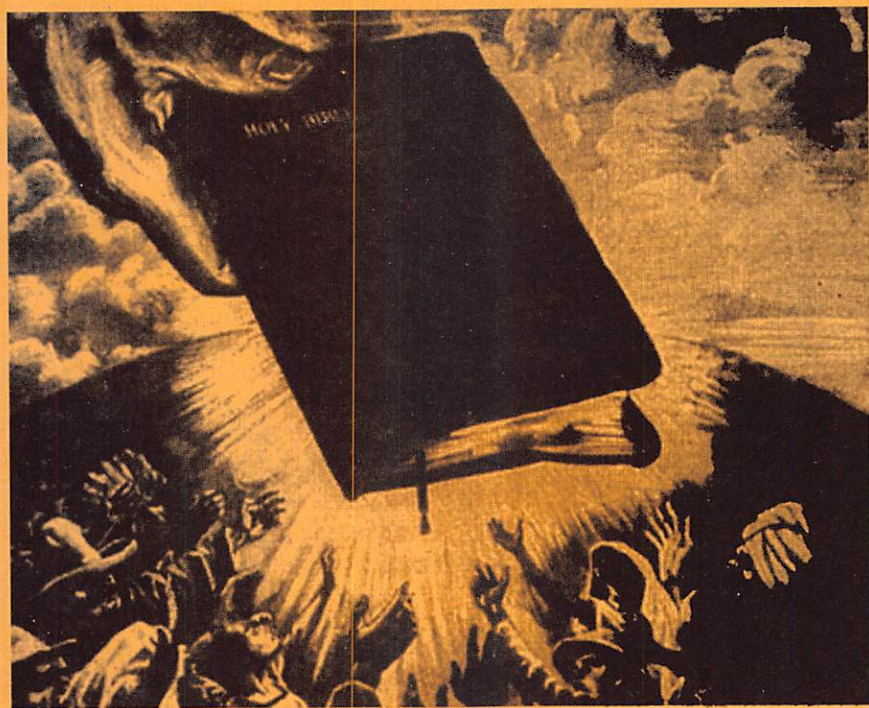


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The Bible Teacher



LET THE TRUTH PREVAIL

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

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

Musical Instruments Never Accompanied Spiritual Songs in the Worship of early Christians

Strange as it may seem, but in the early days of Christianity and even until the 7th century A.D., Christians only sang spiritual songs, without the accompaniment of any musical instrument, in their worship services. Historically speaking, when the Organ was first introduced in the 8th century A.D. into the worship of any body of people claiming to be Christians it divided them. The Greek Catholic church refused it, and still reject it in their worship. They do not use it even today. Evidently, it was an addition of human origin in the worship of Christians, and was never authorised or commanded by Christ or His apostles in the New Testament. According to the New Testament, Christians ought to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and make melody (music) in their heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19), that is, not to touch the chords of a musical instrument, but to touch the chords of the human heart, the Organ that God has made, not what man has made. God want that man, whom He has created, to worship Him, in spirit and in truth, for God is Spirit. (John 4:24). The apostle Paul said, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding." (1 Corinthians 14:15). The writer of the book of Hebrews wrote at Heb.13:15: "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." Again, Colossians 3:16 says,

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." There are many other places in the New Testament where we read about singing, but never once about playing an instrument while singing. The fact of the matter is, that singing in Christian worship is authorized by God, but playing of any kind of instruments with spiritual songs is of human origin.

In the Old Testament king David and others used all kinds of musical instruments, in the worship of God. Amos 6:5 says, "Who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, And invent for yourselves musical instruments like David." But we need to remember, that we are not living today under the Old Testament law. The Old Testament was taken away by God when Christ died on the cross for our sins. (Colossians 2:14). And in its place God has today given us the New Testament under which we live today. (Hebrews 8:7, 13; Galatians 3:24, 25). In the Old Testament they were also required to make animal sacrifices, burn incense, and to do other things, which we are not required to fulfill. Simply because we live today under a different law of God, the New Testament. We, therefore, cannot go to the Old Testament to justify the use of instruments of music in our worship of God today.

When Christians come together to worship God, on the first day of the week, according to the New Testament, they partake of the Lord's Supper, to remember the supreme sacrifice of Christ (Acts 20:7). Also, they pray to God through Christ to thank Him for every blessing they have received; study or learn from the Bible to know God's will; give of their means for the cause of the Gospel. (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2) and sing spiritual songs to praise God and to teach and admonish or edify one another. **The purpose of Christian worship has never been and should never be to impress people in any way, but we ought to worship God in spirit and truth to adore and praise Him.** As Christians when we come together for worship, we do not come as an audience, but as worshippers. Thus all Christians raise their voices to praise God, as God commands (Eph. 5:19). In worship we do not come together to watch or observe a special choir group sing for us, but each individual Christian sings to praise God. God is not looking in us "our singing talents," He is looking in us our humble and contrite spirits. We do not come to God to worship

Him with our talents, but with our broken spirits. (Luke 18:9-17).

