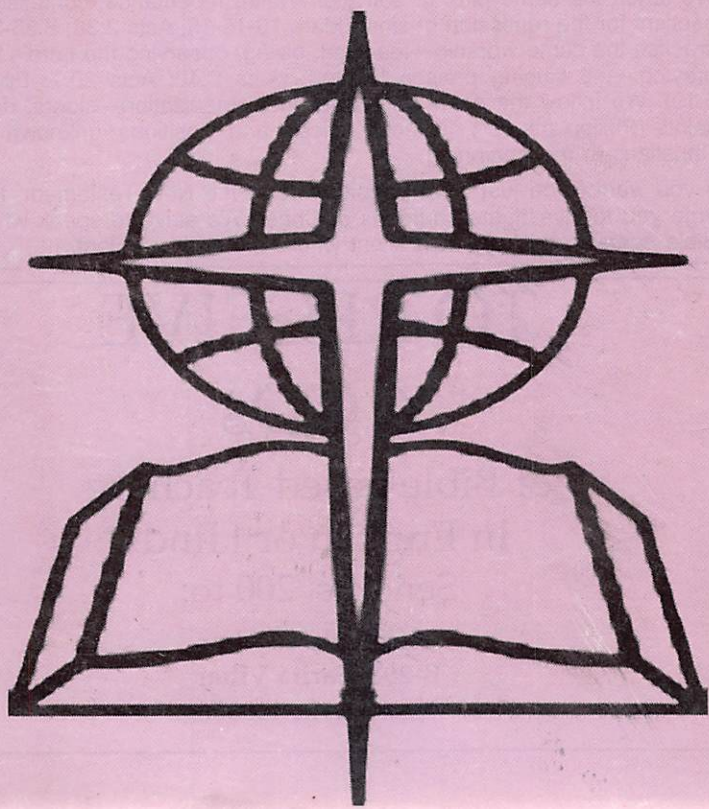


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# THE BIBLE TEACHER



## **BACK TO BASICS**

Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18). His promise was fulfilled when His church came into existence on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter commanded the multitude assembled on that day: "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." (Acts 2:38). Those who gladly received his word were baptized (Acts 2:41), as a result three thousand were added to the church on that day by the Lord Himself (Acts 2:47). That was the beginning of Christ's church.

Of what denomination did those three thousand become members? Our contention is that they joined no denomination. Indeed, denominationalism such as we know in today's world did not even exist then. They had simply obeyed the Gospel and were added by the Lord to His church. They wore no sectarian name, adopted no denominational creed, and belonged to no ecclesiastical hierarchy. They were simply children of God, members of the church, were called Christians (Acts 11:26).

Churches of Christ today everywhere plead for a return to that same church with that same simplicity. We do not claim to be a denomination. Our goal is to be that church—nothing more, nothing less—just basic New Testament Christians as people were in the first century.

We teach the same plan of salvation—faith, repentance, confession, and baptism for the remission of sins. (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39). We practice the same worship—teaching, giving, observing the Lord's Supper, praying, and singing praises to God. (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; Ephesians 5:19). We follow the same congregational organization—elders, deacons, saints (Philippians 1:1), without offices and positions unknown to the Christians in the beginning.

If you want to be just what people were in the New Testament, then we urge you to investigate churches of Christ. We strive to speak where the Bible speaks and to remain silent where the Bible is silent.

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# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

**Vol. 43**

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## *Editorial*

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

#### ***All Spiritual Blessings Of God Are In Christ***

GENERALLY AND commonly speaking our Creator has blessed all people on earth with many physical blessings. We all enjoy daily His sunshine, breathe His air, and eat all kinds of foods that He has created for us. But man is a dual being, he is both physical and spiritual. Christ taught, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4). Man need physical food, but he also need spiritual food. The Bible, in the book of Ephesians, chapter 1 and verse 3 teaches, "Blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

There are, therefore, no spiritual blessings of any kind whatever outside of Christ. If one wants to be blessed spiritually, one need to get into Christ. The Bible teaches, in Christ one becomes a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). Because he has been redeemed from the wages of sin, by the blood of Christ which He has shed in His death for the sinners (1 Peter 1:18, 19). Again, the Bible points out that there will be no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1), since Christ, by the grace of God, has been condemned for them (2 Corinthians 5:21).

But, how does one gets into Christ? We read, "For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you

as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:26, 27). There is no other way to get into Christ, to become eligible for all spiritual blessing in Him.

In Christ, the Bible says, one also receives the privilege of a continual cleansing of any unintended or unintentional sin by the blood of Christ, as one continue to walk daily in His light. (1 John 1:5-10). Further, the Bible teaches, a follower of Christ, the Christian, has the privilege to pray to God, with confidence calling Him the Father, through or in the name of Christ. We read: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." (1 John 5:14). God answers the prayers of His children according to His own will, because He knows the best what to give to His children. But it is a blessing to know that God hear our prayers.

