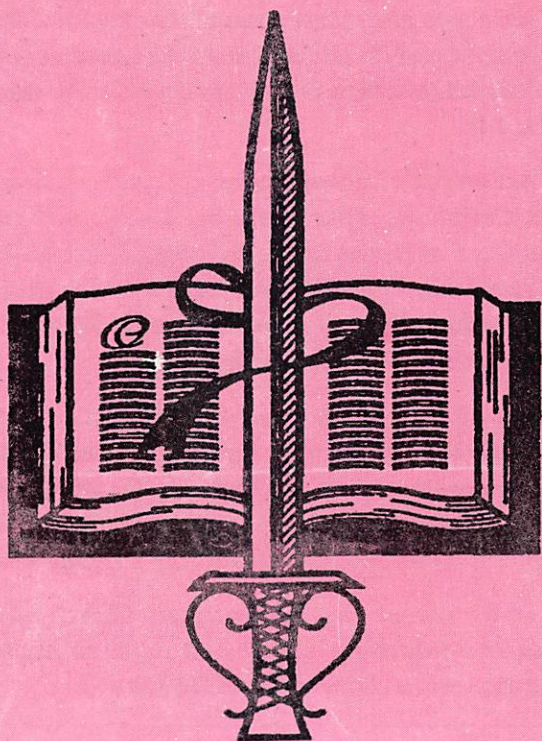


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December, 2011

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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?

Foolishness Of God Is Wiser Than Men, And The Weakness Of God Is Stronger Than Men

It seems foolish to man that God should pay for man's sins. Man believes he himself must pay for his own sins. Man, therefore, has invented a system of religious belief that teaches every individual must perform as many good works and religious duties in one's life-time as possible. This includes performing various kind of rituals, feeding of animals and insects, giving offerings of food, money, gold and silver, etc. to pay obeisance to different deities. Some are taught to neglect their bodies by denying food and clothing to themselves. Others inflict grievous injuries on their bodies to cause pain and suffering. All such things, and much more, people do to appease their gods, thinking they are paying for their sins.

But is it possible? Is it possible for man to ever be able to pay for his own sins? Since all have sinned, and continue to sin. (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). God is Spirit (John 4:24). He does not need anything of this world. The true God is not only Spirit but He is also holy and just. Because of sin all have separated and cut off themselves from God. (Isaiah 59:1, 2). Another attribute of the true God is love (1 John 4:8). Knowing that all have sinned, and none can do anything to save himself from the wages of sin, which is eternal existence in hell, God Himself came on earth to save man from sin. ***Jesus Christ on earth was God incarnate.***

He had come on earth from heaven to pay the penalty of sins of all humans. The Bible, therefore, calls Him "our propitiation." (1 John 2:2; 4:10). He became our propitiation because in Him there was no sin (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21), yet He was made sin by God for us and had accepted to die the most horrible death on the cross as a criminal to pay the penalty of our sins, instead of us. On His sinless body He had accepted our punishment. One of the writers expressing this wonderful good news wrote: "For He made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21). Only righteous will live in heaven. Man cannot make himself righteous by his own efforts. Jesus Christ, who came from heaven, was righteous. In Him man becomes righteous. He is our righteousness, if we are in Him. As we read at 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation..."

To man it seems ridiculous that someone else should pay for his sin. *"For the message of the cross,"* reads the Bible at 1Cor.1:18, therefore, *"is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God."* What seems foolishness to man, is, in fact, the wisdom of God, (1 Corinthians 1:25), and what the wisdom and power of all men put together cannot achieve, God has accomplished that for all humanity through one Man, Jesus Christ, who is the only mediator between God and all men. (1 Timothy 2:5).

New Testament Worship

Lesson Five

WORSHIP OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

J.C. CHOATE

It is very interesting to note how people worship, where they worship, when they worship, what they do in worship, etc. Of course we know today there are many churches and most of them have different ways of worship. Why the difference? Should there be any difference? How can we know whether we are worshipping the Lord as He would have us to? One of the best ways to find out is to go to the Scriptures and see how the early Christians worshipped

After the church had been established on the day of Pentecost, the record says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42). These disciples or Christians continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine or teaching. What did they do? Although all of the acts of worship are not listed, three are. They consist of fellowship or giving, breaking of bread or the Lord's Supper, and prayers.

Later on we have Paul on a trip, and passing through Troas, he stopped off long enough to worship with the local Christians. We read the following report. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." (Acts 20:7). We will notice here that the day of worship was the first day of the week. Evidently Paul had arrived on Monday, but to have the opportunity to worship with them then he stayed on through the week, and even bypassing Saturday, in order that the first day of the week might come around and that he could worship with the Lord's people on the day that the Lord had appointed. Furthermore, it says that this was the day on which the disciples or Christians came together to break bread or to partake of the Lord's Supper. Finally, Paul used this occasion to preach to them and afterward went on his way.

