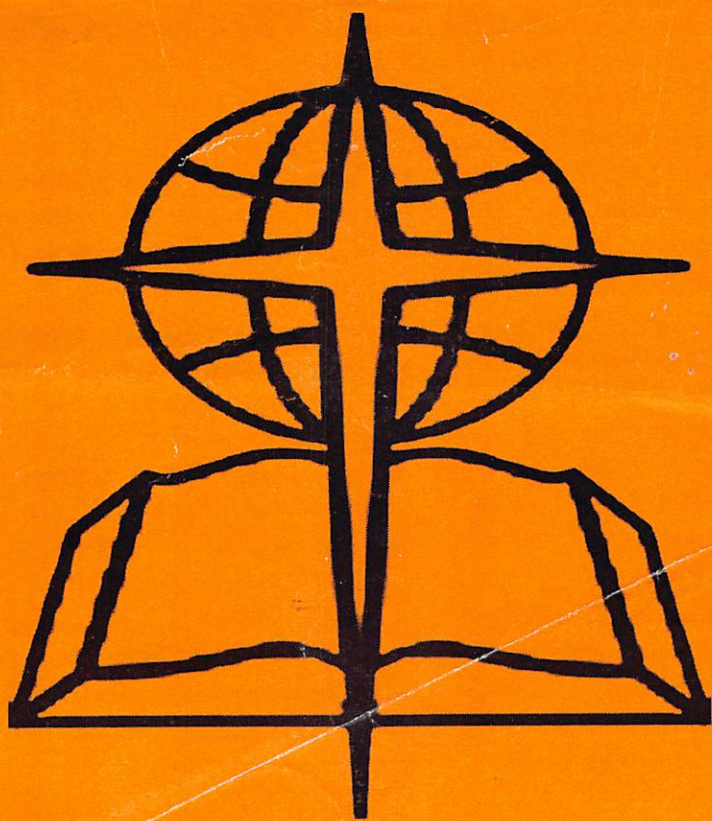


Monthly

August, 2012

Price: Rs. 2/-

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. 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.

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 43

August 2012

No. 4

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

The Mission Of Christ On Earth Was Spiritual, Not Physical

TO understand any passage of the Bible, it is important that one must keep in mind the following four things especially: First, who was speaking, that is, who made that particular statement. Second, to whom was that spoken. Third, when or under what age (before the law of Moses was given, or after the law of Moses was given, or under the New Testament age) was it spoken. Fourth, in what context was it taught or said. Too many teachings or subjects of the Bible have been misunderstood because people have failed to apply these four very basic and important ingredients in learning from the Bible.

For instance, those who claim today that they can heal people miraculously in the name of Jesus Christ, very often quote from John 14:12 to justify their claim. Christ there, we observe, was speaking to His apostles before His death on the cross and His resurrection and ascension to the Father in heaven. To them He said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." Those who claim to heal people miraculously in the name of Jesus today, say that this applies to them, since they too believe in Jesus!

Here Christ was speaking to His disciples before His death and ascension, after His resurrection, and before the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit to receive power (Acts 1:4-8). What

was the context of Christ's statement to the disciples? He had just mentioned to them that He would be going back. They wanted to know where He was intending to go. Christ told them about the Father in heaven. We read:

Phillip, one of the disciples, said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us. Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Phillip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." (John 14:8-12).

From the context of the discussion, it is evident that Christ wanted His disciples or the apostles, who were going to be His witnesses, to believe that He was God. Therefore, He told them, "He who believes in Me the works that I do he will do also, and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."

Now, what kind of works had Christ done? He had fed multitudes of people with a little food in His hand; He had healed instantly all people who had come to Him with all kinds of infirmities and diseases; and he had raised the dead. But notice, the apostles, Christ said, would do the same, and even greater works, Christ said to them, than these they will do, if they would believe in Him. Later, when Christ was going back to heaven, He told them, "And these signs will follow those who believe; In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Mark 16:17, 18). Amongst those disciples of the Lord there were some who really did not believe in Him as Jesus wanted them to believe in Him, that is, that He was God. This is evident reading from Matthew 28:16, 17 and Mark 16:14. Therefore He said, "And these sign shall follow those who believe." Contextually speaking, it was applicable to the apostles, since He was speaking to them. Later, by seeing the resurrected Lord speaking to them and ascending into heaven their faith in Him indeed was strengthened, and they returned to Jerusalem, as the Lord had commanded them, to wait for the promise of the Father (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:1-11).

In Acts chapter 2 we read about the apostles being baptized with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and thus they received the power, as the Lord had promised to them. So we read, "And they went out

and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs." (Mark 16:20). In fact, the book of Acts of the apostles is full of the accounts of the many mighty and wonderful works of the apostles. At one place we read, "And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. ... so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also, a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed." (Acts 5:12-16).

