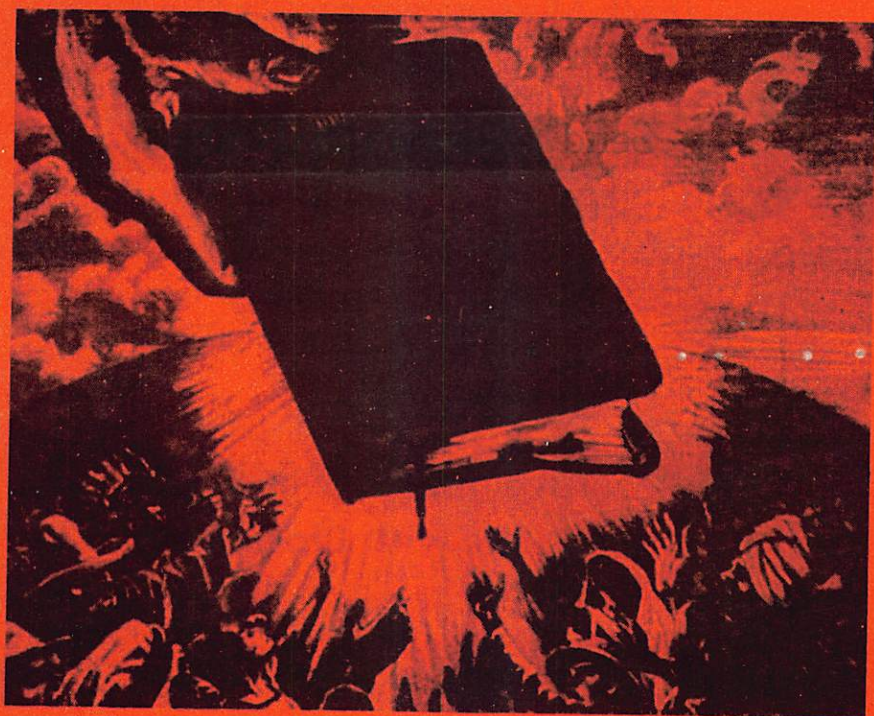


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# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## ***EDITORIAL***

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

***Church is not a dead material building,  
But is a Body of Living People***

While visiting Britain, someone had asked a taxi driver, whether he was a Christian? As the driver responded in the affirmative, the visitor next asked him whether he goes to church regularly? To this the man replied by saying, "In this country most people go to church only on three occasions: when one is hatched, matched or dispatched."

Universally speaking, most people do not really understand what the church in fact is. To most people church is a building or place where people go to worship or to attend or perform some religious functions or ceremonies on certain days. But this is absolutely not what the Bible teaches about the church.

The word church in the English Bible has been derived from the Greek word "ekkelisia." And the word ekkelisia means "an assembly of people who are called for a certain purpose." The New Testament of the Bible, which is the source of learning about the church, was originally written in the Greek language, and wherever the Greek word ekkelisia (church) appear in the New Testament, this is what it means—an assembly, or group of people, or a body of people.

Another thing that we learn from the Bible about the church is the fact that to God and to Christ the church is so important that the Bible says that Christ gave Himself for the church and He purchased the church with His own blood. We read, at Ephesians

5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, just as *Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.*" And Acts 20:28 says, "*.... the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*" If a man starts or build a church, and call it by some name, that church may not be important at all, because Christ taught, "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted." (Matthew 15:13). But the church that Christ Himself built or established in the City of Jerusalem, in about A.D. 33 (Matthew 16:18), and the church of which He Himself is the Head (Ephesians 5:23 & Colossians 1:18); which is His own Spiritual body (Ephesians 1:22,23), is tremendously and extremely important and valuable to God and to our Saviour Jesus Christ. Remember, He gave Himself for the church and shed His blood to purchase the church with that blood! And it is to that church, the Bible teaches, Christ adds daily those who are being saved (Acts 2:47). The Church is not a building made of bricks and mortar. The Church of the Bible is a body of living people who have been saved by the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:28).

## *Preaching the Gospel*

J.C. CHOATE

Christ said, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:19,20). He also said, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned*" (Mark 16:15,16).

From these statements, we want to observe a number of things:

1. Jesus commanded the apostles to go. The Lord not only told the apostles to go, but He told them where to go. He said that they should go into all the world, to every nation of the world, and even to every creature of every nation of all the world. This included everyone, with no one being overlooked. Even for that day it was quite a task, considering the fact that they didn't have the transportation

system and communication system that we now have access to, but nevertheless, this was the Lord's instruction, and surely He would not have asked the impossible.

