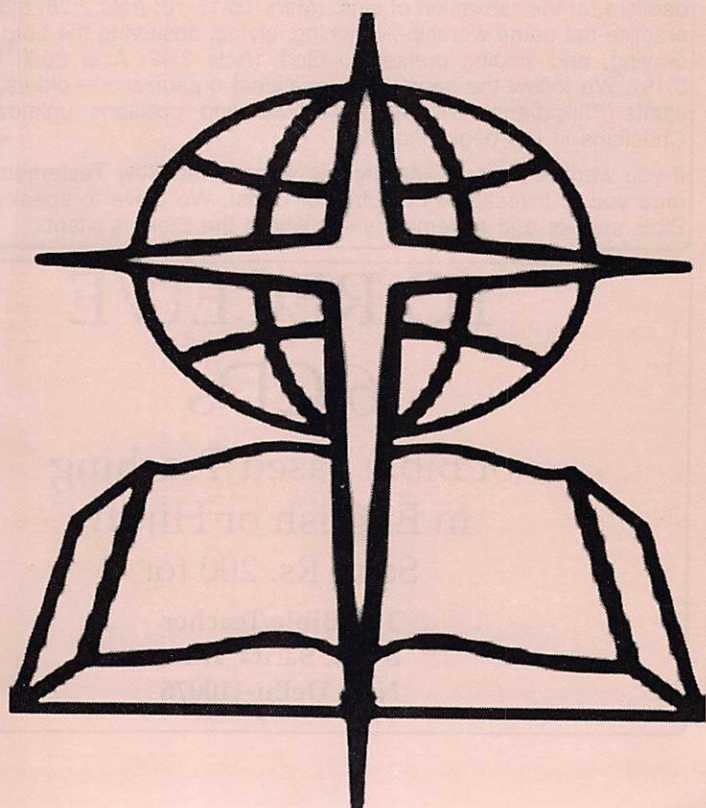


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# THE BIBLE TEACHER



## **BACK TO BASICS**

Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:118). 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**

**January 2013**

**No. 9**

## *Editorial*

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

#### ***For What Profit Is It To A Man If He Gains The Whole World And Loses His Own Soul?***

ANOTHER YEAR has passed and each one of us has come a bit more closer to eternity. We have entered into another year, but are we prepared to enter into eternity? In this world we calculate time by months and years, but eternity is timeless, with no beginning and no ending. And the truth of the matter is that each one of us is an eternal being, made in the likeness and in the image of eternal God. (Genesis 1:26, 27). As souls, we shall live forever. There is no power on this earth that can wipe out or eliminate the existence of a soul. Man's body is from earth (Genesis 2:7), and it returns to earth, at death, as God has appointed for it (Genesis 3:19; Ecclesiastes 12:7). But the real man, the soul, goes to live in his eternal home. (Ecclesiastes 12:5). The soul of man never dies or ceases to exist. The soul of man is the divine part of God that man had received directly from God, when God had created man. A soul, therefore, is of more value than the whole world. This axiomatic truth is reflected in the question Christ had asked: "For what profit is to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

Man uses earthly standard to evaluate his worth. Earthly possessions and pleasures are everything to man. Man is trying

to save that which he cannot save, because it is earthly, and in return he is, day by day and year after year, losing that, the precious eternal soul, which he must save for eternity. Yet, is there anything in this world that man can give in exchange of his soul or to redeem his soul from the consequences of sin? The most important question before each one of us today is: where do I stand in my relationship with God? Do I stand before Him condemned because of my sins? Or do I stand before Him saved from my sins because of His grace? If my soul is required to be separated from my body today, where in eternity will I enter to live forever, will it be with God or in the place where there is no God?

Declaring His judgment on humanity, God's Bible says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). But our creator is not the God of righteousness and justice alone, He is also the God of love and mercy. Because of His amazing and wonderful and graceful attitude towards all men, the Bible teaches: "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8). God allowed Christ, the Divine, Who was with Him from the beginning (John 1:1, 14), to become a man and to die for the sins of man to redeem man from his sin. The Bible teaches when a person believes in Christ and obeys His command to be saved from sin (Mark 16:16), and lives in Him each day by being faithful to Him, to him God will give eternal life in heaven. (John 3:16). In other words, God has placed eternity in the hands of every individual. You and I, as well as all others, have to make the choice in this life while on earth, where we want to live in eternity, either in heaven with God, or in hell without God. Remember, Christ taught, "One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses (Luke 12:15). The secret of true and genuine happiness in this life and in the life to come lies in fearing God and keeping His commandments.