Thus, after fully believing in Christ, the apostles did signs and miracles as Christ had done before them. But Jesus had told them that they would do greater works than His. Did they? What does this mean? **The greater works are the spiritual works. The mission of Christ on earth was spiritual, not physical. Christ had come on earth from heaven to save eternal souls, not mortal physical bodies.** Thus, after He had gone back to heaven after accomplishing the work of salvation of all humans, and He had empowered the apostles to be His witnesses, to preach His gospel which He was confirming through signs and wonders done through them, on the very first day of the preaching of His gospel three thousand souls, who had believed in Him and had obeyed His command were saved. A feat far surpassing anything that was possible before Jesus returned to the Father, after His death, burial and resurrection. (Acts 2).

New Testament Worship

Lesson Thirteen

ATTENDING THE ASSEMBLIES

J.C. CHOATE

ONE of the saddest mistakes a Christian can make is that of failing to attend the assemblies of the church. How can one ever hope to be faithful to the Lord if he does not respect him enough to meet with the other brethren for worship? The point is, he cannot be faithful under such conditions.

Many of the denominational people only attend two worship services a year and that is Christmas and Easter, neither of which are taught in God's word. But there are just a whole lot of people

who are deceiving themselves into thinking that this is all that is necessary to please the Lord. Who do they think the Lord is? But getting closer to home, a lot of members of the church seldom ever attend worship. They offer one excuse after the other. It is their work that prevents their attendance or it is the distance involved. It is this, and that, and something else. But the question is: Will the Lord accept these excuses? Here these individuals are claiming to be Christians but they never attend worship. On the other hand, they can go on with what they want to do, they can go to their work regardless of the distance, and so on.

Some of those who fail to attend usually come up with this remark: "But I have my prayers at home." That would be fine if that was all the Lord required. However, he has specifically asked that his people assemble on the first day of the week. In doing so, they are not only to pray, but study, sing, partake of the Lord's Supper, and give of their means. Now to those who try to worship by themselves at home, to whom do they give their contribution? What about the Lord's Supper? No, I am sure that most of these individuals never get any further than prayer in their worship to the Lord, if they get that far. But they need to be taught that there is more to worship than simply praying to God.

It is true that there are times when Christians may be circumstantially hindered, such as being sick, and other things that would make it impossible for them to attend worship services. In this case, one doesn't have to offer an excuse for not being present but rather he has a reason. Furthermore, the Lord will accept a reason for one's absence, but he will not accept an excuse.

But now let us notice what the word of God itself says about attending the assemblies. The Hebrew writer says, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." (Hebrews 10: 23-27). Now let's get these main points:

1. We should be faithful inasmuch as we are dealing with one who will be faithful in dealing with us.

2. We should continue always in good works in dealing with one another.
3. We must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Some were doing this at that time, and some forsake the assemblies today, but this is not the Lord's will.
4. We should exhort one another or encourage each other to attend the assemblies as we see the day approaching, that is, the Lord's Day, the day of worship. This is to suggest that we are to prepare ourselves for it. We have a whole week to do this, every week.
5. We should remember that if we sin wilfully after learning the truth, then there is no more sacrifice for us, and nothing to look forward to but judgment and damnation. That is, if we purposely fail to attend the assemblies and to do the things that we know that we should, then how can the Lord save us when we have rejected Him? Therefore, we will be lost if we continue to live like this.

All of this is to say that the Lord expects us to attend the assemblies of the church, and it is serious business, and dangerous business, if we fail to. But why has he asked us to do so? Why attend the assemblies? There are many reasons for this. Let us notice some of them:

1. Because we are taught to do so both by command and example. We have already read in Hebrews 10:25 where we are warned not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Then we read in Acts 2: 42 how the early Christians met to worship, and in Acts 20:7 where Paul and the Christians in Troas met on the first day of the week for worship. So we should do likewise.

2. We are to attend the assemblies to worship God. Christ tells us in John 4: 23, 24 that God is seeking after true worshippers and that God is Spirit and that we should worship him in spirit and in truth.

3. The Lord would have us to attend the assemblies so that we might remember him in partaking of the Lord's Supper. Paul, in referring to the institution of the Lord's Supper, shows that the bread is to be partaken of in remembrance of the body of Christ and the cup is to be partaken of in remembrance of the blood of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25). How can we remember the Lord in the way that he wants to be remembered unless we assemble on each first day of the week to do this?

4. We are to assemble in order that we might give of our means

as we have been prospered. Once more in going back to 1 Corinthians 16:2 we have Paul saying that we should assemble on the first day of the week that we may give as we have been prospered. What happens to our contribution when we fail to attend? Of course we could bring it the next Lord's Day, and we should if we have been absent because of sickness, etc., but most of those who fail to attend also miss the opportunity to give, and not only so, but continue to miss again and again without feeling any responsibility in this respect.

5. The Lord has promised to be with us in the assemblies. Listen to His promise: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20). This alone should cause us to want to attend every worship service of the church because the Lord has said that he would be there. Wouldn't we want to attend if the Prime Minister were going to be present, or some other important person? But here is the Lord Himself saying that he would meet with us—not just once, but every time. Surely we wouldn't want to fail, to keep this all important appointment when He has said that He would be there.

