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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

"And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."

Do not be surprised to know that according to the Bible all the followers of Christ were called Christians. At least in three different passages of the New Testament the name Christian is emphasized upon (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). Those Christians in the beginning wouldn't know about Catholics or Protestants or the Evangelicals, because none existed then. After building His church, as Christ had promised, (Matt. 16:18), Christ added all those who were saved by obeying His command (Mark 16:16), to His one church (Acts 2:47). The Bible identifies the church as "His body." (Eph. 1:22,23), and further says that there is "one body." (Eph. 4:4). According to Romans 16:16 all the congregations of that one church of the Lord were known as "churches of Christ." There existed no denominational or sectarian churches, as they do today, of different brands and names. In one instance, in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, we observe, when there were some who were trying to cause division amongst the followers of Christ by calling themselves by different names, they were sharply rebuked by an apostle of Christ, who asked them: "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" In light of this, how sad it is to see today that those who claim to follow Christ are divided in several hundred denominations and sects. And how wonderful would it be if all those who claim to follow Christ today accept the Bible's name

Christian, forgetting and leaving behind all other denominational and sectarian names! Do you know that Christ was so concerned about the unity of all His followers that just a few hours before His death on the cross, he had prayed to the Father in heaven in these words: "I do not pray for these alone," He said, speaking of the disciples who were with Him at that time, "but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (John 17:20,21). Evidently, Christ was apprehensive of the forthcoming division amongst those who would believe in Him.

The greatest need of the hour is for all believers in Christ to come together as one people by accepting Bible as the inspired word of God and the authority of Christ in all spiritual matters (2 Timothy 3:16,17; Matthew 28:18). All who claim to follow Christ need to heed the unity call of Ephesians 4:1-6, where the inspired writer said, "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were 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." The fact of the matter is that the unity of all the believers in Christ is achievable, if it was not so, Christ wouldn't have prayed for such. Today, as it was in the beginning, it is possible for all those who believe in Christ to simply be Christians in His one church; if all believer come forward to obey what the Bible teaches. There is no other way.

Why Good Moral Living Alone Is Not Enough To Save

J.C. CHOATE

Whether you realize it or not, probably most people will be lost because they are trying to be saved on the basis of their own goodness. This reminds us of a young man that came to Jesus

seeking eternal life. We read, "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." (Matthew 19: 16-22).

The foregoing story took place in an Old Testament setting. In other words, the law was still binding at that time, and therefore Jesus answered this man according to what the law said. In hearing Jesus explain that if he wanted to have eternal life, that he should keep the commandments, having reference to the ten commandments, then he responded by saying that he had kept those from his youth up. As we would think of it, in keeping those commandments, then he was certainly a good moral man. Or another way of putting it, he was not a wicked or evil man by any means. It would appear that he thought that he was good enough to go to heaven, but he merely wanted to have the Lord's approval. But in this case, that was not enough. Jesus could look into his heart and life and see that there was a hindrance. It seems that he was a wealthy young man, and therefore, he was putting his trust in his riches. Jesus therefore told him that he should go and sell all that he had, and give it to the poor. Then we have a sad statement. It says that when he heard that, that he went away sorrowful, because he had great riches. Good moral living then, is not enough to save one.

We have a good example of this in the story of Cornelius and his household. Cornelius was a Gentile. He was a man who held a responsible position in the army, that is, he was a centurian. The record also says that he was "A devout man, and one that feared God with all of his house, which gave alms to the people, and prayed to God always." (Acts 10: 2). Yet, he was a lost man.

Through the Lord's intervention, Cornelius and his household and Peter and his brethren were brought together. At this point then, Peter preached to them and the record says that the Holy Spirit was poured out on them to convince the Jews that the gospel was for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. Then Peter asked, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days." (Acts 10: 47, 48). Now if you will take note again of the kind of life Cornelius was living, then you will see that any person even today, who can say that he is a devout man, one that fears God with all of his family, and one who gives to the poor, and prays always, would be classified as being a pretty good person. Yet, Cornelius was a lost man. Therefore, it was necessary for him to hear the gospel, to believe it, and to obey it that he might be saved, and be added to the Lord's church. Had he refused to do so then he would have remained lost in spite of all of the good things that he was doing.