Thanks be to God, because He has added another year to our lives. Let us all learn to fear Him and live each day by following His will.

## **Lesson 5**

# **STEALING**

**J.C. CHOATE**

As we continue our study of God's word, we want to consider the subject of STEALING, Now why would we want to spend time on something like that? For the simple reason that it is often spoken of in the Bible, and because it is a major problem in the world today.

Under the law of Moses, one of the Ten Commandments was, "Thou shalt not steal." (Exodus 20:15). Seven of these commandments, when broken, were punishable by death. The last three were not, and stealing was one of them. That does not mean, however, that stealing was not considered to be a serious crime.

Stealing was that of taking something from another when it didn't belong to the person taking it. It was also called robbing, theft, cheating, deception, fraud, extortion, and over-charging. It involved money, land, jewels, time, and whatever man could take from another without having the right to it, or without paying for it, that is, through cheating.

In Joshua 7 we are told how Joshua sent some two or three thousand men up to smite Ai. Ordinarily Israel would have experienced victory, but in this case they met with defeat. When Joshua received the news he was greatly disturbed and cried out unto the Lord for an answer. The Lord told him that Israel had sinned since there were those who had stolen some of the possessions when they had taken Jericho, which he had forbidden them to do. He further declared that he would no longer be with them until the accursed thing had been removed from among them. Then the next day Joshua called all the people together and a search was made of every tribe, family, and man until the guilty party was found, along with what he had stolen. Finally, when Joshua confronted Achan about this deed, he confessed that he had sinned against the Lord God of Israel in what he had done. Then we read, "And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they

brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones." (Joshua 7:24, 25). Now in this unusual case of theft, Achan and all he had was stoned and burned because of the serious nature of his crime. He had gone against God's will and had taken possessions that caused Israel to be defeated when she went up against Ai. It was only when sin was removed from the camp that the Lord was willing to return to Israel and help her to overcome her enemies.

We have the story of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Jesus told of a man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and along the way, he fell among thieves and they stripped him of his clothes and wounded him and left him for dead. Jesus then tells of both a Priest and a Levite coming by, and even though they saw him they passed by on the other side. Then a Samaritan came by, one who supposed he was considered to be an enemy by the Jews, but nevertheless he had mercy on him, bound up his wounds, and took him to an inn to take care of him. Thieves therefore were common in Jesus' day.

Again, Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matthew 6:19-21). On another occasion, Jesus said, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10).

One time while Jesus was in Jerusalem, he "went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." (Matthew 21:12,13). This reminds us of many religious places today. They may not be temples of God, or representing Christ, but even as religious places they are dens of thieves in that there are all kinds of people there who are taking advantage of the many poor people who come there. They sell all kinds of goods, over charge, cheat them, and take advantage of them in every way they can. Shame on such practices. But Jesus found that kind

of thing going on in the very temple of God there in Jerusalem, and he condemned such practices because that did not really represent the God of heaven.

Jesus taught that there was but one way to God (John 14:6), although man constantly teaches there are many ways to heaven. Christ taught the same principle in John 10:1 when he said that there was one door into the sheepfold, or the church, and went on to say that for one to try to climb up some other way was but a thief and a robber.

We are familiar perhaps with the story of how Christ himself was crucified between two thieves. Of course Christ had no sin and did not deserve death, but he was betrayed, falsely accused, give a false trial, and to make him look as bad as possible, he was crucified between two thieves. One of the thieves was very beligerant, but the other one admitted that while Christ did not deserve to die that as thieves they deserved what they were receiving. Then he asked the Lord to remember him when he came in his kingdom. Christ then told him that that day he would be with him in paradise or in the place of the righteous dead. Christ could forgive him on the spot, and did so. Some use this as an example of how one may be saved today. But our situation is not parallel to his. He lived before Christ died on the cross, and we live after the death of Christ. The Lord's will, and the conditions of pardon, were sealed and made binding with Christ's death on the cross. While Christ lived he could forgive one of his sins on the spot, but on his death then we must go to his will to learn what he would have us to do to be saved. We are then told that he has commanded that we must believe and be baptized to be saved. (Mark 16:16). That applies to all, and therefore there are no exceptions.

