

Monthly

May, 2011

Price: Rs. 2/-

# The Bible Teacher



# **NOW AVAILABLE**

# **NEW VIDEO CD**

## **1. MUST ONE BE BAPTIZED TO BE SAVED? (49.27 min.)**

- What is Baptism?
- Who should be Baptized?
- Why should one be Baptized?
- In whose name should one be Baptized?

## **2. IS THE CHURCH IMPORTANT? (38.36 min.)**

- What is Church?
- Is the Church Important?
- How does one become a member of the Church?
- Must one be in the Church to be Saved?

**To Receive the Set of Two in One Case  
Send Rs. 100/-**

**To**

**Sunny David  
B-201, Sarita Vihar  
New Delhi-110076**

---

**Cell: (0) 9810896789  
Email: [sunny\\_davidin@yahoo.co.in](mailto:sunny_davidin@yahoo.co.in)**

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

---

Vol. 42

May 2011

No. 1

---

## *EDITORIAL*

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

#### *There is only one baptism*

In fact, in the Bible's New Testament we read of at least six types of baptisms. From among those six baptisms four have been fulfilled, one is yet to be fulfilled and will actually be accomplished on the day of judgment when Christ returns, but only one is effective or operative and functional presently today. Let us observe:

In his epistle to the Corinthians the apostle Paul had mentioned to them how their forefathers were baptized under the cloud when they had passed through the sea under the leadership of Moses, when he had brought them out of the slavery of Egyptians by the power of Almighty God. (1 Corinthians 10:1,2). There the apostle said, they were baptized into Moses in the cloud in the sea.

Next, we read of John's baptism. Before the birth of Christ, amongst the Jews, God had sent a man named John. John later began to be recognised as John the baptizer, because he was preaching to the Jews repentance from sin, and those who did repent or changed their mind and had turned to God, John was baptizing them in the river Jordan for the remission of their sins. Mark 1:5 says, "Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan river, confessing their sins." John's baptism was meant only for the unbelieving Jews who had become unfaithful to God. John's baptism was simply a baptism of repentance, signifying sorrow for sins and a desire to be ready for the coming of Christ's kingdom. (Matthew 3:1-16; 16:18, 19).

John, the baptizer, however, later told his audience, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:11, 12). John there was speaking about Jesus Christ, and he told them people that he would baptize with Holy Spirit and fire. Here we observe two baptisms mentioned, and both of these were to be administered by Christ Himself. When Christ was on earth he never baptized anyone with the Holy Spirit or with fire, as John had said, He would. But when He was returning back to the Father in heaven, He had met His chosen disciples or the apostles for the last time on earth and told them: "For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.... 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 1:5 & 8). Please note well, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that John had said Christ would administer, was a promise only to the apostles of Christ. They were going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit soon. And it was actually fulfilled ten days after the ascension of Christ on the day of Jewish Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem. ( Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2:1-4).

But what about fire baptism? John had said that Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. According to the Bible, the baptism of fire has been reserved for those who do not know God and have not obeyed the Gospel of Christ. In the book of 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 we read, "When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. When He comes in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed." Again, at Revelation 21:8 we read, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns

with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." The first death, not mentioned here but implied, is the physical death which all have to face. But all the sinners and the wicked will be punished in the fire of hell. This will be the baptism of fire.

There is yet another baptism mentioned in the Bible, in Matthew 20:22 and in Mark 10:38, about which Christ had told His disciples that He alone would be baptized with that baptism. This was a symbolic reference to the suffering that he was going to endure at the cross, as He would be buried under the burden of sins of the world. (Isaiah 53:4-6).

But when the apostle Paul wrote his epistle to the Ephesians, in about 64 A.D., by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, he wrote in Ephesians 4:5 that there was but only one baptism. This baptism is the baptism that Christ had commanded in His great commission to His followers, before His ascension into heaven. As we read in Matthew 28:19, 20, "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." Again, at Mark 16:15, 16 we read, "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." Notice: this baptism was going to be administered by Christ's followers in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (the Deity). Also, note, this baptism was for those who would believe, and to be saved from their sins.

While all other baptisms, with the exception of one, namely the baptism of fire which will be administered on the last day of judgment to those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of Christ, have passed away having accomplished their specific purposes, Christ's one baptism, which he had commanded in His great commission remains and will continue to be operative and binding until the day Christ comes back to judge the world.

## ***DON'T BLAME GOD***

**J.C. CHOATE**

While I was attending college, a tornado struck a community

nearby and two or three people were killed. Someone said that the reason the tornado swept through that area was because of the sinful living of those particular people. Someone else said that if God was punishing the people because of their sins, why didn't He hit some place like New York City? The same could be said about cities, large and small, all over the world.

