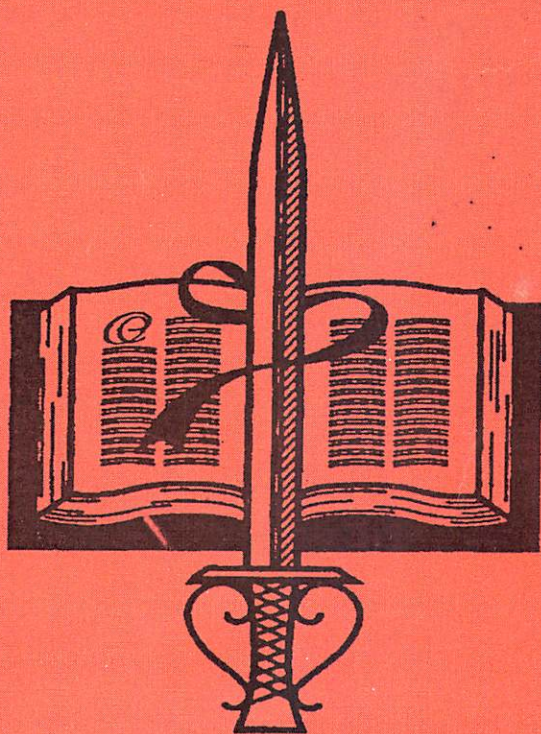


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THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 42

September 2011

No. 5

EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

Christ will never come back on earth

While there has been much speculation about Christ's Second coming, one very important fact is often overlooked. The Scriptures do not teach that Christ will ever come back on this earth. On the contrary, it says that on that day of the Lord when He will appear, both the earth and the works that are in it will be destroyed. We read, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10). Friends, there is not a single passage in the entire Bible which says that Christ will ever again set his foot on this earth. At His second coming this earth will be burned up. Where will He come then? According to the apostle Paul, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). Therefore the Bible teaches that when Christ will come back He will come in the clouds up in the air where His resurrected and immortally changed followers (1 Corinthians 15:50-54) will meet Him and from there they will go with Him to live with Him forever in His heavenly abode. (John 14:1-3).

But when is Christ going to come back? There is not a man on the face of the earth who knows anything about the time when Christ will come back. That information resides only in the mind of God. Once when Christ Himself was asked that question, when he was on earth, His reply was, "...of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Mark 13:32). This ought to have settled the matter forever. But it seems man has the tendency to speak where God has maintained His silence. Christ said no one knows, not even angels in heaven and nor Himself. Therefore, since God has not chosen to reveal about that day to any man, we must conclude that those who claim to know about that day are false prophets.

There have been many in the past who have publicly set different dates as to when Christ would come again and the world would come to an end. One such religious leader was William Miller, who lived in the 1800s. He told his follower that according to his Bible knowledge he has come to the conclusion that Christ was going to come back on March 21, 1844. Many people had believed what Miller had said. They disposed of their personal good, businesses and homes, stopped their children from going to schools. People had honestly and sincerely believed what Miller had said. But they were honestly and sincerely deceived. The Lord didn't come. Miller began to re-check his figures and decided he had missed the date by seven months. So he told people that he had miscalculated his first figures and that the actual date of Christ's return will be October 22, 1844. We are told that as that day began to approach, people were filled with fear, panic, excitement, and enthusiasm. Some had even committed suicide. Others had made themselves white robes in which they could ascend, they began to pray and sing and then waited and waited for Jesus to come. Like March 21, October 22, 1844 also came and went, but, of course, Christ didn't come. How foolish it is to speak where God has not spoken.

But the date predictors have not stopped. More recently another such man came along and predicted that Christ was going to come on May 21, 2011 and that world was going to end. Many gullible souls around the world believed Harold Camping and were likewise deceived.

When Christ was on earth, he had told His listeners, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John

8:32). Again, when He was about to leave this world, in his prayer to the Father in heaven He made this plea about His followers, "Sanctify them by Your truth, Your word is truth." (John 17:17). The Bible contains God's word. God has spoken. Instead of going to men, whoever they may be, people need to turn to the pages of the Bible. Whatever man need to know, God has revealed all in the Bible. Man's doctrine and teaching will lead people to the wide gate and the broad way of destruction. But those who want to enter the eternal life in heaven must choose to enter by the narrow gate and the difficult way. (Matthew 7:13, 14).

New Testament Worship

Lesson Two

THE WORSHIPPER

J.C. CHOATE

Of all of God's creation, there is just one that can worship him and that is man. God created man not with just a body but with a soul and an intellect. With intelligence then man is able to make decisions. He can therefore decide to worship his creator or he can decide that he will not. When man chooses to worship God then it is that he is truly praised and honoured.

