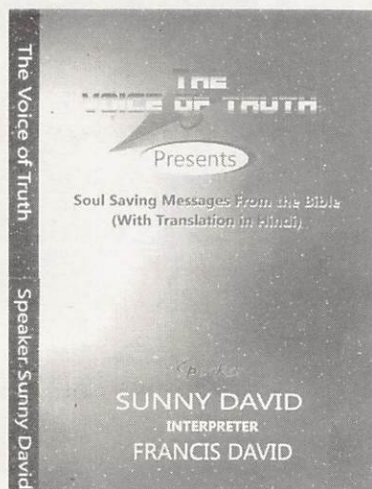


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# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## *EDITORIAL*

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

#### ***Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world***

Almost seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ, Isaiah, foreseeing the coming of the Saviour of humanity into the world had by God's inspiration prophetically spoken these words: "Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:4-6).

The birth of Christ on earth was in accordance with the words God had spoken in the garden of Eden when man had first sinned. There, as we read, in Genesis 3:15, God had said to Satan, who had beguiled Eve and Adam, to sin against God, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed ; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel." Thousands of years later, when Christ, according to the plan and foreknowledge of God, was put to death on the cross, Satan did, as God had said, bruise the heel of Christ, so that He died on the cross, and His body was buried in a tomb where it remained for three days and nights. But according to His promise when He arose and came alive out of the grave (Luke 24:1-8), by His resurrection from the dead, He certainly bruised or crushed the head of Satan forever. (Romans 1:4). The apostle Paul later wrote,

"O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

Like Adam and Eve, all have sinned (Romans 3:23). Because of sin all are destined to perish in hell. But God sent His Son Christ Jesus from heaven, and allowed Him to die on the cross for the sins of all humanity. The Bible says, "For He made Him sin who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). And, "For the wages of sin is death," according to Romans 6:23, "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Today every person on earth has a choice to make: either go in the way of Satan and sin and perish, or accept the gift of God which is eternal life, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## *Hindering the Gospel*

J.C. CHOATE

Discussing the fact that those who preach the gospel should also live by the gospel, Paul goes on to say, "*If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 9:12). Although he had not hindered the gospel, he was certainly aware of the fact that it was possible for him or any one else to do so. The same would be just as true today.

Naturally, those who preach and promote error do much to hinder the gospel of Christ. Just think of the far reaching results if this were not true. On the other hand, perhaps as much or more harm is done by members of the church themselves. Let us think of the ways that we may hinder the gospel of Christ.

1. We hinder the gospel of Christ when we do not preach and teach it to others. The gospel is for all. It is to be shared with all. That is where we come in. The Lord has commanded us to take it to our fellowman (Mark 16:15,16). Now there are two ways we can do this. We can preach it by word of mouth or teach it by the way we live. All should do some of both but many do none of either. It means that when we fail to take the gospel to others we

are hindering its progress.

2. The gospel is hindered when we do not attend the assemblies. How is that? It is very simple. When we do not attend worship we ourselves not only fail to worship the Lord, but we fail to receive the spiritual food that we need to carry on for the Lord. But beyond that, we fail to set the proper example for others and to take advantage of the opportunity that is ours of meeting with a group of people who need to be taught the gospel by word of mouth and by example. Thus, the Hebrew writer exhorted, *"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries"* (Hebrews 10:23-27).

3. We hinder the gospel when we fail to develop and grow as Christians. For when we are spiritually weak then we have need of someone teaching us instead of our having the ability to teach others. This is exactly what the Hebrew writer says, *"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil"* (Hebrews 5:12-14).

4. We hinder the Lord's cause when we fail to live as we should. In this case we bring shame and disgrace upon the Lord's name. The world points a finger of scorn at us and says that if that represents Christianity then it wants no part of it. We cause good and honest people to stumble. We set a bad example for others to follow. All of this hurts. The Lord would have us to not just wear the name Christian, but to truly be Christian. He wants us to do all in His name to His glory. Listen to Paul, *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him"* (Colossians 3:17). Peter exhorts, *"If you are reproached for the name of Christ,*

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blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:14-19).

5. We may hinder the Lord's work by simply neglecting our duty and responsibility. There are many members of the church who are not bad or immoral. They do not purposely and intentionally do anything that is bad or wrong. Others would say that they are very fine people. But their weak point is that they simply drift along, neglecting to do many things that they should do. But neglect, failure to act, carelessness, etc., can be dangerous. We know that this is true with every day life. It is also true in the spiritual realm. Thus James says, "*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves*" (James 1:22). Also read James 2 concerning faith only, those who have nothing to go with their faith, and James 4:17. Finally we read, "*Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him*" (Hebrews 2:1-3).