Again, I read, in my Bible, in 1 John 3:1, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when he is revealed we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." As a Christian, I know that I am a child of God, and that when Christ will be revealed at His coming I will be changed and become like Him to live with Him in heaven, provided I am trying my best to live like Him on earth. For how can I expect to be like Him at His coming, if I am not trying to become like Him now?

The redemption from sin, the promise of salvation from sin, and the promise of a continual cleansing from all unintended or unintentional sins; plus the privilege of having the confidence to pray to God calling Him our Father in heaven and the promise of finally to be able to live with God in his heavenly home forever, are some of the spiritual blessings promised to those who will believe in His Son and do His will, whom God has appointed to be the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. At 2 Corinthians 5:1 we read, the apostle Paul wrote, "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Remember, though, to be blessed with all spiritual blessings of God one must be in His Son Christ. There is no other place.

## **Lesson 6**

# **KILLING**

There are many sins in the world and man is guilty of all of them. Not any one person has committed all of them but everyone has committed some of them. Therefore all have sinned, and all are in need of salvation, or the forgiveness of their sins. It is our purpose to show how you may put off the old man of sin and put on a new life in Christ.

Of all of the sins of man, none is more terrible than that of killing or murdering one's fellow man. Therefore, for our study at this time we want to make a study of KILLING.

I hope I am not talking to anyone who has killed another person, but I may be doing just that. If I am, then what I will have to say will certainly be for your benefit. But this lesson is designed more for all of you who have never committed this sin. We are going to discuss it because we need to be aware of what the Bible teaches on this subject, and by so doing, I would pray that it would help us to value life and never to be guilty of such a crime.

There are many so-called reasons for killing or murder. Some of them would be for money, because of jealousy, seeking revenge, hatred, over an argument, as a result of drinking, and on and on the list goes.

The Bible tells us of the first murder when a man killed his brother because of anger. We are told that Adam and Eve had two sons born to them, and the record goes on to say, "And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time, it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord has respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And

he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden." (Genesis 4:2-16). In Hebrews 11:4 we read, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." From this statement we must conclude then that God had spoken to both Abel and Cain concerning the type of sacrifice they should make to him. Evidently Abel obeyed God in offering the firstlings of his flock, while Cain failed to obey him when he brought only the fruit of the ground as an offering. As a result God accepted Abel's sacrifice and rejected Cain's. This caused Cain to be angry and his anger led him to kill his brother Abel. The story then that follows indicates that God punished him for this sin.

One of the ten commandments in the Law of Moses was simply, "Thou shalt not kill." (Exodus 20:13). Although the ten commandment law is no longer binding as such, still it has always been a moral law that has been binding on man from the beginning both by God and by the laws of men. For instance, in the law of Christ, as revealed in the New Testament, it is definitely taught that we should not kill. Paul said, "Recompense to no man evil for evil." (Romans 12:17). Again, he said, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Romans 12:19). Paul listed murder as a work of the flesh and he said that those who do such things cannot go to heaven, that is, unless they repent and turn away from such and obey God. (Galatians 5:21). John wrote, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and

all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8).

But why is it wrong to kill? Because life is sacred and precious. It is all that one has in this world. It is that which cannot be replaced or called back. God created man, and is therefore the giver of life.

Not only is it wrong to kill and murder for a multitude of reasons, but let it be understood that it is also wrong for one to take his own life. When one commits suicide then he has sinned against himself and God and therefore he will be eternally lost because there is no way for him to repent. Judas Iscariot, one of the Apostles, is an example of one committing suicide. Not only is suicide itself wrong but it is a sign of being a coward and that within itself is a sin. Of course it is possible that one may have committed suicide while in such a disturbed mental state that he would not be held accountable for his action. That is why it is dangerous to pass judgment on such a person because we may not always know the facts. We do know that it is wrong to commit suicide and therefore we should never be guilty of considering the possibility of taking our own life.

Another problem in our time is that there are intellectuals, scientists, etc., who are promoting the idea of the mercy killing of deformed and mentally retarded infants and children, of allowing the terminally ill to commit suicide, and to do away with the aged through some type of lethal or poisonous injection. Now this may sound horrible but these ideas are already being considered in some circles. Of course we know that Hitler introduced some of these practices in his day, and the world thought it was horrible then, but with the passing of time, with the world's population growing, and with more and more scientific progress being made, then maybe the world would look at it differently now, and especially in the years to come. But it can be in the name of mercy, promoting the welfare of humanity, the survival of the fittest, or whatever, but such practices would be nothing but killing and murder, and therefore it would be a sin against man and against God who created man. Don't ever allow yourself to be deceived into thinking that human life can be so easily disposed of without having to pay a high price for it.

