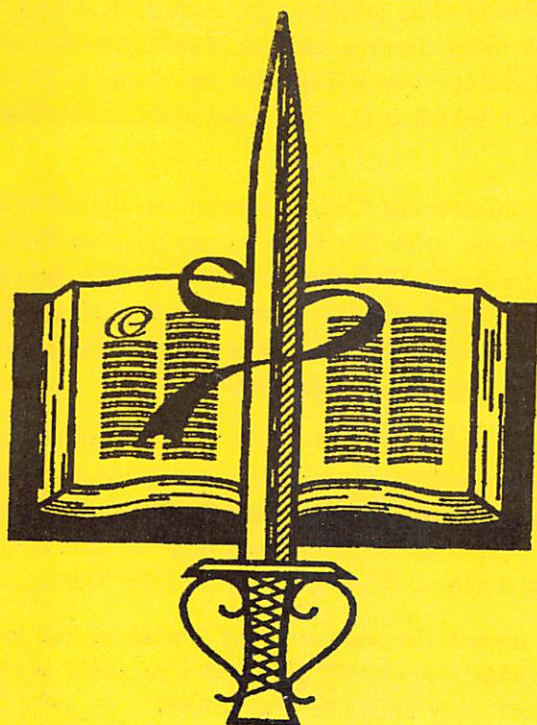


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The Bible Teacher



OUR PLEA

LET THE TRUTH PREVAIL

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

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

The Miracles Christ And His Apostles Had Done In The First Century Cannot Be Repeated Today

During His ministry on earth Jesus had done many miracles. He healed people who were sick with various diseases (Mark 1:32-34), casting out evil spirits (Mark 5:1-20), calming the storm (Matthew 8:23-27), walking on water (Mark 14:22-27), feeding a multitude of people (John 6:1-14), even restoring life to those who were dead (Luke 7:11-15; 8:49-56; John 11:38-44). All of these miracles amongst many others which Jesus had done had one specific purpose as is stated by one of His disciples in these words: "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:30, 31). All those miracles and signs were done to confirm the word He had preached, to convince people, primarily His disciples who were the witnesses of them, and later all others through their writings about them in the books of the New Testament, that He truly and indeed was sent from God.

After His propitiatory death for the sins of the world and His subsequent resurrection, before going back to the Father in heaven when Christ had sent His disciples or the apostles to preach the gospel of His salvation to every creature (Mark 16:15-16), He had promised to them, the apostles, "And these signs will

follow those who believe." Notice, it didn't say that these signs will follow those who will believe after hearing their message, but who believe, in the present, as amongst those disciples the Lord was sending some were unbelievers as we observe from Mark 16:14 and Matthew 28:16, 17. The signs that were to follow were: "in My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." Those disciples of Christ, therefore, when they went out to preach the gospel, were able to perform the same kind of signs and miracles which Christ Himself had done before them. They healed the sick (Acts 3:1-10; 4:16), they cast out evil spirits (Acts 16:16-18), and they also raised the dead (Acts 9: 36-43; 20:7-12). The purpose of those miracles are also stated very clearly in Mark 16:20 in these words, "And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen." (The reader is also urged to read Hebrews 2:3-4).

The gospel of Jesus Christ was made available to all people firstly through the preaching of the apostles. The gospel message was not yet written. There was no New Testament available to them at that time. It was going to be written. So in the beginning of the gospel people had to hear the message and believe. Therefore, to confirm their message the Lord had empowered them, the apostles (Acts 5:12), to work signs and miracles. Also, notice, those miracles were genuine and real, not the fakes that are so prevalent amongst religious charlatans of today. When they healed someone, he was completely healed. When someone had no legs, he was given new legs, and people could see him walking. When dead people were raised, they began to live again, all people could see them to believe.

While on earth Jesus had promised the apostles that when He would return back to heaven, He will send the Holy Spirit to them who will teach them all things and will bring all things that He was teaching them to their remembrance. (John 14:25, 26). Too he had promised them that when He the Spirit of truth will come to them He will guide them into all truth. (John 16:13). At the time of His ascension into heaven, reminding them of the Promise of the Father, He told them that when He will come they will receive power. (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). All of this was

accomplished when the apostles did actually receive the Holy Spirit according to the promise of the Lord as we read in Acts 2:1-4. Immediately after receiving the Holy Spirit the apostles began to speak to those who were their audience in their own languages, in the languages the apostles did not know and perhaps had not even heard before. The apostles preached the gospel to them in their own tongues or languages. (Acts 2:5-11). Later, in Acts 5:12 we read, "And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among people....." Why? Because they were empowered by the Holy Spirit. By or through those miracles, signs and wonders, the Lord was confirming the word they were preaching, which later they also wrote for us in the New Testament of the Bible.