2. Jesus commanded the apostles to go and preach. In commanding them to preach, He also made it clear as to what should be preached. He said that the gospel should be preached, and to be sure that there was no misunderstanding on this point, he spelled it out by saying, *"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believes not shall be condemned"* (Mark 16:16).
3. Jesus said that the apostles should baptize those who wanted to obey the gospel. First of all it should be understood that the Lord placed the responsibility upon the apostles to take the gospel into all the world. Their responsibility was not to see that the people obeyed the gospel, or a lot of other things, but rather to see to it that the gospel was proclaimed to all. However, after the gospel had been preached, and there were those who wanted to obey it, then the Lord said that they should baptize them. Then He went a step further to emphasize the manner in which they were to be baptized. He said, *"baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matthew 28:19). Again, the Lord wanted no misunderstanding on the point.
4. Finally, Jesus taught that those who had been obedient to the gospel should be further taught. Again, notice that it was the Lord's command that they should go into all the world, preach the gospel to all, and then they should baptize those who wanted to obey the Lord. But now once this has been done, there comes another responsibility, and that is, in the words of Jesus, *"Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20). This means that the Lord took every precaution to handle the situation regardless of which direction it went. He further intended that those who obeyed the first principles of the gospel should not be left to die spiritually, but rather that they should be further taught and instructed in the way to live the Christian life. In this way He was not only showing an interest in their immediate salvation but also in their eternal

salvation. He wanted them to be prepared to live the faithful Christian life, and this could be done only through additional teaching.

The foregoing is usually labeled as the Great Commission in that the command to preach the gospel includes the world and its message is so great and vital to the salvation of souls. But going on, we want to see how the Lord planned for this commission to be carried out. As we turn to Acts 1:8 we have the Lord's plan brought down to a series of geographical steps. Please listen to His instruction as He speaks to the apostles: *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). As we read through the book of Acts we can see that this is exactly what happened. Let us observe more closely:

1. The gospel was to be preached to begin with in Jerusalem. When we read Acts 1 and 2 we have this setting: The apostles are in Jerusalem, the day of Pentecost comes, with Jews being gathered from all over the world. Then the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the apostles, enabling them to speak in the languages of those who were present, and it is then that they begin to preach the gospel for the first time. As a result, some three thousand gladly received the word and were baptized and added to the church. It was from this moment that the gospel began to spread. It might also be pointed out that in the Lord's wisdom of having the gospel preached at this time, when so many people were gathered together from all over the world, that it meant that with various ones of those obeying the Lord, the gospel began to spread with their return to their respective lands to tell their own people about it. For instance, we read of strangers from Rome being present. Then later we read of the church existing in Rome before Paul's visit there, and the scriptures do not suggest that Peter ever went there, or that any of the other apostles had gone prior to this time. So what is the explanation? Evidently these strangers from Rome obeyed the gospel, returned home, taught their own people, and thus the church was established.
2. The gospel was to be preached throughout Judea. Jesus was in that area immediately around Jerusalem. That

means it was no problem in preaching to people of this vicinity. So in the days following, the gospel was preached in Jerusalem and throughout Judea. Then we read concerning Stephen's death, *"Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles"* (Acts 8:1). Continuing on, we read concerning those that were scattered, *"Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word"* (Acts 8:4). So the gospel was preached throughout Judea.

3. The gospel then was to be taken to the people of Samaria. *"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did"* (Acts 8:5,6). *"But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized"* (Acts 8:12). Later after Peter and John had visited with them, the record says, *"So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans"* (Acts 8:25). So Samaria heard the gospel, according to the Lord's plan.
4. Finally, the gospel was to be taken to all the world. To prove that it was taken to all the world, Paul said, *"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"* (Colossians 1:23). So the Lord's plan for evangelizing the world was fully carried out within thirty years of time.

What would the Lord have us to do today? He would have us do the same. That is, we also have the responsibility of taking the gospel into all the world, to every nation of all the world, to every creature of every nation of all the world. We have a greater job in the sense that there are more people, but when we consider the modern day facilities at our disposal, such as transportation, communication, etc., then our job should be easier. But the Lord has placed the responsibility upon us and we must do it. Again,

He would not ask us to do the impossible.

The world needs the gospel of Christ. It is the hope of the world. It is the only thing that can change it, help it, and save it. We who have this gospel must see to it that it is preached to all the world.

## Predestination

OWEN COSGROVE

A friend recently told me about an old man who believed adamantly that God predestines everything that happens in the lives of men. One day he tripped and rolled down a flight of stairs — whappety, whappety, whappety — bam!

The old fellow got up and dusted himself off. "Man, that hurt," he said. "But since it just had to happen, I'm glad it's over with!"

The Bible speaks of predestination in the sense that Christianity was planned and purposed, rather than being merely an accident, a coincidence, or a kind of afterthought of God. God *predetermined* that man would have a way to be saved, but He leaves it up to us to decide whether we will obey or not. "Whosoever will" is the clear invitation of the Scriptures.