It is true that one must live a good moral life to be saved. That simply means that one must refrain from doing those things that are bad and wrong. It further means that one cannot do the works of the flesh, or the things of this world. Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6: 9, 10). Speaking to the brethren at Corinth concerning their fellowship with the worldly, Paul said, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to keep company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must we needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one no not to eat" (1 Corinthians 5:9-11). Here Paul is saying that it is not possible to go through this life without having to deal with worldly people, but when it comes to an unfaithful brother in Christ, one who is living an ungodly life, then we should not fellowship such a person.

Paul goes on to say to the Galatian brethren, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, hersies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5: 19-21). Paul is saying in these various scriptures that one cannot indulge in these sinful activities and enter the kingdom of God or the Lord's church. Neither as Christians can one engage in such sinful acts and please God. While one cannot be saved solely on the basis that he doesn't do such things, but still to be the kind of Christian that the Lord wants one to be, then he must abstain from the very appearance of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5: 22).

Some people have the erroneous idea that the Christian is allowed more moral freedom than those in other religions. They think that the Christian can smoke, drink intoxicating beverage, engage in immoral practices, use bad language, dress immodestly, etc. Of course those who know what the Bible teaches, and what it means to be a Christian, then they know that this is not so. It is true that there are some who claim to be Christians who engage in these and other practices, but in doing so they are displeasing to God. Unless they repent then they will be lost.

For one to be saved, and to be a Christian, then he must not only believe in God, and in Christ as the Son of God, he must also repent of all of his sins or turn away from them, and then he must acknowledge or confess Christ as the Son of God, finally to be baptized to wash away his sins. It is only when one does that that the Lord is willing to save him and to add him to his church. Then as a Christian he must be faithful to the Lord unto death if he is to receive the crown of life. We read all of this over and over again in the scriptures. (Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 38; Matthew 10: 32; Acts 2: 47; Revelation 2: 10).

Now one can be a good moral person, believe that he is saved on the basis of his good living, but as with the wicked, he must obey the Lord if he is to be saved. His goodness alone will not save him. Doing the works of one's own righteousness will not save him. (Ephesians 2: 8,9; Titus 3: 5). Where one is

depending on his own goodness to save him, then he must repent of that sin. Paul tells us that all have sinned. (Romans 3: 23). Therefore we read that the Lord came to seek and to save that which is lost. (Luke 19: 10). No, Christ did not die because man was already saved, but because man was lost and needed to be saved. Paul said that Christ died for our sins. (1 Corinthians 15: 1-4). Peter said, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." (1 Peter 3: 18).

My friend, are you saved? If so, how were you saved? Are you one of those who is trying to go to heaven by living a good moral life? Are you putting your trust in yourself, in worldly riches, in some man, in some man-made system, or in something else of this world? Then you are trying to go to heaven through your own devisings. If so, you need to realize that you cannot do this. No one can save but Christ. When you obey him, and live a pure and godly life unto death, then he not only has promised to save you, but to give you a home in heaven. That is what the Bible and Christianity is all about.

In the long ago, the prophet of God laid down a principle that was true then, and it is true today. He said, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 10: 23). It takes humility to admit that, but one is wise when he so does.

Again, regardless of who you are, the kind of life you are living, whether good or bad, I would like to urge you to obey God that you might be saved. Only then, can you be saved (Mark 16: 16) and only then will Christ add you to his church. (Acts 2: 47).

Christianity Requires Change

BYRON NICHOLS

It is a widely-accepted fact that there are a great many changes taking place today in what is generally referred to as "Christianity". The call for significant changes of various kinds is being heard in the midst of all varieties of church groups, from

those commonly regarded as the very conservative to those which are acknowledged as being among the very most liberal, as well as those in between those opposite poles. Even some congregations among churches of Christ are involving themselves in some exceedingly divisive matters relative to beliefs and practices which up until very recent years were practically unheard of within the brotherhood.

In suggesting by the above title that Christianity requires change, it is not at all meant to imply or affirm that there should be any change made that would be in conflict with the Scriptures—not at all. The church is not *our church*. We are not the head of the church. We have not been given any authority over matters of doctrine. If we believe the Bible, we have to accept the principle that we as Christians are not in a position to change anything that is found in the Bible. We are not masters—we are only servants. Our responsibility is the same that Jesus identified for Himself when He said that He came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him (the Father) who sent Him (John 6:38). Even in the midst of His awful turmoil and agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus stared brutality and death right in the eye and prayed to the Father, “...nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). As disciples of Christ, we are called upon to also make these sentiments our own. Thus, we are not in a position to do things to suit ourselves, but rather to do things to suit Him! Our task is to please, not to be pleased!