6. We should want to be present for every meeting because of the example that we are setting. We have families, loved ones, friends, and the people of the world in general, that are watching us. They are looking to us for an example to follow, for guidance. We need to realize this and strive to lead them in the right direction. Their salvation may depend on our actions more than you realize. Paul wrote the Thessalonians: "And ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." (2 Thessalonians 1: 6, 7). Can we be such an example that when people follow us that in reality they will be following Christ? We should. We must. Plan now to attend every assembly—get there on time, be quite and reverent and truly worship the Lord.

7. We are to attend the assemblies for fellowship and spiritual growth, individually and collectively. If the members of the church never assemble then how can the church ever amount to anything in that particular community or city? Without meetings the members cannot know one another, they cannot know their strength, they cannot plan the work, they cannot help one another, and they cannot encourage one another. In other words, much of the work of the church, its strength, its accomplishments, etc., depend heavily

on the assemblies. Actually, without such then the church would soon die out. That is why you always read in the New Testament about the church meeting and wherever Paul and the other brethren went, they always met with the local congregations. We are told that even in times of persecution that the members of the church still found opportunities and ways to meet. It is likewise just as important today that we meet on a regular basis to worship the Lord and to carry on His work.

And so these are but a few of the reasons why we should attend the assemblies of the church. But note that our attendance shouldn't be based on the idea that we can go once a month or just occasionally, but rather we should go every first day of the week and whenever the church sees fit to meet. The scriptures say, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." This would include all of the assemblies that we are able to attend. May the Lord help us to put more emphasis on worship in our own lives so that we might truly be faithful to Him in attending the assemblies of the church. If we will be faithful to Him in this way then we will be faithful to Him otherwise.

PLANTS SPEAK OF A CREATOR

OWEN D. OLBRICHT

PLANTS do not literally speak, but their design speaks of a Designer. The following article, "Biological Clocks Tick in Plants, Too, Scientists Discover," by Emily Gersema, of the Associated Press, appeared in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette, April 4, 2003, p. 5A. The article discussed the amazing things plants do to survive and adapt to their environment.

Plants appear still and silent, but inside a clock is ticking. Scientists in Israel and the U.S. Agriculture Department have discovered that plants, like animals, have a 24-hour biological clock. Like the body clock that tells humans to wake up, plants have one that tells them to prepare for the sun. The plant clock is set so it goes off around the same time every morning, usually just a few hours before noon. The late morning alarm tells plants to prepare for intense sunlight, triggering processes that help the plants make food, says Autar K. Mattoo, a plant physiologist in the department's Agricultural Research Services lab.

The clock controls an enzyme that modifies a protein called DI

... critical for photosynthesis, the process whereby plants extract light and convert it to food. When D1 binds with phosphorus, it creates a modified protein found in chloroplast — a special structure in the cell that is made of carbohydrates, fat and proteins ... [which] tells the plant to adjust its metabolism so it will protect itself from extreme light.

"It cannot run away. Their roots are stuck in the soil, so they have devised and perfected processes that allow them to survive in the harshest extreme environments ... If plants are exposed to excessive ultraviolet radiation, plants produce molecules called falconoid, which act as the sunscreen," Mattoo says.

The clock shuts off in the evening as the sun goes down. If it's dark "and you put the plants into artificial light, they remember this clock."

Two interesting statements by Mattoo appear in this report. (1) Plants "have devised and perfected processes that have allowed them to survive in the harshest extreme environments." (2) "They remember this clock." Plants have no brains. How can they devise and perfect any process without any intellect to determine their choices, and how can they remember? Without a brain, they have no means by which they can experiment and adapt until they develop the best processes for survival. They will die unless they immediately perfect protection from the harsh extremes of nature, for they cannot run in and out of severe circumstances until they have developed protection from hostile environments.

The better explanation is that an all-wise Designer built into plants a biological clock and gave them the capacity to produce enzymes that protect them from extreme, deadly conditions. Paul was correct when he wrote, *"For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made"* (Romans 1:20).

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its—kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so: And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the third day (Genesis 1:11-13).

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF "WORKS" IN THE PLAN OF SALVATION?

WAYNE JACKSON

MOST Protestants, reacting to the "works system" of Roman Catholicism, have adopted the extreme (and unscriptural) view that works play no role in human salvation. Some allege that salvation is on the basis of "faith alone," while others argue that God chose the redeemed *unconditionally* before the world began.

Isn't it true, though, that the Scriptures state that we are *not* saved by works (Ephesians 2:9)? Yes, that is correct. But it is also the case that the New Testament asserts that we *are* justified by works (James 2:24)!

What is the solution to this seeming difficulty? Well, it is not, as Luther suggested, to repudiate the book of James as an inspired document! Rather, one must recognize that there are *different kinds of works* addressed in the divine record.