6. We may hinder the gospel by failing to give of our means. The church depends on the members giving of their means in order to enable it to carry on its work of helping the poor and preaching the gospel. But suppose we do not give. That doesn't mean that the church will not be able to carry on, since the other members may give. However, the church in such a case would be limited in its efforts. That is why the Bible says that when we fail to give we are robbing God, or that we are limiting Him. He can do more as we give more to enable Him to do more. So Paul exhorted, "*On the first day of the week let each one of you lay*

*something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come" (1 Corinthians 16:2). Let us remember that if we fail to give as we should it may result in someone not being able to hear the gospel or that someone who is in need will have to do without. So it is a serious matter when we realize that souls are involved, as well as the physical welfare of various ones, including our own souls.*

So you can see from the foregoing that while we may be blaming the religious world, and in particular the denominational groups, for our failures in being able to preach the gospel to the world, much of the fault may lie at our own feet. It is certainly true that these religious organizations can hinder the spread of pure New Testament Christianity, but we should never forget that as long as we are what we should be, and doing what the Lord wants us to do, that no outside force can prevent us from accomplishing the Lord's will, and that includes taking the gospel to the whole world. But so often the things that are holding us back are our weaknesses, our failures, our lack of faith, our sins, and worlds of other things that may be in our hearts and lives.

May the Lord help us to have more faith, love, zeal, courage, and determination to take a stand for the truth, to live it in our daily lives, and to take it to a lost and dying world. Regardless, we'll either end up being a hindrance to the gospel or one who is a promoter of it. Let us make certain that we are in the latter category.

## ***"I Promise: You're Safe"***

**DAVID THURMAN**

When the wise men from the east came to Herod, they were seeking information about the location of the new king of the Jews (Matt. 2:1ff). Herod had his scholars search the Old Testament and they found the answer in Micah 5. Micah had foretold the coming of the Messiah. Micah had even explained how the Messiah would lead God's people. Instead of focusing on just the birth of Jesus, let's spend our time exploring the promise of the coming of the Prince of Peace.

*"Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops; they have laid siege against us; with a rod they will smite the judge of*

*Israel on the cheek. But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. Therefore, He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel. And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth. And this One will be our peace"* (Micah 5:1-5). Micah speaks of a time in which the enemies of God will rise up against God and His anointed One. But, God promises that a Ruler will come who will lead His people in safety. This ruler will become our peace. In Him, we will be safe. This is God's promise. In Christ, we are safe. Looking at these verses we see first of all the need for this promise of peace.

### **The World Is Against Us**

Micah describes a time of war. There will be troops, a siege and the enemy will attempt to smite the judge of Israel. This is a time of horrible suffering, a time of pain, a time of loss and struggle. No wonder the promise of safety, of peace, is so important in Micah's prophecy.

This principle is still in effect. When Jesus was born, Herod killed all the boys up to age two in the area of Bethlehem. This mass murder was committed in an effort to stop the Messiah. From the first of His life until His crucifixion, Jesus was under constant attack from Satan.

So, even today, those who follow the Christ will face struggle and suffering. *"And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"* (2 Tim. 3:12). Paul warns us that our service in the name of Christ will generate opposition, just as Jesus did. Peter goes even further, explaining that suffering is inevitable, but can be positive. *"In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (1 Pet. 1:6-7). We should never be surprised that while we seek peace and safety, Satan will do all



he can to keep us from being safe. The world is against us.

### **The World Puts Us on the Defensive**

In ancient times a siege meant you were surrounded. It usually meant your army had been defeated in the open combat, and now, in effort to survive, everyone has retreated behind the fortified walls of the city. A siege meant you were on the defensive. Everywhere you look, you see the enemy entrenched around your home. You have no escape, and it seems inevitable that you will be taken and killed.

This is still Satan's approach. He will surround you with doubt and guilt. He will make it look as if he is stronger than God. So, today, in our society all we hear is failure, crime, death and disaster. Many people believe our world is rapidly deteriorating and the future will be much worse than the past. Satan wants us to see how big, how powerful he is.

Even in our own hearts we are on the defensive. Satan will keep whispering in your ear that you are not good enough. He will remind you of all your failures, big and small. He will make you doubt your worth. He will undermine your faith. And, once he convinces you that you are no good, he will tempt you to act as if you are no good. Satan will tempt us, and tempt us, and tempt us, all the while reminding us how unworthy we are.

### **The World Does Not Care About Us**

Micah's prophecy describes a time of war, a time in which God's people seem overwhelmed. It looks as if even the king will be killed. As in many wars, it is obvious the enemy does not care who gets hurt. All that matters is winning.