By the end of the first century, A.D., when the last book of the New Testament was completely written, and all apostles by then had passed away from this life, and also those upon whom the apostles had laid their hands to impart to them the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17, 18) had died, then there was no one left on earth to continue to perform miracles, signs, and wonders any more. By then the Lord had withdrawn all miraculous powers. In fact, this was done according to the Lord's plan as He had earlier revealed through the apostle Paul, who had written, "Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when *that* which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away." (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). The miracles of Christ and His apostles were for the purpose of confirming the spoken word as they preached, which we have today available for us in the New Testament. Today we have the confirmed word of God in the Bible. The perfect or the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25) has come. When Christ and His disciples preached people had the Old Testament but they didn't have the New Testament. Today we have both in the Bible. Today we don't need to see miracles to believe in Christ. Faith, says Romans 10:17, comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The purpose of the first century miracles was to confirm God's word, which *CHRIST* and after Him His apostles had preached. When God's entire will for man was confirmed, by signs and miracles, written and made available to all, then there was no need for miracles any more.

Today we have the confirmed and complete will of God in the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:3, 4).

New Testament Worship

Lesson Four

KINDS OF WORSHIP

J.C. CHOATE

In going through the pages of the New Testament, we have three kinds of worship mentioned. In this lesson we will consider each one. We will do this to be reminded that there is more than one worship set forth in the Scriptures. We will likewise make a study of these different kinds of worship to discover which one the Lord would have us to engage in. And finally, we should allow this to convince us that just because people around us may be worshipping, this does not necessarily mean that their worship is acceptable to God.

1. The Scriptures speak of ignorant worship

"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babblers say? other said, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing). Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as

though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said. For we are also his offspring. For as much then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the God-head is like unto gold, or silver; or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17: 16-31).

Now you will observe that Paul encountered idolatrous worship in Athens. He denounces it by showing that it is being done in ignorance, and then he proceeds to preach to them of the true and living God.

Why were they worshipping idols? Why would anyone bow to idols? An idol is that which is made out of stone, wood or metal, but it is lifeless and spiritless. It cannot see, hear, smell, speak, move, think, or bless. Even where such an object is supposedly representative of something else or of some individual, it is the idol that ultimately comes to be looked upon as being "god".

But only those who are ignorant of the God of heaven would bow in worship to an idol or to any thing whether it be of nature or some human being living or dead.

Today, as then, men continue to worship idols around the world. But why? The problem remains the same—ignorance, pure and simple. No intelligent and informed person is going to worship an idol or image, whether apart from Christianity or within what is called Christianity.

2. The Scriptures speak of vain worship

Christ said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15: 9). Again he said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord;

have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:21-23).

It is still publicly taught that the Lord's people may worship in different ways, and as long as they are honest and sincere in it, then their worship will be accepted of God. This is not true. One's worship is in vain when it is according to the doctrines and commandments of men. The word vain means empty, to no avail, useless. In other words, such worship will not be accepted of the Lord.

Just because a group of people meet "in the name of Christ" that does not mean their worship will be acceptable. In the first place, if they are meeting as members of a denominational church, then they are not meeting in the name of Christ but in the name of their denomination. In the next place as a denomination their worship will be conducted according to the teachings of that organization. The Lord says that a lot of people are going to stand before him on the day of judgment and they are going to remind him of all they have done. but because they have not obeyed his will, and they are not members of his family, then he will denounce them and reject them.

If your worship is according to the teachings of men, that is, you are doing things in worship that you cannot find in God's word, then your worship is vain and therefore will not be accepted of the Lord. So it is time to investigate your situation.

3. The Scriptures speak of true worship

Christ said concerning worship, "God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24).

Let us now notice a few things here. First, God is to be the object of our worship as we have already studied in a previous lesson. Second, those that worship him must do so on the Lord's terms. No one is going to be forced to worship God, but those who choose to do so must do so on the Lord's terms instead of the worship being on his terms or that of others. Third, the worship must be done in spirit and in truth. Now what does that mean? It simply means that our worship must be in spirit, that is, with sincerity, understanding, and humility. As far as the truth is concerned, it means that our worship must be done according to the things that are written in the Scriptures. Now isn't that simple?

But to some it is too simple. They want to go through all kinds of rituals, formalities, ceremonies, and so on, but that is not what the Lord wants. He wants his people to worship him from their hearts as he has commanded. He will settle for no more and no less.

This is the kind of worship taught in the New Testament, and as we continue with our studies, we are going to see that this is how the early Christians worshipped and this is how we must worship. When we all do so then we will all worship alike and the Lord will accept our worship.

