

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 40

July 2009

No. 3

EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

The Word of God is Living and Powerful

It is living because it has the power to lead men to eternal life with God in heaven; and it is powerful because it is sharper than any two edged sword. The word of God can save man if man choose to believe and follow it, but it will destroy them who refuse to follow God's written word. "For the word of God", says Hebrews 4:12, "is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Comparing man with the Word of God, one of the writers of the Bible declared: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever." (1 Peter 1:24,25).

There is only one book in the entire world which contains the will of God for the whole humanity—The Bible. Through the Bible God has revealed to man everything that man ought to know. Man, therefore, cannot ignore the Bible. Because after all is over, man has one thing to face—God's Word. Christ spoke: "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." (John 12:48).

God has blessed man with many blessing on earth, and He shows no partiality (Matthew 5:45; Acts 10:34); the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breath, and the sunshine we receive,

plus many other things are the blessings God has mercifully bestowed on us all. But if God has not revealed His will to man, man would be lost in this world and in the world to come forever. Although the majority of people on earth do not care for true God and His word, as is evident by the kind of lives they live on earth and choices they make in different spheres of their lives, and because of their such attitude toward God and His word they will eventually be lost eternally in hell after the life of this earth is over, but it will not be the fault of God. As God Himself through Christ said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Amidst all the changes on earth, the fading glories of natural objects, and the wasting strength of man, God's word and His revealed truth written in the Bible, remains unaffected, unchanged and unmoved. The Bible teaches very clearly that the God who has created man (Genesis 1:26, 27), will judge all men one day through His Son Jesus Christ, whom He has ordained after raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:30, 31), Who also is the proof of the fact that God in like manner will raise all the dead to stand before Him in the judgment, (Hebrews 9:27), to receive according to what each one has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:46). God has spoken. Is man listening?

Who Is Jesus Christ?

J.C. CHOATE

A few people in the world today might never have heard the name, Jesus Christ. Most have. Yet many who have heard of Him are confused and do not know who He really is. Millions believe in Him, but millions more do not. *Who is Jesus Christ?*

Jesus Christ existed with God in the beginning. Hebrews 1:3 describes Him as being the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person. John 1:1, calling Him "the Word", says that He was *with* God in the beginning, and that *He was God*. *This means that He is one of the Persons of the Godhead, along with God and the Holy Spirit.* God is described as being eternal, having no beginning and no end, so the same is true of Jesus

Christ (Isaiah 63:16). He is said to be the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8), the beginning of the creation of God (not that He was created by God, but that He was involved in initiating the creation of all things) (Revelation 3:14), the First and the Last (Revelation 22:13).

Jesus Christ was the Creator of all things. In Genesis 1:1, we read that *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* The Hebrew word for God is the plural form, which includes the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. In Genesis 1:26 God said, *"Let us make man in our image...."* Paul further explained in Colossians 1:16,17, speaking of Jesus Christ, *"All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."*

Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary through the power of God, having no earthly father. His unique birth was prophesied many centuries before by the prophet Isaiah: *"Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."* In Matthew 1:20,21 it was said *"... that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."* From these verses we can see that Jesus was born miraculously, that He was more than just a man.

Jesus Christ was the Son of God, having emptied Himself of the rights and powers inherent in the Godhead as the Word, and subjecting Himself to God as Father, becoming a brother to humans by His physical birth (Philippians 2:3-8). He came into the world to save man from his sins. We read in John 3:16,17, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son ... that the world through Him might be saved."* Christ Himself said, *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10).

Jesus Christ performed miracles to prove that He was the Son of God. John wrote concerning His miracles, *"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples ... these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God..."* (John 20:30,31).

Jesus Christ died on the cross so that all who believe in Him might be saved and have the hope of eternal life. We read the words of the apostle Paul, *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto*

you the gospel which I preached unto you ... that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Jesus Christ promised to save the obedient in His family, which he called "My church" (Matthew 16:18). He died for this body of people, and all those who are washed in His blood are saved and added by Him to His church. It is called His body, of which He is the Head. It is also described as His bride, wearing His name. (Ephesians 5:23,25; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 3:15; Acts 4:12).

Jesus Christ is the second person in the Godhead (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) (Matthew 28:19,20). There is one God, one Lord (Christ), and one Spirit (the Holy Spirit) (Ephesians 4:1 -6). Because of His willingness to die for the sins of the world, Christ has been given all authority in heaven and on the earth (Matthew 28:18). He is presently sitting at the right hand of the Father, reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15). One day He will come again to take His people, the church, to heaven where they will dwell forevermore.