In spite of all these introductory observations, it still remains a biblical fact that becoming and living like a Christian absolutely **requires** change on our part, a lot of change. We **must** change extensively in order to qualify as one of His faithful.

Notice the fact that drastic change on the part of Christ's followers was required from the very beginning of the church. When Peter preached his convicting sermon in Acts 2, many of the hearers were made to feel their guilt, and they wanted desperately to be made free from their sins. In response, Peter informed them in no uncertain terms that they must make changes that would completely change their lives—the first thing that he told them was that it was necessary that they **repent** (verse 38). This meant that they had to be much more than merely sorry for what they had done; they had to do an about-face, changing to complying with the will of God rather than doing their own will.

Verse 41 shows us that approximately 3,000 of those folks developed a severe conscience problem, to the extent that they made the commitment to make major changes in their manner of life. They were willing to change (repent) and be baptized, as Peter commanded. The true Christian of any day and time was/is one in acceptance of the fact that being a Christian is a momentous decision, one resulting in putting behind the old way of life and taking on a new set of standards for thinking and behaving.

Of course, from the very beginning of the church there have been some who found that their commitment to Christ called for much greater change than was needed in the lives of some others. For example, in 1 Corinthians 6 Paul was dealing with some Christians at Corinth who were in need of making some important additional changes in their lives. They had started the Christian walk, but the apostle discovered that they had not fully comprehended the principle of repentance—he could see the presence of major problems in their thinking and actions. However, to the credit of some of them, Paul says that though they had previously been what most of us would readily classify as “gross sinners”, they had successfully undergone the initial changes required in becoming a follower of Jesus. They had come a long way, but they still had a long way to go in making the continuing necessary changes that would result in their spiritual maturity in Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

True Christianity makes people willing to make the needed kinds of changes. It makes truthful folks out of liars; it transforms the lazy into industrious workers; it changes the aimless into people of purpose, etc., etc.

May we all be or become people of the right kind of change, ever changing into more and more the kind of servant that our Master expects and will honor one day.

We Need to Know God

SHAN JACKSON

When Paul traveled to Athens he went there with one purpose—to bring salvation to the Grecian world. There he encountered certain philosophers who found delight in hearing

new things from all over the world (Acts 17). They knew much, but they did not know God. It was not that they did not have the ability to know God, but that they had failed to begin their search for Him. In their attempt to know all the deities of the world, they failed to find the one and true Deity of all eternity. They knew much—but they did not know God.

There are people today who also know much. However, the world, by its own wisdom, will never know God (1 Corinthians 1:21). Therefore, God has supplied us with His Bible to support us in our quest to find Him and a knowledge of His will. There is no way of knowing Him without it.

Many today are just as ignorant of God as were the philosophers of Mars' Hill. And so the remedy for our ignorance is just the same as theirs. We need to be converted, to turn to the Lord of lords (Acts 3:19). We need to know much—we need to know God.

You see, none of us knows how to find salvation except through the Bible (Romans 10:17). Our feelings, emotions, and thought processes are most deceptive. As Jeremiah said, *"The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man to direct his own steps"* (Jeremiah 10:23). We simply cannot risk the salvation of our souls by blind acceptance of man's teaching (Matthew 15:9). We must know God. We must know that the Lord has spoken. Remember, heaven and earth will pass away, but not His words (Matthew 24:35). We must know much—we must know God.

When this old world is wrapped in flames, the words of the Lord will survive. When death and decay have their names scratched and scarred on everything else, His words will remain. Above everything else they demand our careful and prayerful attention. They are the light and lamp by which we are guided (Psalm 119:105). They are the source of our spiritual understanding (verse 104). We must know God.

There Was A Man

JAMES ALLAN FRANCIS

"More than nineteen hundred years ago there was a Man born contrary to the laws of life. This Man lived in poverty and

was reared in obscurity. He did not travel extensively. Only once did He cross the boundary of the country in which he was born, and that was during His exile in childhood.

"This Man possessed neither wealth nor influence. His relatives were inconspicuous, they were not influential, and they had neither training nor education. In infancy He startled a king; in childhood He puzzled the doctors; in manhood He ruled the course of nature, walked upon billows as if pavements, and hushed the sea to sleep. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His service. He never wrote a book, yet all the libraries of the world could not hold the books that have been written about Him.