DRESS HABITS AND WORSHIP

KEN JOINES

Our culture currently tends toward a relaxed approach to life in general, and this is expressed in the clothing we wear. Some years ago certain businesses chose to observe casual Fridays. Banking personnel, instead of wearing a suit and tie, might be permitted to wear jeans and a pullover shirt. Some of those same businesses are now ditching this practice because production is suffering on casual Fridays. Educators also have found that clothing reflects attitude. School districts that have implemented dress codes and uniforms have seen a corresponding improvement in behavior.

Could this same attitude toward clothing account for a deterioration of behavior in worship assemblies that has become evident in recent years? Before that question is answered, some clarification is needed. God looks on the heart, not the exterior; He is not impressed with fine clothing. God is concerned with the poorest of the poor, and some people are unable to afford dress clothes. Christians must never make poorly dressed people feel inferior. We must make the poor feel welcome and comfortable in our assemblies. On the other hand, no worship assembly should become a style show. I am not saying that all the men must wear a suit and tie. I am not in favor of a dress code. Some people come to worship in their service uniforms. Such people are not the subject here. The subject here is the overly relaxed approach to our dress on the Lord's Day.

This generation has been raised going to concerts and sporting events. We have failed to teach them that there must be an altogether different approach to worship. Our children show up for worship sloppily dressed, carrying their iPods, soft drinks and cell phones so they can receive and send text messages during the service. Two or three trips to the restroom are not uncommon. None of this is allowed at school. When your children are this undisciplined in dress habits, you can expect a corresponding lack of reverence in worship.

Someone wrote: "I am appalled at how some people come dressed for Sunday worship. Some say 'dress codes have been relaxed.' What has become relaxed is the attitude, respect and reverence people have for worship."

When Joseph was called to meet with Pharaoh, the Bible says "he shaved, changed his clothing and came to Pharaoh" (Genesis 41:14b NKJV). Leviticus details how the priest was to be dressed in new or freshly laundered linen when making an offering at the altar of the Lord (16:4). In Genesis 35:2-3, we read, "Jacob said to his household ... Change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God." Why? Respect!

Yet, when we enter the house of worship on the Lord's Day to appear before the very Creator of this universe, we somehow think it "cool" to don our baggy jeans with holes in the knees, our flip-flops and a tank top with some worldly message in large print. Men or women may wear expensive, name-brand duds to make those high-dollar sales calls all week and then see how relaxed and sloppy they can dress for worship.

Someone objects, "But Jesus didn't have fine clothes. It says in the Bible He didn't even have a place to lay His head." Are you sure He had no good clothing? If not, why did the Roman soldiers gamble for His garment when He was crucified? I resent it when someone hints that my Lord went around looking unkempt. All evidence seems to indicate that His appearance was that of the average person. I cannot in my wildest imagination picture Jesus going into the synagogue or temple without giving attention to the way He was dressed. He had more respect for the sacred!

God is God. He is not my buddy. He is God. He is to be held in reverence and godly fear. Hebrews 12:28-29 says, "Worship

God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire". When the day comes that we make God commonplace or bring Him down to our level, then He becomes our peer. Peers can buy favors and make deals with and con each other. Peers can get away with things. Worshipers must make every effort to bring themselves up to God's level, not vice versa.

Someone else says, "But our culture is relaxed, casual." Do we allow culture to dictate how we approach our heavenly Father? Are we to lead or follow? A youth minister comes into the assembly with shirt tail hanging out and dressed in a sloppy manner. He may say, "But the teens want me to dress this way." Question: Is he a leader or follower? Just who is the role model here, anyway?

I have heard most of the arguments for dressing sloppily for worship. But in my memory I still see my dad and other men in our little country church coming for worship dressed in their new overalls, freshly ironed, with a starched white shirt. Most of those men did not own a suit, but they wanted to look their best for worship. I still respect the person who wants to look his or her best when coming before the throne of God to worship. And I wonder about the person who doesn't.

What Kind of Sinner Are You?

DILLARD THURMAN

In my youth, the worst sinner was a ruffian who delighted in bullying smaller boys (which included me) on the schoolyard, as he exerted tyrannical rule because of being older and bigger! We were small, but we could recognize this injustice, and knew it was sin! But sin comes in many forms, shapes and styles; and so do sinners! You have narrowed the field very little when you say, "He is a sinner." Just what kind of sinner do you mean? Some will contend, "One sinner is just as bad as the next." But this is just not so! The bully on the schoolyard is not as bad as he will be years later if he doesn't change his moral standards! Another will say, "One sin is just as bad as another." But the Lord never said so; and it is just not true! You can repent of some sins easier than others, and thus forgiveness is more easily obtained. "It is as bad

to think it as it is to curse and swear out loud," another will say. But this is not true either. The sound of cursing and blaspheming pollutes the air, and resides in the hearts of those who have heard! The sinfulness lives on because it was heard!

The Bible Has Much to Say About Sin!