Jesus promised, *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ... I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).*

Do you believe in Christ? He warned in John 8:24, *"...if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."*

If we do believe in Him, we will obey Him (Mark 16:16), if we love Him we will obey Him (John 14:15) and will remain faithful to Him until death (Revelation 2:10).

Don't Judge, Don't Condemn, Forgive

Matthew 7:1-2, Luke 6:37, James 4:11, 12.

THOMAS DOHLING

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it

will be measured back to you."

To "judge" here does not mean to pronounce condemnatory judgment, nor does it refer to simple judging at all, whether favourable or unfavourable. The context makes it clear that the thing here condemned is that critical disposition to look unfavorably on the character and actions of others, which leads invariably to the pronouncing of rash, unjust, and unpleasant judgments upon them.

What our Lord aims at is the spirit out of which they spring. Unless we root out this unpleasant attitude, we will be inclined to sit in judgment upon a brother's character and actions and also be biased in our dealings with him.

Jesus condemns the violation of the law of love involved in our critical, resentful, and condemnatory disposition towards others. Our Lord, while condemning this attitude, says that if we are critical of others, we will be likewise judged.

In this regard, Luke records Jesus saying, "Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven" (Luke 6:37).

It is the violation of the law of love involved in the exercise of a critical attitude that Jesus is condemning here. Jesus here prohibits rash, unloving judgments, a fault-finding spirit, an attitude to condemn without examination of charges.

In James 4:11-12 we read: "Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?"

To speak evil is to make harsh, critical judgments. The "royal law" requires love of a brother, and when this law is thus violated by a harsh judgment the law itself is condemned. But when a man sets himself up as a judge of the law he is no longer a humble and faithful doer of the law.

God Almighty is the Lawgiver. Shall man judge God? When we judge a brother, we disobey God Who made the law which forbids precisely such an attitude. Speaking evil of another (a brother or anyone) flows from the critical spirit which seeks to exalt self at the expense of another.

The royal law commands us to "love your neighbour as yourself" (James 2:8) and virtually condemns evil-speaking and judging. This is precisely what Jesus is emphasizing. He wants us to have an attitude that is loving, non-critical and forgiving. May God grant us the grace to do His will.

The Message Of The Empty Tomb

W. DOUGLASS HARRIS

Skeptics and unbelievers have never been able to explain convincingly the empty tomb which the disciples of Christ discovered on the third day after His burial. To contend that His disciples stole the body does not square with the facts at all. There were five death penalties associated with the disappearance of the body. Each of the following were punishable by death: (1) for the guards to go to sleep, (2) to break the seal, (3) to allow the seal to be broken, (4) to steal the body, and (5) to allow the body to be stolen.

Christ's disciples should not have been surprised by the empty tomb. He had told them it would happen. (Matthew 12:40.) Many may not have understood why the seal was broken and the stone was rolled away. It was not to let Christ out, but to let the witnesses in. Every precaution possible was taken by divine oversight to eliminate any appearance of deception or fraud.

Not only did that empty tomb have a message then, but for future generations - a message which is the dynamic of Christianity. What was that message?

1. It proves Christ's deity. (Romans 1:3,4.) He claimed in life that He was the Son of God; the empty tomb was the consummating proof of it. This is the only evidence that brought absolute conviction even to His disciples. (John 20:8,9; 24-29.) Peter used the empty tomb in his sermon on Pentecost as proof of His divinity. (Acts 2:29-33.) Others have been raised from the dead, but not to die no more as He was. (Romans 6:9,10.)

2. It gives assurance to our Christian Hope. Christ's resurrection is the bed-rock foundation upon which our faith rests. (1 Corinthians 15:12-20.) Try to imagine the difference had He

not been raised; we never would have heard of Him; there would have been no Bible or church established by Him and no grounds for our hope of a resurrection to another life. That empty tomb gives life, reality, and vitality to our hope.

3. It is proof of the immortality of the soul. (2 Timothy 1:10.) Death reigned supreme until Christ conquered it. (Romans 5:17.) As far as human wisdom was concerned, life ended abruptly at the grave. Wonder about it and faint hopes of a life beyond this life were expressed by Job. (Job 14:14.) But his question was not answered until Christ arose. That grave is not man's end and is the testimony of the empty tomb. (John 5:28,29; 11:25,26.) Paul labors at length on the question in 1 Corinthians 15:35-57. For nearly two thousand years that empty tomb has proclaimed that Christ conquered death, and that by saving faith in Him we can also.