WORKS OF THE LAW

In his letter to the Romans, Paul makes it clear that no one can be saved by keeping the works of Moses' law. The apostle says that *"a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law"* (3:28). That certainly does not suggest, however, that *obedience* to Christ is unessential: in the same epistle, Paul affirms that freedom from sin is obtained upon the basis of obedience to the *"pattern of teaching"* (6:17; see also 6:3-4).

WORKS OF HUMAN MERIT

In the Ephesian letter, Paul writes: *"For by grace have you been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works that no man should glory"* (2:8-9). The works here excluded are charitable works, which men pile up, thinking that such will justify them, while they ignore the sacrifice of Christ and His redemptive system. The Red Cross is famous for its benevolent efforts, but there is no justification to be found therein, because these are mere human efforts, wholly divorced from the mission of the Son of God. The man who boasts: "I am a good person; I do not need Jesus Christ," is guilty of the same mistake.

WORKS OF OBEDIENCE

There is a class of works mentioned in the Bible which are

designated as "*works ordained of God.*" By this expression it is not implied that these are works which God Himself performs. No, they are works **ordained** of God—to be **obeyed** by men.

Consider John 6. The disciples inquired of the Lord: "*What must we do, that we may work the works of God?*" Jesus responded, "*This is the work of God that you believe on him whom he has sent.*" Observe that this "work of (from) God" required a human response—that of believing. Regarding the term "work," as here used, J. H. Thayer commented: ". . . the works required and approved by God." Elsewhere Jesus promised victory to those who "*keep my works,*" (the works, commands, prescribed by Him), Revelation 2:26.

If, therefore, all "works" are excluded from the plan of salvation, then **faith** would be eliminated, for it is clearly identified as a work. In some of his letters, Paul spoke of the "work of faith" (1 Thessalonians 1:3; see also 2 Thessalonians 1:11).

Too, it must be noted that **repentance** is a component in God's scheme of redemption (Acts 2:38; 3:19), and yet, repentance is also classified as a work. Jesus once said that the people of ancient Nineveh "repented" when Jonah preached to them (Matthew 12:41). The book of Jonah observes, however, that God saw their "*works, that they turned from their evil way*" (3:10).

There is no question about it—works, of a certain sort, are a part of the salvation process.

IS BAPTISM A WORK OF MERIT?

The truth is, most denominationalists have little difficulty in acknowledging that both faith and repentance are requirements for the remission of sins, even though they are classified as works. The real point of contention is baptism. Many feel that if it were conceded that baptism is essential to salvation, this would be equivalent to arguing that forgiveness is *earned*. Baptism, it is charged, is a work of human merit. Under this assumption, baptism is thus excluded as a requirement for salvation. But this line of thinking violates the Scriptures.

First, the only passage in the New Testament that even remotely identifies baptism as a "work" is found in Colossians 2. There, Paul says: "*Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead*" (2:12). The act of submitting to immersion is not meritorious; the labor is a "*working of God*" to produce redemption. One is spiritually energized by the operation of God

when he submits to the command of baptism.

Second, the Bible specifically excludes baptism from that class of works which have no part in the divine program of salvation. Paul, in his letter to Titus, affirms that we are *"not (saved) by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves,"* (in other words, which we contrived and implemented as a means of justification.) Rather, *"according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"* (Titus 3:5). The *"washing of regeneration"* (an indisputable allusion to baptism) is plainly set in contrast to those human "works" which are ineffectual to save.

If you have been confused about the role of "works" in God's purpose for man, why not give the matter fresh consideration?

THE IMPOSSIBLE MADE POSSIBLE

DAVID R. PHARR

CAN the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jeremiah 13:23).

Most of our preaching has the expectation that people can and should change their lives. Jeremiah seems to say that it is impossible for some ever to change. The prophet has prayed, preached, and wept, seeking to bring them to repentance. They were so accustomed to doing evil, so set in the ways of sin, that it seemed impossible for them to change.

The Bible shows the hardening effects of repeated sin. The conscience can become *"seared with a hot iron"* (1 Timothy 4:2) and some are *"past feeling"* (Ephesians 4:19). Someone has said that many lives are like concrete: "thoroughly mixed up and permanently set." Love of sin can have a mighty hold.

Regarding the possibility of any real change of character, the world is generally quite skeptical. "He will never change, and if he does, it will not last."

Our own experiences often confirm how hard it is to change the leopard's spots. How hard it is, for example, to change a habit! Habits erode deep grooves in the mind and in the character. "We first make a habit and then the habit makes us." Past failures haunt us and make us think that failures will always follow. "I have tried, but it's just no use." "I am what I am and that is all I will ever be."

Some foolish psychology has tried to solve the dilemma by telling

people to just accept themselves as they are. It is evident, though, that where sin is involved, it is not acceptable to stay as we are. Transgressors need forgiveness. Guilty consciences need assurances. Lost souls need redemption.

The wonderful fact is that some people do make dramatic changes. Bad habits can be broken; personalities can be reshaped; character can be changed. The ultimate issue, however, is forgiveness. You may reform your life, but you can no more forgive your own sins than the leopard can change his own spots.