After Moses had given instructions for strict obedience to God, he said, "*But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.*" (Num. 32:23). You can't sweep sin under the carpet, and expect it to stay hidden! "*Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.*" (1 Cor. 4:5). Jesus said, "*Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*" (Jno. 8:34; this is also taught in Rom. 6:17). Long ago the penalty was stated: "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" (Ezek. 18:4, 20). Again this was emphasized by Paul: "*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" (Rom. 6:23). It cost the life of Jesus Christ to pay the price of our sins against God! Have you considered how terrible sin is? Its horrible effects on mankind?

Let the Bible Define Sin!

It was the apostle of love who gave us the best known definition of sin: "*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.*" (1 Jno. 3:4). Note the derivative of the term: *Trans*, across, and *gradi*, to step. Thus, sin is the stepping across of God's law; or going beyond God's directives. John simplified this in saying: "*All unrighteousness is sin.*" (1 Jno. 5:17). It is a sin to do that which is contrary to God's law; but it is also sin to refrain from doing what God's law says! "*Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*" (Jas. 4:17). This covers sins of omission and commission.

Mark well the development of sin, and avoid it! "*Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*" (Jas. 1:14-15). Hear to this warning from Paul: "*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." (Rom. 6:11-12). Sin is the terrible separator between man and God, that placed the gulf between them. *"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that he will not hear."* (Isa. 59:2). Sin is the "Great Barrier Reef that keeps us from God's approving blessings!"

Why Are No Sinners Around Today?

Have you noticed that you can't find any plain, ordinary sinners today? What used to be sin now parades under an assumed name. A small child doesn't tell a lie: he is excused for having an active imagination. Very likely, he will not grow out of it! Once we had thieves who stole: but now we have kleptomaniacs—sick folk who are not responsible! Used to be when we had thugs and punks who preyed on society—now the "do-gooders" inform us they are not the ones responsible, society is! They are merely maladjusted, underprivileged folk to be loved, pitied and rewarded with kindness! Now one who murders his father and mother can throw himself on the mercy of society, escape punishment, and be rewarded with kindness and compassion, "for now he is an orphan!" Just recently we had a news release on alcoholics in our state: but it was emphasized that this was not sin, but a disease. We used to see drunks staggering on the street—but no more! Now they are alcoholics! They have a disease, but they are not sinners!

If alcoholism is a disease, a sickness, as they claim, why is this disease so alluringly advertised on billboards, TV and in magazines? Why is the spread of this disease licensed to an industry that promotes it? Too, I wonder why the victims of this disease always look to the church for aid, rather than going to the brewery and distillery with their plea? Friends, if alcoholism is a disease, it is the only disease I know that afflicts one member of a family; but ruins the lives of all! It is the only disease I know that can bar folk from God's kingdom! Paul pointedly wrote: *"Be not deceived: neither fornicators . . . nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God."* (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Label it what you will, but to me if a man gets drunk, he is a drunk!

There Are Many Ignorant Sinners!

Man can sin against God in ignorance, through weakness, or

wilfully! It is much easier to obtain forgiveness for the first! Moses told Israel they would be forgiven due to having sinned in ignorance (Num. 15:25-26). And Peter stresses this to them that had killed the Christ: *"And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."* (Acts 3:17). This did not absolve their guilt, but made it easier for them to repent. Paul also mitigated their guilt in saying, *"For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."* (1 Cor. 2:8). Keep in mind that Paul's sin came under this type. He was a bold persecutor of Christ, and wrote: *"I verily thought within myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."* Therefore he persecuted the church violently, even unto death (Acts 26:9-11). Yet to Timothy he wrote, *"But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."* Still He knew his guilt, and admitted that he was chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:13-15). One is never exonerated because of ignorance. He is still held accountable for sin; but finds it easier to repent of sins committed in ignorance.

The Multitudes of Secret Sinners!

The deepest pathos within the Psalmist was in his cry for God to search his heart and cleanse secret sins. *"Search me O God, and know my heart, try, me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."* (Psa. 139:23-24). How we each should carry this prayer always in our heart! God knows us wholly. *"Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance."* (Psa. 90:8). God is still the "heart searcher." (Acts 1:24; Rom. 8:27). Keep in mind that every secret will be revealed! *"For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."* (Eccl. 12:14).

Jesus gave much attention to the secret sins of religious leaders. Outward appearances could not hide their inward sins! *"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their hearts are far from me."* (Mt. 15:8). Pretense and vain show set them forth as shining lights, but their secret sins condemned them. In Mt. 23, Jesus enumerated no less than seven distinct secret sins of which they were guilty! But do we dare take a personal inventory of our own

secret sins? Before praying tonight, try to list all the secret sins you have hidden from others! Yet God sees them all!

Are You a Presumptuous Sinner?