Someone said to a Christian: "We have proof in our religion that you do not have. When we go to our holy place we find the tomb of our prophet, so we have proof that he lived. When you go to Jerusalem, you cannot be sure you have the burial place of Jesus. You have no tomb as we have." "True," replied the Christian. "We have no tomb in our religion, because we have no corpse. Our gospel ends not in a corpse, but in a Conqueror."

The firm believer in the resurrection to come can face life and all its problems; death and all of its hopes with a victorious faith and assurance. **THANK GOD FOR THE MESSAGE OF THE EMPTY TOMB!**

He Does And He Will

DALTON KEY

One thing in life is certain: we all have our share of pain, difficulty and suffering. Bad things happen, and they often happen to good people. Age, disease and sickness seek to destroy our health. Family problems often threaten to destroy the lives and souls of those we love most dearly.

Such problems, along with financial strain, job-related stress, and the everyday challenges of life seem to be like Jesus'

description of the poor - "with us always." (Mark 14:7.)

This, though, should not surprise us. Jesus warned, "In the world you shall have tribulation." (John 16:33.)

We can be thankful that Jesus didn't conclude his thought on that somber note, but continued by promising, "... but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."

No problem, no catastrophe, no sorrow is larger than our God. And God, who "cannot lie," (Titus 1:2), has promised to help his own.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1.) "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want ... He restoreth my soul ... I will fear no evil: for thou art with me ... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." (Psalm 23:1,3,4,6.) "The Lord hath been mindful of us: he will bless us." (Psalm 115:12.) "...He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Hebrews 13:6.)

The question is not: "does God care?" He does. The question is not: "Will God help me through my troubles, through my difficulties, through my sorrows?" He will.

No, the real question, the one each of us in Christ must answer, is simply this: "Do I believe what God has promised?"

A Consciousness Of God

JOHN GIPSON

There are people who have only a vague awareness of God. Some wonder about His existence; others acknowledge the possibility of His presence; some even believe that the creation could not have happened without Him, but with these folks God is only given a passing thought from time to time. They live their lives and make their plans as if they were completely in charge of their time and destiny.

There are others, however, who have a consciousness of God in every day of their lives and in all that they do. They are happy to acknowledge that "we live and move and have our being"

in God, and even confess with the ancient poets, and the apostle Paul, "For we are indeed his offspring." (Acts 17:28.) One elderly lady told me that the first thing she did as soon as she opened her eyes every morning was to say aloud, "Thank you God for giving me another day." She also told me that she devoted her evening prayers to her concern for others, and that this prayer list had grown so long that it required at least two hours. (I felt blessed that she had included me on that list.) A consciousness of God leads one to a consideration of His goodness. When one remembers, "Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights," it awakens the question, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me?" I know how one widow responded. Mark records the incident for us. It happened in the temple when a poor widow came "and put in two copper coins, which make a penny" into the treasury. Many, out of their abundance, had given large sums of money on that day, but this was the gift which impressed Jesus and caused Him to say, "but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living." (Mark 12:44.)

Every Lord's Day I have an opportunity to express my consciousness of God and His goodness toward me. One sure test of my awareness is found in how much I contribute into the treasury. (1 Corinthians 16:1,2.) It is an expression of my thanks "for all His benefits toward me."

The Contrast of "Believe" In The Bible

SAMMY D. COOPER

There are at least two ways "believe" is used in the Bible. One is in a general sense of acknowledging the fact of certain things being true or real. For example, in James 2:19, James says, "You believe there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble." The term "believe" is used in this text in a general sense in that the demons would acknowledge the fact of the existence of God but this acknowledgment did not cause them to turn from their evil ways.

In John 12:42-43, it is written, "Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they would not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praises of men more than the praise of God." In this reference there are those who acknowledge the truth of Christ's existence but did not have enough faith to abandon their secular positions to submit themselves to the will of God.

Another way "believe" is used in the Bible is to have enough trust or confidence in God and Christ to place one's destiny in their hands. An example of this is found in Matthew 7:21-23, where Jesus says, "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. Many will say to Me in that day Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name and done many wonders in Your name? And I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." Jesus explained that just the acknowledging of the Lord's existence and even doing many good works in His name is not enough. Certainly it is very necessary to acknowledge the existence of the Lord, and it is true good works are required but these alone will not allow one to enter the kingdom of heaven but these things must be done according to the will of God. In Hebrews 11, we read about some great Bible characters who believed in God and their faith in God caused them to do the things God commanded.

