earth. This is in keeping with what we read from Solomon's pen. *"The whole of man is to reverence God and keep His commandments"* (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

What about you, friend? How do you feel about God? Is your



heart fixed on Him? Is He the object of your spiritual affection? Are you devoted and dedicated to Him, steadfast and faithful? I hope every Christian can address God in prayer and sincerely say the same thing David did in the long ago, *"My heart is fixed, O God."*

## ***The Problem of Suffering and Evil***

**GEORGE AKPABLI**

Some of the most pressing questions of our time are, "Why do innocent people suffer? Why are babies born deformed? Why is a promising life snuffed out as it is on the rise? Why are there wars during which innocent people are killed, millions forced to flee their homes and become refugees? Why are there natural catastrophes like earthquakes and fires during which people are burned beyond recovery? Why are there accidents during which people are maimed for life?"

### **DEFINING THE ISSUE**

The problem for many Christians is this: "How can an all-powerful and loving God permit evil and suffering to exist? Why would God allow His own children to suffer from terrible diseases? Some Christians also ask, "Why do the wicked seem to prosper while the righteous suffer? Why would God allow His faithful servant to beg for food?" Some question God, "Where were You when I was suffering?"

### **SOME BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO SUFFERING**

The prophet Elijah in the house of the widow of Zarephath is one example of a Biblical reference to suffering. In 1 Kings 17:20 Elijah cried out to the LORD and said, *"O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?"* This heart-wrenching cry was made after the poor widow, who was his benefactor, had lost her only son. The prophet could not understand why.

In Judges 6:13 we have Gideon saying to the angel of God, *"O my Lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands*

*of the Midianites."*

In Job 10:1-3, Job in bitterness of soul asked God, *"Does it seem good to You that You should oppress, that You should despise the work of Your hands, and smile on the counsel of the wicked?"* In effect, God's answer to Job was, "Trust me, I know what I am doing."

As the story continued, in each of these cases, God used the problems that had come by natural means or because of sinful choices to teach important lessons and to bring the sufferer into a stronger relationship with Him.

### **THREE TYPES OF EVIL EXISTS**

To help us understand the problem of evil, we can classify evil in three ways. The first is physical pain or suffering as a consequence of floods, earthquakes, deformed babies, land slides, accidents, etc. The second is moral evil, murder, greed, strife, lying, etc. The third is eternal hell, a place of punishment for the wicked.

### **WHY DOES GOD PERMIT PAIN AND SUFFERING?**

Before we try to answer this question, some important concepts must be understood.

First of all we must realize that man's knowledge of events is limited. Job 1:6-12 is an example. Often it is difficult for us to grasp *eternal* purposes and design. Joseph was mistreated by his own brothers and suffered severely for this. The time came when he understood God's purpose and said in Genesis 45:7, *"God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."*

Secondly, the Bible also tells us in Deuteronomy 29:29, *"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."* Some things are hidden from us. There is no way we can understand them at the time they are happening. There may be no answers even in this entire lifetime. In such cases, our only recourse is to continue to walk by faith, trusting in God to keep His promises to be with us.

The third concept that we must understand is that God has not said that He will take suffering and pain out of our lives, simply because we are Christians. Sometimes we make the mistake of mentally promising ourselves protection and security, in God's name, even though He has never made such commitments. Then

when problems come, we may blame God and we may feel that He has failed us. However, He never forsakes us. Pain and suffering are a part of the existence of every living being. And, paradoxically, some of our greatest lessons of faith come through adversity. We can grow in many ways through enduring such trials. When we complain because we misunderstand some of God promises or the seemingly negative things that happen to us, we are limiting our thinking to only this physical life. We become so earthly-minded that we cannot see anything beyond this world in which we live. See James 1:2,3.

Fourthly, we often err in deciding what is good and what is evil. We associate pleasure with what is good and pain with evil. The real evil is sin, not pain or suffering.

Fifthly, our reaction to suffering may be wrong. Our evaluation of suffering and pain may not always be objective. This makes things more difficult. A proper perspective is given in Romans 8:28. *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* This tells us to look at the whole picture.