Satan still works this way. He does not care about us or our well being. All Satan wants to do is bring down as many souls as he can. All he wants is to inflict as much suffering as he can. We are in a spiritual war, and Satan does not care how many people he hurts in order to get his way. Micah does not leave God's people in this helpless, defensive position. Instead, he promises the coming of a Christ, Who will bring peace. God's promise to give us the Christ brings us peace. Notice how this gift works.

### **The Gift Begins Inconspicuously**

As He often does, God begins His work of victory using the least from among His people. God chooses a little town in the hills

of Judea as the place of birth for the greatest king ever. Although small, even in its own clan, it will give rise to the One whose origins are from ancient times. So, a baby is born in a small town, laid in a manger, and becomes our source of peace.

God does this over and over again. He uses a shepherd who has been run out of Egypt to go back and lead His people out of Egypt. He uses another shepherd boy, the youngest of eight sons to become His mightiest king. Moses and David were not special, they were inconspicuous until God chose to use them.

God still does this. He chooses people who seem to have little to offer, and from them He accomplishes great things. Fishermen become preachers. Tax collectors become evangelists. Staunch enemies become great missionaries. And today, God will use you. He will make you His vessel. It does not matter how important or unimportant you seem to be. God brings peace to your life through small, inconspicuous steps that may change the entire world!

### **The Gift Rises to Lead Us**

God did not just send another message. Instead, He sent His only Son to lead us. God became flesh, born in an unimportant village in a nowhere part of Palestine. Yet, this gift became the most important man in history. This gift, from small beginnings, rose to lead us in the strength of the Lord.

Jesus offers us what we need to cope with the enemy. He will stand in the strength of the Lord. He will shepherd us in the strength of the Lord. We will live securely. While Satan attacks us, Jesus defends us. While Satan spreads doubt and guilt, Jesus offers confidence and forgiveness. Jesus leads us by taking our sins away. He leads by offering us a way to live above the doubts and fears of this world. As a result, the gift of God in Jesus allows us to live securely in a world that is full of upheaval. *"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life"* (1 John 5:13). God wants us to have assurance of our salvation. That assurance allows us to live above the trials Satan uses to bring us down.

### **The Gift Guarantees Peace**

God promises we will have peace through His Son, Jesus. That is why the angels sang *"Peace on earth, good will to men"* (Luke 2:14) when Jesus was born. God's message to us is that

we are safe in the Son of God. That security offers us a peace that the world will never understand.

Paul demonstrates this. He writes to the Philippian church from prison in Rome. He is unsure if he will live and be released or if he will be convicted and be killed. But, he is not worried, since he has the promise of peace from God. Paul tells us, *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:6-7).

Christians have a security that is much bigger than life, or health or blessings. Our peace comes from our Savior, who leads us in victory. Even as life changes, we have peace. Even as health deteriorates, we have peace. Even as our material blessings are taken from us, we have peace. God does not want us worried and afraid. In the gift of His Son, the Lord promises us, we are safe.

### **So Accept the Realities of Life**

It is vital to face the facts. The world is against you, will put you on the defensive and will not care what happens to you. This is the reality of life. Satan will do all he can to make you doubt. He will want you to be frightened. He will want you to fail. This is the reality of the world in which we all live. *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23). Since we have all failed, we live in doubt and fear. Since we have all sinned, we live at odds with each other. In this world you will never find peace and security.

### **So Accept the Peace of Christ**

You can find the security. You can find the peace that passes understanding. You can be safe today. Simply put your life in the hands of the One who came to lead you to safety. Trust in Jesus as your Savior. Turn from your sin. Be immersed into His name for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you can rise to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4). You can live in peace and security when you put your life in the care of the Savior. Be safe, today!

## **Praying for Opportunities**

**BILL RICHARDSON**

Prayer is a barometer of our faith. To believe much in God and

in His power is to pray much. To believe little is to pray little. Prayer as a part of any evangelistic enterprise is the natural outgrowth of our partnership with God.

Jesus, sent from heaven, came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). His redemptive activity continues into the present as the mission of the church. Heaven's mission, in which we participate, is to save the world's lost. God in His graciousness has invited us to have a share in the most important enterprise in the history of mankind (2 Corinthians 4:1). As a result, although humble servants of God, we are honored to be God's fellow workers. Coordination of efforts in such a bold and significant mission requires constant communication.

Jesus' life was characterized by prayer. Observing this important dynamic in His life, His disciples pleaded, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Evidently, it was a discipline they never forgot.

After Jesus' ascension to heaven, His disciples returned to Jerusalem where "they all joined together constantly in prayer" (Acts 1:14 NIV). Those converted on Pentecost "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (2:42).