It is God who can make the impossible possible. One place this is wonderfully taught is in Mark 10:23-27. After Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved, the disciples asked incredulously, *"Who then can be saved?"* But Jesus declared, *"With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."* Men cannot save themselves, by themselves, but God makes it possible.

I wish there were some wonderful place
Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches
And all our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door,
And never be put on again.

—Louisa Fletcher

There is such a place—a spiritual place—where lives can begin again, where the slate is wiped clean, where the past is forgiven, and where the rest of life can be different. That place is in Christ. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). When a penitent believer is baptized into Christ, his sins are forgiven (Galatians 3:27; Acts 2:38) and he becomes a *"new man"* (Ephesians 4:22-24).

The gospel shows the man who is a failure that he does not have to remain a failure, the criminal that he does not have to remain a criminal, the sinner that he is not hopelessly trapped in sin. God can change the leopard's spots, if we will surrender our lives to Him.

There is a corny old joke that goes like this: "How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb?" "Just one, but the light bulb has got to want to change!" That is where the issue must be left. The Lord can do His part. Your life can be changed. But not unless *you want* to change.

FOUR IMPERATIVES OF THE RESURRECTION

BOBBY DOCKERY

THE most significant event in the history of this planet was the resurrection, three days after the death of Christ. If the resurrection did not take place as advertised, then Paul says our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17-19).

The resurrection was the greatest defeat Satan ever suffered; little wonder, then, that he should seek to discredit it and destroy people's faith in it.

But the resurrection really happened! It is the great reality of history. It will bear investigation! It will stand the test of scrutiny. When the two Marys came to the tomb on the morning after Christ rose they were greeted by an angel with these words: *"He is not here; for He is risen as He said. Come see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead"* (Matthew 28:6,7). In this statement there are four imperatives which still speak urgently to us across the expanse of twenty centuries.

1. "Come ..." The resurrection offers us a great invitation. Jesus came to the world to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). He came to call men back to God. God does not *compel* us to serve Him; He *invites* us! We come by choice, not conscription. We come initially through obedience to the Gospel in the act of baptism (Romans 6:3,4). We must come to the empty tomb not just once a year, but *every day* in the thoughts we think and the lives we live. *"If you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above..."* (Colossians 3:1).

2. "See..." The resurrection urges verification. We are summoned to investigate. Probe! Weigh the evidence! The resurrection will stand scrutiny. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that the resurrected Christ was seen by more than 500 eye-witnesses. He was seen in broad daylight! Frightened, defeated, frustrated disciples became fearless preachers of the resurrection. People do not fearlessly die for a fraud! The blood of the martyrs speaks eloquently of the reality of the empty tomb. After 2000 years we can still "see" that Christ is risen!

3. "Go ..." The resurrection places us under an obligation. We are called to undertake a mission. The two Marys were to *go and*

tell the disciples the truth about the resurrection. Later, the risen Lord would send those disciples into the whole world to tell the news to every creature (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16). The empty tomb demands mobility. We must be willing to "Go." In this world we have no continuing city. We are not here to settle down. Unfortunately, many Christians do not give the impression that they are on the go for God!

4. "Tell..." The resurrection demands proclamation! It is not a secret to be kept or knowledge to be hoarded, it is "good news" to be shared. **Jesus is risen! Men have a Savior! Wake the world and tell the people!** Say it in words as well as by deeds. It is not enough to commemorate the resurrection once a year! Every day in word and in deed we must proclaim the living Savior to a dying world, and on the first day of every week we proclaim His resurrection by the remembrance of His Supper!

Jesus rose from the dead and the world has never been the same since. The reality of the empty tomb can transform empty lives! But it little matters to you personally that Jesus rose from the dead if *you have not been raised with Him* (Romans 6:4,5). We must become participants in the resurrection through obedience to the Gospel.

Still the angel commands: "Come... See... Go... Tell..."!

Hog Pen Lessons

OWEN COSGROVE

IN Luke chapter 15, Jesus taught three great parables about repentance. The first one concerned a sheep that wandered away from the fold, and the shepherd left the ninety-nine other sheep to go out and find the lost one. The story indicates God's providential care over even one soul, and the lesson is that there is rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner that repents.

The second parable is about a woman that had ten coins and lost one. Even with nine coins left, she did not have the joy that came with having ten. The moral is that a soul is precious and that the Lord rejoices when a lost one is reclaimed. The sheep apparently was lost through personal carelessness, and the coin was misplaced through the carelessness of another.

However, the third parable is about a young man who became lost through willfulness. He was the younger son of an apparently

rich man who allowed him to claim his part of the estate and to “go out on his own”. We know this as the story of the Prodigal Son. “Prodigal” means wasteful. This son threw himself into a riotous lifestyle, and such living left him broke and desperate. When he “came to himself, he returned in humble submission to his father’s will, and his repentance brought joy and forgiveness.