In order to get perhaps a clearer understanding of the kind of faith or trust needed to please God, look at the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:35-38. Luke wrote, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See here is water, what hinders me from being baptized?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and he baptized him." It should be clear that the eunuch's believing was more than just an acknowledging that he believed what Philip had taught was true. But his believing what Philip had taught caused him to have a desire to be completely pleasing to

God by being baptized.

There is another question to be answered which goes along with the difference in "believe" and that is the contrast between the terms "faith" and "the faith." When referring to "faith" in the general sense, faith would be defined as: unquestioning belief that does not require proof of evidence. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The writer says that acceptance of the things presented is based upon the presentation of facts and not on evidence which could be viewed. The writer continues in Hebrews 11:6, stating, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Also in Romans 5:1, Paul says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

When referring to "the faith" the reference is to the gospel, the truth, or the body of truth. Paul wrote in Colossians 1:21-23, "And you, who were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight, if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister." Paul also makes reference to "the faith" in Titus 1:13,14 where he says, "This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth."

If There Was No Resurrection

CLEM THURMAN

The Bible abounds with IFs. *"If a man thirst." "If ye have faith." "If ye love me." "If ye ask anything in my name." "If I go away." "If any man be in Christ." "If the blind guide the blind."* But of all of the "IFs" found in the word of God, those in the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians are indeed the most frightening. In that chapter, the apostle Paul raises the question: *"If Christ be not raised."*

"But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable. But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:13-22).

*"If Christ has not been raised" presents the rumbling of eternal catastrophe, the blasted hopes of godly men and the thundering crash of a collapsed world. That "IF" paints a wearisome road with potholes, rocks and no respite. The apostle Paul, an educated man who knew all of the arguments advanced by so-called modernists of the day, did not hesitate to preach and teach the resurrection. The preaching of the resurrection was counted as foolishness by many (1 Cor. 1:23), but in this longest chapter of His writings, Paul refutes the arguments one by one. A religion professor of mine in college did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, but he claimed that the resurrection did not matter -that if Jesus was not raised from the dead, it didn't change who He was or what He did. But Paul strongly disagreed with that idea. It is because of the resurrection that He is *"declared to be the Son of God with power"* (Rom. 1:4). And the resurrection of Jesus is a pledge of our own resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3-5). And Paul presents some terrible implications, *"If Christ hath not been raised."* In this article, let us look at some of the consequences if Christ was not raised.*

"Then Is Our Preaching Vain" - v. 14

All of the preaching of the inspired apostles is empty rhetoric if Christ was not raised from the dead: As Paul wrote in the beginning of this chapter (1 Cor. 15), *"For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he*

hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). When the apostles preached, the death, burial and resurrection was not only basic to that gospel but was the first part of it preached. The death and resurrection of Jesus was vital to the salvation which they preached. As Paul wrote of Jesus, *"Who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification"* (Rom. 4:25).

Without the resurrection, the preaching of Jesus as the Christ is vain, for that is what establishes His Lordship. In that first gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), Peter showed from the prophecies of David that Christ was to be raised from the dead to sit on David's throne (Acts 2:29-31,36). Again Paul wrote, *"Concerning his Son . . . who was declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 1:3-4). In view of these statements, it is easily seen that all of the preaching of the apostles was based on the resurrection, and was utterly empty and vain, *"If Christ hath not been raised."*

"Your Faith Is Also In Vain" - v. 14

This is plainly manifest, for the gospel was delivered to the apostles from Christ through the Holy Spirit after He was raised from the dead. Luke begins the book of Acts with the life of Jesus, *"Until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom he had chosen"* (Acts 1:2). Now if Christ had not been raised, then He gave no such commandments! Therefore, any faith produced by the preaching of the apostles would be empty and useless, *"For faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ"* (Rom. 10:17). But if Christ was not raised, then the New Testament is not the word of God.

If Christ *"hath not been raised,"* then our faith is founded upon false testimony. The apostles, and we, would have faith in something that never really happened. If Christ was not raised, then Abel's offering is useless, Enoch was not translated, Abraham's wanderings were foolishness, Moses was beguiled into foolish and aimless wandering and all the martyrs were defrauded. If Christ was not raised, then our faith is placed in one who was only mortal, and we have no Savior. How empty and hopeless to believe in such a hoax!