To accomplish the task of evangelizing Jews in Jerusalem, our brethren asked God to give them boldness. On one such occasion, the place where they prayed was shaken and the Holy Spirit empowered them to speak the word of God boldly (Acts 4:24-31). They prayed before selecting an apostle (1:24), commissioning servants (6:6) and evangelists (13:3), and appointing elders (14:23). Those prayers were often accompanied by fasting.

The church prayed for an imprisoned Peter (Acts 12:5), who was miraculously released. Similarly, Paul and Silas prayed while in prison before God acted to liberate them from their stocks and the jailer from his sin (16:25ff).

In fact, the first-century church was able to reach their world with the gospel because of two outstanding priorities: preaching and prayer. They did not consider meeting the needs of people unimportant, but still they could not be derailed from the fundamental tasks that had marked their ministry from its inception. In the Jerusalem community, the apostles assigned to others the task of feeding the needy: "We will turn this

responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:3-4).

The apostles taught those primitive believers to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17 NKJV). They were specifically taught to pray for the spread of the gospel and for gospel messengers: "Brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored" (2 Thessalonians 3:1 NIV). "Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ" (Colossians 4:3). "Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should" (v. 4). "Pray ... that when ever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 6:19).

Furthermore, prayers were urged to move authorities and bring peace to nations (1 Timothy 2:1-2). And multiple prayers were offered up so Christians could grow in the faith and live exemplary lives before the world so that all men could come to know salvation. The bottom line instruction was: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6).

First-century Christians certainly understood the importance of their divine resources. We, too, are called to reach our world, our generation -an impossible task without God. With God, and through prayer, all things are possible. To move from our inadequacies to God's power requires only that we kneel before Him and make our petitions known. Jesus told His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:37-38). Faced with an overwhelming task and a shortage of workers, Jesus recommended this one thing—"Pray!"

## ***A Simple Method of Teaching the Lost***

**JACK HARRIMAN**

When I have opportunity to study with someone who believes the basics but has not understood and obeyed the Gospel, I follow this four-step plan.

First, I establish the fact that we live under the New Testament and not the Old Testament, and the significance of that fact. The Old Testament was a covenant made exclusively between God

and the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 5:12,13; Psalm 147:19,20). The Gentile world was never under this covenant, and even the Jewish world — since the death of Jesus — is no longer under it. So, we must get our instruction from the New Testament.

Second, I establish a common sense approach to Bible study. This involves two things. All the facts must be gathered. For example: When they came to arrest Jesus, Mark says that one of those who stood nearby drew a sword and cut off the ear of a servant of the High Priest. Matthew informs us that it was a disciple of Jesus who used the sword. Luke says that it was the right ear that was amputated. John identifies the swordsman as Peter and the victim as Malchus. Then, the student must reason accurately from all the facts. Any Bible subject may be approached this way.

Third, I apply this to the question of how and when one becomes a saved person by studying the Great Commission accounts. Matthew says one is to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (28:19). Mark says that one must believe and be baptized to be saved (16:16). Luke adds the element of repentance and remission of sins (24:46). So, one becomes a Christian when he believes the Gospel, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of sins.

Fourth, I confirm this conclusion by a brief study of Acts 2. They heard the Gospel and believed it (verses 14-37). When they asked what else they should do, they were told to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins.

I emphasize two things about believing, repenting, and being baptized. First, they stand together as a unit. Not one of these can be omitted and still result in the remission of sins.

Second, there is a logical progression from faith, to repentance, to baptism, to salvation—which progression has been distorted by some who believe in Christ, as I do.

Question? Where are you in your obedience?

## **Why We Must Preach the Gospel**

**SAMUEL A. MATTHEWS**

Men have devised many laws, and honest Christians do their best to obey the ones that do not break God's law. However, the

Gospel—the Word of God—is our only divinely-written authority in all matters of life. One goal of our preaching and teaching is always to impress upon each Christian our duty to take God's authoritative message to the lost. We want the lost to learn and obey the things from Heaven — not the things from men.

However, the questions are frequently asked, "What will become of those who have never heard the Gospel? Wouldn't it be better for a lost soul to stand before our merciful God in the judgment having never heard the Gospel than for him to have heard and not obeyed?" If a person understood the real purpose and philosophy of the Gospel, he would never ask those questions.