The young man’s older brother protested his father’s kindness toward the penitent son, but the loving parent reminded him that his brother had been dead and was alive again—he was lost, and then he was found. God wants man to repent. Man is not saved by faith alone. To please God, he must repent and obey. There are some wonderful lessons of life that the young man learned in the misery and decadence of the hog pen:

1. **He learned that freedom has responsibilities.** His sudden feeling of independence caused him to make several rash and foolish decisions that nearly ruined his life.
2. **He learned the folly of wastefulness.** The old saying that “he who wastes will come to want” is certainly true in this case.
3. **He learned the high cost of low living.** Crime, immorality, and vice can be a drain on every resource of life.
4. **He learned that life can be hard.** It is not meant for people to have fun all of the time. If we don’t want to work hard when we don’t have to, the time may come when we will have to work hard when we don’t want to.
5. **He learned that craving pleasure is a symptom of immaturity.** The apostle Paul said that when he was a child he thought and acted as a child, but that when he became a man he put away childish things. The hardship of the hog pen brought the young man lessons that pleasure and fun could never have taught.
6. **He learned that few people in the world love as does a good parent.** His fair weather friends were scarce when his funds ran out.
7. **He learned that desperate people will do almost anything.** He was tempted to eat the husks that the swine were eating. Sinful living often lowers people to debauchery and desperation.
8. **He learned that it takes resolution and courage to be humble and to return to God.** A weaker and less committed person would not have had the will to turn his life around.

9. **He learned that a person must not let hypocrites keep him away from God.** The elder brother was of little encouragement to this pitiful and ruined person. It took the love of the Father and a strong determination for the Prodigal Son to make that long trip home. In the hog pen he resolved that he must not let anything keep him away from home and peace.

10. **He learned that his Father truly loved him and would joyfully give him another chance.** This is the message of Christ's Gospel. You and I are too important and precious to waste our lives in the hog pens of life. Repentance and obedience are the open doors that lead to God and Heaven.

And now, for nearly two thousand years the story of that young man's courage and wisdom has led sad souls who were crushed by sin to take new hope and to return to God and His love. Suffering can be great teacher if we will let it.

Contrasting Characters

GARY C. HAMPTON

ABOUT a week before His death, Jesus was sitting at the table in the house of Simon the leper (Mark 14:3). Three distinct types of character were displayed there.

First, there was the **contributor**. Mary began to anoint Jesus' head and feet with nard, a fragrant, expensive perfume from an east Indian plant that she poured from an alabaster flask. Judas noted that it could have been sold for 300 denarii, or at least a week's wages (John 12:5). Mary wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair, thereby honoring the Lord, who had raised her brother from the dead.

Second, there was the **critic**. Judas may have intended to embarrass the worshiper, but he had no real concern for the poor. He was a selfish embezzler. Unfortunately, others joined him in his criticism. After being rebuked, Judas sold the Lord for 30 pieces of silver (Mark 14:10,11).

Third, there was the **Christ**. He complimented Mary for the good work she did and said they would have other opportunities to help the poor. Clearly, Jesus thought worship was as important as benevolence. He honored her for her work by saying, "*She has done what she could...*" That honor continues to this day.

Like Mary, we should honor Jesus who gave up so much to save us (Romans 5:6-8; 1 Timothy 1:15). Paul wrote, *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich"* (2 Corinthians 8:9). Remember, our works can continue to produce good fruit in others even after we die (Revelation 14:13; Hebrews 11:4).

We must avoid being the critic, or joining in criticism with others. Our Lord wants us to use our freedom as an opportunity to serve others, not destroy them and the church to which they belong (Galatians 5:13-15).

We should all desire to follow the footsteps of Jesus and be one who encourages others in love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). Our goal should be to be like Philemon, who Paul said refreshed the hearts of the saints (Philemon 7).

THERE IS ONE GOD

DAVID THURMAN

A QUICK look at the history of Christianity will tell you one thing for sure. Christians have been known to fuss and disagree. Sometimes this leads to major divisions, such as the time of the Reformation. Sometimes it leads to small divisions, such as when a congregation splits over some minor controversial issues. The issue is not do we get along (we don't), but should we get along? And, of course, we should.

How do we create and maintain unity? Paul gives us the answer. *"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all"* (Eph. 4:1-6). In these verses Paul explains the source of unity. His final statement may be his most important one. We should be one because there is one God.

The entire Bible says that there is only one true and living God. That one God did not create several religions, hoping that one of those faiths would lead people to Him. That one God creates one

faith, based on His one Son, teaching one doctrine and adding people to His one church. Paul says we should be one because there is one God.

WHO IS FATHER OF ALL

Every person is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). As such, every person in a broad sense is a child of God. But, when sin enters a person's life (and all have sinned—Rom. 3:23) that relationship is broken. Only when we come into the kingdom of God do we become, once again, a child of God. *"But as many as received Him, to them. He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"* (John 1:12-13). The one God calls all of His children into one spiritual family. And this God gives us what we need to get along.