Predestination is not simply the belief that "whatever will be will be". Only a fool would argue that whatever will be won't be, or whatever won't be will be. The question is whether God causes everything that happens. If God causes it, then He is at fault for all of the world's sin and rebellion, and man is only a helpless and mindless pawn.

People say such things as, "When it's your time to go, you will go!" That may be so in some ways, but we can do a great deal to postpone it. Man can make a great difference in his life, either for good or for evil.

The key word in the Bible for refuting Calvinistic predestination is "if." If everything is predestined, there is no "if" to our part of it. Men talk about fatalism and determinism, but nothing is more clearly taught in the Bible than man's free moral agency.

"I am the master of my fate;

I am the captain of my soul."

God set up the plan for man's redemption — deliberately, consciously, and intentionally, but it is up to man whether he wants



to fit into that plan. God has come as far as He can without overriding our will and forcing salvation upon us. The next move is ours — it's up to us to hear, believe, and obey.

## I Did Not Write The Bible

ALBERT GARDNER

I know that it does not come as a great surprise to you that I did not write the Bible. In fact, I have never been accused of writing the Bible. I have read parts of the Bible that people resented. I have taught Bible truth that made people angry. I have shown people things in the Bible that they did not believe and that crossed their long-held doctrines. But I have never been accused of writing the Bible.

Since I did not write it, **I am not responsible for what it teaches.** I cannot change its message (Galatians 1:8,9), and I can't endorse those who do change it (2 John 9-11). Because so many varied things are taught by religious leaders, we must weigh every doctrine by the Bible. *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1).

Though I did not write the Bible, **I cannot ignore it.** Its claims and commands demand a response. The proper approach to Bible study is to understand that the Book of books came from God. *"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God, which ye heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe"* (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

**I must study it.** Belief that the Bible is from God requires that we study it. Secular knowledge may be helpful in some ways, but a study of the Bible is life changing (2 Timothy 2:15).

**I must understand it.** There are some difficult parts in God's word, but what to do to be saved and how to live the Christian life are simple enough for all to understand. *"Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is"* (Ephesians 5:17).

Philip asked the eunuch, *"Do you understand what you are reading?"* (Acts 8:30). It would be cruel if we could not understand

His will, yet be required to believe, obey, and practice it. *"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)"* (Ephesians 3:3,4).

**I must believe it.** Often people hear gospel preaching, but they do not believe it. They may have a mistaken idea that they must have a certain kind of special feeling, in order to know that they are saved, not realizing that we are converted through the Word. *"For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe"* (1 Corinthians 1:21).

**I must obey it.** Belief of the Gospel is essential, but faith alone is not enough. *"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).

Jesus set the example of obedience which we are to follow. He makes clear that we are to obey. *"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"* (Matthew 7:21).

After one has heard the true Gospel, he can never be the same and must do *something* in response. He will either believe and obey it like 3,000 did (Acts 2:38,41), or he will reject it like Felix (Acts 24:25).

**I must teach it.** Though I did not write the Bible, I have the responsibility of teaching it to others so they can understand, believe, obey, and be saved by it. Just before Jesus ascended back to His Father, He gave the marching orders to the apostles, and consequently to us, when He said, *"Go preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15).

This duty has not been given to angels, but **people** are to teach **people**. When asked if he understood what he was reading, the eunuch said, *"How can I, unless someone guides me?"* (Acts 8:31).

**I must defend it.** I did not write God's Word, but I must defend it. The attack is not on only one verse, but is against the whole Book. The Bible cannot proclaim and defend itself, but must depend on those who believe it to support it. Error also depends on those who believe it to spread it to others.

False teachers had slipped into the early church, so Jude wrote

about our duty in this regard. *"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"* (Jude 3).

**Summary.** I did not write the Bible. Those who did were inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 2:15). What they wrote is accurate, complete, and true. It is **God's Book!** Therefore, we have the responsibility to study, understand, believe, obey, teach, and defend it.

## ***Learning From Church History***

**BRUCE DAUGHTERY**

A study of church history can be very beneficial for Christians today. Some people believe that there is nothing to be gained by studying the past. However, God does not view history this way. *"The things written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope"* (Romans 15:4). J.W. Shepherd, a preacher and historian, once wrote, "If God overrules in human affairs, and teaches men by means of history, then he who faithfully records historic facts fulfills an important service in the education of men." (Preface to *The Church, The Falling Away, and the Restoration*).

One of the lessons we can learn from the past is that an individual has great power to change or influence his or her society. Many people today discount the power of the individual. Some are not motivated to serve the Lord unless they can join a big movement or follow millions of supporters. They might even express this sentiment by saying, "I am just one individual. It does not matter what I do." This type of reasoning demonstrates a lack of faith in what God can do through individuals. It also ignores the history of countless individuals whose actions have made a difference for the cause of Christ.