Man is basically a worshipful being. He is going to worship something or someone. He has always done this and will always do so as long as time shall stand. In both the past and present man has been known to bow down to every imaginable thing. This includes the moon, the stars, stones, rivers, and every form of nature. He has also bowed to all sorts of man-made images made out of stone, wood, and metal. But if man is to worship then he needs to be pointed to the God that made him and encouraged to worship him. Actually, God seeks such to worship Him.

Jesus taught, "But the hour cometh, and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23, 24). So it is not enough for a person to worship, but if his worship is to be acceptable then it must be directed to the right one and it must be done in spirit and in truth. Let us think on what this implies

and necessities.

1. **All may know of the true and living God**—all of creation points to a maker. This is inescapable, and all intelligent human beings, when accepting the facts of the case, will be forced to come to this conclusion. Of course we know that the one true and living God is this Creator. (Genesis 1:1).

2. If God is the Creator of all things, and would have man to obey Him, then surely He has revealed His will to man. And He has. He has done this through the Bible. We are told that things that are written concerning Christ have been written that we might believe. (John 20: 30, 31). Furthermore, all Scriptures have been given by the inspiration of God. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

3. Since God has spoken, and it has been recorded and made available through the pages of the Bible, then it is possible for man to come in contact with it, learn it, and obey it. Christ commanded the apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16: 15, 16). Not only so, but those who are hungry and thirsty for the righteousness of God shall be filled. (Matthew 5: 6). Again, we are told that those who have a desire to receive the Lord that He will give them the power or the opportunity to become sons of God. (John 1: 12).

4. Once one reads and studies the word of God, then faith is produced in his heart. (Romans 10: 17). From knowledge and faith, then he is led to obey the commands of the Lord that brings salvation. (Acts 2: 38; Acts 17: 30; Hebrews 11:6).

5. Through obedience he is saved and added to the Lord's church where he is now a Christian. (Acts 2: 47; Acts 11:26).

6. As a member of the church and as a Christian then one is prepared to worship the Lord as He has directed. Before this time one could not Scripturally worship. We read, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God and doeth *His* will, him he heareth." (John 9:31). Note, two conditions were laid down before one could hope to be heard of the Lord: First, he had to be a worshipper of God, and second, of course, based on the fact that he was a doer of the Lord's word. This amounts to that of being in the proper relationship with God, or the son and Father relationship, or being a Christian and member of the Lord's church.

7. As a Christian and a member of the Lord's church, there is still the necessity of worshipping God in spirit and in truth for the

worship to be accepted. That means that the worship then must be engaged in the right frame of mind. That is, it must be done from the heart, in all humility, in all sincerity and reverence. Such would require purity of heart, and concentration of one's thoughts on what he is engaging in. The worshipper cannot coldly and formally go through worship without any thought of what he is doing. This would be mockery. Then finally, the worship should be engaged in all truth. This means that it should be in harmony with the teaching of God's word. Now the question is what has the Lord taught? As we continue our studies we are going to find that this includes Bible Study, Prayer, Singing, The Lord's Supper, and Giving. Furthermore, it would require that it be on the day that the Lord has stipulated. Now it makes no difference how sincere an individual might be unless his worship is according to the truth then it is all in vain. Again, even if one follows the Lord's teaching to the letter when it comes to the acts of worship, if his worship is not in spirit or with the understanding, then it is in vain. God has specified how he wants the individual to worship Him and it must be complied with explicitly.

8. The worshipper has to be in the right place (the Lord's church), engaging in the acts of worship that the Lord has specified, and with the right people, for his worship to be acceptable.

Fellowship here is very important. The true Christian cannot worship with the various denominational groups or other religious organizations, because their worship is quite different from that which has just been described. The true Christian, and member of the Lord's church, cannot worship God Scripturally on Saturday. He cannot worship with those who study according to the creeds of men, who sing with mechanical music, who pray for all denominational groups, who do not have the Lord's Supper every Sunday, and who's "tithes and offering" are given to promote error. Paul said, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Ephesians 5:11). John wrote, concerning false teachers: "For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 11).

9. **The worshipper himself**—although the worshipper is not perfect, that does not give him the license to live as he pleases. If he is to worship the Lord then he should rid himself of all of his bad habits and practices (James 5: 17), and strive to approach

the Lord in worship with a pure heart, a clean body, and a humble spirit.

What kind of worshipper are you? When do you worship? How often do you worship? Why do you worship? Who do you worship? There are many worshippers, but few true worshippers. The majority either worship the wrong one or worship in the wrong way. Be sure that if you are going to worship that it is directed to the right one and in the right way and that you are the kind of person that the Lord would want to worship Him.

What Lack I Yet?

RON BOATWRIGHT

A young man came running to Jesus and said, *"Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"* (Matthew 19:16). Jesus said to him, *"But if you want to enter life, keep the commandments"* (Matthew 19:17). The young man said, *"All these things I have kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?"* "We need to ask ourselves the same question, "What lack I yet?" so we can be sure of going to Heaven.