Of course the point is, God is not directly sending tornados, fires, floods, snowstorms, earthquakes, tsunamis, or other such things on the people of the world because of their wicked living. If He were using nature in such ways today, the world itself would have been destroyed a long time ago because it is filled with sin and sinners.

However, when tragic events take place, such as the recent tsunami in the Indian Ocean in which thousands and thousands of people were killed, survivors who have lost family members and loved ones usually ask, "Why? Why, God, did You send such a terrible thing upon us?" The same question was asked when four hurricanes hit Florida in the USA a few years back, and when hurricane Katrina destroyed New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. That question has also been asked repeatedly when earthquakes have devastated areas of Turkey, Iran, India, and other countries, causing the deaths of thousands when their small mud houses collapsed on them. Similar earthquakes have hit Japan and China, and people there wondered, "Why? Why me?" No doubt that same question is asked by those who suffer mud slides annually in California and floods in many other parts of the world.

But tragic events of nature are continually happening around the world. Scientists explain: Mud slides occur *naturally* when rain weakens the structure of a mountain, releasing a muddy torrent on whatever may be in its path.

Hurricanes and cyclones sweep over an area when the conflicting energy of high and low air pressure, combined with hot and cool air masses, create rapid spiraling movement of the air over the ocean.

Tornadoes form when warm humid air meets cold dry air in a twisting effect over land, spinning at speeds of 80 to 150 miles an hour.

Earthquakes are caused by the shifting of tectonic plates along fault lines under the earth's surface. This crashing movement can turn any place into rubble in a matter of seconds.

Volcanoes are the result of a build-up of heat and pressure in the hot, molten rock deep underground along tectonic plate lines. Magma finally breaks through the surface, spewing gas, steam, ash, and/or molten lava from the rupture. If the earthquake or the volcanic eruption occurs in the ocean, a seismic sea wave—a tsunami—may occur. This natural result of massive movements in the earth can create waves as much as 35 to 200 feet higher than normal, crushing and mangling everything in their path.

These terrible, catastrophic events are the effects of what we call the "laws of nature". When natural conditions come together in predictable, specified ways, we can expect one of these powerful, destructive results—not as a direct act of God but because the earth's conditions demand it.

On the other hand, while nature itself is responsible for these tragedies, man is responsible for grievous things that come about as a result of wars, terrorism, robberies, killings, the misuse of drugs, hunger, polluted water, poverty, poor eating habits, etc.

However and whatever brings about hurt, pain, suffering, and death, never let the thought cross your mind, or say to yourself and to others, that God is doing this to me. Listen, God created you and all human beings, and He loves you. He doesn't want to kill you. He doesn't want to hurt you or to cause you and your loved ones to suffer. He even gave His son to die for you so you can be saved in this world and in the world to come. John 3:16 says plainly, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."*

Perhaps you have lost a wife, a husband, children, and other family members in some tragic natural calamity. This is heartbreaking, and we grieve for you in your loss, but be thankful that you have survived. Don't try to put the blame on others, and don't blame God, but be thankful that you are still living, and that there are many in your country and around the world who are making great efforts to help you and others to rebuild your life. Be thankful that good can come out of tragedy, and that you can know the love of God and of caring humans in the midst of all the pain.

Although you can see God's creation all around you, as a testi-

mony that God lives, get yourself a Bible and read and study it to learn more about God and about His Son, Jesus Christ. Look for His words of love and reassurance. Learn to say with the Psalmist, *"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul...."* (Psalm 23).

Turning to God's word to allow Him to talk to you, you will learn of the Lord's sacrifice for you, and of what He would have you to do to be saved. He wants you to hear the good news of His Son, Jesus Christ, to believe it, to turn away from your sins, and to be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. When you do these things, with a sincere heart of submission to God, He will save you and add you to His church, His spiritual family. Then as you live the Christian life and remain faithful to him, you will be prepared to go to heaven when you die. In that new spiritual world, you will live with God and the redeemed forevermore. There will be no pain there, no sorrow, no sickness, and no death. *"...We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless"* (2 Peter 3:13,14).

*"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away'. Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new'."* (Revelation 21:3-5).

That is the kind of God we believe in and serve. He lives, and we live because of Him.

## ***OF SHACKLES, CUFFS AND BONDS***

**HOWARD R. HORTON**

One of the most interesting pieces of equipment a law enforcement officer carries is his handcuffs. To pull these out is to make a statement. Someone is going to jail. When the cuffs are placed on someone, they have a tendency to hurt. Of course, the



officer applying the cuffs is in control of just how tight they fit. Usually, the conduct of the one being arrested determines the tightness.

Sin is that way. As Christians, we know what it is like to be bound by sin. That, of course, is the condition of all men and women before they are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). But, what about after we become Christians?