Also, it is worthy of note that various well known and prominent religious leaders from different denominational background have vehemently written or spoken with great unanimity against the use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of God. Here I am quoting some of them, not merely for the purpose of proving the use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of God wrong—The fact that the inspired writers of the New Testament have not mentioned their use in the worship proves that— but to show that mechanical instruments of music in the worship of God have been rejected by many reputed religious leaders of the world also.

One of the well known names in theology is John Calvin, he was the founder of the Presbyterian church. In his commentary on the thirty-third psalm, **John Calvin wrote: "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps and the restoration of other shadows of the law. The Papist, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things from the Jews"** (John Calvin's commentary, thirty-third Psalm). Now listen to Adam Clarke, the greatest commentator of all time, amongst the Methodists, in his, **Clarke's commentary, Vol. IV, p. 686, Adam Clarke said, "I am an old man, and an old minister; and I here declare that I never knew them productive of any good in the worship of God; and have reason to believe that they were productive of much evil. Music as a science I esteem and admire; but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the author of Christianity."** Likewise, John Wesley, the reputed founder of the Methodist church, is quoted by Adam Clarke to have said, **"I have no objection to instruments of music, in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen."** (Clarke's Commentary, Vol. IV, p. 686). Charles Spurgeon has been recognized as the greatest Baptist preacher that ever lived. Charles Spurgeon preached in the 1800's for the Metropolitan Baptist Tabernacle in London, England, to more than ten thousand people. He preached there for more than twenty years, but never allowed any mechanical instrument of music

in his meetings. Charles Spurgeon has been quoted to have said, "I would as soon pray with machinery as to sing with machinery." (M.C. Kurfrees, *instrumental music in the worship*, p. 196). Martin Luther, the distinguished reformer, called the Organ, "an ensign of Baal." Baal being an idol. (McClintock & Strong's Encyclopedia, Music, p. 762).

There is nothing wrong in the use of mechanical instruments of music per se. We can use them in our homes and on other occasions, but to use them in the worship of God in praise of Him is wrong, because God has not commanded. To sing is commanded by God, as it says, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." God has specified singing, therefore we must sing. As an example, in the book of Genesis, we remember, God told Noah to make an ark, but God also specified what kind of wood should Noah use in the building of the ark, and that was gopherwood (Genesis 6:14). Noah understood it to mean that he can't use any other wood for building the ark. God didn't have to tell him that he can't use any other wood. When God said gopherwood, that eliminated the use of any other wood or any other material in building of the ark. The Bible says, "Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did." (Gen. 6:22). Likewise, when God say to sing (Eph.5:19; Col.3:16). This is exactly what He means. Another example to learn from is of Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron who were devoured by fire, as we read in the book of Leviticus chapter 10 and verse 2. You know why? Why were they punished? Because they had used or offered, in the Old Testament system of worship, a profane fire or a strange fire that God had not commanded them. (Leviticus 10:1). The New Testament writer of the book of Hebrews, at Hebrews 10:31 wrote, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," We cannot mock God in this life and hope to reap the everlasting life on the day of judgment. (Galatians 6: 7,8).

The apostle John warned Christians, when he wrote, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9). Now, where is the doctrine of Christ found? Is it not in the New Testament of the Bible? Should we not then worship God today as the New Testament teaches?

Faith In God

J.C. CHOATE

The Hebrew writer tells us, *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Hebrews 11:1). Faith also may be said to be confidence, trust, acceptance, and that which produces obedience. It is upon this foundation that one becomes a Christian and it is because of faith that one remains a Christian.

Again, the Hebrew writer says, *"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"* (Hebrews 11:6). Please notice that there are two things involved here in believing in God. First, one must believe that He exists. Second, he must believe that God rewards those who seek after Him. How could one's faith be acceptable if it fell short of this?

How can we help but believe that there is a God in heaven when we look around us and see all of the things that exist? There are the heavens, earth, animals, human life. All of these things point to a Creator. David proclaimed: *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork"* (Psalm 19:1). Only a fool would deny that God exists (Psalm 14:1).

But it is not enough to believe that there is a God. We must also believe that Jesus Christ is His Son. Christ Himself said, *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me"* (John 14:1). There are many other verses that teach the same. Listen: *"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). *"Then Jesus cried out and said, 'He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me'"* (John 12:44).

What about those who do not believe in Christ? The Scriptures also tell us about these individuals. Christ said, *"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"* (John 3:18). *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him"* (John 3:36). *"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if*

you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins " (John 8:24).