To set such questioners to thinking, we ask: "What would have become of the same heathen or lost soul if there had never been any Gospel?" The Gospel was designed to save a world already condemned (cf. Romans 1:18; 2:12; 3:10-12,23; 5:8). It is only in a relative sense that people are lost because they do not obey the Gospel. Primarily, **people are lost because they are sinners.**

To illustrate: A boat is rushed out to rescue a drowning man. He refuses to be rescued, and he drowns. Now, why did he drown? Some one replies, "He drowned because he would not get into the boat." Wrong! The boat had nothing to do with his drowning; he drowned because he was in the water, and he would have drowned just the same had there never been a boat. Of course, his refusing to be rescued made his drowning a case of suicide.

Just so with the sinner. The Gospel is sent out to rescue the perishing (cf. Romans 1:16). When the sinner refuses to be rescued, it intensifies his guilt and shows it to be a case of spiritual suicide. Yet, the Gospel had nothing to do with his perishing; he would have perished had there never been a Gospel. The boat was a means of rescue, and so is the Gospel.

Many of our denominational friends are inconsistent when it comes to saving souls. Their inconsistency is seen in that they contend that God converts people through a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, but yet, they conduct evangelistic campaigns and support missionaries. Consistency demands that they stand back in silence and let God convert sinners that way. If their teaching of a direct operation of the Holy Spirit were true, there would be no need to preach the Word. They should dismiss all their

preachers. Why have a preacher to preach in order that souls may be converted, if they are converted through a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, apart from the Word?

If we have been Christians any amount of time, we are aware that Christ has commanded that the Gospel be preached. *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15,16).

What is the first part of this command? Go and preach the Gospel. What is the second part of this command? Believe and be baptized. It is as needful to obey the first part of the Great Commission as it is to obey the latter part. In fact, obedience to the latter part is dependent upon man's obedience to the first part. The Gospel must be taken to those who know it not!

We will now study six biblical reasons why the Gospel must be preached to others. **First of all, it is impossible to have Gospel fruit without first sowing the seed of the kingdom.** Jesus taught in the Parable of the Sower that only the good soil (those who hear and understand the Gospel) will bring forth fruit (read Matthew 13:3-8; 18-23). The point we must see is that the fruit was not produced until AFTER the sowing of the seed (the Gospel or Word of God — Luke 8:11).

**Second, no one can please God without faith** (Hebrews 11:6), and there can be no production of faith apart from hearing the Word (cf., Romans 10:14). Hearing the Word of God produces faith (Romans 10:17). That is one reason why we have the written Word (read John 20:30,31). The Corinthians are good examples of this teaching. Many of them heard the Word and believed (Acts 18:8). We must beware, for Satan knows that faith is produced as one hears the Word (cf., Luke 8:12).

**Third, men cannot be drawn to God apart from being taught of Him.** Only those who hear and learn of the Father can come to Jesus (John 6:44,45). Since the Father draws sinners unto Christ through the Gospel (cf., 2 Thessalonians 2:14), we should plainly see how important it is that we sound it out!

**A fourth reason why the Gospel must be preached is because Jesus placed teaching first in the system of conversion** (read Matthew 13:15). In this passage, we have teaching — *"see with their eyes, and hear with their ears."* We also have understanding, turning (or conversion), and healing (or



forgiveness). If there is no teaching, there will be no understanding; no understanding, no conversion; no conversion, no healing or forgiveness. These facts should again impress upon each Christian our duty to take the Gospel to the lost. Just in proportion as we fail to do our duty in preaching the Gospel to the lost, we fail in making it possible for them to be saved.

**Fifth, the Lord's Word is the begetting power in the process of the new birth.** The Bible says, "*Being born again...by the word of God*" (1 Peter 1:23). Just as there can be no physical birth without a father, neither can there be a new spiritual birth without the teaching of God's Word.

**And sixth, where there is no preaching, there can be no salvation** (read Romans 10:13,14). Let us begin at the last of this passage and go back to the first. Where there is no preaching, there can be no hearing; no hearing, no believing; no believing, no calling; no calling, no salvation. So it does not matter whether we begin at the first and go to the last, or begin at the last and go back to the first. We arrive at the same conclusion; namely, the pure Gospel must be preached for souls to be saved.

## **Saints In Unseemly Places**

**BILL DILLON**

Paul closed his Philippian letter from Rome by saying, "*All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household*" (Philippians 4:22). Christians in the imperial family! We can easily imagine what the family life of a debased Nero was like. The immorality of Nero's world was worse than the ungodliness of our own time. If it was possible to be a saint in ancient Rome then it's possible to be a saint in modern-day world.

God's people in times past lived godly lives in the midst of unbelievably corrupt environments. In the days prior to the great deluge, Enoch maintained a level of holiness such that he "*walked with God*" (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5). The world of Enoch was so degraded that a sin-hating Jehovah eventually, decreed its destruction. But in a world of almost universal moral darkness, Enoch's bright light of goodness shone clearly.