We are told to *"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves"* (2 Corinthians 13:5). We need to look at our lives and try to see where we are lacking and need improvement. What can we do to be more pleasing to the Lord? We are told, *"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure"* (2 Peter 1:10). Any sin of which we will not repent will cause us to be eternally lost. Jesus says, *"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:3).

We need to beware of the false teaching of "once saved, always saved". This is a lie of Satan who wants us to be lost. He doesn't want us to ask ourselves, "What lack I yet?" We are warned, *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall"* (1 Corinthians 10:12). In addition, we are warned to *"beware lest you fall from your own steadfastness"* (2 Peter 3:17). Let's not let Satan lure us into complacency. Jesus has promised, *"Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life"* (Revelation 2:10).

To be strong, we must regularly feed ourselves on God's spiritual Word, the Bible. We are to *"receive with meekness the*

implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:22,23). And "desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). Studying His Word will help us to have a strong faith to protect ourselves because we know that, "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

We must concentrate on what we must do to inherit eternal life. And in doing this, *"Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience" (Hebrews 4:11).*

We need to look seriously at our own lives, to recognize any mistakes we are making that could keep us out of Heaven. We need to ask ourselves, **"What lack I yet?"**

Christ Arose and He Ever Lives

CLEM THURMAN

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the basic, vital facts upon which the gospel of Christ is founded. The apostles of the Lord, who were told by Him to go preach to all men everywhere, made the resurrection a central theme of almost every recorded sermon. The fact of His resurrection is recorded in the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And the risen Lord is the subject in the opening chapter of the book of Acts.

Jesus was crucified during the passover festival of the Jews. Some fifty days later, at the feast of the Pentecost, the first gospel sermon was preached by the apostle Peter in the city of Jerusalem. Jesus was a very well-known figure in Jerusalem, and just seven weeks before He had been put to death. Undoubtedly all of the people were still talking about those events. So Peter preached to the Jews: *"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. . . This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses . . . Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this*

Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:22-24,32,36).

This preaching was opposed by the leaders of the Jews, who had Peter and John arrested and threatened them with death. But they said, *"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole. He is the stone which was set at naught of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved"* (Acts 4:10-12). The apostle Paul preached the resurrection of Jesus to the Greeks in the city of Athens (Acts 17:30-31). And in writing to the church in Corinth, he pointed out the three great facts of the gospel: the DEATH, the BURIAL and the RESURRECTION of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). And a great statement is found in Heb. 7:25, *"Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."* He ever lives! And what meaning that has for us?

Christ Ever Lives - to Save the Lost

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). He stated clearly, *"The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). His death on the cross was for the purpose of saving lost sinners by the cleansing power of His blood (Rom. 5:9-10; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 9:22). But to unbelievers, *"The word of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness"* (1 Cor. 1:18). That a "dead man" could save was ridiculous to them. It still is foolishness to the unbeliever. But the Lord Jesus Christ is not dead. *"He ever lives!"*

When He sent the apostles out to all the world, He told them, *"Preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15). The reason for that is the gospel of Christ is *"the power of God unto salvation"* (Rom. 1:16). The word of the Lord Jesus is *"living and active"* (Heb. 4:12). But Christ, the living Christ, makes it so: *"He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near to him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them"* (Heb. 7:25). There is the key to it. He is able to save, for He is ALIVE. *"He ever lives."*

Christ Ever Lives - to Intercede for Us

As Heb. 7:25 declares, *"He ever liveth to make intercession*

for them." Repeatedly in the book of Hebrews, Jesus is called our High Priest. *"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus . . . For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin . . . but he, because he abideth for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable . . . and having a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water"* (Heb. 3:1; 4:15; 7:24; 10:21-22).

As the ninth chapter of Hebrews shows, the principle duties of the high priest under the Old Testament were to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people and thus to intercede to God for them. But we read of Christ, *"But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption"* (Heb. 9:11-12). So, Christ is, at once, the sacrifice which is offered and the High Priest who offers it! What better mediator could we possibly have?

In spite of our best efforts, though, we still fail on occasion. John writes, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us . . . My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (1 John 1:8; 2:1). We have an Advocate, at the throne of God, to plead our case for us. Only a LIVING Christ could be that Advocate. As we read, *"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted"* (Heb. 2:18). When trials come to us, He cares. When troubles beset us, He cares. When pain comes, He cares. When we are tempted, He cares. He went through what we are going through. He will not *"suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, make also the way of escape"* (1 Cor. 10:13). This is our High Priest: *"He ever lives"* to protect us and to make intercession for us.

Christ Ever Lives - to Cleanse Christians

As noted earlier, Christ shed His blood to cleanse us from sin.

As Paul wrote, *"But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him"* (Rom. 5:8-9). When the inspired writer, in Heb. 9, describes the work of Jesus as our High Priest, he states, *"For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"* (Heb. 9:13-14). Without the blood of Jesus, none could be made free from sin. Without His blood, none could be Christians, none could be children of God.