From the foregoing verses of Scripture, surely we can see the blessings that come from believing in the Lord, but at the same time we can see the curses, woes, and punishments that will befall those who choose not to believe in Him.

But to what extent are we to believe in God and Christ as the Son of God? We may mentally accept them, but is this sufficient? God's word tells us that we are to show our faith, or to prove it. Christ, for example, said, *"But why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and not do the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46). Again, He said, *"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, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"* (Matthew 7:21-23). Now these people were believers, and furthermore they were engaging in religious practices, but what was wrong? They were not doing the will of the Father in heaven.

We must believe in the Lord to the extent that we will do what He says that we should do. This is why "faith only" cannot save because it is a dead faith. James wrote, *"Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead"* (James 2:17). He continues, *"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only"* (James 2:24). And finally, *"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"* (James 2:26). Now in these various verses, the inspired writer is showing us that it is going to take more than "faith only" to save. He supports this by more than one illustration.

Sometimes preachers and teachers of "faith only" refer to John 3:16 as an example of their position. However, Christ says nothing there about faith only. Rather, He shows that if we believe in God we will not be lost but will receive eternal life. But the question is: What will an individual do if he really believes in God and His word? He will obey the Lord, of course, and that is the whole point.

Yes, justification is by faith (Romans 5:1), but not by faith only. We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8,9), but not by "faith only". Surely one would not argue that one can be saved apart from repentance, baptism, the Christian life, etc., and yet to

preach "faith only" one would be forced into that position. Actually, the whole problem lies in the meaning of faith. The kind of faith the Bible talks about is an active faith, a moving faith, a working faith, and an obedient faith. We read where Jesus saw the faith of those who brought a sick man to Him (Matthew 9:2). He wants to see our faith rather than to just hear us talk about it. He wants us to demonstrate it or prove it through our actions and by our obedience to His commands. Otherwise, our faith is dead and vain.

Faith is one of the commands of the gospel of Christ. It Comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). It leads the individual to repent of his sins, to confess that Christ is the Son of God, and to be baptized for the remission of sins, and we will be noticing each of these in following lessons. But without this faith there could be no obedience to these commands. With genuine faith, obedience will automatically follow. It will not question the Lord's commands, but it will comply. It will not reject His teaching but it will obey.

Christ said, *"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). It is only natural that if one does not believe, he will not obey the Lord. At the same time, if he does believe then he will obey Christ and that means that he will be baptized. That is so simple, isn't it? In all of the cases of conversion in the book of Acts you have a preacher on hand to preach to the sinner. So he hears, believes the gospel, repents of his sins, confesses Christ, and is baptized for the remission of sins. What happens? Once the individual hears the gospel and comes to the point of believing it, there is no problem with the rest because he is now ready to obey the Lord's commands. The whole thing hinges on whether he believes or not.

We read in Acts 2 of a group of unbelievers. Some of them had actually participated in the crucifixion. Peter and the apostles preached the gospel to them. They showed how that Christ was truly the Son of God. After convincing them of this the question was simply: *"What shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37). In other words, they were now ready to act on their faith, and about three thousand did (Acts 2:41). The record says that Philip preached the gospel to the Samaritans and many believed and were baptized (Acts 8:12). When Philip preached Christ to the eunuch, the record says

that he believed and upon being told what to do he complied and went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:26-39). In Acts 16 we have the story of Paul and Silas telling the jailer that he must believe to be saved. But he was an unbeliever. So they preached the word of God to him and his household in order that they might believe, and then the record tells us that as a result, the jailer took them and washed their stripes, showing repentance, and was baptized, he and all his family straightway (Acts 16:30-33). The same is likewise true with all of the other cases of conversion.

Finally, the scriptures teach that there is but one faith (Ephesians 4:5). There is one Bible, and when all accept it and believe it, then we will all have the same faith, and that one faith will lead us all to do the same thing — to obey the Lord and to be faithful to Him.

Who Are The Chosen?

MILES PEEPLE

In Ephesians 1:4, we have the following: *"just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."* Paul states that the supreme and sovereign God of all creation, the everlasting God, has selected us. He has chosen us in Christ. Just as God chose the Israelites in the Old Testament to be His people and the recipients of His blessings, so God chooses men and women in the present age to be His holy people and to receive all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3). He chooses the ones who are in Christ.

Who are chosen? Who make up the elect of God? Please note carefully: this verse does not say that we are chosen to be put into Christ. No, not at all! In fact, no where does the New Testament say we are chosen to be put into Christ. Not a single passage teaches such an idea. Ephesians 1:4 is saying that, when an individual is *"in Christ"* (i.e., in union with Christ), then he becomes one of the elect of God. It is not the case that one is in Christ because he was chosen. Rather, he is chosen because he is in Christ. We must first be in Christ before we become the chosen of God.