Then there is abortion. What is abortion? It is where a baby is killed in the mother's womb and is extracted from her prior to the time it was to be born. Many of these abortions are performed on women who have been immoral, and both the man and woman involved in the sinful act want to destroy the fruit of their sin. In

some cases, married people want to have an abortion because they don't want any more children. But whatever the case may be, it comes down to the simple fact that it is killing a human life, and therefore it is nothing more than murder. But what kind of mother would want to kill her own child before it is born? What kind of man would want to see his child killed in such a gruesome way? Now the world has gotten into a debate as to whether the fetus, or new life form in a mother's womb, is a human being or not. Of course it is a human being. People argue over that in an attempt to soothe their consciences, but in reality it is nothing but murder. The sad part is that millions and millions of babies are being killed each year, and that legally, around the world. And we thought Hitler was a brutal man. What kind of doctors and nurses do we have that would commit such crimes? Would you want to use a doctor to try to save your life if you knew that he was out daily killing babies? I certainly wouldn't. I always thought that doctors and nurses were committed to that of trying to save lives, not to kill them. But thanks be unto God that not all doctors and nurses engage in such a horrible practice, and may the day come when it is against the law to have wholesale abortions.

Then there is one other side to this thing. In some cases, one may kill another by accident. If it was an accident, and beyond the person's control, then certainly that person would not be held accountable for it. Also there is the matter of self defence, that is, maybe where someone breaks into your place and in defending your life, and the lives of others, you might kill that person. In Exodus 22:2 it is said that the blood of the one killed would not be upon such a person in that case. The same would surely be true today. And finally, there is the matter of capital punishment. Paul tells us in Romans 13 that the law works on our behalf to protect us and to punish the wrong doers. When one therefore becomes a murderer, a killer, then he has forfeited his right to live and to have a place among the living. Furthermore, governments who have just laws operate on behalf of God and therefore it is God working through the arm of the law to punish the wicked.

In conclusion, let it be understood then that killing and murdering the innocent is wrong, We cannot do it or have any part in it. We must also teach, train, and bring our children up to live peaceably among their fellowman and to never be guilty of purposely taking the life of another human being.

We read in the scriptures of where wicked men took Christ, the



Son of God, and one who was without sin, and crucified him upon a cruel cross, thus killing him and murdering him there in a vicious fashion. But as horrible as that was, through that death, through that sacrifice, we can be saved from our sins. (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-10).

## TRUE WISDOM

CECIL MAY, JR.

*"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done with the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envying and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (James 3:13-18).*

The man who is puffed up, sure of himself, certain that no one who disagrees with him could ever have anything worthwhile to say about anything, is not wise. Or, if he thinks he is, he is wise with a worldly, sensual, devilish wisdom. Vanity is not characteristic of wisdom from the Father.

Of such a man it was said, "He is often wrong, but never in doubt." Of another, "I have never in my life heard him say, 'I don't know,' or 'I was mistaken.'"

The truly wise man is the one who may always be seen to be peaceable and understanding. Even when he knows whereof he speaks, he does not parade it.

The truly wise man is one who knows his own limitations. Anyone can be wrong; everyone is probably wrong about some things. That does not mean no one is able to correct anyone else, but it does mean the one doing the correcting needs to be willing to listen as well as talk. Even the things we are right about will be more readily accepted by others if we approach them with meekness and gentleness.

The truly wise man is one who shows his wisdom by the life he lives as well as by what he says.

# GOOD NEWS - "YOU COUNT!"

DAVID THURMAN

Society is full of bad news. There are murders, thefts and violence all around us. One look at the newscasts and even an optimist can get depressed. But, if people will look to God, they can still find good news.

The apostle Peter describes the good news that is offered to us. If you are a Christian, it is good news to realize what God has done. If you are not a Christian, you will hear good news that can change your life, even if the world around you is evil.

Peter writes to people facing persecution, but he reminds them of good news. In so doing, he reminds us we can find meaning in an evil world as well. *"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.' And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ"* (1 Peter 1:14-19). In writing these words Peter reminds those of us who are Christians of three important principles.

## WE ARE CALLED TO HOLINESS

Christians are called to be like God. We are to adopt and act on His character. We are to be holy, because He is holy. God is holy. He rejects all things evil. He is light and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). God is distinct from all else, in that His very nature is pure and righteous. When He called us to be His children, He called on us to accept this nature and reflect Him in our choices, our actions, our attitudes.

That is why Peter begins with the idea of not being conformed to our former way of life. We are not to be governed by our desires or lusts. We are not to live as if we are still in ignorance. As Christians we know better. We know better because we are already in the kingdom and understand what salvation is all about. Once we have been redeemed, our former way of life should begin to

lose its appeal. We should want to be set apart (holy) for God's purposes.

The good news is that you can do this! You don't have to be like the world around you. You don't have to give in to violence or vengeance. You don't have to hold grudges or be depressed. You don't have to reflect the despair of our society. You can be different from the world when you accept the call of God to holiness. Holiness is not about being better than others, it is about being like God. Reflecting God in holiness allows us to live above the world that is so full of evil.

### **WE ARE CALLED TO ACCOUNTABILITY**

Peter warns us that God will judge all men impartially. We will all be held accountable for our choices. None of us will get away with anything. Only those in Christ will be forgiven through His blood. Our world may be fussing and fighting, but God is not going to let anyone get away with anything. This will not be arbitrary, God will judge fairly, but He will pass judgment.