"We Are False Witnesses of God" - v. 15

The apostles *"witnessed of God that he raised up Christ"* (1 Cor. 15:15). And if that isn't true, then we have no reason to believe anything else they taught. To be an apostle, one had to be a witness of the resurrection of Jesus. On Pentecost, the apostles declared, *"This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses"* (Acts 2:32).

Not only were the apostles witnesses of the resurrection, but earlier in 1 Cor. 15, Paul listed some of the other witnesses: *"And that he appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain untill now, but some are fallen asleep; then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also"* (1 Cor. 15:5-8). Now, if the apostles and others lied about the resurrection, then they must surely have lied about all the rest of the gospel plan. They could not be trusted on any point of doctrine, nor could they be classed as good men. All the work of the apostles is in vain; if Christ was not raised.

"Ye Are Yet In Your Sins" - v. 17

This is possibly the most devastating consequence, *"If Christ hath not been raised."* Jesus had stated, *"The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. . . for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins"* (Luke 19:10; Matt. 26:28). We read, *"Without the shedding of blood is no remission"* (Heb. 9:22). And, *"Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without spot, even the blood of Christ"* (1 Pet. 1:18-19). But if Christ was not raised, then that blood was not offered and our sins are not forgiven. And the apostle Paul wrote that Christ, *"Abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel"* (2 Tim. 1:10). But this was possible only by His resurrection.

The Scripture says of Jesus, *"Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them"* (Heb. 7:25). But if Christ has not been raised, then He does not now live and cannot make intercession for us. If Christ was not raised, there is

no blood to wash away our sins (Acts 22:16), no redemption (1 Pet. 1:19), no salvation by faith (1 Cor. 15:17), and no freedom from the guilt of sin (Rom. 5:8-10).

"We Are Of All Men Most Miserable" - v. 18

If Christ was not raised, then there is no hope for any resurrection, for any of us, and no hope for life after death. Every grave becomes a mockery and every death a staggering calamity. If Christ was not raised, then even the promises of the Scriptures jeer at us as we are doggedly assigned to a yawning tomb. We read, *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints"* (Psa. 116:15). But that is just a mockery, if Christ was not raised. Again we read, *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them"* (Rev. 14:13). But those are just empty words, without the resurrection.

Jesus promised, *"Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs 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 judgment . . . In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 5:28-29; 14:2-3). But how can all this be, if He was not raised from the dead? What utter and abject misery is ours, if our hope is only in this life!

"But Now Is Christ Raised" - v. 20

But we leave all the doom and gloom which attends the premise, *"If Christ hath not been raised."* For the gospel cry goes forth: *"Now is Christ raised."* The witness of the apostles rings forth, and our faith is strong and triumphant: *"This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith"* (1 John 5:4). Instead of being hopeless and miserable, we courageously look beyond the grave: *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him"* (1 Thes. 4:14). And because He arose, we know *"that he that raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also with Jesus, and shall present us with you"* (2 Cor. 4:14). Truly, it can be said that God, *"According to his great mercy begat us again unto a*

living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3).

Our salvation is inseparably connected to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul declares that we are *"Baptized into Christ, baptized into his death . . . having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead"* (Rom. 6:3; Col. 2:12). If we have been baptized into His death, buried with Him in baptism, then: *"Like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life"* (Rom. 6:4).

Every person who dies to sin (Rom. 6:1-6), and then obeys the gospel commands through faith in Christ, thereby shows his faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That He was raised from the dead, is thus attested by the lives of all of those who have risen from the watery grave of baptism, *"Through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead"* (Col. 2:12). *"Now is Christ raised!"*

OUR HOPE: ETERNAL LIFE

AUBREY JOHNSON

Hopelessness is a deplorable condition but, thankfully, a curable one. The treatment requires a makeover of the mind. Truth is the tonic that sets patients free from the ailments of unbelief and the crippling attitudes that accompany it. Fear and negativity are symptoms of sin-sick hearts. Conversely, courage and optimism are signs of spiritual wellness.

What Is Hope?

Hope is a catalyst. It is the stuff that fuels our faith. Because faith is the substance of things hoped for, there can be no faith without hope. Instead of dynamism, there is dysfunction. Instead of power, there is weakness. Hope energizes the church and motivates the individual. It gives God's people their get up and go.