"This Man never wrote a song, and yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all other subjects combined. He never founded a college, but all the schools put together cannot boast of having as many students. He never practiced medicine, and yet He has healed more broken hearts than all the doctors far and near. He never marshaled an army, nor drafted a soldier, nor fired a gun, and yet no leader ever had more volunteers who have, under His orders, made more rebels stack arms and surrender without a shot being fired.

"The names of the past proud statesmen of Greece and Rome have come and gone, but the name of this Man abounds more and more. Though time has spread almost two thousand years between the people of this generation and the scene of His crucifixion, HE STILL LIVES! Herod could not KILL Him, Satan could not SEDUCE Him, death could not DESTROY Him, and the grave could not HOLD Him!

"This Man stands forth upon the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory, proclaimed of God, acknowledged by angels, adored by saints, feared by demons, as the living, personal Christ, our Lord and Savior."

"Truly this Man (JESUS) was—and IS—the Son of God!"

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to

die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us " (Romans 5:6-8).

Christ died on the cross for our sins, and His blood will cover us if we will believe and trust Him (Acts 16:31), repent of our sins (Acts 17:30-31), confess His deity before others (Romans 10:9,10), be baptized (immersed) in His name, and follow Him for the rest of our lives (1 John 1:7).

There was a Man—He IS Savior and Lord. Without Him we have no hope, but through Him we have the promise of forgiveness and eternal life. Will YOU trust and obey Him?

The Resurrection of Christ

STANLEY E. SAYERS

From Patmos Isle we hear these words spoken by the resurrected, glorified Lord to the beloved disciple, John, *"Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death"* (Revelation 1:17,18).

Having risen from the dead, possessing the keys of death and Hades, what is the further meaning of Christ's supernatural resurrection?

#1. Satan has been defeated. In Genesis 3:15 we have the prophecy of the serpent's bruising the heel of the seed of woman (Christ), and Christ crushing the head of the serpent. We read in the Hebrew epistle that Christ took *"part of the same"*, became flesh and blood that He might destroy the one who had the power of death, Satan, and deliver those who through the fear of death were all their lifetime *"subject to bondage"* (Hebrews 2:14). The Son of God was manifested to destroy *"the works of the devil"* (1 John 1:8).

#2. Death has given way to the resurrection from the dead. We are told in John 5:28,29 that all that are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son of God and arise. At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus declared that He Himself was the resurrection and the life (John 11:25,26). Then He raised Lazarus to prove it. 1 Corinthians 15:15,20-28, is the replete account of Christ in His

own resurrection, and ours to come. Death has been conquered and the captives set free.

#3. Baptism is graced with meaning. Romans 6:3,4 is pure gold. We die to sin in repentance, and we bury the past life of sin in the water of baptism. In the likeness of Christ's death, we are buried with Him in death: our eyes are closed and one displays all the characteristics of being physically dead, but for the beating of his heart. Arising from the liquid grave, the first breath one takes is in the Kingdom of God! Dead to the world of folly and sin, alive to righteousness in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior (Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:1-10 et al.).

One has died to sin in repentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30), and buried the past life of sin in the grave of baptism. Baptism is immersion, and neither the original Greek nor English translations will render it as sprinkling or pouring.

One rises from the waters of cleansing (Acts 16:22), and pledges complete obedience to Christ, his Lord and Master, becoming a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:1-11), born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5; 1 Corinthians 12:13). His name is now written in the Book of Life (Acts 2:41,47; Hebrews 12:23; Philippians 4:3b; Revelation 20:15).

In water baptism, the precious Holy Spirit take up residence in the new convert's heart (Acts 2:38,39; 1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 6:19,20), where the Father and the Son both make their abode through the Spirit (John 14:21-23; Ephesians 2:22). Joy *"unspeakable and full of glory"* are the experience of being born anew (1 Peter 1:8,9); *"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation"* (Isaiah 12:3). *"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring"* (Isaiah 44:3). What a joy to find Jesus and keep His commandments! (John 14:21ff; Revelation 14:13)!

#4. The power of God is manifest. *"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"* (Romans 1:4).

#5. Life takes on genuine meaning.

(A) Jesus said, *"Because I live, ye shall live also"* (John 14:19).