Hear to the prayer of David: *"Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be free from the great transgression."* (Psa. 19:13). Man is prone to presume to do that which God has not commanded. It was a presumptuous sin for Nadab and Abihu to offer *"strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."* (Lev. 10:1-2). It may seem a small thing to you, but God killed them for their presumptuous sin! Another example of presumptuous sins is found in Num. 16. Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On presumed to act as priests where God had not authorized. They and all theirs were swallowed by the earth, and others were led astray, so that 14,700 people perished because of this one presumptuous effort! Next we look to the death of Uzzah, who presumed to steady the ark of the covenant, but was struck dead because he was not authorized to do this (2 Sam. 6:6). Don't presume to alter God's orders!

Peter places a stinging indictment against all such even yet! *"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities."* (2 Pet. 2:9-10). We have many presumptuous sinners about us! What of religious leaders who presume to preach another gospel? or add mechanical instruments to the praise of God? or wear church name which God has not given? or use a creed book instead of the Bible? or substitute sprinkling for a burial in baptism? Friends, these are presumptuous acts which Oppose God!

Are You a Sinner Through Weakness?

When Paul wrote back to the church at Corinth, he pointed out weaknesses, saying, *"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."* (1 Cor. 11:30). We have mentioned that many sin due to weakness! One example of this is seen in the life of Peter. When Jesus was on trial, Peter followed afar off.

And when put to the test, he denied the Christ. When he was at Antioch, Paul *"withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed;"* for he courted the favor of Jewish Christians, and even *"Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation."* (Gal. 2:11-14). Peter was wrong, and all because of social pressures! Again, look to Demas who travelled with Paul, who revealed, *"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed. . ."* (2 Tim. 4:10).

But think for a minute: How many times have you changed your stance because of "peer-pressure"? It is quite easy to sing, "O How I Love Jesus" among the saints on Sunday morn: but are we as quick to own him during the week? Are you as strong for the Lord when confronted by Satan's forces? That is the time we must be able and willing to say, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."* (Phil. 4:13). This is the courage the Christian must exemplify at all times: *"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."* (2 Cor. 3:5). We can *"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might"* when we fully trust in Him! He can always lead us to victory!

Friend, Are You an Impenitent Sinner?

It is not unusual to be a sinner, for the world is filled with them! *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one."* And following that it is written, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* (Rom. 3:10, 23). That puts us all in a common lot, save for the blood of Christ! How great to read, *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."* (1 Tim. 1:15). If He could save Paul, the chief of sinners, then Christ can save us all! But not without our consent! Jesus stated, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."* (Mk. 16:16). But sinners were told, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* (Acts 2:38). Those who obeyed his word were saved, being added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47), and rejoiced in their salvation!

Friends, God will not save you against your will! To be saved, you must believe in Jesus Christ as God's Son, repent toward God by turning from sin, and enter into Christ by baptism. Are you an impenitent sinner? or will you now repent and do His will?

Preaching Jesus

KEN TYLER

Introduction: We are told in Acts 8:35, *"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."* Preaching Jesus brought salvation to the eunuch's life. In this article I want us to consider what is involved in preaching Jesus.

Preaching Jesus is to proclaim that He died for our sins.

"The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away. And who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth" (Acts 8:32,33).

This passage is found in Isaiah 53:7,8. Philip began at this Scripture and preached Jesus unto the eunuch. Obviously, Philip proclaimed to the eunuch that Jesus died for his sins. The heart of preaching must always be the victorious death of Christ. 1 Peter 2:24 states, *"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree...."* In preaching Jesus Philip proclaimed this message to the eunuch.

Preaching Jesus is to proclaim His plan of salvation. Jesus is *"...the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him"* (Hebrews 5:9). Philip called upon the eunuch to obey the commands of Jesus to be saved. Acts 8:36-38 tells us, *"And as they were on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, see, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him."*

When preachers quit telling people what to do to be saved they have quit preaching Jesus. **In preaching Jesus, Philip proclaimed his plan of salvation.** The eunuch obeyed and was saved.

Preaching Jesus is to proclaim the joy of salvation. It is obvious that the eunuch realized that the greatest of all blessings is salvation. *"And when they were come up out of the water, the*

Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). Only in Jesus can real joy be found, and the preaching of Jesus brought this great blessing to the eunuch. Jesus said, "*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven...*" (Matthew 5:12). When Philip preached Jesus he proclaimed the joy of salvation.

Conclusion: Preaching Jesus is the only thing that will heal our sin-sick world. What we need is a brotherhood that is committed to preaching Jesus. "*Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.*" (Acts 8:4). In other words, they went everywhere preaching Jesus.

This is our commission and it is the only thing that will get the job done.