Many advocates of unconditional election refer to John 15:16 to try to support their false teaching. But does it? John 15:16 says, *"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."* When Jesus acknowledged He chose them rather than their having chosen Him, the Lord Jesus was not talking about their salvation from sin. The context, as well as the words in the verse, will not support the view that salvation from sin is the topic under discussion. Obviously, the Lord Jesus was talking about His calling them to become His apostles. Peter, James, John, and the other nine as well, did not choose themselves to become the Lord's apostles. No, not at all! Jesus selected them to become His apostles. He did not choose them to be saved. No one is ever chosen to be saved. An individual is chosen because he is already saved and is in Christ. By the way, as we have noted in other articles, we get into Christ by being baptized into Him (Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27).

What is the purpose or goal of God's choosing us in Christ? We are the chosen of God in order to become holy and without blame before Him in love. God expects His chosen people to be righteous. He expects them to be pure and godly. The Bible says, *"as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"* (1 Peter 1:14-16). Yet again, the Bible says, *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). We need to refrain totally from doing anything that the Lord prohibits. We must be faithful in doing all that He requires. The goal of salvation and redemption is a holy people before the Lord.

When did God make His choice? God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Before the world was ever created, and before man ever lived, God made His choice (i.e., His election). God did not choose individuals as such, and this is a very significant fact. Instead, He chose the divine plan by which men may be redeemed. God chose the plan but not the individual

man. The essence of this choice was that all who shall ever be in Christ will constitute the true chosen ones of God.

The Yoke of Christ

DILLARD THURMAN

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

It should be universally known that the life in Christ imposes a yoke upon His followers; that there are grave responsibilities and duties that must be accepted even as they accept Christ as their Savior. These obligations, in themselves, are neither light nor easy. Yet, in our text, Jesus states clearly that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. This is true - but only when you take into consideration the Other who bears the yoke with us. Shall we look to the yoke that we must bear?

The Manner of Life Is a Yoke

First of all, the manner of life must be drastically changed when we come into Jesus Christ. That which we approved before must be put far from us in our new relationship. We cannot afford to become entangled in worldliness out of which we fled for refuge in Christ. *"For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage"* (Gal. 5:1). Now, we know that Paul was here speaking of the bondage of the law of Moses, but it has its application also in any bondage that would enslave us - including bondage to sin (Heb. 2:14). Having now accepted the yoke of Jesus Christ, we can't wear the yoke of Satan.

A Christian is to glorify God by a consecrated life of service. We must so joyfully accept the yoke of Christ that the world *"may see our good works, and glorify our Father in heaven"* (Matt. 5:16). As the apostle wrote, *"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ"* (Phil. 1:27). We are to adorn the gospel by our portrayal of it to the world. Each saint becomes a show window in which God advertizes His goodness and His compassion. In writing to Timothy, Paul stated, *"Let no man despise thy youth;*

but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). Every Christian should be such an example. It is a yoke that must be worn!

To God's saints at Corinth it was said, "*Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone, but in tablets that are hearts of flesh*" (2 Cor. 3:2-3). It is important that we remember that we are being read every day by an unbelieving world, and they see Christ only as revealed to them by His body, the church.

The Yoke of True Doctrine

Another obligation which this yoke of discipleship imposes upon all saints has to do with the adherence and loyalty to the true doctrine. God holds us accountable for the purity of His teaching, and punishes any who would destroy its simplicity. "*Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them in the sight of the Lord, that they strive not about words, to no profit, to the subverting of them that hear. Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth*" (2 Tim. 2:14-15).

The word of God must be handled aright, and any who would "*wrest the Scriptures*" does so to his own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16). The apostle Paul himself pronounced a curse against any who would tamper with the purity of the gospel of Christ. "*Though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be accursed*" (Gal. 1:8). Jude tells us that we are to "*contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints*" (Jude 3). But anyone who goes beyond "*the teaching of Christ hath not God*" (2 John 9). As the apostle Paul, we must be "*set for defense of the gospel*" (Phil. 1:16).

Life of Service Is a Yoke

There is also the life of service that must be accepted as Christ's yoke. Any who become the disciple of the Lord must set forth good works that will glorify God. "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them*" (Eph. 2:10). As the apostle further wrote, "*So then, as we have opportunity, let us work*

that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:10). This calls for compassionate love for all who are in need: *"Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world"* (James 1:27). He who is unwilling to bear this yoke of the Lord cannot be His disciple.

The Yoke of Personal Evangelism

The disciple of Christ must bear the yoke of personal evangelism. It is utterly impossible for one disciple to shoulder this responsibility onto the backs of others. It is a good thing that some are willing to go afar to spread the gospel of Christ, but that in no wise alleviates the burden of responsibility which Christ has placed on us all. In sending out the apostles to *"make disciples of all the nations,"* He further told them, *"Teaching them to observe all things which I have commanded you"* (Matt. 28:20). That command is self-perpetuating, and comes to every one of us.