For some people, even believers, this seems frightening. However, in reality, it is more good news. Some terrorists will undoubtedly escape our nation's war on terror. But they will not escape God. Some child molesters will surely never be caught or punished by society. But they will not escape God. Judgment will come and it will be fair.

As believers, we know all this. We can live at a higher level of service to God because we know He will not let anything escape His notice. If it is evil, God will know of it. If it is good, God will know of it. Jesus even says that a simple thing like a cup of water, given in the name of the Lord, will not be forgotten (Mark 9:41). Our lives are governed by an awareness that we are expected to be like God. That sense of accountability enables us to live as God wants.

### **WE ARE CALLED TO DIFFERENCE**

Peter says it plainly: "*We are strangers here.*" Christians are to look, act and sound different from the world. We are not to be as evil, as pessimistic, as foolish as the world. We are not to be conformed to the world any more, but live as God wants. Christians are called to look and act different.

This difference is not some extraordinary effort to stand out. We will not achieve this difference by living off in a monastery, or by wearing drab clothing, or by denying ourselves any worldly comforts. The difference Peter speaks of is not something we do

on the outside, but something God does to our inside. When God claims a soul, He asks that soul to become like Him. When we submit to God, we will look more like God. The more we look like God, the more our world will see the difference. The difference God seeks comes from the heart, not from artificial changes to the surface. The good news is that we can become different, not by being smarter or better, but by surrendering to God's will. That is where the good news can really impact those who have not yet become Christians. Look at the good news Peter offers those who are outside of faith.

### **YOU ARE CALLED FROM EMPTINESS**

Peter tells us that in Christ we have been redeemed (freed) from our empty way of life. Do you ever have those days when life seems bleak? Maybe it is a job that seems to be going nowhere. Maybe it is a home life that is not at all what you imagined your family would be. God understands your emptiness. He knows that living for this world will not bring fulfillment. It brings only emptiness.

That is why Jesus came. He came to set you free from the emptiness that life offers you. He does not set us free from the heartaches and pain of life. But, He does set us free from the emptiness of life, so that even in heartache we have purpose and hope.

Why should you be a Christian? Because you know the empty parts of your life, the places in which you are unhappy, unfulfilled and, maybe, miserable. God knows this about your life as well and wants to offer you meaning and hope. That was the mission of Jesus, to redeem you from despair and allow you to enjoy your life. You can be free from emptiness.

### **YOU ARE CALLED THROUGH BLOOD**

God paid the ultimate price in sending His Son. He shed His blood, which is more precious than any commodity on earth. It is more precious than even silver or gold. That is good news, because it tells you how much you matter to God.

You are worth the death of His only begotten Son. God saw you, saw your emptiness, saw your despair. Yet, God loved you enough to send His only Son to give His life to save you. The price paid for you was the most valuable thing ever. God saw you and your life as important enough to let Jesus die for you.

What would you pay for inner peace? What price would you consider to be able to avoid despair and emptiness? What would

you offer in order to have a fulfilling life, regardless of life's circumstances? Jesus offers all that through His blood. You can have meaning, purpose, happiness, if you come to God through the precious blood of His Son.

### **YOU ARE CALLED BY PERFECTION**

Jesus was a sacrificial lamb without blemish or defect. As the apostle Paul tells us, *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus was perfect. He never sinned, He never failed to reflect God's holiness. Yet, He was willing to offer Himself as a perfect sacrifice to redeem you. An imperfect sacrifice would not do. All sinners must account for their own sins. But Jesus had no sin, and He could therefore offer Himself in your place. That is how much He loved you, that, although sinless, He died in your place.

This is why your life will be so much better when you are saved. You will have the perfection of Christ working in your life, able to accomplish what it did in His life. Paul tells us we have become the righteousness of God in Him. That is the same as saying we are holy, as He is holy. And so, we have come full circle. If you are redeemed by the blood of the perfect One, you receive His righteousness and are made holy. You can now live a life of meaning, purpose and hope.

### **COME TO HIM**

God wants to offer you good news. You cannot stay in this world and find the hope, the happiness or meaning that are found in Christ. But, in Christ you can be free from despair and hopelessness. You can be free from a meaningless existence. You can find your value, your place and your purpose in life. You will be different, accountable and holy. You will be happier, more fulfilled in life and at peace. That is the good news which God offers you. Come to Jesus through His blood, trust in Him, be immersed (baptized) in His name, and rise to walk in a whole new way of life.

## ***THE FOOTPRINTS OF JESUS***

**E. CLAUDE GARDNER**

Jesus is "our everything" and we also sing, "O what a Savior!" He is our "prophet, priest and king" and also, our example. Jesus wants us to follow in His footsteps.

Jesus is the model to follow. He left us an example of suffering, but truly He is an example in everything good. *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps "* (1 Peter 2:21).

The world idolizes (and some Christians do also) certain individuals or celebrities of this world. However, the only perfect model to emulate is Jesus. He is perfect and honorable in every aspect of His life. The more we read of Him the more readily we agree with the centurion at the cross—*"Truly this was the Son of God"* (Matthew 27:54).