Hope is a challenge. Belief is not limited to past facts but extends to future possibilities. Hope is the forward-looking side

of faith, the personalizing of God's promises. Hope is a positive force that guarantees things can change and will get better. Henry Ward Beecher said, "Repentance is another name for aspiration." All meaningful change is the result of hope.

Hope is a certainty. Courage and confidence are grounded in hope. When the Bible portrays hope as the anchor of the soul, it does not mean that hope weighs us down, holds us back, or keeps us stuck. Rather, hope protects us from drifting off course during life's storms. It anchors our relationships and priorities. It secures our faith and values. Hope is not the expectation of ease, comfort and worldly success. Rather, it is the certainty that God's Word is true and can help us grow and glorify Him regardless of our circumstances. Most of all, hope is the assurance that Christ has secured our eternal destiny.

Why Do We Hope?

We hope because God is faithful. Bible history demonstrates that God always honors His Word. Disillusionment does not come from shortcomings in God but from inadequacies in our understanding of God. His love, power and wisdom are infinite and His trustworthiness beyond dispute. Those who put their confidence in Him will not be disappointed.

We hope because the Bible is reliable. If God is dependable, His Word must be equally credible. The very nature of God inspires confidence in the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. Every divine command is worthy of compliance. Every inspired precedent is worthy of emulation. Rather than an arbitrary collection of repressive rules, the Bible is a source of liberating insight into the workings of the universe. It contains God's perfect plan for transforming believers. Those who trust and obey will never find their hope frustrated.

We hope because it makes sense. Hope has a pragmatic side that is self-reinforcing. Not everything that happens to believers is pleasant; however, something in the experience of applied faith commends itself to the soul (Romans 12:2). The conscience approves biblical truth. Each verse resonates within the heart. Vaclav Havel said that hope is "not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out." If hope enabled

people to face the fiery furnace, dare the lion's den, and praise God from prison, surely it will help you tackle the hard times in your life.

For What Do We Hope?

We hope for eternal life. Hope is the absolute assurance that God exists and will fulfill His promises. Some promises pertain to the hereafter and others relate to life here on earth. Yet all hope is rooted in resurrection. Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth -those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28-29). The resurrection of life does not merely refer to duration of life but to the quality of life the redeemed will enjoy in eternity. The alternative is not annihilation but deprivation.

We hope for abundant life. Heaven may be the Christian's greatest hope, but it is not the Christian's only hope. In addition to a desirable destiny, saints enjoy better lives here on earth. People who follow God's Word are blessed in so doing. They live in greater harmony with the world as God created it. They decrease unnecessary friction in relationships and increase the likelihood of happiness in their homes. When delusional thinking and destructive behaviors are abandoned, life is more successful and satisfying.

We hope for empowered life. The same power that revived Christ physically renews Christians spiritually when met with obedient faith (Ephesians 1:18-20). This inner force accounts for innumerable improvements in a believer's life (3:20). When thinking of God's boundless power, the temptation is to focus on what it enables us to have or do. How much better to think of what God's power enables us to become! Rather than parting waters, it empowers me to part with sin and the limiting beliefs that have hindered my spiritual progress in the past. Rather than allowing me to raise the dead, it raises my sights on the person I can become for God's glory.

We hope for changed life. Joseph Roux said, "At first we hope too much, later on, not enough." The reason hope overreaches or decreases is that human expectations are not

aligned with God's purposes. His desire is not to provide us with heaven on earth but to provide for us earth with a foretaste of heaven. I cannot hope too much if I pray for God to glorify Himself through me. When I purpose to become the husband my wife deserves and the father my child needs, God's power is unleashed in my life. The greatest evidence of that power has always been its ability to change people's thinking and behavior. The strength it affords is not evidenced in sinless perfection but in spiritual direction. The drawing power of the gospel has always been the beauty of Christ's example and teaching. Those who aspire to walk closer in His steps will never hope too much or too little.

In Whom Do We Hope?

Christ is our hope. Over the last 150 years, more than a few periodicals, schools and churches have drifted from earlier commitments to New Testament Christianity. These departures have shaken the faith of some saints. When hope rests in men or institutions, there will always be reason for despair, but because our hope is in the resurrected Christ, we do not lose heart, not even for an instant.

Crisis is our opportunity. "Chaos theory" is a term describing how organizations restructure themselves after periods of confusion and disorder. How much surer is the future of God's kingdom on earth? Nations rise and fall, businesses flourish and fail, but Jesus guaranteed that the gates of hades will not prevail against His church. The same God who brought order out of chaos in the beginning can use the turmoil of our times to strengthen and bless His people.