### **UNDERSTANDING GOD IS THE SOLUTION TO THE QUESTION**

To properly deal with the problem, another thing we have to understand is the nature of evil (sin) and the concept of a good God and how He works in our lives.

God operates by natural laws: Without natural laws, life on this earth would be impossible (Genesis 8:2), yet a lot of suffering is the result of natural laws in a world feeling the curse of sin (Romans 8:22): earthquakes, floods, etc. If we violate some of God's natural laws, we suffer the consequences. Fire is necessary for life, but abuse it and it causes pain. Water has the qualities needed to sustain life, but it also has the qualities to drown people. When we enjoy *the benefits* of these laws, no one complains. In Bible times, God used natural disasters to wake up Israel from their sin-slumber. Calamities should sometimes awaken us to the reality that this physical world is a very small part of God's creation, and that it is nothing in comparison to the new heaven and the new earth for which we wait.

God gave us free choice. In our modern world the word "choice" is a loaded one. The ability of man to make free choices often results in consequences of evil and suffering. So why did

God not make us so that we cannot choose to sin? Of course, He could have done so, and then there would be no suffering. But without the power of choice we would not be complete human beings, made in His image. How would you like to be married to a talking rubber doll or a big robot (James 1:13-15)?

Much of the world's suffering cannot be blamed on God but on the bad choices of multitudes of humans. Read Proverbs 14:12 and James 1:13.

### **THE BENEFITS OF SUFFERING AND PAIN**

The answer to the problem is that God never intended for this world to be man's eternal dwelling place. In order to prepare men for heaven we need an environment such as ours.

The presence of suffering produces better sons of God. How could Paul have known the power and the sufficiency of God's grace if there had been no suffering in his life (2 Corinthians 12:9)? Man would never have known ultimate good if he had not experienced suffering.

Pain and suffering here should motivate us to avoid eternal hell. **THE ONLY REAL EVIL IS TO GO TO HELL.** Our present world is just a place of trials and transition to help us learn our need for God, and to enable us to experience the love and compassion of a Father for His children (James 1:2-4). Let us live, despite the pain and the suffering, so as to go to Heaven where there will be no curse of sin, no sorrow, and no helplessness in the face of calamity.

***"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.... And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face..."*** (Revelation 21:4; 22:3,4).

## ***Keeping The Unity Of The Spirit***

**DAVID RILEY**

The words of the apostle Paul were very important and very needed for the first century church at Ephesus. They are just as important to the church today. Unless the unity of the Spirit is

maintained, the church will never fulfill its purpose for existing.

What is that purpose? Paul said that the eternal purpose for the church was to *"make known ... the manifold wisdom of God"* (Ephesians 3:10). The church is to show the manifold, multifaceted, all-encompassing wisdom of God to the world around us. As we *"walk worthy of our vocation"* (Ephesians 4:1), we accomplish this purpose. When we *"endeavor (to put forth every effort) to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace"* (Ephesians 4:3) we are truly walking *"worthy of our vocation."* The church fulfills its purpose when we show the world that we are united in peace.

There are several applications that can be made from these verses in Ephesians, but let us not forget the true context. The church at Ephesus was made up of Christians from pagan, Gentile backgrounds. Paul, in Chapter 2, reminds them of their lost condition as Gentiles before Christ's death on the cross (vs. 11-12). He reminds them of the purpose of the cross for the Gentiles (vs 13-18). The old Mosaic law was the middle wall of partition that created the division between Jews and Gentiles. By His sacrifice, Christ removed the Law and, in so doing, removed the division. The cross made it so that both the Jew and the Gentile could become one and that both might be reconciled to God in one body.

Paul then tells them that as Christians, both the Jew and Gentile are on equal standing with God (vs. 19-22). Those in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, are *"growing into a holy temple in the Lord"* (v. 21) and are built *"together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"* (v. 22). To Paul, this is the reason he is a *"prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles"* (3:1). This mystery [*"that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel"*] (3:6) was revealed to Paul so that he *"could make all men see what is the mystery of the fellowship"* (3:9) and the *"intent"* of the church (3:11).