GOD PROVIDES FOR UNITY

"Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:5-6). God gives us perseverance and encouragement. That is, God equips us with the emotional and spiritual qualities we need to get along. We learn to put up with each other. We learn to be patient with each other. This is what every child of God is called to do. We never get the privilege of giving up on each other. Instead, we take the gifts of God (perseverance and encouragement) and use them on each other to maintain the unity God wants us to have.

GOD WANTS ONE VOICE

Paul could not have made this any clearer. God wants us to praise Him with one voice. The idea that we can all teach different things and practice different things and still offer the praise God wants is wrong. God wants us to put up with each other, failings and all, and in that unity offer the praise He wants. And, notice, that praise is not done by soloists. Praise is offered by the joint union of all our voices. It is in our unity that the one voice rings out. The opposite is also true. When we are divisive and fussing with each other, the praise that should go toward God is lost in the noise of the many voices that are not united. God wants us to be one.

GOD IS OVER ALL

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways

My ways," declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). Some might object to the idea that God wants us to be united. After all, this many people from many different cultures and backgrounds and languages, how can we be one. From a human stand point it can't happen. But, God doesn't think like us. His methods are not ours.

GOD IS BIGGER THAN WE IMAGINE

Isaiah tells us that God is much bigger than we realize. While we evaluate everything in human terms, God is working at a whole different level. We can't get our mind around Him. We cannot figure Him out. We cannot define Him in simple human terms. We are too small in comparison. All that we can know about God is what He tells us. And our limited human ability will never fully grasp Him. But, if this awesome God tells us we can be one, we must trust Him that this is so. It may not make sense to us as children of God, but it makes perfect sense to the Father.

GOD'S METHODS ARE BEYOND US

Not only is God bigger than we can grasp, but His ways are not our ways. While we would build a church on the things we have in common (race, color, language, culture) God doesn't work that way. We would break up the kingdom into little groups that were similar in appearance and actions. God brings every person into one body of believers and tells us to love each other and put with up with each other. While we might not understand why this needs to be done, that is God's method in building the kingdom. When we divide the body we stop using God's ways and substitute our own.

HE IS THROUGH ALL

There is one God working in all of His children. If there is one God and one body of believers, then it is vital that we learn to maintain the unity of the Spirit. *"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons"* (1 Cor. 12:4-6). Two great principles come out of this text.

DIVERSITY IS GOD'S INTENTION

God never intended for all of us to look, act and think alike. He gives gifts to the individuals in the kingdom, knowing that our differences will actually bring strength to the body. So, God gives

one gift to one person, and a different gift to another. We come from different backgrounds and thinking. But that is not a cause to divide; it is the reason to unite. God's plan has always been to take all the different people of the world and bring them into one body. The differences that we use to break up the church are actually the tools God wants us to use to build the body.

UNITY IS FOUND IN ONE GOD

How does this work? Well, I may not understand all of it (after all, God is bigger than I can imagine) but I have to trust the One God that His way will work. Now my task is to get along with the people He brings into the body. And, just because they look different than me or think differently than I do, my job in the kingdom is to persevere and encourage those around me, even if they think and act differently than I do.

Unity is never going to be found in conformity. Unity is going to be found, built and strengthened by the different talents, backgrounds and experiences we all bring into the kingdom when we are saved. Unity is not found in us, but in the One God.

HE IS IN ALL

The same God who saved me, is the same God who saved you. As a result, we both have the same God in us. We don't have different Gods or different Lords. We have the one God. That means as you look around you will see other Christians who have the one God in them. They may not look like it from the outside. They may think and act differently than you do. But, the same God in you is in them. That is why unity is paramount to God. He calls us to be one. We must make that our priority.

OBEY GOD BY GETTING ALONG

*"So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now **much** more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:12-13). Paul has spent the first eleven verses of this chapter telling us to have the mind of Christ. That means we give up our rights as He did and meet the needs of those around us, as He did. So, when the apostle says to obey, he means get along with each other. We work out our salvation in humility and patience, putting up with each other as Jesus does.

GOD IS WORKING IN US

It might be hard to tell, but God is working in each of us. We often can tell that God is working in us, but it can be hard for us to see it in others. Paul tells us to cooperate and get along, not because we have exclusive rights to God, but because God is in every Christian working His will in their lives in His way. If we disrupt the unity of the body, we are messing with the God who is in every Christian.

ARE YOU IN HIM

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-28). To have this God working in you, you must be in Christ. You can become a child of God today, if you will put your faith in Jesus and put Him on in baptism. Then, as Paul tells us, the differences go away. Gender, race, nationality and language become unimportant. The only question to answer is: "Are you in Christ?" Have you been washed in His blood at baptism. If not, become part of the one body of the one Lord who together serve the one God.

A LIFE OF FAITH

CLEM THURMAN

WHEN James A. Garfield stood at the graveside of the brother of Col. Robert Ingersoll, he heard that noted atheist deliver the funeral oration, which lasted less than two minutes. Among the things said was this: "Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights, we cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead, there comes no word." What hopelessness and despair! How can one go on when filled with that eating at his soul?