In 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 we have Paul writing to his Corinthian brethren about the importance of the Lord's Supper. Let us note: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many

sleep." (1 Corinthians 11:23-30). Now let us list some of the main points made here:

1. Paul received this of the Lord.
2. He speaks of the bread representing the body of Christ and the cup representing His blood.
3. That it was to be partaken of in remembrance of the body and blood of Christ.
4. In so doing, they would show forth the Lord's death till He come.
5. Those eating and drinking of it unworthily, not being faithful to the Lord, would eat and drink damnation to themselves.
6. Before partaking of it then they should examine themselves to see what their spiritual condition was. Of course the idea was that if they weren't prepared to partake of the Lord's Supper, because of sin in their lives, then they should make matters right with God and then go ahead and partake of the Lord's Supper. It might be pointed out that although one should not partake of the Supper if he is not living as he should, neither can he live as he should and not participate in the Lord's Supper. Therefore, whatever is in one's life that should not be there, then it should be removed and then the individual is in position to partake of the Supper as a faithful Christian.
7. The Lord's people are not to engage in closed communion inasmuch as Paul says that each one should examine himself before partaking of it. God can look on the heart, but we as members of the church cannot. Therefore, we have no right to judge a man, but it is the duty of an individual to consider his own case in light of what the Bible teaches.

Also in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul condemns the Corinthians for making a feast out of the Lord's Supper, and thereby making a mockery of it. He points out to them that they have their own houses to eat and to drink in and that when they come together for worship it should not be for the purpose of eating and drinking to be filled physically. The same would be true today. Christians are to meet in all seriousness to worship. They are to partake of the bread and the cup only to remember the body and the blood of Christ, and nothing more.

Then on turning over to 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 we have the same

writer dealing with the subject of giving. He writes: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Again, he writes, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:6,7). So according to these the Lord's people were definitely expected to give. We also learn these things:

1. They were to do it on the first day of the week.
2. All Christians were to give.
3. They were to give according to what they had to give.
4. Their giving was to be according to the way they had prospered. No where does the New Testament teach tithing and no where is the amount that is to be given set as being so much.
5. They were to give as they had purposed or determined in their hearts beforehand.
6. They were not to give grudgingly or of necessity, feeling that they were being forced to do so.
7. Rather they were to give cheerfully inasmuch as God loves a cheerful giver or one that wants to give and is happy to give.

There are several references made to singing in the New Testament, and there is one of where Paul and Silas sang praises to God while in prison (Acts 16:25), but there is no example of where a congregation of the Lord's people gathered on the first day of the week to sing. Nevertheless, the inspired writers commanded Christians to sing (Ephesians 5: 19; Colossians 3: 16), and so that is another act of worship that Christians of the first century engaged in.

Now putting all of this together, we find that the Lord's people gathered each first day of the week to pray, study, sing, partake of the Lord's Supper, and to give. We do not read of anything else. In the various secular writings that have been preserved from this period of time, they tell the same story. So we know what Christians did in that age to worship the Lord. Should we not do the same?

What Must We Believe

OWEN D. OLBRICHT

The question asked by the jailer at Philippi was, "What must I do to be saved?" He was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31-32). Luke did not record what else Paul said, so we do not know all he told the jailer to believe.

Instead of telling him there was nothing for him to do, Paul told him what he could do, "Believe on the Lord Jesus." We are not saved only because God saves us. We must believe on Jesus through God's Word (John 17:20; 20:30-31; Acts 15:7; 17:11-12; Romans 10:17).

'What Must We Believe?

Salvation is dependent not only on believing but also on what we believe. If we are to believe on Jesus, we are to believe the following things Jesus taught in His New Covenant.

- *God exists and rewards those who seek Him.* "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a re-warder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). There are those who believe in God but not that it is necessary to seek Him diligently.

- *Jesus is "I Am."* "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). There are those who believe Jesus is from God but not that He is "I Am," a term used to refer to Yahweh (Exodus 3:14), thus identifying Jesus as one with Yahweh (John 10:30).

- *Jesus is Lord and Christ, the Son of God.* "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (20:31).

There are those who accept Jesus as a son of God but not as the unique Son of God who is our Lord to be served, followed and obeyed. Calling Jesus, "Lord" and not serving Him as Lord is not acceptable to Him (Luke 6:46).

- *Jesus and His words.* Jesus said to the Jews, "And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not" (John 5:38). "If ye believe not [Moses'] writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (v. 47). There are those who profess they believe Jesus but who do not accept His teaching relating to

righting our sinful condition that has broken our relationship with God.