In spite of all the evil forces arrayed for his undoing, Noah lived true to God and managed the salvation of his family (Genesis 6-9).

Down through the years, courageous men and women, living in depraved conditions, have shown that it is possible to be **in the world** but not **of the world**. The one who did this best of all was Christ.

The life of one who lives in imitation of Him will be as a current of fresh air in a sin-stenched atmosphere. Let the Lord's people everywhere live as bright and shining lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15).

## **Tolerance**

CECIL MAY

The old-fashioned virtue called tolerance has almost disappeared. The Biblical words for this virtue were forbearance and longsuffering. It cannot be exercised except in reaction to something that is wrong, or at least irritating, and that point matters.

What is demanded by modern culture and called tolerance is a morally apathetic state in which nothing is wrong, nothing matters.

Jesus was tolerant, in the Biblical sense, of the woman exposed in the act of adultery, but not because adultery did not matter. Jesus called it sin, which today would be thought the epitome of intolerance. He was tolerant of a poor woman who was being unwittingly and unwillingly used as a pawn by hypocritical religious leaders to get something with which to accuse Jesus. "*Neither do I condemn you,*" He said. He was not tolerant at all of adultery. "*Go and sin no more,*" He told her (John 8:11).

Homosexual activists accuse Christians of intolerance precisely because we label homosexual acts as sin. They do not seek tolerance; they seek approval. Tolerance is not required in our attitudes toward those who are practicing approved conduct.

We ought to exercise tolerance toward homosexuals. We should not taunt them, mistreat them, harbor hatred toward them, or call them ugly names. It would be nice if they would return the favor, but even when they do not, when we are reviled, we are not to revile in turn.

The practice of homosexuality, however, is sin. The Bible calls it *porneia*, "fornication", "sexual immorality" (Jude 7). The same

word is applied to sex between unmarried heterosexuals, adulterous affairs, and divorce for unscriptural cause. Those who believe in Christ, and who therefore accept the life-style and conduct to which He calls us, cannot pronounce evil to be good. We have no right to declare as righteous conduct what God has decreed to be lawless.

Tolerance recognizes that behavior may be wrong without being criminal. We do not have the right, personally, to use force against those who engage in legal, but immoral, conduct. Even if the conduct is illegal, the prerogative of enforcement is not ours but the government's. We tolerate religious error because we recognize that imprisoning people, putting them on the rack, or burning them at the stake are not the ways to persuade them to change their minds.

Tolerance is also exercised when love is shown to the sinner, as Christ loved us and died for us while we were sinners. When truth is lovingly taught to a sinner to rescue him or her from sin; when confidence is shown toward those involved in sinful conduct, that they will turn from it; and especially when contriteness and sorrow for our own sins is demonstrated even as we seek to restore others, the Biblical virtue of tolerance is exercised.

Christians are to be **tolerant** toward sinners. Christians are not to **give approval** to sin. There is a great difference.

## ***Forgiving One Another***

**BASIL OVERTON**

Remember that the Bible teaches many things regarding our relationship to one another, and all it teaches is important. One is preaching an important phase of the Gospel when he preaches what the Lord has revealed about our responsibilities to one another.

*"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31,32).*

In teaching God's children to forgive one another, the Holy Spirit in the foregoing passage presented the highest example of forgiveness when He commanded Christians to forgive each other

*"even as God also in Christ forgave you." Jesus taught: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14,15).*

*"And when they came unto the place which is called the Skull, where they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And parting his garments among them, they cast lots" (Luke 23:33,34).* "Said", in this text is from a Greek verb that is in the imperfect tense, which is the tense of continuing action in the past. The verse literally means that "Jesus kept on saying, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." This may mean that each time an insult or abuse was hurled at Him, He said: *"Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do."* Jesus wanted even Caesar's soldiers to be forgiven; He wanted the Jews to be forgiven who instigated His crucifixion. On the Pentecost following His crucifixion, the Holy Spirit announced God's conditions of forgiveness for those who crucified His Son (Acts 2:36-38).

Jesus, the innocent one was buffeted, beaten, and betrayed; He was tried, denied, and crucified, and yet His first words on the cross were a prayer to His Father that His offenders be forgiven! His first words on the cross were not a complaint registered against His persecutors; they were not a plea of His own pure and perfect innocence; they were not a cry for vengeance, but they were a prayer for the forgiveness of those who so brutally abused Him.

It is reported that when a Zulu chief beat his wife for accepting Jesus. He left her, thinking she was dead. When he returned and found her alive and asking Jesus for help, he asked her what Jesus could possibly do for her. She replied, "He can help me forgive you."