Do you remember a man named Simon the sorcerer? You can find his story in Acts 8:13-24 where we read of a sinner who became a Christian. As is the case all too often, this new convert turned to the thinking and conduct of the old man. Thus, an inspired apostle rebuked him with the words, "For I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:23 KJV). Thus, a free man (Romans 6:17-19) is in bonds again. Satan, with Simon's full consent, slapped the cuffs back on!

Now, the important thing is this: What will Simon do about those cuffs? Just how tight will he allow Satan to make them? From what we read in our text, Peter confronted Simon, and Simon immediately said, "Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me" (Acts 8:24). Of course, our text informs us that Peter had already commanded Simon to repent or perish (vv. 20-22).

Paul had a similar problem with the church at Rome. Within that church were people still feeling the pressure of keeping the Mosaic Law. In other words, they thought that the gospel (God's power to save men—Romans 1:16-17) was not enough. They believed some of the Mosaic Law had to be kept as well. But was this true?

Romans 6 is a great chapter on the glorious, yet serious ramifications, of being a baptized believer. Paul is not stressing the necessity of baptism in Romans 6; they had already been baptized. They just had not yet been taught or understood the serious demands placed on them as risen saints.

Being "raised with Christ" implies a death, the death of the old man, and the glorious resurrection of the new man in Christ Jesus. And this new man has the power of Christ, of God and of the Holy Spirit (through faith in His Word) to keep sin from having any more reign or dominion over him. Consider Romans 6:9-12, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin

once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."

Are these passages not clear? When Christ was raised from the dead, death could no longer hold Him, touch Him, hurt Him or have any reign over Him. In like manner, when we are raised with Him, sin cannot have any reign or dominion over us. We will still fall short from time to time, but we do not have to let sin have reign over us anymore! We can be "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37). And, this is accomplished without anything from the Mosaic Law. The "law of the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:2) is the only law men and women need today.

Let's be honest with new converts. When they become New Testament Christians, they will still feel the same pressures of their old lifestyles. However, the new convert must also know that those pressures do not have to win; strong as they may be, as often as they may come, they can still be faced, endured and solidly whipped through Jesus Christ. Sin does not have to rule the Christian any more! The new convert has appropriated the blood of Christ and every benefit is vouchsafed for him or her at Calvary.

People become Christians because they are sensitive people. Their hearts are still teachable, trainable and-pliable. The gospel can mold them further. However, this sensitivity sometimes can be a two-way street. The devil has the ability to cause people to become disheartened, depressed and despondent enough to start doubting God's ability to forgive and strengthen them further. John touched upon this in 1 John 3:20, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

All Christians, at some point, find themselves in the same boat with Simon the sorcerer. Our old lifestyles sometimes just will not stay away. Some old lifestyles seem to rise up and grab us around pressuring us to do something wrong, stupid and sinful. What are we to do? We are to fight! We are to remember the words of the Holy Spirit—words like, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13); words like, "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37); words like, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). The point is this: Have you felt any pressure around the wrists of your inner man? Has your enthusiasm been hampered by

shackles, bonds or cuffs of an old lifestyle? Do we allow Satan each day to continue to tighten his hold on us, thus robbing us of our self-esteem, drive and great hope for eternal life?

Jesus Christ has the handcuff key! Peter used these keys on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when 3,000 souls were baptized and added to the church, by the Lord Himself (Acts 2:37-47). Thus, if we listen really well we can hear the clicks of the braces being opened by the gospel and the thud of 3,000 sets of handcuffs hitting the ground!

Simon the sorcerer? He heard the click twice. Once when he became a Christian (Acts 8:13) and again after he became a Christian.

Do you need the cuffs removed—again? Then repent and pray. Click.

## ***Maintaining Objective Faith in a Subjective World***

**TOMMY SOUTH**

During the turbulent decade of the 1960s, we first began to hear the popularized slogans of the movement toward subjectivism (also known as moral relativism; now, more commonly, post-modernism). "All truth is relative," we were told. "If it feels good, do it!" Thomas Altizer even pronounced that "God is dead" (not meaning that He had expired, so much as that He had become irrelevant). All of this sounded so radical back then that we could scarcely imagine subjectivism would very quickly become the dominant view of reality in our society.

In a national survey in November 2002, George Barna reported that only 38 percent of Americans believed that absolute moral truth exists. That's not surprising, but it is very troubling. Even more troubling, however, was Barna's finding that same year that only 32 percent of those claiming to be "born again" Christians believed in moral absolutes. These are people who believe in God and Jesus and who indicate at least some regard for the Bible as the Word of God—yet, slightly less than one-third believe that absolute moral truth exists.

We are indeed living in a subjective world, and we must learn how to do it while maintaining an objective faith. The Christian faith is an objective one because it is based on historical realities concerning the acts of God in history, most notably the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The New Testament does not begin, "Once upon a time there was a man named Jesus."