When Paul stated that he was a debtor to all men (Rom. 1:14), he was making a confession that can be repeated by everyone who has received the gospel! The only way to repay Christ for the glorious light of the gospel is in sending it forth to others. The apostle Paul shows that the natural thing for a Christian is to tell the story of the cross that brings salvation: *"But having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak; we also believe, and therefore also we speak"* (2 Cor. 4:13). If you are saved, tell others about this salvation so they can be saved. This yoke must be borne by every child of God.

Yoke of Complete Obedience

Possibly the yoke that galls more people than any other is that of complete obedience to the gospel of Christ. Yet, until one has obeyed the Lord, he is not His disciple. *"Thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness"* (Rom. 6:17-18). As the apostle Peter wrote, *"Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth"* (1 Pet. 1:22).

Until one has accepted the yoke of obedience, he is not a servant of Christ and Jesus is not his Savior. *"Though he was a*

Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:8-9). He is the Savior only of those who obey Him! If one is not willing to obey completely the gospel of Jesus Christ, then the Lord still asks, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord; and do not the things which I say?" Luke 6:46).

We Are Yoked with God

None can say that the yoke which Christ imposes is easy and light in itself. It requires rigid adherence to that which the Lord demands. Yet, when viewed as working with God, it is light and easy. *"We are God's fellow-workers" (1 Cor. 3:9), and, "God works in you" (Phil. 2:13). What a glorious calling, that we can work with God, the Creator of the universe! How satisfying to announce, "Working together with him we entreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:1). What a triumph it was for Paul and Barnabas to report to the church in Jerusalem, "And they rehearsed all things that God had done with them" (Acts 15:4). God was their partner!*

Christ Also is Yoked with Us

The Lord Jesus promised, *"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). Our close relationship is shown, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself ... as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:19-20). It may seem to be an unbearable burden to preach the gospel to all mankind, but we are not alone in this endeavor. Christ works with and through us to reconcile the world unto Himself. This makes the yoke easy and burden light. We have only to look to the other side of the burden to see who carries the greater load!*

Teamed with the Holy Spirit

The Christian is also yoked with the Holy Spirit to accomplish God's will. *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:14-16). The apostle Paul also wrote, "And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6)*

We Are Yoked with Other Servants

God's children are even working in fellowship with the angels of heaven! An angel of the Lord told John that he was a "*fellow-servant*" of all them that keep the sayings of God (Rev. 22:9). And it must also be understood that we are yoked with the best people on earth - the Lord's people - in laboring for Him. The early Christians had such fellowship in the Lord's work as to make the yoke easy and burden light, for they shared mutual obligations joyfully. It is only when we have given ourselves in unselfish service to the cause of Christ that we find the easiness of His yoke and the lightness of His burden. A trusting, obedient faith appropriates the greatness of the privilege of laboring with God in doing His will, and exults in the lightness of the burden He imposes.

Power to Persevere

JOHNNY RAMSEY

We should never overlook the power of endurance in the life of a Christian. Day by day, as we grow in the grace of godliness (2 Pet. 3:18), we come nearer to the ideal which God has set for faithful soldiers of the Savior. A brilliant hymn challenges our attention:

*Valiant endeavor and loving obedience,
Freely and joyously now would we bring,
Yielding henceforth to our glorious King,
Freely surrendered and wholly Thine own.*

Ardent members of the church of the Lord must "*Continue steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers*" (Acts 2:42). We stand up for the name of Christ, the gospel and the plan of salvation. We worship sincerely (John 4:24), give generously (Acts 20:35), live spiritually (Rom. 13:14), attend regularly (Psa. 122:1) and pray fervently (James 5:16). The only way for one to be victorious is to persevere in every one of our endeavors for the Lord. Even when adversity comes our way, we remember this powerful truth: "Trouble and perplexity drive me to prayer, and prayer drives away perplexity and trouble."

We will certainly fail in our pursuit of heaven if we allow difficult moments to crush our spirits and dampen our hopes. Many people cannot enjoy the rainbow, because they are still dwelling upon the storm. It is sad indeed when we linger over past problems and miss present joys and future success. Paul made it very clear in the magnificent section of 2 Cor. 4, *"Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal"* (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

When we abide in the Lord, continue in His word and remain within the confines of God's grace (1 John 2:24), it will be very difficult for Satan to gain an advantage over us (2 Cor. 2:11). But, when we become slothful and careless, we dig our own spiritual grave. Our faith must constantly be *"working by love"* (Gal. 5:6) if heaven would be our home and if we would be productive in spiritual values in the here and now.