Consider two examples from church history and how they relate to the availability of the Bible to the average person. The first example is seen in the work of Jerome. Jerome was commissioned to prepare a new translation of the Bible into Latin in the fourth century after Christ. The previous Latin versions proved to have many manuscript defects. Jerome's work took

many years and required him to learn Hebrew as well as Greek, but in 404 AD, he completed his translation. Initially, Jerome's new Bible was not well received. Jerome complained bitterly, "They like their versions to be pretty, not accurate." In time, however, Jerome's work was recognized for the good that it accomplished. His translation, called the Vulgate, became the Bible for western civilization for more than 1,000 years! The English versions of today, as well as modern Bible translations in French, German, Italian, Spanish, and other languages, developed from Latin; all have had their form and vocabulary molded by Jerome's Vulgate translation.

The second example is that of William Tyndale. Tyndale was an Englishman living at the dawn of the Reformation. He had been influenced by the work of John Wycliffe to put the Bible into the language of the common man. Not everyone in the medieval world believed that this was a good idea. One time, an English priest told Tyndale that men would be better having the laws of the Pope rather than the laws of God. Tyndale responded by saying that if God spared his life, he would make it so that the boy driving a plow would know more Scripture than the priest knew. Due to religious persecution, Tyndale had to leave his native country to complete his work. His first New Testament was finished in 1525 A.D., and the book had to be smuggled into England. Eventually, more than 50,000 copies were circulated there. Tyndale was later betrayed by a friend, and at the orders of the king of England, he was executed on October 6, 1536. Before his death at a stake of fire he prayed, "Lord, open the eyes of the King." It has been estimated that more than 90% of the New Testament, as translated by Tyndale, was incorporated into the King James Version of the Bible.

Though long dead and unknown to most people today, Jerome and Tyndale, along with many other individuals, contributed to the availability of the Bible in the language of the common person. These were two men who made an impact, not only in their day and time, but also on those who have followed them through the centuries.

Dear Reader, let each one of us determine to do what we can for the cause of Christ. One individual *can* make a great difference!

# *Misunderstandings About Salvation*

JOHN-MARK WILSON

## **MISUNDERSTANDING 1: Can I be saved like the thief on the Cross?**

No. The thief died under the Old Law of Moses, not under the New Law of Christ. Christ frequently forgave sins during His personal ministry, which He had the authority to do as one of the Godhead. However, He has specified in His new will — the New Testament — how people can be saved after His death. We must remember that a will is in effect after the death of the testator (Hebrews 9:15-17). God tells us when the Old Law ended (Colossians 2:14). According to Ephesians 2:14-16, the Law was like a wall, separating Jews and Gentiles, and it was abolished in the Lord's death. Second Corinthians 3:14 tells us that the Old Testament was done away in Christ. We read in Galatians 3: 23-29 that we are no longer under the Old Law. Therefore, we must obey the directions in the New Testament if we desire to be saved today.

## **MISUNDERSTANDING 2: What about the people who are very sincere but have not been baptized?**

Not by sincerity alone. Hebrews 5:9 says clearly that we must obey Christ. We read in Matthew 7:21 that we must do the will of God. In John 3:5, Jesus explained that one must be born of water and the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of Heaven. We read further in 2 Thessalonians 1:7,8 that God will take vengeance on those who do not obey the Gospel.

Romans 6:3,4 and Acts 22:16 show that it is through our baptism into the death of Christ that we are cleansed by His blood. Second Timothy 2:10 explains that salvation is found only in Christ Jesus. Without Him we cannot stand before God, but according to Romans 8:1, there is no condemnation *in* Christ. Galatians 3:27 tells how we get into Him — through baptism. However, if there is no water and no baptism, then the person is not *in* Christ. *Can one be saved without Christ? Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6).*

**A question for the reader:** What if you are bitten by a poisonous snake and there is no antidote? You die. The poison that kills the soul is sin. We are bitten by the serpent of sin. The

only antidote is the blood of Christ. Without the saving power of that blood, the soul is dead.

**MISUNDERSTANDING 3: What if the person is out in the desert?**

The biblical case of a person being in the desert and wanting to be baptized is found in Acts 8. Shockingly, they came to some water, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into that water, and the eunuch was able to obey his Lord in baptism! If a person genuinely wants to be baptized, he will be able to do so. However, if he is simply looking for an excuse not to obey the commands specifically laid down in the New Testament, one excuse is as good as another.

**MISUNDERSTANDING 4: Baptism is a work; we are not saved by works.**

Verses often used: Romans 4:1-5; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 4:1-5. The works mentioned in these verses are works of merit — we can't *earn* our salvation. However, those who teach that we are saved by "faith only" are contradicting James 2:14-26. This passage shows that we are not saved by faith apart from works, but also by spiritual works, as commanded in the New Testament.