### **Objective Versus Subjective**

Perhaps we should begin by defining the crucial terms in this discussion.

The objective view of reality has three primary characteristics:

(1) Truth or reality is what it is, regardless of human perception. In other words, what is true is true whether you or I think so or not. For example, on July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon, an event that was celebrated worldwide as an astounding achievement of modern technology. However, many people deny that it ever happened. In 1998 a former NASA scientist claimed in his book that the entire event was a hoax, staged under top-secret conditions at the mysterious "Area 51" in the Nevada desert, and that it is scientifically impossible for anyone to walk on the moon. An international organization of like-minded folks maintain the entire moon-walking episode was an elaborate deception orchestrated by the U.S. government.

If Neil Armstrong did walk on the moon, it really doesn't matter what these people say or think; he still did it. If he didn't do it, it doesn't matter what the rest of us think: it never happened. That's objectivism.

(2) Reality is supportable by evidence. If something is objectively true, those who support it can produce evidence in its favor. This may be in the form of eyewitnesses, documents or arguments concerning its reasonableness and/or probability. That doesn't mean that the evidence is necessarily persuasive to everyone but that evidence exists to back up the claim.

(3) By implication, whatever contradicts reality is necessarily false. In other words, two opposite claims can't both be true. If Armstrong walked on the moon, it is false to say that he didn't. If he didn't, it is false to say that he did.

The subjective view of reality is simply the opposite of the above:

(1) Reality is limited to the perception of each individual. Something may be true for you but not for me, and both views are said to be true. If you believe that Neil Armstrong walked on the moon and I don't, we are both right in our own way. There is no "public truth" on the matter; reality is simply what each of us chooses to believe that it is.

(2) Evidence is unnecessary and irrelevant. Because all truth is personal, it really doesn't matter whether any evidence supports one's convictions or not. For subjectivism, the individual is the only standard by which truth can be judged.

(3) Because all truth is personal and relative, even contradictions can both be true. In other words, Neil Armstrong walked on the moon—and he didn't!

### **The Dangers of Subjectivism**

The effects of the subjective world-view on spiritual truth are obvious: God is real only if He is real to you; otherwise, He has no objective reality. Jesus is and is not God's Son and the Savior of the world depending on what you think about Him, and other (even conflicting) claims about Him are equally valid. The Bible is the Word of God only if you choose to take it that way; otherwise, it is simply another collection of ancient writings.

More specifically, notice the effects of subjectivism as it relates to faith:

(1) Man—not God—becomes the standard of right and wrong. Actually, there is no right and wrong, except what each of us determines for himself or herself. This leads to both moral and spiritual relativism (i.e., nothing is absolutely right or wrong/true or false) and that leads inevitably to chaos. We are reminded of the sad evaluation of the era of the Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6 NASB). That's why the stories from the book of Judges are so bizarre—something akin to today's newspaper accounts.

(2) Faith is replaced by feelings. Genuine "faith" in the biblical sense is not a blind acceptance of something as true. It is based on certain realities: God exists. Jesus is His Son. He died on the cross for the sins of the world and rose from the dead. Scripture is true and can be trusted to give us an accurate account of what God has done and wants.

Subjectivism, on the other hand, is based mostly on how people feel, and there is an enormous difference in this and actual faith. Allow me to mention a few things that feelings cannot do for faith:

- Feelings cannot inform faith. Because faith is based on historical and spiritual realities, those realities must be conveyed and accepted. Your feelings will not lead you to the conclusion that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. In fact, for many people, feelings will lead them to quite the opposite conclusion.
- Feelings cannot determine God's will for your life. God's will is known from His Word and from the wisdom it teaches. Just because we feel something strongly does not mean that God is leading us. In fact, following our feelings apart from objective revelation from Scripture will likely cause us to play right into the hands of what Paul calls "the flesh," the self-centered tendency resident within all of us that pulls us away from doing God's will (see Galatians 5:16-17).
- Feelings cannot establish right and wrong, truth and error. If they could, then there would be no solid truth because what is true would vary from individual to individual.

When Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman in John 4, she brought up the age-old argument between Jews and Samaritans about the proper place of worship—the Jerusalem temple or the rival Samaritan sanctuary on Mount Gerizim. This was evidently an attempt to steer Him away from the discussion of her marital history. Jesus didn't allow her to derail Him, but before proceeding He answered the place-of-worship question: "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall you worship the Father. You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:21-22). The Samaritans felt very strongly about Mount Gerizim being the right place to worship. But Jesus said that regardless of their feelings, they were wrong: "You worship that which you do not know." Feelings cannot establish theological truth and error, nor can they establish moral right and wrong.