The Apostle Paul said concerning thieves and other such lawbreakers, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). Peter said it was a shame to suffer as a thief. We read, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters." (1 Peter 4:15). Again, Paul, said, "Thou shalt not steal." (Romans 13:9). One who steals from another, or one who is a thief, is one who takes something that does not belong to him. He is lazy and does not

want to work to earn his living or to buy the things that he would like to have. His philosophy is, "What is yours is mine if I can get it." Many reason that they need it worse than the other fellow, or what will it hurt to take something from the rich. But the point is, it does not belong to the thief, and therefore it is bad and wrong and against the law of the land, and above all, against the law of God for him to take it.

Stealing is very bad today. There are all kinds of thefts. Such is in the news daily. There are also all kinds of schemes to beat others out of what they have, and this is nothing more than robbing and stealing. Think of the ones who cheat the government on taxes, all of those who cheat their employer by not giving an honest day's work for a day's pay.

Therefore, stealing is wrong, and there is just one way to deal with it, and that is, the guilty need to repent of this sin. The Apostle Paul said, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." (Ephesians 4:28). That is the answer then. Quit stealing and go to work, and instead of taking from others, earn a sufficient amount to take care of your own needs, and then have enough to share with those who have need. That is true repentance.

A lot of things are done that would not be classified as robbing or stealing but that is what it is nevertheless. If you are doing some of these things then surely you know this. But you wouldn't want to be called a thief or a robber, would you? They put those kind of people in jail, don't they? But wait just a minute! Just because you haven't been caught, that doesn't mean that you will not. And even if you are never caught, God knows what you have been doing, and a thief cannot enter the Lord's kingdom in this world or in the world to come. I would plead with you therefore if you are doing anything of a questionable nature that you repent of it and obey God.

Then there are those even in the church that are robbing God every Sunday by not giving of their means as the Lord has commanded or giving of their time and talents to help with the Lord's work. You also need to repent and make this right with God.

If you are not a Christian, please become one. The Lord wants you to. Believe in him, repent or turn away from your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of your sins. When you do that then Christ will save you and add you to his church, but not until. (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:47).



# **For What Did Our Lord Pray?**

WINFRED CLARK

We are all aware that our Lord prayed. This is not a matter of doubt. Time and again we read of his praying. One man said, "The praying Christ," is a strong argument for prayer. You can easily find more than a dozen instances of our Lord's practice of prayer. He prayed at his baptism (Luke 3:21). He prayed in Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46). He prayed on the cross (Luke 23:46). Again and again Jesus prayed and He taught others to pray.

When we read of his praying we are impressed. However, when we take the time to look at some of the things for which he prayed, we find this of even greater interest. We get an insight into the great heart of our Lord as we stop to pay attention to those things for which our Lord prayed. These tell us the things that were the most important to him, and the things that he considers to be most essential. These help us to understand his priorities and purposes. They help us to see how to pray better and to be more like our Lord as we pray.

Let us take the opportunity to look at three occasions where Jesus prayed. "First, there was the time before Peter's denial (Luke 22:32). Second, there was the time when he hung on the cross (Luke 22:34). And finally, there was the prayer on night of his betrayal (John 17).

## **I. HE PRAYED FOR THE FAITHFULNESS OF A DISCIPLE.**

One night our Lord met with his disciples to eat the passover. Among them was a degree of strife as to who would be greatest (Luke 22:24). That posed a very special problem. Such would leave them open to many temptations. As he dealt with that problem we find the Lord addressing Peter and saying, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32).

When we take into account what the Lord had to say to Peter and to the others, there are some very obvious lessons. First, we learn that a person's faith can fail. This is another way of saying his *confidence* could fail. We also know that before that night was over that Peter's faith did fail. If it had not he would not have denied that he knew the Lord (Luke 22:55-62). This he did the very night

our Lord prayed for him.

Second, we learn that divine foreknowledge is not causation. The fact that Jesus knew that Peter would deny him did not cause him to do so. Jesus knew the sifting would come but this does not ignore the fact of human responsibility.

Third, we learn that any failure of faith is of deep concern to the Lord. He knows that faith is essential and that without it one cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). This prayer helps us to see the Lord's concern about man's faith.