But His blood not only cleanses people from sin in making them Christians, the blood of Christ continues to cleanse them as Christians. The apostle John wrote, *"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin"* (1 John 1:5-7).

We have been *"called out of darkness, and into his marvelous light"* (1 Pet. 2:9). But, as John wrote, while we are *"walking in the light,"* the blood of Jesus continues to cleanse us from sin. Thus, living an acceptable life does not mean never making a mistake. It rather means that, as we walk in the light (a child of God), the blood of Christ constantly cleanses us from sin. Note the context again: *"If we walk in the light . . . The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* (1 John 1:7-8).

Every honest person knows that he sins. In so many ways, we fail to measure up, we *"miss the mark"* (which is the definition of sin). How terrible to live with the guilty knowledge of our own shortcomings! But we don't have to. Jesus died and rose again, and *"He ever lives"* to cleanse us with His blood. This is the basis for the statement in Heb. 10:19, *"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."* No one lives a life good enough to have boldness to come before God. Our boldness comes from the blood of Jesus Christ. He continues to cleanse us from sin. Because *"He ever lives."*

He Ever Lives - to Help and Strengthen Us

After His resurrection, Jesus told His apostles to preach among all the nations. Then He gives them His wonderful promise: *"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matt. 28:20). Wherever we go, He is with us. Whatever troubles come, His promise is, *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"* (Heb. 13:5). The apostle Paul wrote, *"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"* (Rom. 8:31-32,37). You see, Christ "ever lives" to look after the needs of those who serve Him.

The prayer of Paul for beloved brethren was: *"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love"* (Eph. 3:16-17). Then, three chapters later he wrote, *"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might"* (Eph. 6:10). If I must rely only on my own strength, I will fail. But Jesus "ever lives" to strengthen me.

The apostle Paul wrote of a *"thorn in the flesh"* which was given him by Satan: *"Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"* (2 Cor. 12:8-9). Paul's conclusion, then, was: *"I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . For when I am weak, then I am strong"* (v. 10). As long as Paul depended upon his own strength, he suffered and was weakened. But in his dependence on the living Christ, he found strength. So do we.

Because of the presence, strength and help of Jesus Christ, Paul could say: *"For to me to live is Christ . . . I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Phil. 1:21; 4:13). This was true because Christ "ever lives." And He lives for us, also. His presence, His strength and His constant help is promised to us when we live for Him.

Yes, Christ ever lives. And because He lives, we may, *"Enter into the holiest . . . Draw near with a true heart in full assurance*

of faith . . . *Hold fast the profession of our faith*" (Heb. 10:19-23). And because Christ ever lives, we should live for Him.

The Meeting of Grace and Faith

DILLARD THURMAN

Modern pulpiteers have almost made a career out of the various texts dealing with the grace of God. So radical have they become that there has been fostered a feeling that there is nothing for man to do, and nothing that he can do, to affect his salvation. If this be true, then God has the sole responsibility for man's salvation, and if any man is not saved, he can point an accusing finger at God. Too, if one man is saved and another is lost, then God has indeed become a respecter of persons, and Acts 10:34 is utterly false: *"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."* God has thus become capricious and fanciful in doling out salvation!

Yet, none can deny God's grace is extended to man, and man can receive it. *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world"* (Titus 2:11-12). It is just as important for us to realize that there is something that grace does as it is to understand that grace is given. We are told that grace teaches. Also, we are told that grace teaches us to DO something! The fact that we are to do something does not nullify grace. Rather, our response to God's grace is the means whereby grace is appropriated. As the apostle Paul wrote, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast"* (Eph. 2:8-9). Here he explains that grace, apart from anything we might do to try to earn it, saves through faith. But to be an availing faith, it must work through love: *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision: but faith working through love"* (Gal. 5:6). This is the *"obedience of faith"* (Rom. 1:5) which obtains God's grace.

Even in the field of nature, grace is associated with the obedience of faith. God's grace is shown in seed time and harvest; He sends rain and sunshine, and has placed the germ of life in the seed. Nature teaches us these things. But, while praying for

our daily bread, we cannot ignore the laws of nature! We must, in faith, plant the seed, cultivate and harvest the wheat in order to appropriate God's grace and eat the bread. Grace provides, faith accepts, and then the obedience of faith appropriates that which grace has proffered. That we may see that this same inflexible rule holds true also in spiritual matters, we turn for examples in the word of God.

Noah Was Saved by Grace

Because of the wickedness of mankind, God determined to destroy the world (Gen. 6), but God extended grace to Noah. He warned him of the impending deluge that was to destroy the world and revealed to him the way of escape. Noah could not know the danger, nor the solution, by himself. But God's grace to Noah was amply shown through the word of God which was spoken to him. Because Noah believed God, he acted obediently to that word to save himself. *"Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, even so did he"* (Gen. 6:22). As a result of his obedient faith, God's grace saved Noah. *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith"* (Heb. 11:7).