- *The apostles' testimony.* "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" (2 Thessalonians 1:10). This testimony was the truth which must be believed to be saved (2:12-13), truth that was revealed to the apostles by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). Some people say they accept the testimony of the apostles but reject certain crucial things they taught concerning salvation and worship of God.

- *Jesus is risen.* "If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe-in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). There are those who believe they are going to heaven because they have responded to some religious rites but who do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

- *Jesus' blood will cleanse us from our sins.* "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (3:24-25). Some people consider those saved who do not understand they are being cleansed by Jesus' blood.

- *The gospel is God's power to save.* "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (1:16). The gospel includes the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and "that Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Those who believe the gospel are saved; therefore, they believe they are being saved by Jesus' cleansing blood. Their faith is not in the preacher, the water of baptism, their act, or the faith of others. Their faith is in the blood of Jesus to cleanse them from their sins. How can one be saved without faith in God's power to save?

'What We Are Not to 'Believe

There are things that we are not to believe because believing them will condemn us. We are not to believe:

- *Every spirit.* "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

- *Lies.* "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2

Thessalonians 2:11-12). Believing the truth (John 8:32; Ephesians 1:13) will save us while believing a lie concerning salvation will condemn us.

Understanding

Believing requires an understanding of what we are to believe but not necessarily how or why. By faith Noah built an ark (Hebrews 11:7). He understood that a flood was coming and he must build an ark for the preservation of his family. He did not know how God would bring about the flood, but he believed and understood what God said, so he built the ark.

By faith Israel marched around the walls of Jericho (v. 30). They understood and believed God would demolish the walls even though they did not understand how God would do it or why God required marching instead of another activity. Because they believed in God and the results He promised, they marched.

The same is true concerning our salvation. We are to understand what we believe. This culminates in baptism. In baptism we are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19) as an expression of our faith in the existence of God and in Jesus as Lord (Acts 2:36) and of our willingness to serve Him as Lord (Luke 6:46). When we are buried and raised in baptism, we are to place our faith in the same power of God that resurrected Jesus to raise us to a new life (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). When we are baptized, the blood of Jesus will forgive us and save us from our sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). We accept these truths because of the testimony of the apostles. We do not know why **these** are the requirements of Jesus or completely understand how **salvation** comes to us, but we believe because it is what Jesus requires.

Conclusion

Jesus requires that we believe. This is very important, but even more significant is what we believe. We cannot believe wrong concerning our salvation and be saved. If we believe lies we will be damned, but if we believe the truth we will be saved. This may not mean that we correctly believe every biblical truth, but it does mean that we must believe the truth concerning what we must believe in order to be saved. If not, then believing alone is enough, and what we believe is not important.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

DENNIS LOYD

Although we engage in public prayers as part of our worship and employ prayers at mealtime and in group gatherings, prayer is generally a very personal and private activity. In fact, Jesus encouraged that aspect of prayer when He contrasted the fanfare and display of the prayers of the hypocrites with the prayers of the righteous. "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matthew 6:6).

To prepare for those quiet times alone with God, we must learn some very important principles governing prayer. We need to know what prayer is, what we should pray for, how to pray to be pleasing to God, and what the benefits of prayer are. Those lessons we learn from our study and from our observation of the prayers of those around us.

One's personal prayer life can be a time of instruction for those who seek to learn. We have a prime example of this method of learning in Luke 11:1 when the disciples saw and asked: "Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.'" Immediately Jesus followed with a pattern for prayer in which He illustrated praise for the Father's majesty and will, and petition for the kingdom, for food, for forgiveness and for deliverance. Luke suggests three motivations for the request by this single disciple who probably spoke on behalf of the other disciples.

First, the disciple experienced the power of observation, "as He was praying in a certain place." Tragically, a time would come when the disciples did not observe Him at prayer; rather they slept. But on this occasion, they saw Him as He chose an appropriate location — perhaps where He could be away from the crowds that often surrounded Him. And they saw Him as He prayed. Here was one of the Godhead praying to His Father. Jesus the Son had stepped down from heaven to take on the form of a man, and as a man He needed time to pray — to thank, to request, to praise — the God of heaven and earth. What this disciple saw that day

made a profound impression on him, for he saw his Master pouring out His praise and gratitude and concerns to God.

When we are quiet and still enough to watch carefully and thoughtfully, we can be impressed with what we see around us. Jesus was not doing what He had condemned in His Sermon on the Mount. He was not praying to be seen of men, but He was seen. And what this one or the entire group saw made an impact on them. Incidentally, when Luke tells us that "He ceased," he helps us understand a bit more Paul's charge to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Those who suggest that prayer is unending need to understand that each prayer comes to an end, but the power of prayer and the practice of prayer are continuing privileges given to all Christians. What was seen led to an action.