## **II. HE PRAYED FOR THE UNITY OF BELIEVERS.**

Take some time to read the seventeenth chapter of the book of John and you will find yourself in the midst of a tremendous spiritual atmosphere. In this chapter you will find the phrase "I pray" again and again. This is a very noble prayer that is addressed to the Father (John 17:1). In this prayer we find that our Lord does not ignore a distinction between those who are in the world and those who are in the church. He saw a clear difference and made a distinction in his prayer (John 17:9, 14, 21). He prays that those who believe on him may be one, or united (John 17:20-21). But he is not speaking of just any group of believers. Notice that he is speaking of those believers of the word who would believe after hearing the word Preached by the apostles (John 17:20). They are described as, "them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:20). That word was the word which he had given to them (John 17:8). That is the truth by which men are sanctified (John 17:17). So we can see that our Lord spoke of a certain kind of unity. It was a unity based on the preaching of the apostles. He did not just pray for unity, but a unity that is produced by faith in the word of the apostles. Jesus did not pray for unity on just any basis. To make it appear that he did is to misrepresent the prayer of our Lord.

## **III. HE PRAYED FOR SALVATION OF MEN.**

As he hung on the cross, there was around Jesus a crowd that was intent on putting him to death. As he saw what occurred He said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). This was like an intercessory prayer. It was a prayer of one whose heart is filled with love on the one hand and yet with pity on the other. He saw the stark ignorance of those who were killing him and yet he prayed for them.

This prayer is so much like his whole life. It does not surprise

us that he did this. Remember that Paul wrote, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). So this is in keeping with the character of Jesus. Yes, he prayed for the salvation of men, even when they did not want the salvation that he had to offer. Isn't that always the case? Do not churches have to be concerned today about people who are lost, who do not even know they are lost? Are not parents often concerned when their children do not see why they are concerned?

We have no doubt about why Jesus prayed these prayers. Notice that none of these were for material things. None of these were for a more comfortable life. Each and every one of these had to do with the souls of men. Those are the issues which gripped the heart of the Son of God, and they should do the same to ours.

## HOW TO SUCCEED

DAVID THURMAN

Have you noticed how many books there are telling you how to succeed in life? Some tell you how to build a business, others how to invest, others how to get along with people. Some authors speak of personal relationships, others write about strengthening a marriage. One of the most popular themes in our world is: "How to be a success".

As we look at the life of Jesus, we can see events that tell us about what real success is. We can also read of experiences that changed lives. One of those accounts is in Luke 5. *"Now it came about that while the multitude were pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret: and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them, and were washing their nets. And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the multitudes from the boat. And when He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' And Simon answered and said, 'Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but at Your bidding I will let down the nets.'"* (Luke 5:1-5).

The first half of this text tells us four important 'principles we need to know in order to succeed. Let us look at them.

## **KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS**

The custom was for fishermen on the Lake Gennesaret (the sea of Galilee) to fish at night. When daybreak came, they would go to shore, repair their nets and other gear, then go home to rest and come back to fish the next night. These men had fished all night and come up empty. They would go home to families without having generated any income. They were tired and they must have been discouraged at working hard all night and coming up empty.

Like us, these men had done all they knew how to do, yet they were not successful. The first great principle is that we must learn that we all have limitations. No matter how smart we are, how educated we are, or how prepared we might be, life will still throw things at us we are not prepared for. As odd as this seems, success only comes to those who know their limitations and can face them. When we know and face our weaknesses, we can then turn to those who can help. That is where Jesus comes in.

## **KNOW GOD'S WORD**

As the fishermen work their nets, they hear the word of God as taught by Jesus Himself. In fact, Jesus borrows a boat (delaying their work) so He can better speak to the crowds that had gathered. During this time, the fishermen were able to hear Jesus speak as well.

But they didn't just hear Jesus speak, they responded by putting His words into action. Jesus told them to put out and try fishing during the daylight. This was not supposed to work. You could only catch fish at night. But these men listened and obeyed, putting out to do what the Lord said, even though it didn't fully make sense to them.

In our world, we need more people who will know God's word. People who read and study it daily. But even more, we need people like Peter and his co workers who will obey when they read the word. People who will do what God says, trusting that obeying God will lead to success. Those of us who come to know His word, and follow it, will find success.

## **KNOW THE NEED FOR RISKS**

Jesus tells them to go out into the deep water. That was where the schools of fish would be, but it also meant getting all the boats and gear ready for another try at fishing. It meant putting out from the shore, that is, going back to work and starting all over. They were tired and discouraged, but Jesus told them to take the chance

and give it a try.