Commitment is our means. Spiritual renewal is not a mysterious or complicated process. It all comes down to two things: loving God and keeping His commandments. Evidence suggests that the church is turning a corner and beginning to experience a time of renewal and sustained growth. Christians have restudied their beliefs and are emerging more passionate and convicted than at any time in the last 40 years. The sifting is by no means complete, but the future is sure. Victory belongs to those who remain faithful to God's Word and God's way, and that is no idle hope:

Lessons From Lazarus

T. PIERCE BROWN

The story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead has some lessons for us today. Let us look at some of the verses in John 11 and make some observations about their implication for us.

Note verse 3: "He whom thou lovest is sick" (KJV). We know nothing about the work, life and character of Lazarus except that these three -Lazarus and his sisters, and especially Lazarus— had a special place in the heart of Jesus. No doubt Martha had a special place for her solicitous care, her hospitality, her concern for His comfort and welfare. Mary had a special place because of her quiet, devotional, spiritual yearning to sit at His feet and absorb great truths.

Lazarus may have had some of the best qualities of both, but in any case, a special bond existed between Jesus and Lazarus. Jesus loves all mankind. He is a friend of sinners. But for Lazarus and John, Jesus had special love. The word "love" for both Lazarus and John was not "agape," but "philos." That is, the Spirit was not emphasizing that Jesus was willing to sacrifice His life for them (agape) but had a strong affection for them.

Some value can be found in the words they used as they sent for Him. It was not, "Come and help Lazarus." It was not, "Lazarus loves you and wants you." It was not anything in the character of Lazarus that was the grounds of their request or of His response. They simply reminded Him of and relied on His love and mercy and grace. This helps us remember that nothing in our character of goodness causes Jesus to do something for us. It is "according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

All Things Work Together For Good

When Jesus said in John 11:4 that Lazarus' sickness was "not unto death," He did not mean, "he will not die" for he did. The reason God allowed him to be sick was not so he would die, but so God and Christ could be glorified. That should be the primary purpose of all that we do.

This does not prove that God brought sickness on Lazarus to demonstrate His glory and power. It does mean that Jesus did

not hesitate to use it for that purpose, illustrating the fact that God can work things for good to those who love Him. God can use our sickness, infirmities, afflictions and death for various good purposes: (1) To help us discover our true character—whether we trust in God and depend on Him. (2) To show His faithfulness in proving that His grace is sufficient for us. (3) To give us a feeling of the preciousness of Jesus and the reality of the brevity and uncertainty of life.

John 11:6 tells us that Jesus waited two days. We are fairly certain of the reason, but a lesson to us says that we should never be impatient with the apparent indifference of God in the event of our difficulties. It is impossible and unnecessary to know His purposes in all these cases. It is only necessary that we love and trust Him.

In verse 11, He says, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." Not: "my" or "your" but "our." It suggests a beautiful thought. If you are a friend of Jesus and I am a friend of Jesus, you are my friend. If I love the Lord and put Him first in my life and I believe that you love the Lord and put Him first, then I have a special love for you. We should be glad He said, "Our friend sleepeth," for it changes the concept of death. In sleep there is a rest from pain, toil, and care. Death to us often implies permanence. Sleep implies waking.

From a human standpoint, He said plainly, "Lazarus is dead," but He wanted them to know that death for a friend of Jesus amounts to no more than sleep, for they are all alive in Him. Jesus said in Mark 12:27, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were dead but alive to God.

An Important Purpose

In John 11:21 and 32, both Mary and Martha believed that if Jesus had been there, Lazarus would not have died. Verse 15 confirms that. His sympathy and their need would have caused Him to prevent Lazarus from dying, but as great as His sympathy was for them, He had a more important fourfold purpose in staying away and letting Lazarus die.

First, it was to glorify God. Second, it was to glorify the Son of God. Third, it was to confirm to the world that He was the Son of God. Fourth, it was to give the apostles absolute proof of that

fact, not only for the strengthening of their faith, but to authenticate their testimony concerning Him. They did not merely testify, "We believe Jesus can raise the dead." They testified, "We know He raised the dead and was Himself resurrected." This is an important point, missed by many. If they had died merely for testifying to their belief, it would have been the strongest testimony that their *belief* was real. It would have proved nothing about the reality or truthfulness of the thing in which they believed. One may die for his belief in an individual, it proves nothing about claims. But the apostles died, not merely for their belief, but rather testifying about what they knew to be true.