The *"vocation"* (work or purpose) that Paul had in mind in Chapter 4:1 was the unity between the Jew and Gentile. This unity was not to be **produced** by the Ephesian congregation because the **Holy Spirit** had already produced it. However, the unity between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians was to be **kept, maintained and nurtured by the church**. Their spiritual job description was to make sure that they were *"endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (4:3).

The urging that Paul expressed to the Ephesian church is as much needed today as in the first century. We must always be "endeavoring" (putting forth every effort) to keep the unity that the Spirit has made between all Christians, no matter their national or ethnic origin—black or white, Indian or Pakistani, American or Iraqi, Japanese or Chinese, Jew or Gentile. As Christians, we are the body of Christ! This unity must supersede race, geography, economics, gender, age, and language. Because, *"there is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"* (4:4-6).

Everyone is watching—the world is watching, the church is watching, especially God is watching! Everyone is watching us! People will judge the church and God by how we treat one another. Will the church accomplish its divine and eternal purpose? Will we by *"walking worthy of our vocation"* display the *"manifold wisdom of God"* as we *"endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"*?

## **No Condemnation**

**KERRY HOLTON**

**Here is good news:** *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1). What a wonderful blessing! Those who have entered into union with Christ stand uncondemned.

What does it mean to be in a position where there is *"no condemnation"*? It means that Christians have been freed from the effect of their sins. It is sin in a person's life which condemns, condemns him to death. Condemnation, then, is the result of man's sin (Romans 5:16, 18). The entire human race was tried for sin. The verdict was read: "Guilty," it said. The sentence was condemnation.

But Jesus died for sin and condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8: 3). Through His act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men (Romans 8:3, 4). They have been spared from condemnation, for in Christ Jesus they have been set free from that which causes condemnation — the law of sin

and death (Romans 8:2). Christians stand uncondemned. They have been acquitted of their sins. The verdict has been read, and it is "Not Guilty!" Rejoice, Christian! There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ, who are not walking after the flesh but according to the Spirit!

My sin—O the bliss of this glorious thought—  
My sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the  
Cross and I bear it no more; Praise the Lord,  
Praise the Lord, O my soul."

## *Jesus: Head Of The Church, Or Figurehead?*

ROYCE FREDERICK

Queen Elizabeth II recently celebrated her 50th year as Queen of England! She is highly honored and loved. However, elected officials actually govern the nation.

Jesus "... *is the head of the body, the church ...*" (Colossians 1:18). But some men want to take control — and give the church a "head transplant"! They are "... *not holding fast (firmly) to the Head...*" (Colossians 2:19).

Is Jesus truly Head over the church where you attend, or merely a "figurehead"? If we praise Him in sermons and songs, does that make the church truly His church? He asks, "*But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?*" (Luke 6:46).

Many sermons are aimed at helping us follow Jesus as Lord of our life. We need those. But our life includes our participation in the local church. By our giving, labours, and attendance, we endorse and support the local church. If you or I see the church departing from the will of Christ, we must speak up — in kindness — and help correct the wrongs. (See 1 Corinthians 12:12, 26,27; 2 John 9-11; Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; Ephesians 5:11).

**Our Head tells His church how to behave.** Jesus said "... *love one another. ...By this all will know that you are My disciples ...*" and He prayed, "*that they all may be one ... that the world may believe that You sent Me*" (John 13:34,35; 17:21). Division and strife dishonor our Head. When we cling to God's will and each

other, many more will come to Christ.

**Our Head tells His church what to teach.** There are two choices: (1) walk by opinion, following men's teachings, treating Jesus as a figurehead, OR (2) walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), following God's written word, for *"faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17), thus honoring Jesus as Head.