Second, Luke describes the power of teaching. "Lord, teach us to pray." What a simple but profound request! Significantly, the disciple did not ask, "teach us how to pray," but, "teach us to pray." The lessons needed spoke of broader principles than the contents of an individual prayer. They needed instruction about those things mentioned earlier — the nature of prayer, the purpose of prayer, God's will in prayer, and the benefits of prayer. Once again, some of those lessons the disciples learned from observation, but some they learned from His instruction. The model or pattern prayer He gave illustrates immediate instruction. We need to understand that we need to pray, and that was what the disciple asked: "teach us to pray."

The power of teaching is revealed when a student asks the right question or questions and the teacher responds with the right answer or answers. My friend John Parker calls this text a teacher's dream. We must have the desire to learn and the awareness of where to go to be taught. On this occasion, Jesus was obviously the right Teacher, and the right question provoked the right response. The Scriptures are replete with God's instructions concerning prayer. Our willingness to learn will always be met with the truth that can make us free. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

Finally, Luke identifies the power of example when the disciple added "as John also taught his disciples." He could have reasoned that Jesus' prayers were to be expected because He was the Son of God. Surely He would talk to His Father. But he had also seen

the example of John and his disciples, and they had prayed. John began his work some time before Jesus called His disciples and began teaching. Some of Jesus' disciples had been John's disciples first. Now this one was wanting to learn what Jesus had to say about some of the things John had taught. When we see the good done by and for others, we want to learn how to imitate that good. We want to know that it is what the Lord wants of us and that He approves of and encourages such conduct. Surely if Jesus prayed, He approved what John had taught about prayer. Now the disciples remembered that example and wanted to follow it.

Prayer empowers the individual because prayer itself contains power. Alfred, Lord Tennyson said in *The Idylls of the King*, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." That power comes from our appeal to the God who created heaven and earth and all that is in them. But we find access to that power in much the same way this lone disciple did long ago. We see the power of observation, the power of teaching and the power of example. As is often the case in our study of the Scriptures, we find one verse teaching very important lessons.

BIBLE STUDY

KEN TYLER

It is easy to become so involved in our daily activities that Bible study is stifled out. It takes a person who really loves the Bible to study it regularly. Without a genuine love for God's word, Bible study is a hit and miss affair, mostly miss. There are many verses in Psalm 119 that point out how much God's word should mean to the child of God. In this article, I want to draw your attention to a few of them.

First, the Psalmist said in 119:72, "*The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.*" He said again in verse 127, "*Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.*" Does God's word mean this much to you? So many have sold their souls for gold and silver. Please don't let this happen to you.

Second, the psalmist said in 119:129, "*Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.*" Is this how you feel about God's word? Do you consider it to be wonderful? Notice

carefully that the Psalmist kept God's word because of what it meant to him.

Third, the Psalmist said in 119:131, "*I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.*" What a marvelous statement! He didn't run away from the commandments of God but longed for them. Do His words mean this much to you?

Fourth, several times in this passage the Psalmist mentions his love of God's word. Listen, "...*I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved*" (verse 47); "*O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day*" (verse 97); "*I have vain thoughts; but thy law do I love*" (verse 113); "*My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly*" (verse 167). Are these statements characteristic of your feelings about God's word?

John 12:48 makes it plain that we will be judged by the word at the last day. I pray that all of us will love it, study it, and then obey it. The Bible is too valuable to be left lying around in our houses collecting dust. Be a good Bible student. You won't regret it.

Searching The Mind Of God!

DILLARD THURMAN

There is no word, oral or written, that can compare with the Word of God! This majestic Book reveals to the mind of sinful men the righteous Will of our Eternal God! It alone unlocks the mystery of man's origin, but it also illuminates the reason for his being and his final destiny! Vainly the skeptics have sought for the origin of our Universe, but their wild theories and hypotheses have led them off into ever-widening tangents, so that their speculations and suppositions become increasingly ridiculous! However, God in graphic, terse words unlocks the mystery to those who walk by faith! Why not look to His record?

Creative Power: He Spake; It Was Done!

Nine times in the first chapter of the Bible you read the words: "*And God said.*" (Read Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29). As you check the references, notice what came to pass! Even as Joshua declared: "*Not one thing hath failed of all the good things the Lord your God spake.*" (Josh. 23:13). How is that for a record of honesty and accuracy? The Psalmist summed it up: "*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them*"

by the breath of his mouth." (Psa. 33:6). How emphatically it is stated: *"For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."* (Psa. 33:9). The Creation, including the earth and all the galaxies of space, God spake into existence by His Word! *"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."* (Heb. 11:3). Out of nothing God spake forth the world!

More than this, we believe He is yet *"upholding all things by the word of his power."* (Heb. 1:3). Sure, we have scoffers who do not accept this by faith; *"For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto the fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."* (2 Pet. 5-7). Friends, mark it down — this old sin-cursed earth is riding to a fall! And we had better pay attention to the Word of God! Let it reveal God's Will to you!