Success seldom comes to people who are unwilling to take a risk. When we learn God's word we will be challenged to do some things that will be new and different. Fishing in daylight was not normal. Turning the other cheek is not normal, neither is forgiving those who hurt you. But success is built on taking the risks God's word commands.

### **KNOW THE NEED TO PERSEVERE**

These men were tired. They had probably started fishing at dusk the night before. They worked hard all night trying to make a living. Peter tells Jesus all this, but together with his companions, they put out to attempt daylight fishing.

These men didn't quit. They kept on trying even in the face of physical exhaustion and emotional discouragement. They knew they needed to persevere, even in the face of failure. They decided to keep on trying, even though it didn't make sense. They decided to give fishing in the daylight a chance, although they had been unsuccessful up to then. People who know about success will tell you, "Never give up, no matter how tired or discouraged you might be".

The story continues and we see four more principles of success. *"And when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish; and their nets began to break; and they signaled to their partners in the other boat, for them to come and help them. And they came, and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.' And when they had brought their boats to land they left everything and followed Him"* (Luke 5:6-11). Sure enough, when they obeyed the Lord's word, success came to them. Notice what they needed to know.

### **KNOW THE NEED FOR OTHERS**

When they put out in the one boat, it was quickly obvious they would need help. The blessing Jesus provided was way too much for one boat, let alone one person. They all realized they were going to need to work together to haul in all the fish.

This is still an important principle for success, especially in

serving God. Some think they can best serve God on their own, doing their own thing without worrying about being a church or working with others in the kingdom. But real success only comes as we realize we need each other. Success comes to individuals and churches as they learn to rely on each other to accomplish much more than they can on their own.

### **KNOW THE POWER OF GOD**

These fishermen knew the Sea of Galilee, they made their living on it. They knew fishing in daylight was not a good option. But they trusted Jesus at His word and did what He commanded. Then they came to know the power of God. God was able to bless them more than they could have hoped. This sort of catch of fish would put money in their pockets for days. They would have plenty to live on and maybe even have a few extras.

Success comes when we put our faith in the power of God to provide what we need, and more. When God puts a task before us, we should not worry about the money (God has plenty). We should not worry about the resources (God can provide those). Successful Christians and churches know God's power and rely on that power to provide.

### **KNOW HUMILITY**

Peter didn't brag to others about "his" idea to fish in the daylight. Instead of that, he fell humbly before the Lord and admitted his shortcomings. Peter was amazed at the power of God, and in seeing that power, he was humbled in his opinion of himself. Peter and the others didn't try to take credit for their success, they gave that to Jesus.

Those who are successful in life need to know this lesson. More athletes would benefit, if they admitted their success was due to coaches, fans and even God who blessed them with athletic ability. Churches would do better to aim the glory at God instead of taking the credit for the ministries that take place.

### **KNOW THE NEED TO GO ON**

The story doesn't end here, it begins. These men leave their vocations as fishermen, and take the work of preaching and teaching. They didn't sit and revel in their success, they went on to other tasks and bigger achievements. The last principle of success we see in this event is the need to keep growing.

No matter how well you may be doing in life, there never is a

stopping place. No matter what your age or how great your accomplishments, real success is never a finished outcome, but an ongoing process that keeps challenging you to be better, to do more, to grow in your service to God and others.

### WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

This event, and these principles, changed the lives of Peter, James and John forever. We need to learn from them. You can trust God's word to bring success. You can take risks and rely on God's power. Put your faith in Jesus, turn from your sin in humility and be baptized in the name of the Son of God. Put out into the deep water of faith and experience success.

## WHAT IS GAMBLING

ROBERT TAYLOR, JR.

(1) Gambling is **greed**. This is what initiates it and fuels its corrupt continuation. Both the Old and New Testaments warn men against corruptible covetousness. The final law of the Decalogue forbade covetousness' (Exodus 29:17; Deuteronomy 5:21). Paul called it idolatry (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5). Covetousness closes heaven's door in our face (Ephesians 5). Jesus warned against this corrupting crime in Luke 12:13-21. Greed and gambling have far more in common than beginning with the same alphabetical letter!

(2) Gambling is **selfishness**. The whole infamous industry is successful when it can fleece people out of money they need for life's essentials. A few Win. That keeps suckers coming back again and again. Most lose. This is why it is so productive to the captains of the industry. Gambling is not a play game where all money is returned at the end of the Infamous affair. Gamblers are keepers! They are insensitive keepers.