Baptism is not a work of *merit*, but an act of God's mercy allowing us this avenue of salvation, according to Titus 3:5. In Luke 7:30, the Pharisees refused baptism and rejected the counsel of God. John 6:29 teaches that even the act of believing is called a work — the work of God. Acts 10:35 says that he that *works righteousness* is acceptable to God.

**MISUNDERSTANDING 5: We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8).**

Acts 17:30. This passage shows that we must repent, but confession and faith are not mentioned. So we don't have to believe or confess in order to be saved? Right? \_\_\_\_

Matthew 10:32,33. Confession is mentioned, but neither believing nor repenting is mentioned, therefore we don't have to have faith or repent? Right? \_\_\_\_

1 Peter 3:21. Baptism is mentioned, but neither faith, repentance, nor confession is mentioned. So all we have to do is be baptized? Right? ....

Why are these conclusions not right? Because we cannot isolate one passage about salvation from other verses dealing with that subject.

## **Grace—everything God has done to redeem mankind**

1. Promise of the redeemer.
2. Death of Jesus on the cross.
3. Giving of the plan of salvation.
4. Preservation of the Bible.
5. Sending of the apostles out into the world.
6. Includes God's providence.

## **Faith—everything man must do for his salvation.**

1. Believe in God.
2. Turn away from sin.
3. Believe in Jesus as the divine Son of God.
4. Confess faith in Him.
5. Be baptized as an act of faith.
6. Be faithful unto death.

Noah is a good example of being saved by grace through faith.

Genesis 6:8 — Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. So God in His mercy told Noah what to do — build an ark. It was a huge job, but he did it exactly as God asked.

Hebrews 11:7 — Noah prepared the ark with godly fear, and it was called faithfulness.

**MISUNDERSTANDING 6: Baptism is only a figure of our salvation, signifying we have been saved (1 Peter 3:21).**

1 Peter 3:21 Does not say baptism is a figure, but a "like" figure. Just like the flood waters saved Noah, "Baptism saves us".

**MISUNDERSTANDING 7: In Mark 16:16 Jesus does NOT say, "He that believeth not and is baptized not shall be condemned." Only the unbelievers are condemned. Parallels: Digestion example:**

He that eateth and digesteth shall be filled, but he that eateth not shall be hungry. If one does not eat, he certainly won't digest.

## **Keeping On**

**REX BANKS**

In the shade of a juniper tree, a leather-girded prophet of God poured out his heart in prayer. *"It is enough, now O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers"* (1 Kings 19:4). Elijah was deeply distressed, hardly surprising in view of the fact that

the bloodthirsty Jezebel had a band of cutthroats on his trail. Further, if we recall that Elijah had just enjoyed a great victory over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, his distress is even more understandable. I mean, God had **empowered** Elijah, given the enemy into his hands, elevated him in the sight of all the people! What a letdown, what a disappointment now to be a hunted man when the Lord had seemed so near just a few hours before.

Maybe the prophet felt a little like the Israelites of Moses' day. God had promised to redeem them *"with an outstretched arm and with great judgments"* (Exodus 6:6), and it had happened. Ten plagues upon Egypt had demonstrated the power of Jehovah against the so-called "gods" of Egypt: Apis, Hapi, Hathor and others, and about three million Israelites were set free. The Pharaoh's army perished in the sea, and Israel and the nation were exalted: *"Who is like Thee among the gods, O Lord? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, majestic in holiness"* (Exodus 15:11). Israel was on a high; then, three days later in a hot, arid wilderness, the thirsty multitude came to a pool, and its waters were bitter (verse 23)! Undrinkable water and three million thirsty people! Where was the God who had just recently performed such wonders on their behalf? Just days earlier, the very forces of nature had served them, and now they couldn't get a drink! So, out goes the victory song and in comes the grumbling against God's appointed leader (verse 24).

Maybe like me, you recognize yourself in the prophet under the tree and in the thirsty multitude at the waters of Marah. How many of us come out of the waters of baptism "on a high" and secretly think, "Well, from now on it's easy sailing. If God loved me enough to send Jesus, then He loves me enough to deal with life's trials and tribulations. Now, I will bask in the sunlight of His blessings, and in sweet serenity, I will grow into a wise, spiritually mature saint before ascending to the Lord in clouds of glory." We feel invulnerable.

Then, a friend (a Christian brother or sister) breaks our heart, or the mind-numbing, will-sapping routine of daily existence just drags us down into the pit. Under our own juniper tree we protest: "But Lord, I thought my Christian walk would be a victory parade. I began with such plans." At our own bitter pool we grumble, "It's just not what I expected! After all the promises about the abundant



life, peace, and joy, I'm disappointed and hurt and angry!" Sadly, some of us renounce the God who seemed to promise so much, but who simply did not live up to our expectations. We've seen it happen. What is the solution?

Brethren, let's get it right. God **did not promise** a rose-strewn pathway through life. What He promised us is the strength to deal with life's problems in such a way that they become blessings to us, developing **endurance** and **perseverance** (Romans 5:3ff; James 2:2ff).