We Treat God's Word With Contempt!

One of the great inconsistencies of man has been a readiness to acknowledge faith in God, and then turn rebelliously to conduct that belies his faith! The challenge from Elijah to the false prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel still confronts us: *"How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him."* (1 Kgs. 18:21). It is inconsistent to claim faith in God while turning from Him! One who truly believes in God will long to know His Will and do it! Never will his life repudiate his staunch claim of faith! One who lives for the Devil is inconsistent in affirming his faith in God! The old adage rightly says: *"What you are speaks so loud I can't hear what you say!"* *"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."* (Tit. 1:16). Are you also indicted by inconsistency?

Is The Bible The Word of God?

How lustily we sing, *"How precious is the Book divine, by inspiration given,"* and *"Give me the Bible, holy message shining; Thy light shall guide me in the narrow way."* Yet that Bible lies unopened on the shelf six days a week! Letters from strangers

are avidly opened and read, and even 'junk mail' is scanned; but the precious Word of God is ignored! "Consistency, thou art a jewel!" Paul spake *"of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."* (Eph. 3:2-5). We can't hold that concept of the Scriptures consistently if we ignore them. The Psalmist said of the godly, *"His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."* (Psa. 1:2). How much should this be said of the Christian! We should be able to say: *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."* (Psa. 119:11). Is His Word our companion?

Spiritual Life From That Word!

All life springs from the seed, and Jesus said of spiritual life, *"The seed is the word of God."* (Lk. 8:11). We learn more of the process of spiritual birth in reading: *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."* (1 Pet. 1:23). This operation of the Word of God was known by the Psalmist: *"For thy word hath quickened me."* (Psa. 119:50). Thus it was that Paul wrote, *"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."* (1 Cor. 4:15). Since God's Word is essential to spiritual life, we are obligated to plant that seed in every good and honest heart! Jesus told Nicodemus, *"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* (Jno. 3:5). The clarity is given in Eph. 5:26 when Paul writes of the church: *"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."* The Holy Spirit revealed the word (begettall power) that led them to be buried in water for the new birth in Christ Jesus.

God's Word Can Change Us!

A dynamic facet of His Word is its ability to change sinful men! As stated of old, *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."* (Psa. 19:7). In the natural state of unregenerated man, he could not have an affinity with a Holy God! An angel released the apostles from prison, and gave the charge, *"Go, stand and speak*

in the temple to the people all the words of this life." (Acts 5:20). This was to be their message to the world! So Paul said, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation."* (Rom. 1:16). With reference to this power, James wrote, *"Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."* (Jas. 1:21). God has no other power to make this change! Therefore Paul stated, *"I declare unto you the gospel... by which ye are saved."* (1 Cor. 15:1-2). The wonder of this is shown by Paul: *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God."* *"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."* (1 Cor. 1:18, 21). In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul addressed those in the synagogue, saying, *"To you is the word of this salvation sent."* (Acts 13:26). That is the message of all ages!

The Power Of His Word Within!

It is the engrafted word that engenders faith in the heart. *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Rom. 10:17). Many folk cling to hallucinations and strong delusions; but it is only by hearing the Word of God that saving faith is produced! And we ought to receive God's truth in that light! *"For this cause thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe."* (1 Thes. 2:13). Jesus revealed that this is the way to sanctification: *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."* (Jno. 17:17). This is underlined by an earlier statement: *"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."* (Jno. 15:3). But the vilest sinner is purified through obedience to that word! In writing to those who had been fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of selves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners, Paul then said, *"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, 'but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'" (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Herein is shown the working of the Spirit in the word!*

We Must Preach the Word!

The Word of God places upon all Christians the obligation of

propagating that Word! Jesus charged His disciples, "*Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*" (Mk. 16:15). But that was also transferred to all future generations of saints; for He also said, "*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" (Mt. 28:20). It is self-perpetuating, and we now have that responsibility. Paul could well have been speaking to saints of this day when he wrote, "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*" (2 Tim. 4:2-4). We live in those perilous days! A spiritually lost and bewildered world need the light; are we hiding it under a bushel?

TAKE HEED!

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Convenience has always been the mother of apostasy. Therefore the church, in every age, has been in the throes of and on the verge of departing from the truth because mankind seeks the easy way out! It takes courage, fortitude and determination to remain loyal and faithful. It takes no effort at all to leave the moorings of the gospel. The line of least resistance makes crooked rivers and useless members of the church! The fourth chapter of 1 Timothy is a notable passage which is a classic reminder of the constant challenge to remain committed to the Lord's cause forever and never to take that first step on the long journey of apostasy that eventuates in hell.