Abraham Was Justified by Grace

God's promise to Abraham was extended by grace, and it was accompanied by instruction. This testimony was believed by Abraham, and because he believed, he moved in obedience to God's teaching to become justified by the obedience of faith. *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went"* (Heb. 11:8). After God's grace was extended in the promise, Abraham's faith accepted this grace with complete assurance; and his faith worked to obtain the reward. *"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only"* (James 2:21-24). Again, we have a clear

example of how grace is extended, faith accepts the promise of grace, and the obedience of faith appropriates the blessing.

The Deliverance of Israel

When the Israelites were in need of deliverance from bondage in Egypt, God's grace was extended by the word of God through Moses. They were helpless without God's intervention. But God sent Moses to tell them what to do to obtain freedom. They had to believe this word to accept God's grace. But there was an obedience of faith also demanded before they could enjoy the reward of this grace. *"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ"* (1 Cor. 10:1-3). Very plainly is it shown that grace was extended through teaching, this grace was appropriated by faith and the reward of this grace and faith was appropriated by the obedience of faith.

Naaman Was Cleansed by Grace

Another good example of the working of this principle is the cleansing of Naaman, the Syrian (2 Kgs 5). God's grace was shown in the promise of cleansing. Naaman, a leper, was told by a Jewish slave girl that a prophet in Israel could heal him. He went to Israel and met with Elisha, a prophet of God. Elisha gave God's instructions, that Naaman must go and dip seven times in the River Jordan. Naaman, at first, rejected the grace of God and started home in rebellion to God's instructions. But when his servant showed him the foolishness of his actions, he turned back to God's grace. Faith was generated and that faith prompted *"obedience of faith"* and he went to the Jordan River and dipped seven times. He then received the reward: he was healed of his leprosy. So again, grace extended the promise, faith accepted and the obedience of faith obtained the reward.

Blind Man Healed by God's Grace

The man had been blind from birth. The Lord Jesus healed him, restoring his sight: *"He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent)."*

He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing" (John 9:6-7). God's grace was extended to the blind man through Jesus, with instructions to be followed. The fact that he followed the word of Jesus by going and washing in the pool of Siloam demonstrated his faith in the instruction which grace provided. The results of the "obedience of faith" is stated simply: *"He washed, and came seeing."* Grace was extended by instruction, faith was produced, and the obedience of faith appropriated the blessing of sight.

Grace was Preached on the Day of Pentecost

The same rule of faith and action is carried over into the gospel proclamation. Those Jews on Pentecost in Jerusalem heard the promise of salvation which God's grace extended to them (Acts 2:21). But they had to have faith in order to obtain the promised blessing. So Peter told them to have such faith: *"Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified"* (v. 36). They then asked what they were to do. Peter, still delivering God's plan of grace, commanded them: *"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins"* (Acts 2:38). Now, notice how and when the grace of God was received: *"They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls"* (Acts 2:41). Grace provided the promise through gospel preaching, the testimony was accepted by faith, and their repentance then led to that "obedience of faith" in baptism by which the remission of sins which they sought was provided.

The Samaritans Were Saved by Grace

This same unerring rule applied to every case of conversion in the book of Acts. When Philip *"went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them"* (Acts 8:5), God's grace was extended in the gospel message. *"But when they believed Philip's preaching concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Christ, they were baptized, both men and women"* (v. 12). This shows exactly the same pattern as in the cases above — grace was extended by the preaching of the gospel, faith accepted the message, and the obedience of faith obtained the reward. Jesus had promised, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:16). The Samaritans were saved in exactly that way. Grace was extended by Philip's preaching, they believed and were baptized, and they were

thus *"saved by grace through faith."* Only the *"obedience of faith"* could appropriate the grace of God for salvation.

Grace Was Extended to Ethiopian Eunuch

God extended His grace to a man traveling from Jerusalem back home to Ethiopia. He was reading from the book of prophet Isaiah (Isa. 53), and asked Philip for an explanation of this portion of the word of God. The grace of God was then extended to the man when Philip *"opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture, preached unto him Jesus"* (Acts 8:35). The Ethiopian then accepted this message in faith and asked, *"Here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?"* (v. 36). We then read, *"He commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him"* (v. 38). This follows the pattern of the Pentecostians and the Samaritans. Grace was extended to him through the preaching of the gospel, he believed and was baptized, and rejoiced in his salvation (v. 39). Grace had been extended, faith had accepted its message, and the obedience of faith had obtained the promised reward (Mark 16:16).

Space will not allow an exhaustive study of every case, but this principle is axiomatic to any Bible scholar: Never has God's grace blessed any man until faith had accepted its message and was made perfect in obedience. There is no exception to this rule in the Scriptures. Therefore, we plead with you to accept God's grace and obey from the heart the teaching grace delivers.