A child of God may be unstained by immoral sensual practices; he may be regular in worship service; he may be held in high esteem by men; and yet he may have an unforgiving heart! Perhaps one's heart is never heavier than when it is unforgiving. Someone has said: "Forgiveness is the odor of the rose you crush beneath your clumsy feet." Remember, God commands us to forgive each other as He has forgiven us in Christ.

# *Humility—Not Just Nice, But Necessary*

BYRON NICHOLS

We tend to enjoy humble people, and we usually are uncomfortable around those who are self-centered and proud. It appears from the Scriptures that God has pretty much these same feelings. It may well be that we have often thought of the goodness and attractiveness of humility without having come to a realization that humility is essential to our salvation. That's right — it is not *optional* — it is absolutely *essential*. This may come as a major shock to some, but not only does God approve of humility and disapprove of arrogance and pride, He makes it clear in His Word that those who continue in their self-centered pride will be lost eternally. In addition, those who truly desire to go to heaven absolutely must practice humility in their quest for that everlasting happiness. The attitude of humility expresses itself in obedience. To disobey is to display arrogance and self-will, but to become obedient, whether to parents, employers, governments, or the Lord Himself, one has to view himself as being of less importance than the person or position of another.

However, humility involves much more than mere obedience. We may not have given it much thought, but there are different types of obedience. For example, a child may obey his parents, but his obedience may only be the result of a dreadful fear of stern discipline for disobedience. A citizen may obey the laws of the land, but may also be constantly critical of the rulers and even have an intense hatred for them. A person might obey many laws of God but be bitter toward Him, believing God to be unloving and requiring far too much from man. None of these examples illustrate obedience that results from humility.

The obedience that is evoked by humility is not accompanied by such feelings as irritation, antagonism, or resentment, but humble obedience is associated with such as contentment, gratitude, love, and agreement. Those who render biblical obedience acknowledge and subscribe to the truthfulness of the prophet Micah's words in Micah 6:8, "... *And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*" (emphasis added).

Humility toward God eliminates willfulness on our part as it promotes our understanding of our dependence upon the Lord for all that we have and all that we are. To see God in His awesome greatness helps us to see ourselves for what we are — woefully weak creatures who could not even exist were it not for Him and His power, grace, mercy, and love. If only we could duplicate the experience and response of Isaiah in relation to his vision of the Lord as recorded for us in Isaiah Chapter Six! The prophet was enabled to see, as it were, the Lord God Himself arrayed in His royal splendor as He was seated upon His great throne. Then he saw and heard two seraphim, and he heard one of them cry out, *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"* (verse 3). Verse 5 then reveals to us the immediate reaction of Isaiah to all that he had witnessed in that marvelous vision — *"Then I said: 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'"*

The book of Proverbs tries repeatedly to teach us that the pathway to honor will take us through humility. This is especially clear in Proverbs 15:33 and 18:12 with these words, *"... before honor is humility."*

One of the most beautiful and meaningful passages in all of Scripture is found in the second chapter of Philippians, where Paul paints a written masterpiece depicting humility personified. He shows us in verses 5 through 8 the unparalleled humility and submission of Jesus. It is absolutely mandatory that we then read verses 9-11, for it is here that we see the fruit resulting from that submissive humility: *"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

Dear friends, we obviously will never attain the position and honor that belong only to Jesus, but He left directions for all who desire to achieve honor that is truly honor. *"But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"* (Matthew 23:11,12).

Humility that results in submissive obedience is our map for getting from earth to heaven. There is no acceptable, alternate route.

## *The Preexistence And The Deity Of Jesus Christ*

**REUBEN S. EMPERADO**

Did Jesus have a conscious, preexistent state before He came to the earth? This question may sound technical and complicated to some, but it is a very important question that must be considered and answered. Why? Because many people today do not believe in the deity of Jesus. In this article we want to show from the Scripture that Jesus had a preexistent state prior to His incarnation and that He was conscious of that existence.

In my country (Philippines), there is a fast growing cult that aggressively teaches that Jesus was just a man and that He did not have any conscious, preexistent state before He became a man. These people are known in our country as "Iglesia Ni Cristo" (Church of Christ -not to be confused with the true church founded by Christ in Jerusalem, in 33 A.D.). Felix Manalo, a Filipino evangelist who was baptized into the body of Christ in 1911, but later fell away from the truth, founded this group in 1914 in Manila. He and his ministers have been advancing their pernicious errors aggressively, not only in the Philippines but also in other parts of the world. In fact, they are now found in Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, Hawaii (mostly among Filipino communities), and in the mainland continent of America. These people teach that Jesus is not God and that He existed only as an idea in the mind of God before He came to earth.