There are five major teachings in the evangelistic epistles known as 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. These five principles of gospel truth permeate the thirteen chapters of the three books:

1. *Qualifications of Elders*
2. *Preach the Word!*
3. *Keep the Church Pure*
4. *Live as an Example*
5. *Rebuke False Teachers*

It is uniquely true that all five of these issues are desperately

needed if we would offset error and stamp out apostasy. Very few would ever depart from the faith if we universally had qualified bishops, Bible preaching evangelists, stalwart congregations, good brethren who practiced purity of life and men of God who rebuked sin and exposed error! Sadly, in many areas, several of these ingredients of soundness are missing and in some places they are actively opposed. It seems that the only thing some brethren oppose are those courageous folk oppose false teaching!

In 2 Thes. 2:7 Paul made it very clear, as God's-inspired ambassador, that the mystery of lawlessness was already at work in the first century. In 1 Jno. 4:1 and 2 Pet. 2:1 great servants of the Almighty plainly stated that many false prophets had already gone out into the world. Apostasy had marched upon the scene and had to be openly opposed and bluntly dealt with. Through the intervening centuries, Satan and his emissaries have not been lazy or silent, and today God's army must be on the alert constantly lest the devil gain advantage over us (2 Cor. 2:11). If we fail to reprove such (Eph. 5:11), we become "*partakers of their evil deeds*" (2 Jno. 11). Elders, especially, must be on guard (Acts 20:28-32) and be able and willing to "*convict the gainsayers*" (Titus 1:9).

Paul made it crystal clear to Timothy, in 1 Tim. 4, that many in his generation would depart from the system of faith and even teach doctrines of demons. Such would harden the hearts of hearers and teachers alike and cause apostasy within the ranks of soldiers of Christ. Students of church history know full-well that such came to pass. Sorrow upon sorrow resulted from the contamination of the pure, pristine stream that flowed from the "*mountain the Lord's house*" (Isa. 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 3:15). Had it not been for the courage and conviction of a small band of devoted saints, through the centuries, Satan and his host would have been victorious. The sufferings which the valiant Christians endured is a monumental tribute to the providence of God and the tenacity of the saints who would not, turn their backs on the heavenly cause mandated by the Savior (Rom. 8:18).

When the Ephesian church tried those claiming to be apostles, and proved them false, Christ commended them for it (Rev.2:2). Heb. 3:12 and 2 Pet. 3:17 members of the Lord's church were challenged to remain loyal to God and never to depart from steadfastness in the kingdom. And in Heb. 2:1-3 Christians were

entreated to hold to the solid moorings of the gospel and never "drift away from them" nor "neglect so great salvation."

Some Truths About Truth

RANDALL CASELMAN

Truth is defined as that which is real, genuine, certain, valid, factual. Truth is actuality, that which can be trusted because it is the things that are. In the Bible, truth is spoken of as an attribute of God. Twice Isaiah tells us that He is the God of truth. Titus 1:2 contends that God cannot lie. So, that which is revealed by God, inspired by God, breathed by God, is truth and can be trusted as genuine and valid. Note some truths about truth:

1. Truth can be known. Jesus said, "*You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*" (John 8:32). We can know truth by studying the Scriptures, which are inspired by the Holy Spirit and which testify about Jesus. John wrote, "*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14). Jesus plainly stated that He was the truth in John 14:6: "*I am the way and the truth and the life.*" Do we know truth?

2. Truth, when obeyed, sanctifies. Jesus prayed, "*Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth*" (John 17:17). As we respond to the guidance of the Spirit, we are cleansed by truth. Paul tells us as much: "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless*" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

3. Truth sets us free and apart. What is sanctification? Being freed from sin and the eternal consequences of sin. Sanctification sets us free and sets us apart. You see, when we are washed with water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26), we are raised to walk in a newness of life (Romans 6:4). Paul goes on to say that we become instruments of righteousness, living sacrifices (Romans 6:13;12:1). Peter says that we are a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a people belonging to God (1 Peter 2:5,9). As we allow the Spirit of truth to lead us, as we keep in step with Him, we

produce His fruit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Indeed, this fruit sets us apart. Right?

4. Truth should set us ablaze. Remember Jeremiah? *"His word is in my heart like fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot"* (Jeremiah 20:9). If and when we are genuinely convinced that we have the truth of God in us, we cannot hold it back. Like Jeremiah, we are forced to proclaim His truth to others.

His truth sets us ablaze in another way also: it keeps us from sin. David wrote, *"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you"* (Psalm 119:11). Truth hidden in our heart regulates our attitudes, our disposition, and even our daily behavior. **5. Truth must be contended for.** We are instructed to *"contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints"* (Jude 3). "The faith" refers to that body of truth once delivered. This truth is not only to be proclaimed, it is to be defended. Why? Because it is the good news of the Gospel that saves. In Colossians 1:5, Paul speaks of *"the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven, and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel...."* Indeed, we must contend for the faith, stand up for truth, fight the good fight, keep the faith—because we, as the church of God, are the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

What is truth? What is our relationship to truth? Do we know it? Do we know Him? Are we being led by Him? Are we bearing His fruit? Are we obeying truth? Are we walking in the light? I pray that we are. *"So if the Son sets you free"* Jesus said in John 8:36, *"you will be free indeed."* **Indeed!**

Should We Still Study the Old Testament?