What Did Paul Determine?

T. PIERCE BROWN

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:2, *"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."* What did he mean by that? He is not saying, "I will be ignorant of every subject except that which deals with Jesus." He is not saying, "I will neither learn nor speak of anything that does not deal with the crucifixion." He does not mean that if someone says, "Show me how to make a tent like that", or "How is the weather in Corinth?" or, "How was Timothy the last time you saw him?" he

would make no reply. He would indeed have been an unbalanced fanatic, and of course this is not what he was. His meaning is, "I may speak of many things, or I may not. I make no determination about that, for it does not matter. But one thing matters, and I do make a determination about that. I will speak of Jesus and His crucifixion." For the world and for the church, there is one great, central, extensive and far-reaching truth that is simpler, yet broader, deeper, wider, more profound and more significant than all other truths in the world. That is the truth that Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God, died for our sins. All other subjects may be optional. This one is required. There is one dominant purpose in our lives, and that is to keep central in our thinking and teaching the fact that Jesus died for us and all that is involved in it.

There is a principle in this that reaches far beyond the usual lessons we get when we talk about the cross of Christ. And that is: once we settle on the central matters, many times the little details will automatically be taken care of.

Every person should build his life in that fashion, and it would not only clarify his direction and purpose, it would solve many problems, save much time, and make many decisions almost automatic. It would involve everything one does, from "Of what church should I be a member?" to "What must I do to be saved?" and everything in between.

The simplest way to answer those questions is to ask, "What does Christ want of me?" Of course, you do not know the answer to that question in all things in life without a diligent study of the Bible, but this is to be the focal point, or reference point, to which all your activities point. Remember that we may do many things, but one thing we should determine, and that is **to let Christ and His sacrifice for us be the thing that causes us to act as we do.**

The Great Commission

CHARLES E. BURCH

After our Lord's resurrection, He gave the great commission. *"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things*

whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20). It is called the great commission, due to the enormous task involved in taking the gospel to all nations.

It is easy to become discouraged today because it seems that no one is interested in serving the Lord. Many of us can think back a few years and remember when it was much easier to baptize people into Christ. But it has always been that when it is so hard to reach people in one area, another area opens up. The following is part of a letter from Tex Williams, from World Bible School, Austin, Texas:

"In the West African Country of Nigeria, a student in a Catholic high school began taking a World Bible School Correspondence Course. Other students asked for the course until a large number were involved.

"What the students were learning began to be discussed in their Bible classes. Some of the teaching nuns asked for the WBS course and passed on copies to the local parish priest who also became a student. He wrote WBS and asked for enough copies of the lessons to use in their high school Bible teaching program.

"A local Nigerian evangelist visited the school. After a lot of teaching, he baptized the priest, the nuns and most of the high school students. A New Testament church was begun. Fifteen months later they wrote that they had baptized over 500 new converts and started five new congregations in the area."

Thank God for the power of the gospel of Christ! When it lodges in honest and sincere hearts, it does produce fruit. So let us never become discouraged, but sow the seed at every opportunity. God will give the increase. Think of someone you would like to lead to Christ this year.

The First Lie; But Not the Last!

A.L. FRANKS

True "Christianity" is the world's greatest blessing. It centres around Jesus, the Christ—the Son of God. It is empowered by faith in the actual, physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The apostle Paul stated that the resurrection of our Lord "declared"

Him to be *"the Son of God with power"* (Romans 1:4). If Jesus was not raised; if He was not made *"alive forever more"* (Revelation 1:18), then what is called "Christianity" falls flat on its face and is of no lasting or eternal value.

An inspired apostle wrote about several sad realities... *"If Christ be not risen."* Among them, he included: (a) *"preaching is vain"* (b) *"faith is vain"* (c) Gospel preachers are *"false witnesses"* (d) believers are *"yet in their sins"*, and those who have (e) *"fallen asleep in Jesus"* are *"perished"* (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

The actuality of the resurrection of Jesus is plainly and repeatedly taught in the Holy Scriptures. The four Gospel writers of the New Testament all relate vivid details about the literal resurrection of the *"One called 'Jesus'"*. According to Matthew, an angel spoke to certain women saying, *"Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay"* (Matthew 28:5,6).

In Mark's record, he wrote about a *"young man clothed in a long white garment"* who announced to the women that came early on the first day of the week to Jesus' tomb, bringing spices to anoint His body, *"...He is risen; he is not here..."* (Mark 16:6).

Luke relates this amazing, miraculous event by asking those who came on a Sunday morning to Jesus' grave, *"Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen"* (Luke 24:5,6).

John, in his account of the gospel story, related how the disciples of Jesus, including Peter and the *"other disciple whom Jesus loved"*, found the tomb empty (John 20:1-10).