Other atheists, facing death, have made similar statements. Hobbs declared, "I am taking a fearful leap into the dark." Mirabeau said, "Give me more laudanaum; I don't want to think of eternity." And Edward Gibbon, another noted atheist, declared, "All is dark."

Contrast all this with the statement from the apostle Paul: "I

know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). And this word: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if to live in the flesh,—if this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose I know not. But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better: yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake" (Phil. 1:21-24).

A fulfilling life must be a life that is based upon faith. Faith in something other than one's self. We read in Heb. 11:6, *"And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him."* A successful life will be based upon: this truth: *"Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Psa. 127: 1).* We must recognize a greater architect for our lives than ourselves, and put ourselves into the hands of God. We then can achieve success.

The faith that will make for a fulfilled life is faith in God (Heb. 11: 6), and faith in Christ, *"Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (Jno. 8: 24).* But we must also have faith in our own strength and ability to accomplish things as God helps us! Too many times we hide behind the excuse, "I am not able," or "I can't." But Jesus declares, *"All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23).* We must have confidence that God is able to supply what we need to accomplish His purpose in our lives.

The apostle Paul had this kind of confidence. As he expressed it: *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2: 20).* This kind of reliance upon faith enabled this same man to declare, *"I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).*

When, through faith, we place ourselves in God's hands, His strength and His power work in and through us. So, it is not just our own strength at work: *"It is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).* And as Paul asks, *"If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).* His answer is: *"We are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8: 37).* A successful life is a life that is not based upon doubts, or upon self, but a life that is based upon faith in God, and the confidence and trust to put ourselves in His hands and to *"walk by*

faith" (2 Cor. 5:7). Then, we are truly *"more than conquerors through him that loved us."*

The Golden Bells

CHARLES PUGH

THE faithful ancients approached God with a sense of reverence and awe that too often is rare today. Moses was told by God to *"put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground"* (Exodus 3:5). Moses responded with profound awe and reverence. He *"hid his face: for he was afraid to look upon God"* (Exodus 3:6).

In Exodus there is a description concerning a portion of the attire of the high priest. *"And upon its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet, all around its hem, and bells of gold between them all around: a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe all around. And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers, and its sound will be heard when he goes into the holy place before the LORD and when he comes out, that he may not die"* (Exodus 28:33-35).

Hanging on the fringe of the high priest's robe were golden bells and pomegranates (Exodus 28:34). The priest could not take a single step toward the holy place without the tinkling of the golden bells.

In an old sermon preached on this theme during the early part of this century, one preacher made the following observations:

"[He (the high priest)] was to hear those bells—the people, were to hear them when he entered in, when he came out—that he die not. They were an awful protest against irreverence, against neglect in worship. Priest and people, when they heard those golden bells, were to concentrate themselves on their solemn task.

"Our ears, too, might be filled with the tinkling of those golden bells! If the nominal worshippers in the pews felt where they were and what they were doing, could they loll, and sleep, and yawn? Could young persons drop in after the service has begun, and drop out before it is finished as though they were in a theatre? Could they be so careless, so little conscious of the significance of worship, if they felt what God meant to be

the lesson of those bells on the High Priest's robe?"
Have we learned the lesson of the golden bells?

We Need to Awake and Get Busy

DALE GRISSOM

JAMES admonishes us in James 1:25: *"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deeds."* There are many things that a Christian is required to do—among these works is sharing the Gospel with the lost. We are commanded to teach in Matthew 28:19,20: *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."*

Consider also the words of Proverbs 11:30: *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."* Note James 2:24: *"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."* Winning souls is a work that demonstrates our wisdom. It is essential to the Lord's church to teach those in the world the plan of salvation and then teach them to be obedient to all of God's commands. Those that receive the Word and are baptized into Christ are added to the church, as the Scripture teaches in Acts 2:47: *"Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."*

We are the earthen vessels to which God has entrusted the responsibility of spreading His Word. If we will carry out our mission, as the church of the Lord, we will be busy trying to spread the borders of His kingdom. Many people who profess to be Christians, members of God's own family, do not get involved in reaching out to the lost. Some Christians do not study their Bibles as they should, neither do they pray and meditate upon God's Word. If we could only awake from the sleep of idleness, we would see the church grow. When the early church underwent persecution at Jerusalem, it was scattered abroad, and the Christians went everywhere teaching the Word (Acts 8:4). We need to get busy carrying the message of God's Word to a lost world.



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).

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

Regd. No. 26921/71

Postal Regn. No.

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

Licence to Post without Prepayment

No. U/SE/25/2009-2011

Posted at Lodi Road HO

Total No. of pages 24+cover

on 10-11 August 2012

Welcome to the Services of CHURCH OF CHRIST

**B-350 (L.G.F.)
Chitranjan Park
Near Market #1
New Delhi-110019**

SUNDAY

Bible Study	... 10.00 A.M.
Sunday School	... 10.00 A.M.
Worship	... 11.00 A.M.

English/Hindi

To:

From:

THE BIBLE TEACHER
P.O. Box 3815
New Delhi-110049