- Feelings cannot tell you if you are right with God. Being lost or saved is an objective reality based on what God has said and promised, not on how we feel about the matter. In Acts 23:1, Paul acknowledges that he had a good conscience all

of his life, right up to his arrest in Jerusalem. That means when he was arresting Christians and casting his vote in favor of their deaths, he felt just fine about it (Acts 22:3-5; 26:9-11). But, as he eventually learned, he could not have been more wrong.

Likewise, sometimes our feelings condemn us when God doesn't. First John 3:19-20 informs us that we can "assure our heart ... in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our hearts and knows all things." Just as we may be lost when we feel that we are saved, it is possible to be saved when we feel lost. Our feelings simply are not an adequate guide to this important question.

(3) Subjectivism creates a vacuum of hopelessness and despair. Back in the 1960s, we were told that throwing off the old views of public, universal truth to which we were all answerable would bring us freedom. The truth is we are never really free until we know where the boundaries are. I recall a visit to the World Trade Center in New York City several years ago, and the feeling of apprehension when I stepped out of the elevator into the observation floor. The height was absolutely dizzying and the view fantastic, but had the entire thing not been enclosed in glass, I would have ventured no further than the elevator door. Only because I knew there were boundaries of safety could I venture out and see what there was to be seen.

From the subjective point of view, no one can be sure of anything. It's even a contradiction of the subjective position to state with absolute certainty that nothing is absolute. And if no one can be sure of anything, inevitably the sense of hopelessness will follow that permeates our culture today resulting in drug and alcohol abuse and a host of other social aberrations.

### **"I Know Whom I Have Believed"**

Contrast all of these problems with the words of Paul in 2 Timothy 1:11-14: "For [this gospel] I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you."

Paul could know in whom he had believed because God is an objective reality, and he knew that the gospel is true whether his enemies believed it or not. Likewise, he could be sure that God is able to guard what had been entrusted to Paul because he had good evidence of God's capabilities based on Old Testament history and the death and resurrection of Jesus. And he could admonish Timothy to follow the pattern of sound words that he had been taught; the objective revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ that is not subject to individual approval or acknowledgment. Timothy should guard the truth entrusted to him because some things are true and others are false. On that basis, both Timothy and Paul could be free to live out their lives of service to Christ, despite the suffering, certain of the outcome. No sense of hopelessness here!

By following these same principles, it is still possible to maintain an objective faith in a subjective world. The next Barna poll may reveal that only 1 percent believe in absolute truth, but that does not hinder the believer in Christ from maintaining the faith by which we are saved. It is not now and never will be easy, but it can be done!

## **SELF-CONTROL**

**PAUL CLEMENTS**

Self-control is a Christian virtue that is difficult for some to develop and maintain. It is what we need most and seem to strive for least in this life. The kind of self-control we need requires restraint, courage, perseverance, determination, discipline, etc. Maybe we're frightened by such requirements. Felix was terrified when Paul spoke about self-control in Acts 24:25. We don't know what Paul said, but he spoke of it in the company of right living and the final judgment. He surely told Felix that self-control was essential to achieve righteousness and to be approved on judgment day! Regardless, self-imposed discipline is a necessity if we are to live a Christian life.

The term "self-control" implies strength. Self-control (temperance, *κν*) is the mastery of one's desires, especially one's physical appetites. It is control of mind and body. It is the power to hold oneself within limits. This power allows us to bring all our



faculties under control. "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32 NKJV). When we achieve self-control, we have strength, order and harmony in our lives. We are more able to handle life's challenges.

Self-control may be obvious in some areas of life (e.g. mastery of a musical instrument). It is also apparent even in the least of matters. For example, for a student to do his best in school and make good grades even in the subjects he doesn't like requires self-control. For a person determined to lose weight to avoid his favorite cake takes self-control. Orderliness in our personal lives (e.g. picking up after oneself, making the bed, etc.) is a direct result of self-control. Some folks are almost always on time for church services. Others are habitually late. Self-control and the discipline required to develop good habits make the difference.

Self-control is essentially the ability to regulate our actions by principles and sound judgment. It matters little how good we claim to be or how much we know if we cannot control ourselves. Self-control relates to all areas of life. The opposite of self-control is identified in such passages as 1 Corinthians 7:5. Here temptation to commit sexual sin is mentioned.

James described a lack of self-control when he said lust conceives and bears sin of any kind (1:15). Temptation is not wrong in and of itself. Yielding to temptations, giving in to our lusts, and not applying restraint lead to sin. This is where self-control must be applied.

When Paul condemns the works of flesh and commends the fruit of the Spirit, self-control is listed and said to be a quality against which there is no law (Galatians 5:23). The law of Christ, the inspired word of truth, must rule our hearts and lives and thereby help us restrain our passions and evil desires.