WE ARE AT WAR

JIMMY JIVIDEN

The war we are fighting is not for physical territory or temporal power. It is a war against the devil and all of the deceit and darkness of his domain. "*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places*" (Ephesians 6:12). This spiritual warfare demands the greatest sacrifice and most noble courage since we are being attacked on all fronts.

There is the philosophical front that challenges reason and common sense as the means of understanding Scriptures. In its place the devil would place existentialism and its corollaries. Truth would be portrayed as relative, subjective, and personal. Universal, objective, absolute truth would be debunked. Yet, it was Jesus who said, "*Thy word is truth*" (John 17:17).

There is the ethical front that challenges the teachings of Jesus concerning honesty, morality, and benevolence. The devil would advocate situational ethics and let every man do what is right in his own eyes. Might would be right. Abuse, oppression, and perversion would be unchecked, and the imaginations of men's hearts would be only evil continually.

There is the religious front that challenges God's revelation

in the Scriptures. Satan would contradict what God has said and seek to deceive man as he did in the Garden of Eden. He would try to make the Word of God ineffective by claiming that it is so enshrouded in past cultures that it cannot apply to contemporary man. He would try to crowd the Word of God out of the mind of man by secularism.

It is time for soldiers of Christ to arise and fight. All that it takes for evil to conquer is for good men to do nothing. Paul exhorted Christians at Ephesus to: **"...take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist the evil day, and having done everything to stand firm"** (Ephesians 6:13).

GRACE AND OBEDIENCE

FRANK CHESSE

Grace is unmerited favor, divinely bestowed upon sinful humanity. Man does not deserve one good thing God does for him. In spite of all the good deeds that he might perform, the term "unprofitable" is irrevocably attached to every man's name. However, God has always demanded a response from man in cooperation with His grace. Paul describes this response as the *"obedience of faith"* (Romans 16:26).

When God foretold the judgment to befall Egypt in the death of the firstborn, His announcement was tempered with grace. He promised to spare the firstborn in every house where the blood of the lamb had been applied to the doorpost (Exodus 12:13). Israel's obedience was essential, but it did not earn for them the favor of God in the sparing of their firstborn. Thus, submission to God, though necessary, was not the object of their trust. The object of their faith, hope, and trust for the salvation of their children, was *God and His grace*. It was, however, their *obedience of faith* that enabled them to appropriate the provisions of grace to their homes.

While wandering in the wilderness, Israel was plagued with serpents as punishment for their expressions of discontent (Numbers 21:4-6). Having acknowledged their sin, God instructed Moses to make a serpent of brass and enjoined the afflicted to look thereon for deliverance (Numbers 21:8). Was the power to heal in the brass serpent? Was looking upon the serpent an

essential part of the healing process? Was it not necessary for those bitten to express their faith by complying with the condition that God had given? Did their obedience of faith cancel God's grace and convert their gift of healing into human merit?

The power to heal, save, and bless belongs to God, and the display thereof constitutes grace in action. Man's obedient faith is God's means of enabling him to benefit from the opulent provisions of grace. Faith's trust is in *divine grace*, not *human action*. Though the obedience of faith is indispensable to man's participation in the blessings of grace, man's trust must ever remain firmly riveted in God, and not in his act of obedience.

A Miracle or Providence?

ROBERT BROOKS

A miracle requires the supernatural power and actions of a supernatural being. Therefore, only God can do a miracle. A miracle can occur only when a natural law is suspended and the supernatural element is enacted.

The apostles of Christ were able to work miracles to prove that they were sent by Him. Peter and John were there as representatives of Christ when the lame man was healed in Acts 3. Peter was there as God's man when Dorcas was raised from being dead in Acts 9. Paul was bitten by a snake but did not get sick, as evidence that Christ was with him (Acts 28). In every miracle, whether in the Old or New Testament, the natural law was suspended while the supernatural took over.

Divine providence does not require a miracle, although God did often provide for His people through miracles. The manna and the loaves and fishes were examples of providence with the use of miracles. Divine providence is seen when God works through His natural laws to provide.

God provided for His people in Egypt by putting Joseph in a strategic position of power and influence. He used the evil hearts of his brethren to get Joseph to Egypt, and then He used the lustful eye of Potipher's wife to further the cause. He used Pharaoh and his dreams to put Joseph in a place to interpret them, and thus advance His divine cause. Consequently, at the end, Joseph could say truthfully, "*It was all God's doing*" (Genesis 50:20), and it was all done without a direct miracle.

There is much misunderstanding today about miracles. Some refer to the birth of a child as a miracle. However, a baby's birth is the result of God's natural law working perfectly to propagate human life on the earth, just as He planned. Others refer to the sunrise and sunset as miracles but this, again, is the working of God's natural law that He set into motion at the beginning of the world (Genesis 1:14-18).