DAVID MCCLISTER

One of the biggest questions that faced the early church was the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. The matter came to a head in Acts 15, and the apostles taught that the Law of Moses had not been binding since the death of Jesus. The old covenant contained the promise of its own demise (Heb 8:7-13) and Paul said that the old law had been nailed to the cross (Col 2:14).

If the old covenant is no longer in force and its law replaced, then why should we still study and preach from the Old Testament? Does its cancellation warrant virtually ignoring it or relegating it to the status of a curious relic of the past? Should we still study the Old Testament?

Certainly! By all means! Why? Allow me to suggest a few important reasons:

1. *The Old Testament gives us confidence in God's power and faithfulness.* The New Testament often urges us to rely, in faith, on God's power. How is such trust vindicated? Answer: from the stories of the Old Testament. The God who devastated Egypt with plagues, who led his people through the Red Sea, who fought their wars and defeated their enemies and who brought them out of captivity is the same God of the new covenant. Our confidence in God's power to save and bless is rooted in the acts of God recorded in the Old Testament, acts by which he has proven his power to accomplish good for his people. The New Testament also urges us to rely on God's promise word. How is such trust vindicated? The answer again is: from the stories of the Old Testament. The Old Testament is a veritable history of God making promises and keeping them faithfully and thus demonstrates that God is trustworthy (1 Cor 1:9; 2 Thess 3:3).

2. *The Old Testament serves as a warning to us.* The history of Israel in the Old Testament is, for the most part, a history of failure and stands as a stark warning to spiritual Israel not to follow in those same steps of faithlessness and disobedience. Consider 1 Corinthians 10, where Paul exhorted the church in Corinth not to become idolaters after the example of the Israelites in the wilderness (the author of Hebrews makes a similar appeal in Heb 3, 4). Stephen used the history of the Old Testament as the basis of his rebuke to Jews of his day (Acts 7), and Jesus himself used the stories of the Old Testament as warnings to His hearers (Matt 23:34-36; 10:15; 12:38-42).

3. *The Old Testament is about Jesus.* The old covenant was a promise waiting to be fulfilled; a story waiting for its ending. It's conclusion came in Jesus (2 Cor 1:20; Matt 5:17-18), the one to whom the law and the prophets had pointed (Rom 3:21-22). Adam, the high priesthood, the sacrificial system, the prophets, the kingship, wisdom and many other such things were types of the Messiah. Furthermore, Jesus was the object of many specific

predictions which the New Testament authors were careful to note (see especially Matthew's gospel). Jesus himself taught his followers to read the Old Testament in light of him (John 5:39, 45; Luke 24:27), and the early Christians used the Old Testament to preach Jesus (see Acts 2:22-36; 8:26-35; 13:26-40). To put it simply, it is not possible to understand the gospel correctly, or to have the right picture of Jesus, without first having read the Old Testament.

4. *The Old Testament is the blueprint and prescription for the New Covenant.* The old covenant contained many features that were types of spiritual things in the new covenant. The priesthood, the temple, circumcision, sacrifices, the exodus and Passover, washings — all of these things have spiritual counterparts in the new covenant. The outward features of the old system were shadows of the spiritual realities in the new covenant. In order to understand what it means to say that the church is God's temple (1 Pet 2:5; Eph 2:21; 1 Cor 3:16) or that Christians are God's priests (1 Pet 2:5, 9), we must go to the Old Testament to learn the fundamental nature of these institutions. Furthermore, the Old Testament records prophecies about the messianic age in which God described the kind of people he wants us to be (see Hos. 2:14-10 for an example). The New Testament was written, among other things, for the purpose of teaching us how to live so as to be that people.

While we realize that we no longer live by the old law, we must also realize that we still need the Old Testament. "Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

TAKING TIME TO TEACH

RANDY HARSHBARGER

The Apostle Paul was incredulous that the Galatians were returning to the Law of Moses. Their impaired spiritual judgment and faulty thinking led him to ask: "who did bewitch you?" (Gal 3:1). That is, who worked a charm on you? What fascination now holds your allegiance? Paul's early experiences in the gospel helped cement his relationship to the Lord and to other brethren

(Gal 1:11-24; Acts 9:26-30); the Galatians, who were called through the same gospel, were forgetting about the crucified Christ. In Galatians three, Paul moves from a defense of his apostleship to a defense of his message. Because he cared deeply about the Galatians he took time to teach them needed lessons about Christ and the gospel.