We must diligently add the virtues of godliness to our daily walk, if perseverance becomes a reality in our journey toward the land of fadeless day. It is the end of our faith (1 Pet. 1:9) that culminates in joy and glory. We must always be found pressing on, if we would dwell in God's House forever (Psa. 27:4). If we become weary in well-doing, we will certainly fall short of our cherished destination.

We are exhorted to recall the tragedy that befell Lot's wife (Luke 17:32) and never look back, but ever look onward and upward, lest we turn back to perdition (Heb. 10:38-39). The challenge to do better is found throughout the Bible. Solomon wrote, *"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might"* (Eccle. 9:10). It is surely the work of the devil that causes us to be content with less than our very best.

To keep on keeping on, even when trouble and sorrow attend our way, is a mark of true greatness, supreme loyalty and undaunted faith. And these are the things that make us strong. May we fervently and sincerely sing:

*Savior, lead me then at last,
When the storm of life is past,*

*To the land of endless day
Where all tears are wiped away.*

And, as one old brother prayed, "Lord, that will be enough."
Amen!

This Book Called The Bible

CHARLES BOX

Solomon said, "...of many books there is no end" (Ecclesiastes 12:12). Yet, one book stands out as far different from all others. This book has been protected and preserved by the providence of God. *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away"* (Matthew 24:35).

This protected and preserved book is the Bible. It is God's inspired Word. Therefore, the obligation rests upon us to study that Book, to handle it correctly, and to believe and obey its teachings.

Can the Bible be understood? Yes! It can be understood. Knowing some simple things can help. The Bible is made up of the Old Testament and the New Testament — actually, sixty-six books, which together tell one story. The message is, "Someone is coming, Someone has come, and Someone is coming again." Thirty-nine books are in the Old Testament. Twenty-seven are in the New Testament.

Can the Old Testament be understood? Yes! The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament can be divided into four categories. The divisions are: (1) five books of law — Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; (2) twelve books of history — Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther; (3) five books of poetry — Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon; (4) Seventeen books of prophecy — Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. This inspired historical record is true and dependable.

Can the New Testament be understood? Yes! The twenty-seven books of the New Testament can be divided as follows:

(1) the Gospel records — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — tell of the life of Christ and His personal ministry; (2) Acts tells of the establishment of the church and forgiveness of sins, (3) twenty-one books tell how to live the Christian life — Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, and Jude; and (4) Revelation tells of the eternal victory for God's people.

Take time to learn God's Word, live by its teaching, die by it, and go to heaven when life is over. The Bible is true! You can depend on its teaching. Your soul is safe as you follow its precepts.

The Outstretched Hand Of God

MICHAEL L. KING

You may have heard the question, "If you feel a distance between you and God, who moved?" We live in a world filled with so many elements of distraction that it often leaves one wondering or feeling as if God no longer knows or cares about us.

Our sins are perceived, by us, to be worse than the sins of any other. We have high and lofty expectations for ourselves, and when we fail to meet those self-imposed objectives, it is easy to become discouraged. We are very familiar with God's attitude toward sin and we sometimes forget that He loves the sinner while abhorring the sin that is committed.

Jesus emphasized during His ministry that His mission was not to concentrate on those who were righteous, but *"He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick ... For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance'"* (Matthew 9:12,13).

The burden of proof has never been on God or Jesus as to whether they have the ability to reach man's soul, but on man to comply and respond to their marvelous provisions. Jesus has *"blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"* (Ephesians 1:3).

Peter echoed the Holy Spirit's sentiments when he promised that *"His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to*

life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

The marvelous grace of God is shown by Paul in his epistle to the Romans. He said, "*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). Additionally, he notes that "*we are saved from wrath through Him*" (verse 9). This same vicarious death ended the stand-off and separation that had been caused by man's sin toward his God (Isaiah 59:1,2), to be reconciled (resolve, clear up, mend, patch up), and be "*saved by His life*" (Romans 5:10). A primary by-product of this reconciliation is that "*we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (verse 11). It is so wonderful that we have "*such a high priest Who was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens*" (Hebrews 7:26).

Israel was like us in that their sins had separated them from God (Isaiah 59:1,2), necessitating intervention from something or someone holy to remove that which was unholy. When Israel was in bondage in Egypt, her cries of deliverance went up to God. In response, God brought them out, but soon their sinfulness led them to complain about their hardships. God instructed Moses to say to them, "*You have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, 'Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?'*" (Numbers 11:20).

Moses was a bit pessimistic himself and tried to make excuse for those over whom he had leadership responsibilities, but "*the Lord said to Moses, 'Has the Lord's arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not'*" (verse 23).

Isaiah told Israel, "*For your iniquities you have sold yourselves*" (Isaiah 50:1). The Lord observed that when He came, there was no man; when he called, there was no answer. He warned that He could dry up the sea, make rivers a wilderness, or make the sky turn black (verses 2,3). The Lord asked once again, "*Is my hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem?*" (verse 2).