The New Testament is filled with plain and emphatic teachings about the *living* Christ—who was dead, but was raised—*never to die again*. Hundreds of witnesses of our Lord's resurrection are mentioned throughout the New Testament (see 1 Corinthians chapter 15). When a successor to Judas was selected, it was required that the new apostle to be chosen must have been a *"witness"*, along with the other apostles, of *"His resurrection"* (Acts 1:22).

Men have marveled through the centuries concerning the rapid spread of Christianity throughout the world. However, when the truth of Jesus' resurrection is considered and believed, we can begin to understand why the message of the Gospel had so much power as it was boldly proclaimed *"first in Jerusalem, then in Judea, Samaria, and even unto the uttermost parts of the earth"*

(Acts 1:8), and, as Paul wrote, "to every creature which is under heaven" (Colossians 1:23).

When we realize that the very heart (core) of the preaching of Christ is the reality of His glorious resurrection, and that He was, in truth, raised never to die again ("*alive forevermore*"), we can understand why the enemies of the cross have, since the very beginning (Matthew 28:12-15), denied His resurrection and have sought diligently to keep others from believing in Jesus — the Savior, the Son of God. Let us not, therefore, be shocked or surprised when atheists and infidels make false claims that are intended to create doubt in the hearts of believers and those who may become believers and/or Christians. Yes, lies have been told. The "box with bones", the ossuary which some have speculated to be the "burial box of the family of Jesus", is not the first lie promoted by unbelievers, and it will not be the last. But be assured: **our Lord Jesus Christ is alive.** His tomb was, and is, empty.

PAUL THE MYTH, VERSUS THE REAL PAUL

KEVIN L. MOORE

Paul gives his readers a very lofty admonition: "*Imitate me*" (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1). The problem is, we tend to have such a distorted view of Paul that this seems to be an extremely difficult, if not impossible, thing to do.

One of the reasons this is such a challenge is because "Paul, the myth" has been created over the centuries. Sometimes he is referred to as "Saint Paul" to distinguish him from the ordinary Christian. He is commonly viewed as an inaccessible authority figure, high-up on a pedestal with a halo encircling his head.

We hear of "Pauline theology", as though he were a lone maverick who developed his own brand of Christianity, distinct from that of the Jerusalem apostles. He is often regarded as a fearless missionary who boldly marched into unknown territories, bravely confronting religious error and conquering men's souls without the slightest apprehension.

With such an inflated view of Paul, how can any of us mere mortals ever hope to comply with the apostolic directive to imitate him? Few can live up to the standard of "Paul, the myth", and since

I am "Saint Paul", I have an excuse for not doing more for the Lord, for not being more involved in the church, and for not being more faithful in my Christian walk.

However, to be fair to Paul, to give more credit to God (who was the real reason for the apostle's success), and to take away some of our excuses, we need to have a more realistic view of Paul. The purpose of this article is not to take anything away from the apostle that is his due, but simply to dispel some of the Pauline myths.

Paul, the "Theological Genius", Is a Myth

Is it legitimate to speak of "Pauline theology" as though Paul developed his own doctrine and his own brand of Christianity? What does Paul himself say? *"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (Galatians 1:11,12). The Gospel which Paul preached was something that he himself had "received" (1 Corinthians 15:1-3), and the things he wrote were ultimately *"the commandments of the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Whether or not Paul was highly intelligent, talented, or creative, no one really knows. What we do know is that everything he believed, taught, and stood for did not come from himself. It all came from a much higher source. Rather than promoting anything about himself, he hid behind the message of a crucified and risen Savior. How, then, do I imitate Paul in this regard? *"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God..."* (1 Peter 4:11).

Paul, the "Fearless Warrior", Is a Myth

Is it realistic to think of Paul as a man without inhibitions, apprehensions, or fears? If so, it makes it much more difficult for most of us to imitate him. But is that what the apostle was really like? While Paul obeyed the missionary call, it was anything but easy for him. He later wrote, *"... when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears"* (2 Corinthians 7:5, emphasis added).

From Macedonia Paul's team moved to Achaia, where the Lord reassured him, *"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you ..."* (Acts 18:9-10). Paul later admitted to the Corinthians, *"I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling"* (1 Corinthians 2:3). If that does not destroy the "Pauline myth", I don't know what will!

Based solely on the information available to us, there does not appear to have been anything all that remarkable about Paul. Both his bodily presence and his speech were considered unimpressive (2 Corinthians 10:10). A second-century description of him portrays him as a man of small stature, with a bald head, hooked nose, and crooked legs (Acts of Paul and Thecla). Considering the extreme maltreatment he endured through the years (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-28), it is not surprising that his body bore visible scars (Galatians 6:17). On top of all that, what he describes as his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) was probably some physical malady that he struggled with for the rest of his life.