In the classic, **In His Steps**, Charles Sheldon tells of a person who was confronted with a problem and resolved it by asking, "What would Jesus do?" This is solid advice when faced with any decision or dilemma.

We should sing the little song:

"Be like Jesus this my song;

Be like Jesus in the home or in the throng;

Be like Jesus all day long."

We can go wherever Jesus would go, read whatever Jesus would read, see whatever Jesus would see, and try to do whatever Jesus would do.

He is *"the way"* (John 14:6). Also, Christianity is called *"the way"*—it is the way of life as we follow Jesus (Acts 9:2, 24:14).

Can we follow others? Can we imitate the example of others? Yes, conditioned on their pointing us to Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:1; Matthew 5:16).

Why do we need the footprints of Jesus? It is imperative for us because we are not wise enough to choose our changes. Men ignorant of God or rebellious toward Him are groping in this world of darkness (Jeremiah 10:23).

Also, we need Jesus because He is the only way to God (Matthew 11:27). Without Him none can go to heaven to be with God. Jesus said, *"No man cometh unto the Father but by me"* (John 14:6).

The way, the narrow way, is made plain by the big footprints of Jesus. The way of holiness is prepared for us (Isaiah 35).

When we accept the call of the Gospel we follow the Master who makes us useful, as He did Peter, Andrew, James, and John (Matthew 4:18-22; John 12:26).

How are we to follow Jesus? We should follow Him in prayer, service, love, obedience, holiness, and self-sacrifice. Jesus taught

self-denial and the development of the spirit of sacrifice. This means we must make a complete surrender of our lives (Luke 9:57-62; Matthew 10:28-31).

The redeemed ones are those who follow Jesus (Revelation 14:3-5). They are the ones who have heard the voice of Jesus (John 10:4,5,27). His voice teaches: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:16). He said we must do the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21). If we *"follow afar off,"* as did Peter, we will get into difficulty as did he (Luke 22:54).

Satan makes footprints, too, but to follow him will lead us to eternal destruction. We must always be on guard so that he cannot deceive us.

The *"good man"* will be blessed for following the Lord (Psalm 37:23). Our Shepherd leads us in paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:3). The Psalmist prayed, *"Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me"* (Psalm 119:133).

## ***"Behold The Goodness And The Severity Of God"***

MAX PATTERSON

The remarkable statement that forms the title of this article was made by Paul in his letter to the Romans (Romans 11:22). We love to preach on the **goodness** of God, but we are reluctant to speak on the severity of God. People love to hear sermons on the goodness of God, but had rather not listen to those on the **severity** of God.

Well, God *is* good. He made available the paradise of Eden for Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:8-15). He rescued Noah and his family from the old world (Genesis 8:1-4). He led His people out of Egyptian bondage (Exodus 3:7,8; 34:6,7). He was especially good to send His Son to die for mankind (John 3:16). This was a supreme sacrifice.

Yet, there *is* the severity of God. The word severity has to do with being stern, strict, demanding, exacting, serious. One sees this as manifested against Adam and Eve when they sinned in the Garden of Eden. Peter uses three illustrations to point out the severity of God in 2 Peter 2:4-6. He says that God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell. He says that God

spared not the old world, but saved Noah. Finally, he says that God turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes. In the wilderness, when God's people sinned, they fell, and many times they were destroyed (1 Corinthians 10:8-10). During the time of the judges, when the people "*did what was right in their own eyes*," God allowed them to fall into oppression (Judges 2:14).

Only the **disobedient** will be in the lake of fire.

We must recognize that the goodness and severity of God are conditional. *Now* God exercises love and mercy, but *in the day of judgment* He will mete out severity and justice to those who did not believe and obey Him. Just as God was not severe toward the angels *until* they fell, and destroyed the antediluvian world only because of its sinfulness, and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah only because of their immorality and inhuman practices, just so only the disobedient will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

God pleads with man to come to Him and do what is right (Matthew 11:28-30).

## WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

BOBBY WHEAT

There is much confusion in the religious world today about the Holy Spirit. For some people, the Holy Spirit represents speaking in unknown tongues; for some, the Spirit means miraculous healings; and for still others the presence of the Spirit means comfort, assurance, and assistance in Christian living.

In all of the confusion, we hear the voices of many people asking, from a simple desire to know the truth, "Who is the Holy Spirit?" As with any question of a religious nature, our best course of action is to go to the Bible so that we can find an answer that truly comes from God.

From the Bible we learn many things about the Holy Spirit. In the time of the early church, the Spirit did cause many wonderful and miraculous things to happen. However, the Scriptures also demonstrate to us that the need for those miracles, such as speaking in tongues and miraculous healing, has long passed. This does not mean, however, that the Holy Spirit has stopped working in the lives of God's people.



Among the many truths we learn from the Bible about the Holy Spirit, five things stand out as being "timeless." That is, these are things which the Spirit does, or is, in all times. We want to emphasize three things that the Spirit "is", and then two important things that the Spirit "does".