**Our Head tells His church what to call itself.** What religious name do you wear? What is the church called where you attend? Can you find those names given to the Lord's people in the New Testament? Christ gave one name to His people: "Christian" (1 Peter 4:16). He did not give a name to the church, but uses terms such as "body", "temple", "church of God", and "churches of Christ" — and often includes the location (Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 3:16; Romans 16:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:1), God owns everything, but gave all authority to Christ (Matthew 28:18). So, the church primarily belongs to Christ. Why name the church after Paul, John, any other man, any doctrine, or a feast day (1 Corinthians 1:10-13)? Christ died for the church, built it, and owns it (Acts 20:28; Matthew 16:18). He is its "head" and should have "preeminence" in all things (Colossians 1:18), including what we call His church.

**Our Head tells His church how to worship.** His word instructs us to partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, sing, pray, give, and listen to His word (Acts 20:7; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 14:15,16; 16:1,2). If we added incense, musical instruments, candles in front of images, or bananas in the Lord's Supper, we would not be following our Head, because His word does not tell us to worship in those ways.

**Our Head tells His church how to organize.** To lead the local church and its work, the Lord's plan is that we have *"elders in every church"* (Acts 14:23; see Titus 1:5). The New Testament also calls them "bishops" (overseers) and "pastors" (shepherds). And we should select "deacons" to help with special labors (see Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). Every time the New Testament mentions a church and its elders, at least two elders are leading the church. But many churches have departed from the Lord's plan, omitting the elders. Some are overseen by one man, others by a "board" of men, and some by men in distant places.

Will you honor Christ as Head by obeying His will in your daily life and in His church?



# **You Can Be Just A Christian**

WOODROW YATES

Has it occurred to you that you can be **just a Christian** — nothing more nor less than a plain Christian? Yes, even in the midst of the religious confusion of our creed-bound, denomination-divided age, it is possible for you to be **just a Christian!**

Being just a Christian means trusting and obeying Jesus Christ, just as Paul and Philip and the early Christians did in the first century after Christ. It means going back beyond all the distinctive Catholic and Protestant teachings and doctrines of today to find Christ just as He is revealed in the inspired New Testament?

You see, there were no different denominations in the beginning of Christianity. The early disciples were all of one body. They were called simply "*Christians*" (Acts 11:26). They did not follow different creeds, but were guided by "*the faith once for all delivered to the saints*" (Jude 3). The New Testament, first as the spoken Word, and later as written down by "*holy men of God*" as they were guided by the Holy Spirit, was their only rule of faith and practice (2 Peter 1:21). We have this same New Testament today and can reproduce the same pure Christianity which flourished in the first century after Christ.

Jesus built only one church, and God added everyone who obeyed the Gospel of Christ to this non-denominational church, the body of Christ (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47). The Bible teaches that you will be added to this same body today when you believe in Jesus Christ as God's Son, repent your sins (John 8:24; Luke 13: 3), and confess Christ as the Son of God before men (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9-10), and are baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; Matthew 28:19; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-5).

Why not become a Christian, according to these simple guidelines of the New Testament, and worship and work in the non-denominational church of Christ in your community?

# Choosing Religion

G.F. RAINES

Many sincere people have been caused by false teaching to believe that a person should choose a religion on the basis of convenience and preference, like a housewife selects a loaf of bread, or a bar of soap. Many members of denominational churches admit that they selected church only-because of its size, its popularity, or its nearness to their residence.

Many people who would eagerly go a long distance to see some entertainment would not travel one mile to scripturally worship God, although Jesus says, *"God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24).

Jesus did not build a multiplicity of churches so that people could find a church corresponding with their own preference. This is what the Lord Himself said: *"... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). The apostle Paul says: *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:18).

*"But now are they many members, yet but one body"* (1 Corinthians 12:20).

I earnestly urge you to diligently study your Bible, especially Acts of Apostles and the epistles of Paul, Peter, John, James, and Jude, and then adamantly refuse to embrace any religion except the nondenominational Christianity which is plainly described therein; because, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

The Book of God, by which all men will be judged in the last day (Revelation 20:11-15), clearly says: *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12).

Let us never forget that our Lord Jesus Christ declared that *"Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up"* (Matthew 15:13).

# *Enlist Now!*

GORDON HOGAN

God calls men and women to enlist in a spiritual army, with His Son as commander-in-chief. This army, the church of Christ, does not kill or destroy, but rather brings to willing, faithful soldiers happiness, fulfilment, constructive service, and life everlasting.