Paul illustrates self-control by the discipline required of the contender in athletic contests (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). The athlete must be in training to achieve success. Similarly, we must be in spiritual training if we are to receive the incorruptible crown. Self-control demands laying aside the weight of sin and steadfastly running the Christian race (Hebrews 12:1). Only by control of self can we, like Paul, finish the race (2 Timothy 4:7). When addressing the things that were wanting in the churches of Crete, Paul told Titus to require self-control of church leaders (Titus 1:8). He knew

that in the grievous times that were coming, a lack of self-control would be one of the indicators of a false pretense at godliness (2 Timothy 3:1-5). The elders of the church were to set the example in the matter of self-control. All Christians should develop self-control as a virtue built on faith, virtue and knowledge (2 Peter 1:5-6).

Self-control is acquired by exercising wisdom in the application of knowledge gained from God's Word. "Gird up the loins of your mind" and set your sights on eternal life—living a holy life of obedience (1 Peter 1:13-15). This should get us started in the development of self-control which is gained only by hard work and constant effort. There are no shortcuts. "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

The Rechabites were used as examples of self-control before Judah (Jeremiah 35). They had been instructed by their forefathers to avoid certain things including wine. When Jeremiah brought them into the temple and offered them wine (God's directive), they refused to imbibe. Although bowls of wine were set before them and they were told to drink, they would not! Judah was told by God through Jeremiah that they should have listened to the prophets and applied self-control as the Rechabites did. Because they did not listen to God, they would be punished. The self-controlled Rechabites, on the other hand, were commended by God.

Another example of such power over self is Daniel. He "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies" (Daniel 1:8). Although he was of the royal seed, he was a captive in the hands of the Babylonians. It must have taken great courage and conviction to go against the king's wishes. Evidence that self-control was the practice in all areas of his life is seen in the statement: "He knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom" (Daniel 6:10). He continued in this, knowing he would be thrown to the lions! Daniel is a great example of a self-controlled young man.

Like Paul, we may have to buffet our bodies to keep them under control. The word "buffet" is a severe word meaning to strike your face. Paul uses it metaphorically to describe the necessary restraint of himself that he might be spiritually in shape.

From the wisdom of Solomon, we learn that the person without control over his spirit "is like a city broken down, without walls" (Proverbs 25:28). Without self-control, we are defenseless. Self-control requires constant attention. If we want to please God, we must follow these good examples and develop self-control having "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24).

## ***WORSHIP REJECTED***

**JOHN GIPSON**

The Bible makes it clear that worship should be the response of man to God. Jesus quoted with approval the Scripture that says, "*You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.*" The directive to worship is clear and plain.

Ancient Israel worshipped! In fact, she loved to do it (including bringing freewill offerings). Yet, Amos thundered against them and insisted they were multiplying their transgressions in doing so. Wait a minute! Doesn't that sound a little strange to you? Sinning while worshipping? If it happened in the long ago, do you suppose it might still be possible today?

God's rejection against Israel's worship was total. Look at the verbs that march across the page of your Bible: "I hate ... I despise ... I take no delight... I will not accept ... I will not look upon ... take away ... I will not listen" (Amos 5:21-23). Worship rejected!

How would you feel, looking into God's Book and seeing all of the Sundays you worshipped, if you then saw, written across every one of them in bold letters the words, "Worship rejected"?

God makes it plain that worship that is different from the life one lives will never avail. "*But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream*" (Amos 5:24).

Perhaps you remember the old joke about a man entering into heaven and shouting back to those in line, "Wednesdays don't count!" We may laugh, but Wednesdays do count. The worship we engage in on Sunday is important, but the way we live the other six days of the week may well determine whether any of our worship is acceptable.

# The Lord's Supper

WAYNE JACKSON

One of the distinctive features of the church of Jesus Christ is the practice of observing the Lord's Supper on the first day of each week. Quite often our religious neighbors cannot understand our strictness in this regard; they feel that the time of such participation is relatively inconsequential and thus an optional matter. What does the New Testament teach?

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the night prior to His death (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20). In connection therewith, He said, *"This do in remembrance of me."* Later, Paul wrote: *"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come"* (1 Corinthians 11:26).

However, is there a specified time for eating the Lord's Supper? It is true that Christ Himself, so far as the New Testament record goes, did not specify a time, but we must remember two things. First, not everything that Jesus taught is recorded in the Gospel records (cf. Acts 20:35). Also, Christ sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles (and, through them, the entire church) into truth that He personally did not commit to them (John 16:13). So, it is not merely a matter of what the Lord Himself taught, but also what the practice of the early church was, under the leadership of inspired men. An understanding of this is of utmost importance.