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD

*"Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me " (Psalm 51:11).*

These are words we understand to have been written by King David after he committed adultery with Bathsheba. David's greatest fear was that God would leave him as He had left King Saul. Therefore, he prays, *"Do not cast me from your presence."*

An interesting feature of ancient Hebrew poetry is its use of "parallelism" in which an idea in the first phrase or line is restated with different words in the second phrase or line. The second line of Psalm 51:11 is a request that God not take His Holy Spirit from David's presence. We understand from this verse that for God to take His Holy Spirit from a person is the same thing as God Himself leaving that person. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is God Himself. We must recognize, then, that the Spirit "is" everything that God "is", and that He "does" only what God Himself would "do".

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A GIFT

Peter replied, *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).*

Speaking to the crowd in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost following Jesus' resurrection, Peter tells of two things that happen when a person is baptized. Assuming that true repentance has occurred, that person receives forgiveness of sins and *"the gift of the Holy Spirit."* Some would interpret this last expression to mean "a gift given by the Holy Spirit." However, it is more natural to understand this as **"a gift which is the Holy Spirit."**

This passage assures us that when a person becomes a Christian he immediately receives the Holy Spirit. It is not necessary to seek additional "experience" as proof of the Spirit's presence in the life of a Christian. God has placed Himself, in the form of the Holy Spirit, into every person who has been baptized into Christ. The Holy Spirit is God's gift to us.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A SEAL OF OWNERSHIP

*"Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance..."* (Ephesians 1:13,14).

Have you ever written your name inside a book cover? Why did you do that? It was to indicate the fact that you own the book, that it belongs to you. God does the same thing with a Christian — He writes His name on that person to indicate His ownership. But God does not do His writing with pen and ink as we would. Rather, He marks us with His Holy Spirit. So Paul speaks in the above passage from the book of Ephesians, telling Christians that their belief in Jesus as the Son of God has caused God to mark them with the Spirit, to write His name on them.

We also learn from this passage that the Holy Spirit is the Christian's **guarantee** that he will receive the promised inheritance, which is eternal life in heaven with God. God has left the Spirit with us as a deposit which proves that He will keep His promise to us.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS IN PRAYER

*"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us..."* (Romans 8:26).

Every Christian has at some time experienced the feeling that his or her prayers were not being heard by God. But the Word of God teaches very clearly that God is listening any and every time a Christian approaches Him in prayer. In fact, God Himself is present within us in the form of the Holy Spirit, and He understands our needs and desires. The Spirit of God takes our prayers before God, and this happens whether or not a person "feels" right about his prayer. This knowledge should be a great source of comfort to a Christian. **God hears every prayer!**

### THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS US GROW

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"* (Galatians 5:22).

The desire of every Christian should be to become more like Jesus with every day that passes. Every characteristic demonstrated in the life of Christ should be reflected in the life of every believer. But this is no small task, and many have given up

their Christian walk in discouragement over their failure to be like Jesus.

Paul's words in Galatians 5:22 should give the encouragement we need to continue striving for spiritual perfection. These characteristics are the result of the Spirit's presence and work in the life of a Christian! God has not given us a difficult task to accomplish all by ourselves. He has given us the task, and He has given us the perfect helper: the Holy Spirit.

God did not send His Holy Spirit to confuse mankind. He sent the Spirit to help, to guide, and to comfort those whose desire is to follow Christ.

All we need to know about the Holy Spirit is presented in the Bible. Search the Scriptures so that you can understand who the Spirit is and what He does for a Christian. This knowledge will strengthen you.

## ***DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS***

**DAVID PHARR**

In your study and use of the Bible you must learn to *"rightly divide"* (2 Timothy 2:15). This means making the right application of the various parts of Scripture.

As you continue to study you will become more and more accustomed to determining from the context what is the application of a passage. Beginning Bible students frequently feel discouraged because the Bible seems hard to understand. But remember that it takes time to develop skill. Everyone else has had to start their study when it was also difficult for them.

One of the most important divisions to recognize in the Bible is the difference between those things which are a part of the Old and New Testament laws. Failure to make this distinction causes much confusion. Many of the errors of modern denominationalism have developed because the dividing line between the Old Testament and New Testament was not recognized.

All of the Old Testament was written during the time when the law given through Moses was in force. This law pertained especially

to the Israelite nation. John 1:17 says, "*The (Old Testament) law was given by Moses....*"

The law of Moses continued in force during the earthly lifetime of Jesus. It was the law under which He lived (Galatians 4:4 says He was "made under the law"). It is important to remember that many things connected with Jesus' earthly life were things that pertained to the law of Moses, such as keeping the Jewish feasts, the Sabbath, etc. Remember, though, that during His earthly ministry Jesus was teaching things which would later be incorporated into His New Testament.

**But when Christ died He took away the law of Moses and replaced it with His New Testament law.**

Some of the numerous passages that teach this are Colossians 2:14; Galatians 3:24,25; and Hebrews 8:8-13; 10:9. We understand, therefore, that we today live under the law of Christ, *not* the law of Moses. Listed in the two columns below are a few things that are differences between these two important laws.