- (B) *"He that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live" (John 11:25).*
- (C) *"Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day" (John 6:54).*
- (D) *"He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6:56).*
- (E) *"As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father. so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:57).*
- (F) *"This is the bread which came down from heaven, as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever" (John 6:58).*
- (G) *"I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).*
- (H) *"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).*
- (I) *"It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45).*

#6. A personal nearness to God otherwise unobtainable.

- (A) Sin separated us from God (Isaiah 59:1,2).
- (B) *"The enmity" (Ephesians 2:15,16). He has abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments in ordinances (the law of Moses), and has made in Himself of two one new man, thereby making peace, and reconciling both unto God "in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."*

#7. He wants to bless our lives. *"But unto everyone of us is given grace according to the gift of Christ" (Ephesians 4:7). Ascending up on high, he "led captivity captive" and gave gifts to men. Having ascended, what is it but that He first descended (the tomb), and has ascended up "far above all heavens, that he might fill all things" (v. 10).*

#8. Risen and ascended; He is coming again! *"And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12). John concludes, "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).*

What does the resurrection of Christ mean to you? It means all the foregoing to me and far, far more. God hasten the day when incomprehensible glory shall burst in the skies and our precious Lord and Savior shall come with an innumerable company of angels, to gather His people to that eternal inheritance with Him!

Affinity With Sin

FRANK CHESSER

"Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab" (2 Chronicles 18:1). Ahab was the seventh and one of the most wicked kings of Israel. Incited by Jezebel, he drove Israel to such depths of sin that even the mighty confrontation on Mt. Carmel was unable to shake loose its deep roots in idolatry. Of him the record states, *"Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him"* (1 Kings 16:33).

Jehoshaphat was the fourth and one of the most righteous kings of Judah. He sought after the Lord and walked in His commandments. He commissioned princes, priests and Levites to go throughout Judah and teach the people the law of the Lord (2 Chronicles 17). However, he made a costly mistake when he allied himself with Ahab. Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab was sealed by the marriage of Jehoram his son, to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Though difficult to envision, the son of one of the most righteous kings of Judah became the son-in-law of one of the most infamous couples in the history of mankind. Note the tragic consequences of Jehoshaphat's affinity with Ahab:

COMMITMENT TO WAR

Having been wined and dined in ostentatious fashion, Jehoshaphat did not hesitate to join Ahab in battle against Syria. This decision almost cost him his life. As the enemy compassed about him, *"Jehoshaphat cried out and the Lord helped him, and God moved them to depart from him"* (2 Chronicles 18:31). Only by divine intervention was Jehoshaphat spared an untimely death. God's mercy saved Lot from the brimstone of Sodom, and that

same trait of Deity rescued Jehoshaphat from the sword of Syria.

Kinship with sin always means war. It creates war in the heart, making it *"like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt"* (Isaiah 57:20). It produces war in the home, for *"unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it"* (Psalm 127:1). It yields war in the church as it foment *"envying and strife and divisions"* among brethren (1 Corinthians 3:3). It is the basis of war among nations. Thus David prayed, *"Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man; Which imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war"* (Psalm 140:1-2).

HEARKENED TO FALSE PROPHETS INSTEAD OF GOD

Having devoted little thought to the matter, Jehoshaphat agreed to join Ahab in battle. Desiring to calm his fears over his decision, Ahab sought to pacify him with four hundred false prophets who encouraged them to go against Syria with God's blessings. Yet unsatisfied, Jehoshaphat asked, *"Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him?"* Reluctantly, Ahab sent for Micaiah, who foretold Ahab's death and Israel's defeat should they proceed with their plans. Rejecting the word of God, Jehoshaphat hearkened to a lying spirit and suffered the wrath of the Lord.

HIS FAMILY AND JUDAH SUFFERED SEVERELY

At Jehoshaphat's death the royal scepter fell to Jehoram. Inspiration declares that the influence of Athaliah played a major role in his extreme wickedness. He commenced his reign by killing his six brothers and various princes in Israel. He permeated Judah with idolatry and "compelled" the people to commit fornication. Divine judgment brought suffering to Judah and death to Jehoram and all of his sons except for Ahaziah. At Jehoram's death, Ahaziah took the throne and continued the wicked ways of his father. When he was slain, Athaliah usurped the throne and gave the southern kingdom its own "Jezebel." She inaugurated her reign in blood by murdering all potential heirs to the throne, including her own grandchildren, and set out to make Baal the national god of Judah.