Enlistment comes first! Because the enemy, Satan, is constantly seeking whom he may devour and destroy, enlistment is urgent! The terms of enlistment require that the recruit must believe that his commander-in-chief, Jesus, is the Son of God, and trust Him fully (John 5:24; 6:29; 8:24). He must make a declaration and acknowledgement of Jesus with his mouth (Romans 10:9-10). He must turn to God in repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3). He must be baptized (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Galatians 3:26-27).

Soldiers of Christ have a terrible, wicked enemy in Satan. Therefore, Christ's men and women must be trained and equipped for the defense of righteousness.

The formula is set forth by the Apostle Paul as follows:

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins gird about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication for all saints... (Ephesians 6:10-18).*

Every member of the Lord's army is to be on active duty, always ready for service.

# *Submission and Humility*

*1 Peter 5:5-7, James 4:6-10*

THOMAS DOHLING

In his exhortation to the scattered Christians, Peter the apostle says: "Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" [1 Peter 5:5].

He exhorts all Christians to be submissive to one another and clothed in humility. The idea here is to wrap ourselves in humility because "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Jesus Himself said: "And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:12).

If we are to receive God's grace, we have to be humble. The world may scoff at these virtues—submissiveness and humility—and term them as weakness. However, these are the very virtues that Christ Jesus Himself displayed while on earth as He Himself says: "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

We are to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand and cast all our cares upon Him. It has to be a total abandonment. We have to be content in the fact that He cares for us and will exalt us in due time (1 Peter 5:6, 7). Until such time, we are promised of receiving God's grace to bear our afflictions.

Peter further alerts the suffering Christians to the wiles of the devil and how he walks about like "a roaring lion" seeking someone to devour. Therefore he calls upon them to be sober, vigilant (very alert), and to remain steadfast in the faith.

James echoes the same message in James 4:6-10.

Submit to God so that He may be more gracious towards you.

Resist the devil and he will flee from you. If not resisted and hurled back, he presses the attack.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. If we wish God very near to us we must seek to dwell very near to Him. Only sin keeps us afar off. Cleanse your hands of evil doing. Purify your hearts of evil thoughts. Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. Mourn over

your sins and sincerely repent of them. Then you will be able to draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

We require these virtues—gentleness and humility (involves submission)—in greater measure with love as our motive in order to enjoy greater degrees of God's grace.

## *If You Stay Where You Are*

DAVID ROPER

The story is told of a man who fell into an empty well. Another man, passing by, heard him calling for help and located a rope and began to try to rescue him. But the man in the well was afraid and asked, "What if the rope breaks?" The rescuer earnestly replied, **"What happens if you stay where you are?"**

Spiritually speaking, this question needs to reach the hearts of those who have not obeyed the Gospel. Sure, there are uncertainties in living the Christian life, but **"What happens if you stay where you are?"**

At the present time, you are "dead in sins and trespasses" (Ephesians 2:11). In this state, you are *"without Christ, without God, and without hope"* (Ephesians 2:12). You are lost! What happens if you stay where you are? You will lose your soul forever (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

We urge you, with compassion in our hearts, to trust and obey!

*They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles. Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . Save yourselves from this untoward generation (Acts 2:37,38,40).*

Those of us in Christ can also profit from the question, "What happens if you stay where you are?" Peter stated the truth that we must *"grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18). **But what if we stay where we are?** What if we do not grow in Bible study and prayer? What if we are not becoming more faithful in our attendance in worship and in serving the Lord? We can become unfaithful and be lost (2 Peter 1:3,9)!

# Signs on the Road of Life

OWEN COSGROVE

Can we imagine what traveling would be like without road signs to help us along the way? The way to life as described in the Bible has many road signs that we need to understand and heed.

**Obey All Traffic Signs — State Law.** God does not make laws for us to pick and choose and obey selectively. To break one is to be guilty of all of them. Obey the Lord's commandments. This is *Heaven's law*.