Look, God didn't **desert** Israel in the wilderness. In fact, His servant Moses "led" them to Marah (Exodus 15:22), and "...there He **tested them**" (verse 25). God's purpose was "to *know what was in their heart*" (Deuteronomy 8:2). Doesn't it make a difference to know that He is in control even in the *down* times? Doesn't it make a difference to know that the way we deal with problems reveals something about our hearts (trust or unbelief)?

Listen, Elijah's distress was not proof of God's absence but proof of Elijah's wavering faith. The God of creation sent an angel with a bread cake to feed the depressed prophet (1 Kings 19:5,6).

Problems are not proof that God no longer numbers the hairs of our head (Matthew 10:30); they are proof that God is molding us, strengthening us, maturing us. That's what fathers do (Hebrews 12:1).

Never give up because problems come! Never, never see problems as proof that God has deserted us! Life may not be fair, but in Christ it is a prelude to joy inexplicable. **Never** give up!

## "Whose Heart the Lord Opened"

GLENN COLLEY

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

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

His heart has been opened.

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

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

How did the Lord open Lydia's heart? The very same way He opens hearts today; with the teaching of His Word. The good news of forgiveness and security and genuine hope for heaven goes deeply into the souls of people who will listen. That is what is meant by the Hebrews writer who said, *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Hebrews 4:12).

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

## ***Remembering His Death and Resurrection***

**FRAZIER CONLEY**

From time to time people have suggested that the Lord's Supper memorializes only the death of Jesus, that it does not commemorate Christ's resurrection at all. This is hardly a trivial matter, as it concerns the meaning of the central act of worship in which Christians engage.

In fact, the Lord's Supper commemorates Christ's resurrection as well as His death. We can have confidence in this for the following reasons:

First, Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19 rsv). These words are repeated, and they are the Lord's own words about the interpretation of the communion.

We ask, "Could a Christian remember Christ without recalling His resurrection? It would be easier to remember Einstein and

forget the theory of relativity or to remember Moses and forget the Ten Commandments than it would be to remember Christ and not recall His resurrection.

In remembering Him, undoubtedly the Lord wants us to remember not only His death but also His resurrection, life, love, teachings and good deeds. As long as a participant in the Lord's Supper is thankful for the central events of the Cross, it would also be appropriate for him to recall any of the wonderful blessings Christ made possible.

Second, God placed the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week. The first day of the week is significant because the resurrection of Christ happened on that day. This clearly shows a strong connection in the divine system between the Lord's Supper and Christ's resurrection. All alone this fact would justify an inference that the Lord's Supper commemorates the resurrection of Christ as well as His death. If one could somehow divorce Christ's death from His resurrection and celebrate only His death, it would appear that the Lord's Supper should have been ordained for Friday, the day He died, instead of Sunday, the day He was raised.

Third, in 1 Corinthians 10:16 the Word of God says, "The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" The Christian participates in or has fellowship with the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The body of Christ is significant not only in its death but also in its resurrection. The raising of His body was the occasion upon which the "new man" was created (Ephesians 2:13-16). The church therefore is the body of Christ, not merely His body crucified, but His body crucified and risen. When Christians participate in the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper, they are commemorating the fact that they participate in the risen and living body of Christ. In the Lord's Supper, we celebrate His death and His resurrection.

Fourth, it can be affirmed without hesitation that when Paul said that Christians "proclaim [Christ's] death" (1 Corinthians 11:26) at the Lord's Supper, he was using the single word death in a comprehensive sense to refer to all of the saving events, including the Lord's resurrection. His death—the cross, the blood, etc.—is at the heart of the gospel and is of the highest significance. When the word "death" stands alone in the Word of God, it frequently, if not always, stands for or symbolizes the gospel events as a whole.

That is, "death" is shorthand or an abbreviation for the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and all that these things mean to us. Notice the following:

1. Jesus' death is frequently said to be the basis for the Christian's justification and forgiveness. But His resurrection is also said to be the basis. "And if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17 ASV). "Who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

"Who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). "Baptism ... now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (3:21 RSV).

These passages confirm that Christ's resurrection was also fundamental in providing justification from sin, a hope of spiritual life, salvation, and a conscience clear of guilt. Therefore, Christ's death alone, without His resurrection, could not have justified anyone. Therefore, when Scripture alludes to His death in its atoning significance, it clearly must refer also to His resurrection.

2. When Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified," it would be foolish to conclude that Paul meant he did not also preach the resurrection of Christ to the Corinthians. We know he preached both from the whole nature of the gospel, as well as from texts such as 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. The passage therefore illustrates that an allusion to the death of Christ (when used alone) can be and often is an abbreviation for or shorthand for the whole of His death, burial and resurrection.