We must never forget that whether by miracles or the working of His power through natural law, it is always God who provides. We believe that *"every good and perfect gift is from the Father who giveth to all liberally and without prejudice"*. (James 1:17). Whether our bread comes down from heaven, as did the manna, or comes from wheat seed sown in the ground and processed into bread, it comes from God — it is still the providence of God.

Whether our water comes from a rock in a desert place, or we pump it from a well in the ground, or draw it from a river, our water is still the result of divine providence.

No matter how we are blessed with our everyday needs, we should always give God thanks. After all, none of us can make a seed or create a single drop of water.

Devoted Truth

RICH CUNNINGHAM

People who stand up for the Truth are sometimes persecuted for doing so. That's why so few are willing to speak the Truth in the face of falsehood. It is easier to lay low and just tolerate evil behavior, false teachings, or blatant lies.

However, there are some who are so devoted to the Truth that they will risk themselves to support it. John the Baptist told Herod Antipas, *"It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife"* (Mark 6:19). He was beheaded for saying it. Stephen said to the Jewish Sanhedrin, *"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers; you always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him — you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it"* (Acts 7:51-53). He was stoned to death for saying it. Of course, when the high priest asked Jesus, *"Are you*

the Christ, the son of the Blessed One?" Jesus answered, *"I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven"* (Mark 14:61,62). Jesus spoke the Truth, and they crucified Him for it.

The truth is not a personal belief meant to be secreted away in our hearts, only to be revealed in friendly surroundings among people of like mind. The Truth is to be spoken and applied to life. Truth is to be advanced against falsehood at all times, in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2). When speaking the Truth results in persecution, we must not grow quiet, but must then speak the Truth even more certainly.

The world is full of lies. Who will be courageous and speak the Truth no matter what? God help us, I hope we all will.

Growth Vs. Gospel

DAN WINKLER

As God's people, we find ourselves in competition with the world and denominational circles. The conflict is serious, for the salvation of souls and the expansion of our spiritual kingdom are at stake. We want to succeed! However, should we succeed at any cost?

A subtle danger faces us, which might be called the "growth syndrome". Without care, "Will it help us grow?" will become the criterion by which we measure success and the standard by which we live. With a pen of balance and a heart of loving concern, might we suggest some terrifying consequences of this danger.

First, if growth is our main emphasis, we could be encouraged to shift our "mission". Jesus said, *"Go into all the world, and preach the gospel"* (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19). As a church, we exist to walk in the steps of Jesus who *"came to seek and save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). Without care, our mission can subtly shift from "going into all the world", to "growing before the eyes of the world". God forbid!

Second, if growth is our main emphasis, we could be encouraged to weaken our "message". Again, Jesus said *"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel"* (Mark 16:15). As a church, we exist to *"preach the word"* (2 Timothy 4:2-4). Without care, our message can become slanted, weakened, or even

compromised out of a desire* to be less offensive or controversial and more appealing to the masses for which we compete. God forbid!

Third, if growth is our main emphasis, we could be encouraged to pursue an imposter "metamorphosis". Christians are to be "*transformed* (literally undergo a spiritual metamorphosis) *into the same image*" of Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18). As a church, our goal is to think and feel the way Jesus thought and felt (Philippians 2:5), as we attempt to follow His example (1 Peter 2:21). Without care, we can subtly become more interested in "our image" than we are in "the image of Jesus". God forbid!

Fourth, if growth is our main emphasis, we could be encouraged to weaken our "missionary" thrust. We are to "*go... make disciples of all the nations*" (Matthew 28:19). In Paul's day, the Gospel "*was preached in all creation under heaven*" (Colossians 1:23). Can we say the same? Without care, we can easily become imbalanced, pressing for a strong home base, with numbers running over, to the neglect of souls elsewhere who are starving for the good news of Jesus. God forbid, for both are important! May our hearts pulsate with a desire for the church to do well! At the same time, may we press forward to a greater future, refusing to compromise our mission, our message, or our God-given quest to be like Jesus and to share Him with others! After all, spiritual growth is the secret to church growth. "*So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily*" (Acts 16:5).

ARE THERE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS TODAY?

HUGO MCCORD

When a Christian lady was asked, "Of what denomination are you a member?," she replied, "Of none. I am simply a member of the New Testament church, which was not, and is not today, a denomination."

The lady was asked two other questions: "The New Testament church had apostles. Do you have apostles in your church? The New Testament church had prophets. Do you have prophesying in your church?"

The questions asked showed that the person asking them was

a Bible reader. Indeed, the New Testament church did have apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20; 3:5; 2 Peter 3:2) and also miracles. "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles" (1 Corinthians 12:28 Asv; cf. Mark 16:17-18); even the miracle of raising Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:36-43).