John 11:16 gives an interesting picture of Thomas the Twin (Didymus). He is commonly called Doubting Thomas, but he doubted very little, if any, more than the rest of them. For example, in Luke 24:11 when the women who were at the tomb told the apostles Jesus was seen and risen, they believed not but counted it as idle tales. Thomas was willing to go with Him at the risk of his life, for the Jews had sought to stone Him. "Let us go with Jesus" is worth a whole sermon or article. The fact that he was willing to die with and for Him is worthy of note.

The Resurrection

Martha had expressed her faith in the general resurrection at the last day in John 11:21-27. I am unable to find exactly what the Pharisees believed except that it would occur. I am also unable to express adequately what Jesus meant but can suggest some thoughts.

Jesus was turning Martha's mind away from mere belief in a doctrine to trust in a person. This may be more important than many of us realize. We may believe a proposition or statement of or about a person without trusting in the person. However, we cannot trust in the person without believing his statement. Trust in Christ involves more than trusting in or believing any statement about Christ.

He was turning her mind away from an event that she felt would occur some day, to the reality that is now. That, too, is important. Some in the church think, "I would like to have fellowship with Christ in heaven, but I am not too interested in having fellowship with Him now." The reason we feel sure this is

so is that they do not show much evidence of wanting fellowship with Him. They are concerned about how few services they can attend in order to get by, rather than how many they can get a chance to attend. They study and read as little as possible in the vain assumption that if they happen to get to heaven they will enjoy it more. If we do not enjoy singing His praises, studying, praying and glorifying Him now, God would not be so cruel to us as to force us to live an eternity doing it later.

He was trying to get Martha and us to see what is in Christ. He not only had power to raise the dead, but He also had and has power to turn death into victory instead of defeat. In Christ there is power to make death a doorway—an entrance into richer life, not merely an exit from life.

Possibly He said, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25) rather than "I can give life," in order to help us to see that the resurrection and life are not just provided by Christ; they are in Him. "In Christ" expresses a spiritual relationship only dimly appreciated by most persons.

He was trying to do more than get across to Martha and us a guarantee that there is a life of some sort beyond the grave. She already believed that. When He says, "I am the resurrection, and the life," He wants us to know that in Him, life is not a matter of mere duration; it is a matter of quality. He emphasized that when He continued, "he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (ASV). One who lives in Christ, although he will die from a human standpoint, will have a quality of life that will exist forever.

One now living in Christ and trusting in Him has a quality of life that will go on forever. Can we stop living and trusting in Christ? Of course we can. He said in John 15:6, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." He exhorted them to abide in Him, giving them blessings if they did and telling the consequences if they did not.

The primary thrust of Jesus' words is too plain and simple to be misunderstood, yet so profound that the implications cannot be fully grasped.

Plainly Jesus recognized that it is man's lot to die, as Lazarus

and Jesus Himself did. He was not denying that fact from a human perspective. He was pointing out that although the soul leaves the body (dies), the only life or death that makes any really significant difference is when that soul is properly connected with Christ. This is why Paul spoke about some that were dead while they live, and dead in trespasses and sins (1 Timothy 5:6; Ephesians 2:1). But the one who comes into Christ has to die to sin and be raised to walk in a new life (Romans 6:3-4). As he had the old life because his soul was connected with his body, so he has a new life because his soul is connected with Christ. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV). This is about what Paul meant when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20 ASV).

The only person who has that kind of life is the one who lives in Christ and trusts in Him. The present participle is used in this case. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me" (John 11:26 KJV) broadly translated is, "Whosoever keeps on trusting and living in me." That is, all the qualities that his soul now has related to Christ will continue. The soul enables us to think, taste, feel, smell, hear, perceive, reflect, imagine, recollect, anticipate, have ideas, emotions, memories, habits, etc. Those will continue after we are dead from a human perspective.

When one has turned his life over to Christ in obedience to the gospel, then all those aspects of his soul are now related to Christ rather than to his own body. So when his soul leaves his own physical body, it keeps on with the same qualities it had. The new life that is ours when we became a Christian will go on forever. That is one reason it is called "eternal life." It is the quality of life produced by the Eternal One and does not end when one dies. Death is not a change of character, but a change of address.

It is a wonderful fact that if you really died to self, Satan and sin, were buried with Christ in baptism, and raised with Him to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:1-4) you have the quality of life that you can keep forever if you choose to abide in Him.