Appealing to their experiences, Paul asked: "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3:2). The matter could be settled conclusively by their honest answer. Did the Galatians receive the Spirit by the works of the law of Moses? Paul had earlier argued that justification was through faith in Christ, not by the works of the law (Gal 2:16). Salvation by works of law (whether the Law of Moses or any law system) demands perfect obedience; the Galatians could not make this claim of perfection (Rom 3:23). The Galatians received the Spirit through the hearing of faith or message of faith. They had the ability to hear. They heard the gospel or the message of faith. They believed the message, which was the thing believed. In this way, they received the Holy Spirit.

Were the Galatians, after receiving the Spirit, able to perform miraculous acts? Does verse five hint at that idea? "He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you" (Gal 3:5). Or, could Paul be saying that through the instrumentality of the Spirit of God the word was revealed and confirmed, not only by himself, but by others? The Spirit was supplied by the Lord; the Galatians were blessed by the working of the Spirit as the word was revealed and confirmed. The Galatians, in days past, had obeyed that message; sadly, they now distanced themselves from the hearing of faith. The hearing of faith in contrast to the works of the law can also be called the "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5; 16:26). If the Galatians prized the possession of the Spirit they should be faithful to Christ through whom they received the Spirit. They had embraced the gospel; they could now acceptably serve the Lord. Since the Spirit is superior to the flesh, why trust in circumcision, which cannot fulfill spiritually (Gal 3:3). The Galatians had undergone persecution for Christ; what purposes would be served if they were to go back to the Law (Gal 3:4)? Their obedience to the gospel, not the Law of Moses, made possible the reception of the Spirit. Why jeopardize the working of God's grace by reverting to the inferior (Gal 4:9)?

Those connected with this new journalistic effort believe that it is worthwhile to take the time to teach needed lessons from God's word. The Galatians were in danger of losing their salvation and needed further instruction. God's people today (and the world in which we live) need a steady, balanced diet of truth. Those who will write for this magazine believe that good can be served by honest, kind presentations of needed truths. No issue should be ignored; neither will this periodical be a "one issue" paper. Yes, it takes time and effort to produce such a product. We are committed to that task. We do not believe we are the only brethren capable of producing needed Bible lessons via the printed page. Our desire is simply to do all we can to provide good, quality material that will contribute to a better understanding of God's revelation to the hearts of men. Give us the opportunity and we will work hard to live up to your trust.

Salvation is by grace through faith. That truth is vividly expressed in the cross of Jesus. The cross says that we cannot save ourselves. The cross says we need the "hearing of faith." The cross declares as foolish any attempt to find salvation outside of Christ. The Galatians lost sight of Christ and his cross. May our lives always reflect commitment to Christ and his cross (Gal. 6:14). That is a lesson we must always take time to teach.

LIVING BY FAITH

CLEM THURMAN

"The righteous shall live by faith. We walk by faith, and not by sight" (Rom. 1:17; 2 Cor. 5:7).

We marvel at the power of God as demonstrated in the creation of the world: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).* God didn't have to go through a long process of a building program, either, for the psalmist explains: *"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Psa. 33:6,9).* We build by starting with some kind of materials, then re-shaping or assembling the materials to form what we want. But God **created**, and that means he brought something out of nothing! *"By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of*

God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear" (Heb. 11:3). Such power is beyond our comprehension, but "by faith" that power can be ours as we live for Him.

We read in Gen. 1:26-27, "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . And God created man in his own image." The apostle writes in wonder, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are" (1 Jno. 3:1). Our Father is the God who "spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast" (Psa. 33:9). He loves His children (Jno. 3:16) and gives us many promises in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). His promises never fail (Deut. 6:3), for He will do what He says: "He is faithful that promised. . . I believe God, that it will be even as he said. . . I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 10:23; Acts 27:25; Heb. 13:5). If we belong to Him, then God grants us "all things that pertain to life and to godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3) and gives us "every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). It should be evident then, that when we are living for Him, He will take care of us: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

God told Noah to prepare an ark, and gave him instructions as to how to do it (Gen. 6): "By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Heb. 11:7). Noah "lived by faith" in building the ark, trusting God and His word. When David went out to meet Goliath, he expressed his faith this way, "The God that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:37). Noah didn't trust in his own skill at designing a ship, nor did he trust his own weather forecasting; he trusted God, and lived by that faith. David did not trust in his sling, nor his skill with it; he trusted God, that God would act through him. Living by faith for us today simply means trusting God and living as He directs us to live. We do not always have to understand all the reasons why God tells us certain things to do and other things from which to abstain; all we have to do is trust that He knows what is best for us. Then our lives will reflect His power, as He empowers us to live for Him, and we can say triumphantly, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).



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