3. For believers, Christ's death and resurrection always go together. His death apart from His resurrection would have been entirely in vain. To celebrate one is to celebrate the other. As one cannot separate Christ the head from His body the church, one cannot separate the Cross from the resurrection and ascension.

4. The use of one brief word to refer to the whole of something is a recognized figure of speech called "synecdoche of the part." The following references to the death of Christ are also believed to refer not only to His death, but also to His resurrection: Romans 3:25; 5:9; 1 Corinthians 1:17-18; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Galatians

6:14; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:20, 22; Hebrews 9:14; 10:19-20; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

5. Some theorists take passages like Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith," and focus on the narrowest definition of the word faith. They refuse to recognize that very often faith is a comprehensive word, an abbreviation for all of the requirements of conversion including obedience (John 3:16; Acts 14:1). But knowledgeable Bible students know that the single word "faith" when used alone about salvation refers to the whole of the believer's response, including repentance and baptism. This is true of other single word summaries. Notice how the word "repentance" stands for the whole of conversion in Acts 17:30. Notice how in verse 4 the word "persuaded" (ASV) undoubtedly includes in it faith, repentance, confession and baptism. Notice the same thing about the word "turned" in Acts 9:35. Yet some take the single word "faith" and say believers are saved by it and therefore baptism has no part in it.

Therefore, when Paul says in the Lord's Supper that we "show forth his death," he includes in the single word "death" Christ's sufferings, burial, resurrection and glorification.

## ***The Evidence of God's Grace***

**DAVID THURMAN**

*"But there were some of them, men Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:20-21).* The early church was at an important crossroads. The church had been completely Jewish in its makeup up until the conversion of Cornelius, as recorded in Acts 10 and 11. Following the conversion of the first Gentile, other believers began to spread the good news of salvation among other Gentiles who would not become Jews in any sense. The first church to experience the mixture of both Jewish and non-Jewish Christians was in the city of Antioch.

The apostles in Jerusalem heard about this situation and quickly realized the situation could be difficult or even explosive

to the growing kingdom of Jesus Christ. In the Antioch church would be believers from strict Jewish backgrounds and believers from idolatrous backgrounds. There would be those grounded in the Old Testament Scriptures and those who had never heard of Moses and the other great heroes of faith. To avoid having the first multi-cultural church fall into division, the apostles sent a great encourager, Barnabas, the Son of Encouragement, to go and work with the church in Antioch. *"And the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch"* (Acts 11:22).

Barnabas came seeking to be reassured. He probably wanted to be sure the gospel was being taught, not some watered down half-truth that would be marketable to the Gentiles. Too, he may have wanted to be sure the Jews weren't making it impossible for the new converts by placing on them Old Testament demands. Whatever Barnabas was seeking, he had reason to rejoice because *"when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord"* (Acts 11:23). Barnabas stopped having anything to worry about. He found evidence of God's grace at work among the new, multi-cultural church in Antioch. When he saw the evidence of God's grace, Barnabas knew the church would be alright, as long as they stayed faithful to the Lord and His grace. What did Barnabas see in Antioch? What is the evidence of God's grace in a church?

### **He Saw Righteous Lives**

Anytime people respond to God's grace, they demonstrate different values and behaviors. *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age"* (Titus 2:11-12). When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he knew that Gentiles would be in the church. These were those who had no background in the Old Law and its values. Would they know how to act? Would they know what was right and what was wrong? Would their values and actions reflect Jesus Christ or would they be forgiven but not changed? Barnabas rejoiced because he could see that God's grace had worked its way with all of the believers.

Often today religious leaders want to get people to change without relying on God's grace. Every church creed and many church traditions arose with the intention of controlling behaviors,

often among those new to faith who were not well grounded. But all the creeds and rules man can create will not change people's actions. These man-made guidelines may look good but they will do no good in controlling people's actions. *"Why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!' (which all refer to things destined to perish with the using)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence"* (Col. 2:20-23). Men have come up with all kinds of rules and traditions to govern and regulate religious behaviors. Paul says these do no good. The only thing that will control people, is grace.

When Barnabas got to Antioch, he could see Jews and Gentiles acting according to God's grace. Grace does for man what nothing else can do. Grace allows a man the freedom, through mercy and forgiveness, to start fresh and serve God without limitations. People who live and trust in grace can serve God in ways no one else can. So, when Barnabas saw grace in the Antioch church, he saw people living righteous lives. He didn't try to improve on things by giving them some rules to follow. He just let God's grace do its job.

### **He Saw Humility**

How can you take people with such diverse backgrounds and make them get along? Some might want their way (such as being more Jewish) while others might want theirs (like being more Greek). What is the answer to merging different peoples into one new body? The answer is again found in grace.

*"Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity"* (2 Tim. 1:9). Paul tells us that we are saved, not by status or performance, but by grace. This occurs according to God's will, not man's. Grace is the great equalizer before God. All people are saved from sin in the same way. It is not how Jewish (or non-Jewish) they are. It is not how rich or poor, free or slave, male or female. It is by grace that all are saved.