**In this lesson we will show that:**

1. Jesus existed eternally and face-to-face with God.
2. Jesus was conscious of this existence.
3. Jesus existed as God.
4. Jesus was equal with God.
5. Jesus was the Creator of all things.
6. Jesus became a man.

## **Jesus was with God in eternity before He came to earth**

A. Prophet Micah said that the Messiah came from eternity, from the days of old. *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting"* (Micah 5:2, ASV)

Jesus, as the ruler of Israel, had to come from Bethlehem Ephrathah, as the fulfillment of Micah's words. However, this prophecy also tells us that His existence is from eternity, or from everlasting. How do we know that these words have reference to Christ? The best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself. In the Gospel of Matthew, when Herod inquired where the Messiah was to be born, the elders of Israel quoted Malachi 5:2. (See Matthew 2:3-6.)

Isaiah 9:6, ASV, further explains: *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

Notice that the text says that Jesus is "Mighty God", "everlasting Father" or Father of eternity. Again, how do we know that this prophecy has reference to Jesus Christ? We know because this chapter from Isaiah is quoted in Matthew 4:12-16, describing the work of Christ. Also, in Matthew 1:23, an angel of the Lord refers to Jesus as "Immanuel, God with us".

Now we come to the New Testament records. Both apostles John and Paul said in their writing that Jesus the Christ existed with the Father before He came to earth. Let us notice what they said:

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:1-3,14, NKJV).

John, in this passage, tells us four vital things about Jesus Christ:

1. That Jesus, as the Word, existed in the beginning.
2. That Jesus was face-to-face with God. Greek scholars tell



us that the Greek phrase "pros ton theon" literally means "face-to-face with God".

3. That Jesus existed in the nature and form of God. John said, *"and the Word was God."* (Verse 2).
4. That Jesus is the Creator of all things in the universe.
5. That Jesus became a man. John's statement concerning Jesus is dynamite. In three short declarations he tells who Jesus is and what He did in eternity.

Now let us see what Paul had to say about the origin and nature of our Lord Jesus Christ:

*"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped."*—(Philippians 2: 5-8, ASV).

In Weymouth's New Testament, this verse is translated in this manner:

*"Although from the beginning He had the nature of God He did not reckon His equality with God a treasure to be tightly grasped"* (Philippians 2:60).

This passage tells the following three things.

1. Jesus existed in the form of God before He was born in the flesh.
2. Jesus was equal with God.
3. Jesus did not hold on to this equality but humbled Himself and became a man (See verses 7,8)

Concerning this passage, **Vines' Expository Dictionary of the New Testament** has these very important comments.

"This is important in Philippians 2:6, concerning the deity of Christ. The phrase *"being (existing) in the form (morphe, the essential and specific form and character) of God,"* carries with it the two facts of the antecedent Godhood of Christ, previous to His incarnation, and the continuance of His Godhood at and after the event of His Birth (see Gifford, on the Incarnation, pp. 11, sqq.). "It is translated 'exist' in 1 Corinthians 11:18, RV, for KJV, 'there be', Cf. Luke 16:14; 23:50; Acts 2:30; 3:2; 17:24; 22:3."

Again, Vine said, "The present participle of *huparcho*, 'to exist', always involves a preexistent state, prior to the fact referred to, and a continuance of the state after the fact. Thus in Philippians 2:6, the phrase *'who being (huparchon) in the form of God'*, implies His preexistent deity, previous to His birth, and His continued deity afterwards."

The epistle of Paul to the Christians in Colossae was written to correct an error that was slowly creeping into the church, which attacked the supremacy of Jesus. So, in this epistle, Paul clearly declared that Jesus is the image of the invisible God, that He antedates everything and He is the Creator of all things.

*"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell"* (Colossians 1:13-19).

From this passage we learn many things about Jesus, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

1. God has delivered us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves.
2. In Jesus we have redemption through His blood.
3. Jesus is the image of the invisible God.
4. Jesus is the Firstborn of all creation, that is, He became God's firstborn Son when He was born in the flesh, so that, through our brotherhood with Him, He could bring many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10; 1:5,6; Galatians 4:4-6).
5. He is the creator of all things.
6. Jesus existed before all things.
7. Jesus is the head of the church.
8. Jesus is preeminent over all things.

Many more passages could be cited to prove our thesis in this article, but I believe that the references we have quoted in this article are sufficient to prove that Jesus is God, that He existed before time and before all things, and that He has the supremacy over all things. Jesus as God, Creator, and Redeemer deserves all our worship and honor.



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