Therefore, as a result of Jehoshaphat's affinity with Ahab, his ruling son killed all of his other sons; his daughter-in-law

murdered his great-grandchildren and others; his ruling son and grandson were so corrupt that both were destroyed by the hand of divine judgment; and for fifteen years Judah suffered inconceivable spiritual damage under his son, grandson, and daughter-in-law. Such are the inevitable results when man forms an "affinity with sin."

Overcoming Temptation

T. PIERCE BROWN

One of the most beautiful stories illustrating the mind of Christ is His experience in overcoming temptations on the mountain with the Devil. How can I develop a Christ-like mind and be able to do likewise?

First, there must be a deliberate choice to be led by and filled with the Spirit. This simply means that when one finds a command or desire of God in any area, no matter what his conscious desire or preference is, he deliberately chooses, as Christ did, "*Not MY will, but THINE be done*" (Luke 22:42). Of course, this means that the principles herein mentioned do not apply to one who is not a Christian.

Second, we must notice 1 Corinthians 10:13, "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*" But how does one accept and appropriate that promise?

As a foundation principle, he has to be aware of the promise and have it in his conscious and subconscious mind to be able to rely on it. It is also important to be "*filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18, 19) by letting "the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16). That word "richly" suggests a deep and broad familiarity with the Word, and a constant practice of its contents. When you are familiar enough with the Scriptures, you will discover that there is no temptation that can come to you that a Scripture does not fit. If you are consciously relying on God's promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13, the Devil will simply not have

enough power to overcome you.

This is the specific way you *"Resist the devil and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7). You have noted that Jesus quoted Scripture to the Devil when He was tempted, but you may not have been aware that the principle of *"letting the word of Christ dwell in you richly"* will give you the same kind of power. You will simply be *"strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man"* (Ephesians 3:16) so that you will not fall.

"... Not To Be High-Minded..."

DON L. NORWOOD

Christians are warned in the New Testament not to be "high-minded," trusting in material wealth and feeling puffed up with self-importance. The expression "high-minded" used in the text under consideration can also be translated "proud" or "puffed up."

This same attitude keeps a person from being humble before God and man. It keeps him from being willing to confess wrong and to repent when he needs to. It also keeps one from seeking and granting forgiveness.

We humans, even though we may be genuine Christians, will always need God's mercy and forgiveness (Romans 3:23). And God has made it very clear to us in His Word that He will only forgive us if we sincerely forgive others from our hearts (Mark 11:25, 26; Matthew 6:14, 15).

Jesus made it clear in His parable in Matthew 18:23-35 that if we do not forgive each other, we will not be forgiven by the Lord. Moreover, we will live eternally lost and paying the debt.

The "pride of life" is a worldly attitude and is not what the Father would have us display in order to keep a right relationship with Him (1 John 2:15-17). It is one of the things that we must put away if we are to inherit eternal life with God.

Jesus' parable about the wayward (or prodigal) son (Luke 15:10-32) points out to us the great need for humility, complete honesty with ourselves, and the willingness to admit wrongdoing, and then to sincerely repent. Also, He teaches the necessity of openly confessing the wrong that one has done. The father was

eager to forgive and to receive him happily back in the home and family when he (the father) saw that the son had really repented. This shows us that God is ready and willing to forgive when we humbly repent and confess the wrong. This kind of humble attitude will always make it easier for us to forgive and to be forgiven.

When Do Our Sacrifices Actually Count?

GARELL L. FOREHAND

Our God has always required sacrificial service from mankind. From the time of Abel, sacrifice has been uniformly set before us as the God-appointed way that we approach our Creator.

Of course, sacrifices from sinful people have ever been the means whereby appropriation of the one great sacrifice becomes possible. If a sacrificial offering is accepted by God, it is clearly because of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. *"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure . . . Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.' He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Hebrews 10:4-6, 9, 10).*

In response to that single effectual sacrifice, man has been called upon to offer the God-ordained sacrifices, while depending upon Christ's payment. *"Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord"* (Psalm 4:5). That is completely different from offering the sacrifices, and putting one's trust in the sacrifices he offers!

Christians are called upon to *"offer up spiritual sacrifices"* that are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). We are informed that doing good and sharing are sacrifices with which God is well-pleased (Hebrews 13:16). We are even taught to offer our own bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord (Romans 12:1). But how may we be assured that our sacrifices are truly

acceptable to God?