Israel's feelings of being alienated from God were legitimate, but not because of God's failures. "*Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you*" (Isaiah 59:1, 2).

Our God can meet all of our needs and more! He will not override our will or desire to do so, but wants us to come to Him. Jesus reminds hearers that He is the *"bread of life"* (John 6:35) and whoever comes to Him will never be cast out (verse 37). The burden of proof is placed upon those in need to *"Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it shall be opened to you"* (Matthew 7:7). The promise in the following verse is that every request will be met. James stated, *"You do not have because you do not ask"* (James 4:2). He cautioned that motives for asking must be pure, for if we plan to spend it on our pleasures, we are asking amiss (verse 3).

Simply, we determine the length to which God will outstretch His arm of love and bounty by our willingness to accept it and comply with His will for us. It is no wonder that the New Testament concluded with an invitation to grasp the outstretched hand of God for forgiveness, friendship, favor, and future blessings. *"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whosoever desires, let him take the water of life freely"* (Revelation 22:17).

We know that *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promises"* (2 Peter 3:9); therefore, if you feel distanced or "cut out of God's will", who has withdrawn or brought about the disassociation? The distance can be overcome if we are willing to *"... submit to God. Resist the devil and He will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded"* (James 4: 7-9).

Is Thy God Able?

TIM D. SHOEMAKER

Daniel had spent the night in the lion's den, but it was king Darius who was unable to sleep in his palace. In Daniel 6:20 we read that very early in the morning Darius came to the den and cried out, *"O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, who thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"*

The question raised by Darius is one that is still asked by men today. They want to know if the God of the Christian is able today to deliver. Who can blame them, for who wants to serve a God

that is unable to help? Such an one would not be the true God, but only an idol (Jeremiah 10:5). However, the answer to their question is a resounding "Yes", for indeed our God is able to deliver.

God is able to save. *"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them"* (Hebrews 7:25). In the context of this verse the writer of Hebrews speaks of Christ as our High Priest who is superior to all others who served as high priest. All previous high priests had been unable to continue in that office because of death. Jesus is superior because He ever lives to make intercession for us. There is no danger that our High Priest might die and leave us without One to intercede on our behalf for the rest of our journey. Therefore, He is able to save to the uttermost those that come to Him.

In other words, there is full assurance to all Christians that Christ is able to bring about our ultimate salvation in heaven because He is always making intercession for us. Paul, in his letter to the church at Rome, spoke of this great work of Jesus saying, *"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us"* (Romans 8:33,34).

God is able to keep us. *"For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day"* (2 Timothy 1:12). In spite of all that Paul suffered in his service to Jesus, he was not ashamed, because he had put his full trust in Jesus. He was convinced that Jesus would guard his (Paul's) soul until that day when all men would be rewarded for what they had done in this body. Just as Jesus had committed His spirit to God (Luke 23:46) with the full confidence that God would care for Him, so Paul, in that same assurance of God's ability to guard and protect, committed his soul to God also.

Our Lord is able to help those who are tempted in this life. *"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted"* (Hebrews 2:18). The word "succour" is from the Greek word *bon-hew* which means "to run to the aid of those who cry for help; to advance to the assistance

of anyone..." Because Jesus has undergone temptations like all of us, He is able to help us in our time of temptation. When God chose One to be high priest, the requirement was that that One be understanding of those who came acknowledging their sin and the need for His sacrifice for the forgiveness of their sins. Likewise, Christ, as our High Priest, suffered being tempted, that He might be helpful to us when we are tempted. The writer here confirms that He is able to do that.

Hog Pen Lessons

OWEN COSGROVE

In Luke chapter 15, Jesus taught three great parables about repentance. The first one concerned a sheep that wandered away from the fold, and the shepherd left the ninety-nine other sheep to go out and find the lost one. The story indicates God's providential care over even one soul, and the lesson is that there is rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner that repents.

The second parable is about a woman that had ten coins and lost one. Even with nine coins left, she did not have the joy that came with having ten. The moral is that a soul is precious and that the Lord rejoices when a lost one is reclaimed. The sheep apparently was lost through personal carelessness; and the coin was misplaced through the carelessness of another.

However, the third parable is about a young man who became lost through willfulness. He was the younger son of an apparently rich man who allowed him to claim his part of the estate and to "go out on his own". We know this as the story of the Prodigal Son. "Prodigal" means wasteful. This son threw himself into a riotous lifestyle, and such living left him broke and desperate. When he "came to himself, he returned in humble submission to his father's will, and his repentance brought joy and forgiveness.

The young man's older brother protested his father's kindness toward the penitent son, but the loving parent reminded him that his brother had been dead and was alive again — he was lost, and then he was found. God wants man to repent. Man is not saved by faith alone. To please God, he must repent and obey. There are some wonderful lessons of life that the young man

learned in the misery and decadence of the hog pen:

1. He learned that freedom has responsibilities. His sudden feeling of independence caused him to make several rash and foolish decisions that nearly ruined his life.