#### **Old Testament**

Given to Israelite nation only  
Sabbath (Saturday)  
Instrumental music  
Animal sacrifices  
Levitical priesthood  
Tithing

#### **\* New Testament**

\* For all nations  
\* Lord's Day (Sunday)  
\* Singing only  
\* Blood of Christ  
\* Priesthood of all believers  
\* Giving as prospered

Do you remember to pray in conjunction with Bible study? Pray for strong convictions based on the truths you learn. Pray not only for the ability to understand, but also for the faith to rely absolutely on all that God says. Pray for the strength, then, to obey what God in His word asks you to do.

## ***The New Testament***

DON WALKER

In Matthew 26:28 Jesus said, "*For this is the blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*" The New Testament is a power indeed. That "*everlasting covenant*" (Hebrews 13:20) provides the marching orders for New Testament

Christians. That New Testament provides a blueprint for the New Testament church. No child of God should be without a working knowledge of this powerful section of Holy Writ (Hebrews 5:12-14).

The New Testament is a fulfillment of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17) and stands as the reality that cast the shadow of that first covenant (Hebrews 10:1; Colossians 2:17). Concerning this truth, the Hebrews writer recorded this point regarding the high priest, *"who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: For, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount"* (Hebrews 8:5).

The New Testament's message is really quite clear. The proclamation that Christ is coming again rings forth from Acts, chapter one, through the end of Revelation. Realizing this point, righteousness and temperance should mark our lives, for one day we will be judged by the very testament (the words of Christ) that we speak of now (Acts 24:25; John 12:48). Its division is truly quite logical when we read it in this light. Notice how the New Testament is divided:

**Matthew — John ...The life of Christ**

**Acts ...The history of the Church**

**Romans — Jude ...How to *live* as a Christian**

**Revelation ...How to *die* as a Christian**

Truly the New Testament is a great blessing for men. Sealed with the blood of Christ, it will shine a light, enabling us to follow in the footsteps of our Lord, Jesus Christ. May we each thank the Father for such a bountiful gift. May we ever keep the importance of the New Testament before our minds as we study our Bibles much more, and much more seriously.

## ***DEAD OR ALIVE?***

**J. LEE ROBERTS**

*"For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ"*  
(1 Corinthians 15:22).

**All who reject God's instructions and disobey Him, as did Adam, are separated from God by their sins and are spiritually dead. When we, along with Adam, follow the advice of the serpent, instead of listening to the Lord, we are cut off from the source of**

spiritual life and are no longer in fellowship with our Creator. This sin, this rejection of His wisdom, is universal as "all have sinned". This is to be "in Adam" and to be **spiritually dead**. Jesus spoke of this state when He told the **dead** to bury their **dead** and when he pronounced the rebellious young prodigal as "**dead**" (Matthew 8:22; Luke 15:32). Paul described widows who live only for pleasure as **dead while living** (1 Timothy 5:6).

**All who follow Adam's disobedience are also dead!** Through sin, all die in Adam. Read Ephesians 2:1-6: "*You were **dead** through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the **air**, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. Among these we **all** once lived in the passions of our flesh, ... like the rest of mankind.*

*"But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were **dead through our trespasses**, made us alive together with Christ ... and raised us up with Him."*

**All spiritual life is in Christ**, as we follow His example of total love and obedience to the Father and to His will. Convicted of the enormity of our sins through the Spirit's work in the message of the Cross, we turn from the love and practice of sin to love God and His righteousness.

We are made **spiritually alive** when we reject Adam's example and obey Christ in baptism. We are buried with Him and raised to walk in holiness, our hearts changed to hate evil and love godliness, — to cease serving sin and to become servants of righteousness.

*"Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*

*"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:12-14).*

*"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.*

*"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:14-16).*

*“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.*

*“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior...” (Titus 3:3-7).*

**Prayerfully read** these additional scriptures: Romans 6:1-19; 1 Peter 1:22-25; 3:1-17; Acts 2:37-42; 1 John 2:3-6; Titus 2:11-14.

**In Christ we are made alive** and are being changed into His likeness, always taking on more and more of His attributes — loving as He loved, forgiving as He forgave, as the Spirit works in us.

## THE LOVE OF GOD

ALLAN E. FLAXMAN

How horrible is the Bible picture of Hell! Many years ago I listened to a sermon delivered by one of our outstanding preachers, based on the Bible description of Hell. It was not funny. It was designed to make his audience “sit up and take notice.” It certainly got that response from me, and I feel confident that it got the same result from the large audience.

Hell is a place of Darkness! Hell is a place of Fire! Hell is a place of suffering and weeping and gnashing of teeth! In Hell the condemned will remember all the events on earth they wish they could forget! For example, the times they ignored those who were trying to encourage them to become Christians. Hell is Eternal — it will never end!