When We Are Truly Penitent. True sacrifice to God is a response to Him because of our own sin. At its 'roots' is actually a desire for reconciliation that has been lost due to our transgressions. To be acceptable, our sacrifices must spring from pure motivation. David understood this principle, and he humbly confessed his sin to God. *"For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart - These, O God, You will not despise . . . Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering"* (Psalm 51:16-17, 19).

When We Are Being Obedient To God. Sacrifice is certainly a condition of obedience, but never a substitute for it. Upon accusing King Saul of not having obeyed the voice of the Lord, the prophet asked: *"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry"* (1 Sam. 15:22, 23).

When We Are Ourselves Merciful. Sacrifice is an appeal to mercy. It would be the height of hypocrisy for one to sacrificially approach God for His mercy while at the same time refusing to offer mercy to others. When the Pharisees grew offended at Christ's eating with the "sinners" of the people, Jesus told them: *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance"* (Mt. 9:12, 13).

A Fresh Start

DAVID THURMAN

I am always amazed at the new products being thrown at us. We have MP3 music, we have high definition television. I now enjoy satellite radio reception in my vehicles. The new and improved version of just about everything is now available, from soap to cereal. We like the new stuff.

Some of us would like some new stuff in other areas. We may have messed up our lives in bad relationships. We may have made some poor choices in our daily activities. We look around at the mess we have made, and we wish we could just have a fresh start. If we could just start new, we could create a new and improved life.

The good news from God is that this new start is available. The whole reason Jesus came was to offer you the chance at a fresh start. *"For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Cor. 5:14-21). In these verses God offers you a fresh start in all phases of your life. Notice how your life can become new and improved.

A NEW CONTROL

When you turn your life over to God, you find a control for your life you did not have before. Now, the love of God controls you. Since you have accepted the salvation that comes through Jesus, you gain control over your life in ways you could not imagine before.

Have you had a hard time staying away from temptation? Have you struggled with drugs, or alcohol, or other addictions? Have you made the same mistakes over and over again? Do you promise yourself you will be different, only to fail again and again?

God offers you a control for your life that will change all this. When you surrender to the will of God by becoming a Christian, you will have control over the very things that have haunted you.

You can get new control of your life, simply by giving up control to God.

A NEW CONCEPT

Paul goes on to tell us that we now have a new outlook on life. Instead of seeing people and things as we used to, we now look at things from a spiritual perspective. This is a whole new concept that allows us to see life differently.

In Christ, we can now look at ourselves and not be so harsh or guilt ridden. All the mistakes you have made, all the failures you have endured can be taken away. Instead of seeing your life as a waste, you can forgive yourself and start new. You can learn to like yourself again.

In Christ, we can also look at others differently. Instead of seeing their mistakes and picking at them, we can give them the same mercy God has extended to us. In Christ, we have a new concept of life that allows us to start over, and allows us to forgive.

A NEW CREATION

God tells us the old things are gone, all things are become new. God puts our past in the past and never brings it up again. When you come to God through Christ, all your failings will be forgiven and forgotten.

That means you can start over in your relationships. You can start fresh with your family, with your friends and co-workers. No matter how much of a mess you have made, God will clean it up and let you start again, new and improved.

Better still, new things have come. In place of the old habits, the old attitudes and feelings, God sends a new heart with a fresh outlook. Out of that grows new values that will transform your life. In Christ you are not the same old sinner, you are a new creation.

A NEW COVENANT

A wonderful part of the fresh start God offers is a relationship with Him. There was a time you could not approach God because you were caught in sin. But, in Christ you have a new covenant with the Lord that allows you access to God.

Paul describes this as the process of reconciliation. God forgives you and draws you back into relationship with Him. Even better, God stops counting your sins against you, keeping you clean and forgiven from now on.

All of your mistakes are forgiven. All of your struggles are

overlooked. God sees you only as the new and improved person He has made you through His grace. This is a new covenant. It is not based on how good you are or how good you can be. It is based on the love of God. It is based on the mercy of God. In that grace, God brings you back into His family. You get a fresh start from a new covenant.

A NEW CAREER

Finally, when God cleans you up and lets you start over, He challenges you to start a new career. This is not a "work" responsibility, but a new lifestyle that reflects all the new things in your life. God asks you to share the good news that you have experienced. We are now charged with the ministry of reconciliation.