2. He learned the folly of wastefulness. The old saying that "he who wastes will come to want" is certainly true in this case.

3. He learned the high cost of low living. Crime, immorality, and vice can be a drain on every resource of life.

4. He learned that life can be hard. It is not meant for people to have fun all of the time. If we don't want to work hard when we don't have to, the time may come when we will have to work hard when we don't want to.

5. He learned that craving pleasure is a symptom of immaturity. The apostle Paul said that when he was a child he thought and acted as a child, but that when he became a man he put away childish things. The hardship of the hog pen brought the young man lessons that pleasure and fun could never have taught.

6. He learned that few people in the world love as does a good parent. His fair weather friends were scarce when his funds ran out.

7. He learned that desperate people will do almost anything. He was tempted to eat the husks that the swine were eating. Sinful living often lowers people to debauchery and desperation.

8. He learned that it takes resolution and courage to be humble and to return to God. A weaker and less committed person would not have had the will to turn his life around.

9. He learned that a person must not let hypocrites keep him away from God. The elder brother was of little encouragement to this pitiful and ruined person. It took the love of the Father and a strong determination for the Prodigal Son to make that long trip home. In the hog pen he resolved that he must not let anything keep him away from home and peace.

10. He learned that his Father truly loved him and would joyfully give him another chance. This is the message of Christ's Gospel. You and I are too important and precious to waste our lives in the hog pens of life. Repentance and obedience are the open doors that lead to God and Heaven.

And now, for nearly two thousand years the story of that young

man's courage and wisdom has led sad souls who were crushed by sin to take new hope and to return to God and His love. Suffering can be a great teacher if we will let it.

What About the Thief on the Cross?

STEVE VICE

"What about the thief on the cross?" This is a common question asked by sincere people, and it is a question that can be answered very simply and clearly.

Many times this question is answered with an explanation of the separation of the Old and New Covenants. Since it is a fact that the thief on the cross did not live under the New Covenant, it follows that he was not subject to baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

However, another (and I believe, simpler) explanation is this. To whom did Jesus speak those words? An essential rule of hermeneutics is the question, "To whom is the person speaking?"

In Matthew 9:1-8, a paralyzed man was lowered through a hole in the roof, desiring that Jesus would heal him. Jesus said to that man, "*Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.*" Were the sins of all the people who heard Jesus speak those words forgiven of their sins? A few moments later Jesus said to this man, "*Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.*" Did all who heard Jesus take up their beds and walk? Did all paralyzed people in Jerusalem take their beds and go to their homes? Of course not! Why? Because Jesus spoke those words to only that one man.

When Jesus went to eat with Simon the Pharisee, a sinful woman stood behind Him, weeping, and washing His feet with her tears. Jesus said to this woman, "*Your sins are forgiven*" (Luke 7:48). Did He speak those words to all who were in the house? Can we be forgiven today like this sinful woman, by weeping and washing Jesus' feet with our tears? No. Those words of forgiveness were spoken only to that one woman.

When Jesus said, "*Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise*" (Luke 23:43), to whom was He speaking?

Was He speaking to both thieves? Did both thieves go to be with Jesus in paradise? No. Was he speaking to John and His mother, Mary, who were standing within hearing distance? No. He spoke those words only to that one man who was hanging beside Him, and that one man was with Jesus in Paradise that day.

Nowhere else in the New Testament can we find anyone who was saved like this thief. When Peter and the apostles were asked what had to be done to be saved, they did not answer, "Nothing, but today you will be with Jesus in Paradise." However, they did answer, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."* (Acts 2:38).

Which words has Jesus spoken to you? *"Today you will be with Me in Paradise"* (Luke 23:43), or, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved. He who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:15,16). The answer is clear.

People today are not saved as the thief on the cross was saved. In Acts 2:37-41, believers repented of their sins and were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. In Acts 8:1-12, the Gospel of Christ was preached, people believed it, and were baptized into Jesus Christ for salvation. When Phillip preached to the man from Ethiopia in Acts 8:26-39, the man confessed his belief that Jesus was the Son of God. Then both he and Philip went down into the water, where Philip baptized him. This man of Ethiopia came rejoicing in the salvation of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever wondered why people do not hold up Zacchaeus the tax collector as an example of salvation for us today? Jesus said to him, *"Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham"* (Luke 19:9). As far as we know, Zacchaeus was never baptized. Could it be the fact that he was willing to give half of his goods to the poor, and to repay anyone he had wronged, that people do not uphold his salvation as a pattern for us today? The fact is, Jesus did not speak those words to us today.

What is God's will for you today? For the answer see Mark 16:15,16.



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