The apostles were "baptized in the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5) and received power (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8) to make some people prophets — such as Mark, Luke, Jesus' half-brothers James and Jude — and prophetesses — such as Philip's four daughters (Acts 21:9) — "through the laying on of the apostles' hands" (Acts 8:18; 2 Timothy 1:6).

The apostles and prophets are all dead and in God's plan had no successors. Practically speaking, both the apostles and the prophets are still with us in 27 written documents, to which not a word is to be added, nor from which a word is to be subtracted (1 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 22:18-19).

The apostles, including Paul — "one born out of due time," a special apostle to the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 15:8; Romans 11:13)— had authority to bind and to loose (Matthew 18:18). The authority that Jesus gave to the apostles to bind and to loose is displayed in the apostles' doctrine in the 27 books of the New Testament (Acts 2:42).

The apostle John wrote:

"We are of God. He who knows God hears us: he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:6).

God's plan was that the New Testament church would be "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 2:20), and that even in heaven the apostles would be important in the sacred city, the new Jerusalem:

"The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Revelation 21:14).

The New Testament church literally was not Israel: "they are not all Israel who are of Israel" (Romans 9:6); but spiritually the New Testament church is "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). Figuratively and spiritually, the apostles "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of [spiritual] Israel," which is the New Testament church (Matthew 19:28), not the literal 12 tribes. The rolls of genealogy, identifying tribal membership, were destroyed in A.D. 70.

Jesus announced that the apostles' authority as ambassadors, sitting upon 12 thrones, would be during the regeneration (2 Corinthians 5:20). The regeneration started on the birthday of the church on the day of Pentecost when about 3,000 souls were born again of water and Spirit after they obeyed the apostles' doctrine to repent and be baptized in order to receive the forgiveness of their sins (John 3:3, 5; Acts 2:38-47).

As those 3,000 souls, and then "multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14), were regenerated, day by day the Lord added to the church the ones being saved (Acts 2:47; cf. 5:11).

Similarly, sinners today are regenerated in the same way, and the Lord adds them to His church. Thus, the time of the regeneration is from the birthday of the church to the end of the world (Matthew 19:28).

The One with all authority in heaven and on the earth promised the apostles, not that "I will be with you until you die," but "I am with you all the days to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20 MNT). Thus, He was transferring His authority to the apostles, whose words are final to the end of the world. For "whatever you bind on the earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you release on the earth will have been released in heaven" (Matthew 18:18).

The whole of the apostles' binding and releasing is the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42) and now it's contained in 27 indestructible books (1 Peter 1:25). Those books contain "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3), leaving every regenerated person "equipped [and] completely furnished for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17).

During the time that the apostles laid hands on certain men and women to make them prophets or prophetesses (Acts 8:18; 21:9; Romans 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:6), all Christians were commanded not to despise prophecies (1 Thessalonians 5:20 NKJV). Such prophesying was God ordained and God commanded all Christians not to "quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 12: 8-10).

Since it was God's plan to make certain people prophets "through the laying on of the apostles' hands," then, when the last person died on whom the hands of an apostle had been laid, all prophesying automatically ceased. Today, therefore, prophesying is impossible. An apostle emphasized that something better than prophesying is now God's plan:

"Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak in languages? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts, and yet I show you a far better way" (1 Corinthians 12:29-31).

The far better way is a love that never fails. "Whether there are gifts of prophecy, they will pass away; or languages, they will cease; or knowledge, it will pass away" (1 Corinthians 13:8).

During the early years of the New Testament church, revelation was not complete. At that time, Paul wrote,

"We know incompletely, and we prophesy incompletely; but when that which is complete comes, then that which is incomplete will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, thought as a child, and understood as a child; but when I became a man, I stopped childish behavior" (1 Corinthians 13:9-11).

After the intermediate prophesying had served its purpose, and after the "perfect," the completed New Testament revelation, was finished in about A.D. 96, all spiritual Christians consecrate on faith, hope and love, noble qualities that will abide on and on, "these three; and love is the greatest of these" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Experts Aren't Always Right

DALTON KEY

The experts aren't always right. The experts of Egypt, around the time of Moses, believed the earth was hatched from a winged egg, that man came from white worms found in the sludge of the Nile, and that the sun reflected the light of the earth.

But the experts were wrong.

The experts of ancient Babylon taught that humans were produced by a spitting monster. Wherever the monster spat, a man was formed; wherever a man spat, a woman appeared; and wherever a woman spat, an animal emerged.

The ancient experts were wrong.

Today's experts tell us that the universe has evolved, over a span of several billions of years, from nothing before the "Big Bang", to single-celled organisms, to — finally — you and me.

I don't know about you, but I'd just as soon have the spitting monster theory.

Experts may be wrong, but the Bible is right (Psalms 33:4). And, it is right in affirming that "*God created man in His own image*" (Genesis 1:27).



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