So Paul tells the Romans, *"For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment,*

as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3). Grace reminds us that each of us (whatever our culture or past) was chosen by God to serve Him. This means we cannot look down on anyone or think more highly of ourselves than we should.

Barnabas saw this in Antioch. When God's grace goes to work in people, they recall how they were saved and that all others are saved in the same way. When we compare performance, then human works get involved and pride takes over. Then we worry about being better than others, or being good enough to please God. When grace is operating in hearts, comparisons stop. In Antioch, no one, regardless of past, looked down on others. The Jews who had served God from childhood realized they were no better or worse than the idolator who had just been baptized. Grace makes us humble.

### **He Saw Generosity**

The Antioch church would become one of the most generous churches in history. When famine came to Judea, this mixed church sent funds to help the believers in Judea (Acts 11:27-30). One of the marks of grace is that it causes people to be generous. When Barnabas came to Antioch, he must have seen this quality immediately.

*"And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them. And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not one needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostle's feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need"* (Acts 4:32-35). When abundant grace is present in a church, that church will give until all its needs are met. Some churches still think the way to raise money is to force, compel or coerce people, or that the way to motivate giving is to make people feel guilty. But the New Testament churches didn't use guilt. They relied on God's grace. When believers see how God has saved them and others, they naturally want to share what God has given them. They don't feel possessive, but generous.

This was certainly true of the Philippian church. *"Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed*



*in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord*" (2 Cor. 8:1-3). This church, relying on grace, gave and gave and gave, even though they were poverty stricken themselves. How do you motivate people to give when they have so little to begin with? The answer is you immerse them in God's grace so they know the source of their blessings! You remind them all of us are poor and that what God gives to us is not our own, but is a blessing of God. Grace then will allow people to let go of money that they would keep otherwise.

### **He Saw Talents**

Barnabas must have also seen diverse talents at work in Antioch. Later there would be *"prophets, and teachers"* (Acts 13:1) at this church. When grace comes to people it brings many and various talents to empower the people to do what God wants done. *"And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly"* (Rom. 12:6). Paul says it clearly. God's grace gives different gifts to people and the people are to use those gifts God gives.

Later, Peter would explain how to use these gifts. *"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"* (1 Pet. 4:10). Peter lets us know that grace is manifold, or diverse, in how it works in people's lives. Some are given gifts of serving, others gifts of manual labor. Some are given gifts of teaching, others gifts of evangelism. Instead of worrying about my talents versus yours, I should just use the grace that God has given me to use the talents He has given me. Grace reminds me that the talents come from God and therefore each should use that talent as an expression of God's diverse grace.

Grace empowers believers to do what God wants done. When we accept the idea that God gives the talents to people, maybe then we can stop worrying about who "gets to do what" in the kingdom or who gets the credit for doing it. Instead, we can just use the gifts God gives us to serve Him and His church.

### **He Saw Jesus**

Barnabas rejoiced because he saw evidence of God's grace in Antioch. What that means is that he saw people from many backgrounds coming together to do one thing: they were

becoming more like Jesus. Grace does that to people. If you want to be like Jesus, then come into the grace of God. Be baptized today and let God's grace do its wonderful work in your life.

## ***Recognizing and Resisting Wolves***

**ARDRON HINTON**

Jesus warned about "wolves" that endangered His sheep. Paul repeated this warning. The problem in heeding such words is in recognizing these "wolves". Let us consider the facts in the case (Acts 20:29-31).

First, we need to realize that not all who teach and practice false doctrines are "wolves" — in the Lord's estimation. Some are *misled* themselves. Like Apollos, these need correction (Acts 18:24-26). Their sincerity and good intentions will not transform their mistaken ideas into biblical truth.

Next we must face the fact that real "wolves" will appear to be sheep. They will not label themselves as what they actually are. Their intentions will be deceptively disguised or carefully hidden. In general, what can we do in confronting and resisting these predators?

First, we can test them by the Scriptures, especially what they teach and advocate. A "wolf will twist truth to serve his purposes (2 Peter 3:16), so caution is advised.

Then, we can be alert to indications of desire for power and the control of others. Diotrophes (3 John 9) was riot the last of his kind.

Finally, we can notice the "fruit" the person's life produces. Evil ways will produce evil "fruit" sooner or later (Matthew 7:15-20).

### **Specific Steps**

1. Listen to what is said and check it carefully.
2. Watch what is done. "Actions speak louder than words."
3. Notice the results and effects ("fruit"), and don't be misled.
4. Apply common sense to issues. Truth is reasonable.
5. Strengthen your own faith. It is your "shield".
6. Master the use of Scripture. It is your "sword".
7. Develop your serving skills. You will need them.



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