You can stay out of Hell by obeying the Gospel, but if you once get into Hell you will never get out! Not a pretty picture! And remember, God painted such a graphic picture, doubtless, so that it would be a warning to everyone through the ages (Matthew 13:42-50; 18:8,9; 8:12; Jude 13; Luke 16:27-31; Matthew 25:32; 2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Hell is the ultimate destiny of all unforgiven sinners (Romans 6:23). That, then, raises the question, “What is sin?” Also, “How does God regard sin that He would prepare a place as horrible and as horrifying as Hell is, for unforgiven sinners?”

Perhaps we should begin by noting that God's present attitude toward sin is not new! In the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, God promised Adam and Eve that to eat the one forbidden fruit would bring about their death. Thousands of years later we are all too well aware that God kept that promise. We have learned, too, that God never fails to keep any promise He ever makes. In the days of Noah, the whole world population, except for eight people, was drowned in the Flood. Why? Because of sin. And, as the story continues on through the Old Testament until the coming of Christ, God's same attitude toward sin remains (Genesis 2:17; 6:1-8:14).

The New Testament takes up the story, continuing to emphasize God's severe attitude toward sin. "*Sin, "it says, "is the transgression of God's law"* (1 John 3:4; Romans 4:15). It further says, "*He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin*" (James 4:17).

Gets one to thinking, doesn't it? How sinful is sin? The New Testament speaks of the "sinfulness of sin" (Romans 7:13). It also points out that the sacrificial blood of animals has no power to actually "take away" sin (that is, to cause the sinner to actually experience God's forgiveness). God continues to view sin any way but lightly (Hebrews 10:4).

But, in this Christian Age, a new event has been introduced into the equation. "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,*" says Paul in 1 Timothy 1:15. "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16).

Is this a "back-flip" on God's part? Is He having "second thoughts" about Hell? Not at all. The advent of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world was a God-planned event! Planned, in fact, "*Before the foundation of the world*" (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Revelation 13:8). How marvelous and how wonderful His love, that He should go to these extreme measures — giving His "*Only begotten Son*" as the only qualifying and suitable sacrifice to keep sinful man out of Hell!

And that brings forward yet another thought, raised in the Hebrews letter. The inspired writer says, "*He that despised Moses' Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy things, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*" (Hebrews 10:28,29). No wonder we are reminded immediately, "*It is a fearful*



thing to fall into the hands of the living God. "Vengeance indeed belongs rightfully to Him (verses 30,31)!"

Yet, think of it. *"The wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). Hell remains more horrible than we can imagine! And, God so loved us all that *"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

## ***GOD IS A RESPECTER OF PERSONS!***

JOHN HARRIS

In a gospel meeting I received a question that read: "One night you quoted Acts 10:34 that said God is no respecter of persons, and another night you mentioned that only members of the church of Christ can be saved. According to such reasoning, God is a respecter of persons if He saved only those in the church of Christ."

After thanking the audience for the letter, I announced that my subject for that night would be, "God Is a Respector of Persons." In Acts 10:34 Peter said, *"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him."* Peter is teaching beyond a doubt that God is no respecter of persons. He was preaching to a Gentile audience for the first time, and he is saying that God makes no distinction between Jew and Gentile, but any man is acceptable to God, provided he fears God and works righteousness.

So God is no respecter of persons as to who a person is, whether rich or poor, bond or free, male or female, Jew or Greek (Galatians 3:26-29), but, on the other hand, God *does* respect the person who fears Him and works righteousness.

David said, *"Let my tongue sing of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness"* (Psalm 119:172). And Samuel said to Saul, *"Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of Jehovah thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would Jehovah have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever"* (1 Samuel 13:13).

Peter said, *"He that would love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; and let him turn away from evil, and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and*

*his ears are open unto their supplication: but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil"* (1 Peter 3:10-12).

So the Lord respects *some* people, and some He does not respect.

Paul said, "*He became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation*" (Hebrews 5:9). Jesus is not the author of salvation to those who refuse to obey Him. In this **He does respect persons**.

Jesus said, "*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32). Paul said that God "*would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Timothy 2:4).

Thus, it is necessary for a man to know the truth to be saved, but some men refuse to accept the truth. Even while Jesus preached to them, some closed their eyes and stopped their ears (Matthew 13:15). God therefore **respects those who will hear and obey the truth, and He rejects those who will not**.

Paul said to the Roman Christians that God "*will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life*" (Romans 2:6,7). Eternal life will be the reward of the Christian. "*But unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil*" (Romans 2:8,9).

In all of these Scriptures we learn that God respects *some* men, and some He *does not* respect. He respects those who fear Him and work righteousness, those who love and obey the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. But those who obey the Gospel become Christians, and these constitute the church of Christ. That is what the church is, *the saved*. The Lord adds *the saved to the church*; therefore all the saved are *in the church* (Acts 2:47). So God respects those who are members of His church, and He rejects those who are not members.

But, strictly speaking, God does not respect **persons**, but He does respect **character**. Every man is a creator of his own character. Some men are Christian characters and some are not, because some men obey the Gospel and live by God's Word; some do not. God no longer respects a man because he is a Jew, but He does respect the character that fears and obeys Him.



## 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).

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