The first century church observed the Lord's Supper with a consistent frequency. Of those early disciples it is said: *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (Acts 2:42). The phrase *"the breaking of bread"* is a reference to the memorial Supper. The definite article *"the"* specifies a particular event, in contrast, for example, to a common daily meal mentioned in verse 46, *"... breaking bread at home, they took their food..."* The verb *"continued steadfastly"* (verse 42) is in the Greek imperfect tense, suggesting their customary or habitual practice of eating the Lord's Supper. Still, however, the time is not stated.

Later, Luke writes: *"And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread..."* (Acts 20:7). Here we do have a time specified. It is upon the first day of the week, Sunday.

However, notice some other important points in this verse. First, the disciples "were gathered together". The verb is in the passive voice, indicating that the assembly was not of their own initiative; it was a DIVINE appointment! Second, the infinitive phrase "to break bread" (the Greek may be rendered literally, "for the breaking of bread") denotes the primary purpose for which the Christians were assembled. Thus, the purpose of that meeting on the first day of the week was to observe the Lord's Supper. Now, if we can learn the frequency of their Sunday meetings, we will know how often, under Divine guidance, the disciples remembered the Lord's death in the Supper. The answer is supplied in 1 Corinthians 16:2, where Paul admonishes the saints to lay by in store "*on the first day of every week*" (NASV). Though the King James Version omits the word "every", it is in the Greek text. This demonstrates that the early Christians met each Sunday. Since the purpose of that assembly was "to break bread", it conclusively follows that they observed the Supper each Lord's day. This argument is simply unanswerable, and those who wish to be apostolic in practice will follow the divinely led example of the first century church.

## **Wise Old Man!**

DEMAR ELAM

*"Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end"* (Proverbs 19:20).

One of man's greatest challenges is the ability to listen to counsel and receive instruction. However, Solomon says that if you want to be wise in your latter days you must listen to counsel and receive instruction.

Isn't it amazing how difficult it is for man, first to listen to counsel, and secondly, to receive instruction? Many people receive only the counsel and instruction that agree with the way they want to do a thing or the way they want to believe a particular thing.

Youth is consumed by the speeding robber called age. Years bring old age, and man reflects on the life and the understanding those years have produced in him. Sadness fills the minds of

those who reflect and realize that they refused to listen to counsel and receive instruction.

Do you want to be a wise old man? Then listen to the mighty Word of God regarding this matter. Hear the Lord and receive His instruction. *"Love the Lord your God, with all your heart and all of your soul and strength"* (Deuteronomy 6:5). *"Love your neighbors as yourself"* (Galatians 5:14). *"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God"* (Matthew 6:33). *"Lay up treasures in heaven"* (Matthew 6:19-21). *"Go the second mile"* (Matthew 5:38-42). *"Love your enemies"* (Matthew 5:43-48). Develop the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25). Assist others and help them bear their burdens (Galatians 6:2). *"Husbands love your wives"* (Ephesians 5:25). *"Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first fruits of all your increases"* (Proverbs 3:9).

When your arms and legs are feeble due to the passing of the years, will you be viewed by those who know you as a "wise old man", or a foolish old man who never listened to God or man?

*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck"* (Proverbs 1:7-9).

## ***Seek First The Kingdom***

**WAYNE BARRIER**

Bookstores are filled with books that tell us how to be successful in our business careers, personal lives, relationships, and other areas of life. Each area is usually discussed and presented as the most important of all. Almost everyone is confronted with situations that demand that we set priorities and choose and emphasize one facet of life over others.

With all this advice, many people still seem to be torn and frustrated with feelings of failure, uncertainty, and emptiness. Christians should not have these problems. Guidance is given in the Bible for these matters.

Consider the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 6:33 where He states, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and*

*all these things shall be added to you.*" "All these things" are actually the physical things that most people devote themselves to obtaining. They should be second priority. When we put Jesus first, He promises to help with other priorities. Jesus had stated earlier in Matthew 6:24, "... You cannot serve God and mammon."

This message of Jesus is discussed further and presented in practical terms as Paul writes in Colossians 3:1-10, *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek these things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."*

*"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth; fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created Him."*

The message of Paul continues in Colossians 3:12-17 as he says, *"Therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 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."*

The Christian is provided with perfect advice and guidance to help find meaning, purpose, behavioral standards, and priorities in life. The Bible is all we need to set our course and achieve success that is rewarding, pleasing to God, and everlasting. Can you be disciplined to "seek these things above"? If we are "in

Christ", we can have the knowledge and strength to follow this path of success and reward. The way to get "in Christ" is through obedience to His teachings found in His Word. Baptism is the act of obedience that puts one "into Christ" (Galatians 3:26,27).