If Paul were such a pitiable and unimpressive specimen of humanity, how does one explain his phenomenal success as a missionary? First and foremost, credit must be given to the mighty working of God (1 Corinthians 2:4,5; 15:10). Secondly, one cannot discount the invaluable assistance of Paul's co-workers (Acts 20:4, etc.) But as far as Paul himself is concerned, what made the difference in his life was a convicted heart and the burden he carried for a lost world (1 Corinthians 9:16). No matter how inadequate, untalented, or fearful you might feel, if your heart is convicted by the message of Christ, you will be compelled to step out in faith and allow God to accomplish great things despite your weaknesses.

Paul, the "Individualist", Is a Myth

The "lone maverick," the "inaccessible authority figure," and the "saint on a pedestal" are not the images of Paul we get from the New Testament. Of the thirteen letters bearing Paul's name, only five begin with his name alone (each for a special reason). However, Paul's normal practice was to include references to co-senders: "Sosthenes" (1 Corinthians), "Timothy" (2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon), "all the brothers with me" (Galatians), "Silvanus and Timothy" (1 and 2 Thessalonians). In addition, there are numerous co-workers mentioned in the body of Paul's letters as well as those who send greetings at the end. The apostle was anything but a solo worker for the Lord. Of course, the chief partner in Paul's lifelong ministry was the Lord Himself (cf. Acts 14:27; 15:4, 21:19; 1 Corinthians 3:6,7).

Paul "the theological genius", "the fearless warrior", and "the individualist" are myths that have no basis in Scripture. The apostle did not give an impossible directive when he said, "imitate

me". To truly imitate Paul, as he imitated Christ, we must: (1) hide behind the message of a crucified and risen Savior; (2) step out in faith, confront our fears, and do what the Lord has commissioned us to do; and (3) understand that we are called upon to work within a community, in partnership with one another, and ultimately with God.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR CHILDREN

ROD KYLE

Our children are born needing to be cared for materially, emotionally, and spiritually. It is tragic indeed that hundreds are not caring for their children's material and emotional needs. The real tragedy, however, is the hidden, spiritual neglect of our children. This statistic, I fear, would easily surpass all other forms of neglect. The Bible commands all parents to rear their children to know their Creator (Ephesians 6:4). In fact, Jesus warns that any person who deflects a child from God's goal of heaven will suffer a fate worse than being thrown into the sea with a millstone tied to his/her neck (Matthew 18:6,10). So where do we begin in fulfilling our spiritual responsibility to our children?

It is certainly not sprinkling a little water on our child and calling it baptism. Such a practice is without biblical authority. Instead, the Bible clearly teaches that parents need to learn and practice the truth in the Bible for themselves first (1 Peter 1:22). Children see through hypocrisy, and the best way to bring up children is never to let them down!

The apostle Paul described the young preacher Timothy's upbringing in this way, "... *from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 3:15).

God's Word must be taught to our children in the home by the parents (2 Timothy 1:5). Yes, children need to be taken to the worship assemblies and Bible classes that the Lord's church arranges (i.e. Acts 20:7-12), but the over-all spiritual rearing of each child remains a parental responsibility (Ephesians 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

So, what are you doing to enable your children to go to heaven?

Is the Bible Still Viable?

HOLLIS MILLER

Religious newspapers, magazines, seminars, lectureships, and other such efforts are so common today that one has to run fast to keep up with them. All of them have their spiritual message to deliver. What is the church? What kind of leadership is needed? What is the preacher's pulpit responsibility? Is modern worship beneficial or detrimental? On and on the questions go, and editors, authors, and writers have their opinions. One is made to wonder if Joe Doe, who never went beyond the eighth grade and worships with a rural congregation with fifty members, can possibly know how his and the church's life should be conducted in the modern world.

Is John's statement that his Gospel was written that men may know what to believe about Christ no longer valid? Paul told Timothy to preach the Word: should we add, "Also preach the greater insights of modern religious thinkers?" And what about Paul's affirmation that no man knows the things of God except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians: 11; cf. Isaiah 40:13f; Romans 11:34f)? Is it no longer true that the Scriptures are all we need for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness? Do they no longer equip us for every good work?

Facts of history cannot be removed, however much men may desire to do so. Jesus lived, taught, died, and arose. He can never be turned into some mythological figure. The books of the New Testament were written to guide churches and individuals into right thinking about Christianity. To view them as good for their times but not ours is to rob them of their divine mission for all men and all times. The church is a living body of believers in Jesus Christ, and it will remain that throughout the ages. The rule of faith for the church of every age is the Word of God, and that Word is found in the Scriptures—not in the dictates of men.



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*Printed and Published by Sunny David for Church of Christ, B-350,
Chitranjan Park, New Delhi and Printed at: Print India, A-38/2, Mayapuri
Phase-I, New Delhi-110064. Editor: Sunny David (Cell: 09810896789,
E-mail: sunny_davidin@yahoo.co.in).*

Regd. No. 26921/71

Postal Regn. No.

DL(S)-17/3154/2009-2011

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Posted at Lodi Road HO

Total No. of pages 24+cover

on 10-11 September 2011

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