**Stop.** Those who run the spiritual stop signs of life risk hurting themselves and others. When the Lord says stop, we'd better not run the stop signs. Even when we are tempted to do wrong, **stop!** "Stop" does not mean slow down. It means **stop**.

**Slow.** We get too impatient in life. Watch your speed. You will make wiser decisions and improve your chance of survival if you just slow down when time and circumstances call for it.

**Do Not Enter.** There are some areas of life where Christians must not be. Do not even start into these areas. Leave them alone.

**Wrong Way.** This sign means that you are headed toward a deadly encounter if you do not make some changes quickly.

**Turn Back.** If you are going the wrong way, turn back before it is too late.

**Keep Right.** The twenty-one epistles of the New Testament were written to Christians, urging them to be faithful to Christ. *Get right* by obeying the Gospel, and *keep right* by being faithful in Christ's service.

**One Way.** There is one way that leads to life eternal, and it is not a two-way street. Wise travelers get in that way and go with the flow that leads to Heaven. As the song says, "No turning back, no turning back."

**Yield.** The Christian learns to yield. First, he yields to God because God has the right of way. Then he learns to yield to others in matters of judgment so that the church can work together as a mighty team. We can all have our say, but we cannot all have our way.

People who do not learn to yield cause many fender benders

and smash-ups in life. We will still arrive at our destination in plenty of time, and our trip will be much more pleasant for us and others, when we learn to yield.

Yes, life has many traffic signs. Good Christians, like good drivers, respect and obey the rules.

## ***"Whose Heart the Lord Opened"***

**GLENN COLLEY**

There is an interesting clause tucked away in Acts 16:14 having to do with Lydia's conversion: *"...whose heart the Lord opened."*

Sometimes through our lives we have the pleasant experience of seeing a hard heart softened. Here is a miserly man of considerable wealth who never cares about anyone but himself and his money. He falls very ill and contemplates the way his life has been spent and then vows to himself and to the Lord that if his health should return, he will seek out and help those in need. His heart has been opened.

Picture a farmer, a simple, quiet man of brawny physique and calloused hands, a man used to hard living, as the nurse gently lays his newborn baby girl into those big hands. His heart melts.

The entire verse in Acts 16 says, *"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized..."*

How did the Lord open Lydia's heart? The very same way He opens hearts today; with the teaching of His Word. The good news of forgiveness and security and genuine hope for heaven goes deeply into the souls of people who will listen. That is what is meant by the Hebrews writer who said, *"For 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 a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Hebrews 4:12).

Have you let the Lord open your heart to His wonderful truth and to the joy of serving Him?

# *Work That Lasts For Eternity*

JACK HARRIMAN

In the early days of World War II, Winston Churchill called Britain's coal miners together. A great crisis had arisen. The miners were not getting out enough coal to fuel the factories that produced the planes, ships, etc., so desperately needed.

When the Prime Minister arose he said, "I want to give it to you straight — nothing! Two hundred guns, no more! Twenty tanks, that's all! I heard he (Hitler) was coming with a million men, and I said to myself, 'The British Navy will put five hundred thousand of them to the bottom of the channel, but what will we do with half a million of them ashore?'"

For an hour and forty minutes he outlined the desperate situation confronting Britain. Then in stirring language he said, "When at last it is all over, we'll parade these streets again and as you go by people will call out, 'And where were you?' Someone will answer, 'I marched with the Eighth Army,' and someone else will say, 'I was in the skies over Britain.' Another will reply, 'I was in the Merchant Marines pushing the ships through the sea up to Archangel.' Then I shall be standing there and I will call out, 'Where were you?' I will hear you answer, 'We were down in the black pits right up against the face of the coal.'"

Then, thousands of coal miners arose and with tears streaming down their faces, cheered the Prime Minister, and the coal came out! They had caught a fresh vision of the importance of their work.

When at last it is all over for us, we will parade the streets of Heaven. And it may be that someone will call out, "And where were you?" Many impressive answers may be given, but none more satisfying than to say, "I was in \_\_\_\_\_ teaching the Gospel of Christ."

*"And let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9).*