## ARE YOU LIVING THE ABUNDANT LIFE?

JERRY JENKINS

Many who profess to be devoted followers of Jesus find themselves living far short of what could be classified as the "abundant life". The *abundant* life is not the same as the *affluent* life or the life *without problems*; the abundant life is a life promised to those converts to Christ who make a total response of their lives to the Lord.

**1. The abundant life comes to those who have genuine faith.** This faith is total trust in the One who created us and redeemed us. It involves dependence upon Him and acceptance of His suggestions and corrections.

**2. The abundant life comes to those who live a life of prayer.** Prayer is not bringing a grocery list to God. It is a trusting child speaking to his loving Father, Who desires to fulfill every need.

**3. Abundant living comes to those who submit fully to His will.** Two lives that must be contrasted are: (1) the joy in the life of a person who obeys God and (2) the guilty, hard life of one who is in rebellion to God.

**4. Abundant living comes to those who live a life of giving.** The more selfish a person is the less he will truly enjoy the blessings of God.

## *Rahab—Wheat Among the Tares*

BARNEY HARTLINE

Mark Twain, seen by some as more preacher than humorist, once said, "Having spent considerable time with good people, I can understand why Jesus liked to be with tax collectors and reprobate sinners." What poor judges of character humankind has proven to be. Through the centuries God's prophets have been



put to death, His apostles beaten and rejected, and even His Son hung on a cruel cross. Age-old prejudices kept the Jews of New Testament times from perceiving that Samaritans could be just as good, maybe even more righteous, than priests and Levites. No doubt it is good that God and not man is the judge because man throughout history has failed miserably.

Twain was correct in his observation that good often springs from the people we least expect. We often do not appreciate such goodness because we have been conditioned to believe that there are certain groups from which no good can come.

From such a group is Rahab, whose occupation followed her very name—Rahab, the harlot. Her story, found in the book of Joshua, presents an intriguing character from which no good could be expected. After all, she was a prostitute. More than that she was a Canaanite—a people who practiced a pagan religion that included human sacrifice. The Moabites lived in the land of Canaan. One historical account tells of a Moabite king, Mesha, who in the sight of the thousands gathered in a vast amphitheater, killed and burned his child as a propitiatory sacrifice to the cruel gods of his country. Isaiah 15, 16 and 25:10-12 predicts the utter annihilation of the Moabites; and they are frequently denounced by the subsequent prophets. Certainly no good could come from a person in this group.

How did Rahab, who was raised in this world of paganism, have such a loyalty to the God of Israel? The Scriptures do not reveal how her faith developed, but several important lessons can be learned by her example.

First, we can learn that we should never turn our backs on anyone. We would do well to avoid assuming that there are those who will not be interested in God's truth and His goodness. A Canaanite woman, a common harlot, showed that God's goodness could shine in anyone who makes up one's mind to place faith in Him.

Second, we learn that God is no respecter of persons. Peter had great difficulty learning this lesson. Yet when he saw that the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit, just as the Jews had, Peter confessed: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34 *KJV*).

Some people proclaim God a racist because He turned His back on certain ethnic groups in the Bible. But in the story of

Rahab, this is not so. It was the behavior and lifestyles of the Canaanites and other such groups recorded in the Old Testament that were so displeasing to God—not from whom they were descended. A Canaanite prostitute, born and raised among a nation of people who murdered one another in the name of religion, was able to see that something was not right and good in the world in which she lived. When the opportunity presented itself for faith in action, she took it. Here was a woman, someone not supposed to succeed in the world of Judaism, who ironically became an ancestor to the great kings of Israel, David and Solomon. Ultimately Rahab is listed in the earthly lineage of Jesus Christ Himself.

We must never judge that someone's background will keep him from having faith in God and doing good. Often it is the person who has lived in the downward spiral of sin who becomes more devoted to God than someone who has never experienced that side of life. He or she has seen the consequences to that dead end and wishes to return no more.

The third, and perhaps most important, lesson to be learned from Rahab's story is that God loves us. He loves us whether we were born into a family of sinners or a family of saints. No matter how far we have strayed from Him, He will welcome us back with open arms if we will repent and put our trust in Him.

Fourth, we learn from Rahab's story that we need to trust God to be the judge of us all. Jesus warns in the parable of the tares and the wheat of the probability of uprooting the good with the bad when we try to set ourselves up as judge. A tare looked too much like wheat; it was hard to tell the difference between the two in the early stages of growth. Thus, the tares are not to be uprooted until near the end of the growing season. "But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them'" (Matthew 13:29 NKJV).

Many of us, thinking ourselves to be good and faithful servants of God, have unwittingly destroyed the work of some good brother or sister in Christ because of our prejudices and ignorance. If we had lived in the time and culture in which Rahab existed, filled with prejudice against the Canaanites, would we have recognized her as wheat among the tares?