The fact is, when we get good news, we should want to share that with everyone. Whether it is what you got for your birthday or the great performance of your new car, when we have good news we like to tell others about it. That is all God asks of you. Jesus died for you. God reconciled you to Himself through that death. You have been given a fresh start. This new and improved person should want to tell the world what God has done.

This new career is not burdensome. When others see the control you have, when they see the new concepts you live by, they will be interested. When others see your joy at being close to God, when they see that you live without guilt, they will be intrigued. All you will need do is share the good news of reconciliation with them.

BECOME NEW

The steps to this new life are simple. You must trust in the savior who died for you. Paul says that *"He died for all"*. Jesus willingly took your guilt. You need to trust Him that your guilt is gone and that He has made you new.

You must turn from your old life. You can't keep the same values you used to have. You have already proven they don't work! You must repent, express your sorrow at your failings and come back to God. That is what Jesus was talking about when He said, *"I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:3). Repentance is not hard, but it does require you to give up on doing things your way. Your way hasn't worked all that well anyway. So, turn to God in faith and repentance.

Finally, Paul tells us the last step to this new start. *"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life"* (Rom. 6:3-4). You can walk in newness of life. You can get a fresh start. You can be new and improved. All you need to do is trust in Christ, turn from your sin and be immersed in the name of Jesus. Enjoy a new life!

Parables of Jesus

JOHNNY RAMSEY

There are thirty major parables of our Lord in the four accounts of His gospel. These masterful lessons thrill our souls and challenge our intellect. Knowing *"what is in man"* (John 2:25), Christ was able to convey grand truths in special and memorable ways never to be forgotten. These earthly stories with heavenly meanings have warmed the hearts of millions for 2,000 years. They stand as a tribute to the genius of the communication skills of Jesus, the Master Teacher. They are ever fresh and new, even though they are the heart of the legend that caused Nicodemus to exclaim, *"Thou art a teacher come from God!"* (John 3:2).

In the first seven parables that launched His epochal journey in this form of teaching technique, the Savior captured the heart and core of the nature of His kingdom. Matt. 13 is a unique journey into the mind of Deity. We learn major points about the cause of Christ. In reflecting upon the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3-9; 13:18-23), we can see the power of truth hindered by hard and indifferent hearts. Only a few with good and honest hearts accept the challenge of God's truth. Jesus taught us to sow the seed and not be discouraged when only a minority obey. In the parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24-30), we learn that Satan tries desperately to confuse the world with counterfeit religion and careless endeavor. We may have to wait until the Judgment Day to see the result of this battle between good and evil that fills us with consternation now.

In two parables concerning leaven and mustard seed (Matt.

13:31-33), we are given valuable points that enlighten and challenge us. It is very important for us to allow God to give the increase and take charge of keeping the roll book. The Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47), and He keeps the record accurately. Read also Acts 2:41; 1 Cor. 3:6-7 and Rev. 3:1-5! From a very small beginning, Christianity grew to a wonderful power in the midst of an unbelieving world, and it did so without the pomp and clever tactics used by false religions. May God help us to be content with the simple sowing of the seed and never engage in the gimmicks and gadgets of carnality.

The next two parables in Matt. 13 are truly marvelous reminders of the incomparable value of God's kingdom. The **pearl of great price** and the **hidden treasure** (Matt. 13:44-46) form a magnificent tribute to the blessings that attend salvation. Worth far more than the wealth of secular enterprise is the depth of truth and redemption in Christ Jesus. The enduring quality of the gospel transcends all the charming and fleeting vanity of Satan's enchanting and devious schemes.

*Take the world, but give me Jesus,
All its joys are but a name;
But His love abideth ever,
Through the endless years the same.*

In the seventh parable of this chapter, about the net cast into the sea (Matt. 13:47-50), our blessed Redeemer makes it very clear that no evil or error, however well-disguised, will slip through the net when the final curtain falls. Even if sinners can bluff their way through this world and deceive their friends in this brief life, they will face eternity without hope.

*You can fool the hapless public,
You can be a subtle fraud,
You can advertise your virtues,
But you cannot fool God!*

When Jesus began to teach in parables, He left a legacy that reaches the hearts and minds of men. We must preach the word but allow God to take care of the harvest. We must be patient and allow the leaven time to produce growth. The tremendous value of the kingdom deserves our very best endeavor. And, ultimately, the righteous will not have to put up with sinners.