(3) Gambling is **addictive**. It can be just as addictive as drinking, smoking, doing other drugs or illegal sexual practices. It gets into a person's blood. The gambling industry is not going to doctor its addicts. Taxpayers are usually tagged to do such.

(4) Gambling is **anti-work**. It smothers out such fine, healthy counsel as we have in Ephesians 4:28 and II Thessalonians 3:10. If all society turned to gambling to keep bills paid, the work ethic taught in the Bible would disappear with amazing rapidity. Gambling

did not build our nation, but it is surely helping in the wrecking of it.

(5) Gambling is **dishonorable**. Money may be accumulated by working for it, inheriting it, receiving it as a gift from a generous donor or by finding it as did the man in Matthew 13:44. Gambling does not fit any of these honorable molds. It is robbery by consent.

(6) Gambling is **idolatrous**. It takes the place of God and godliness. Dog and horse racing loom with greater importance than running the Christian race. Casinos take the place of Christ. Lotteries mean more than the Lord. Poker is preferred over piety. Gambling is no ally of God. It is no companion to Christ. It is no help to holiness.

## *The Outstretched Hand of God*

MICHAEL L. KING

You may have heard the question, "If you feel a distance between you and God, who moved?" We live in a world filled with so many elements of distraction that it often leaves one wondering or feeling as if God no longer knows or cares about us.

Our sins are perceived, by us, to be worse than the sins of any other. We have high and lofty expectations for ourselves, and when we fail to meet those self-imposed objectives, it is easy to become discouraged. We are very familiar with God's attitude toward sin and we sometimes forget that He loves the sinner while abhorring the sin that is committed.

Jesus emphasized during His ministry that His mission was not to concentrate on those who were righteous, but *"He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick ... For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance'"* (Matthew 9:12,13).

The burden of proof has never been on God or Jesus as to whether they have the ability to reach man's soul, but on man to comply and respond to their marvelous provisions. God has *"blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"* (Ephesians 1:3).

Peter echoed the Holy Spirit's sentiments when he promised that *"His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue"* (2 Peter 1:3).

The marvelous grace of God is shown by Paul in his epistle to



the Romans. He said, *"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). Additionally, he notes that *"we are saved from wrath through Him"* (verse 9). This same vicarious death ended the stand-off and separation that had been caused by man's sin toward his God (Isaiah 59:1,2), to be reconciled (resolve, clear up, mend, patch up), and be *"saved by His life"* (Romans 5:10). A primary by-product of this reconciliation is that *"we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (verse 11). It is so wonderful that we have *"such a high priest [Who] was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens"* (Hebrews 7:26).

Israel was like us in that their sins had separated them from God (Isaiah 59:1,2), necessitating intervention from something or someone holy to remove that which was unholy. When Israel was in bondage in Egypt, her cries of deliverance went up to God. In response, God brought them out, but soon their sinfulness led them to complain about their hardships. God instructed Moses to say to them, *"You have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, 'Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?'"* (Numbers 11:20).

Moses was a bit pessimistic himself and tried to make excuse for those over whom he had leadership responsibilities, but *"the Lord said to Moses, 'Has the Lord's arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not'"* (verse 23).

Isaiah told Israel, *"For your iniquities you have sold yourselves"* (Isaiah 50:1). The Lord observed that when He came, there was no man; when he called, there was no answer. He warned that He could dry up the sea, make rivers a wilderness, or make the sky turn black (verses 2,3). The Lord asked once again, *"Is my hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem?"* (verse 2).

Israel's feelings of being alienated from God were legitimate, but not because of God's failures. *"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But **your iniquities** have separated you from your God; and **your sins** have hidden His face from you"* (Isaiah 59:1, 2).

Our God can meet all of our needs and more! He will not override our will or desire to do so, but wants us to come to Him. Jesus reminds hearers that He is the *"bread of life"* (John 6:35) and whoever comes to Him will never be cast out (verse 37). The burden

of proof is placed upon those in need to *"Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it shall be opened to you"* (Matthew 7:7). The promise in the following verse is that every request will be met. James stated, *"You do not have because you do not ask"* (James 4:2). He cautioned that motives for asking must be pure, for if we plan to spend it on our pleasures, we are asking amiss (verse 3).

Simply, we determine the length to which God will outstretch His arm of love and bounty by our willingness to accept it and comply with His will for us. It is no wonder that the New Testament concluded with an invitation to grasp the outstretched hand of God for forgiveness, friendship, favor, and future blessings. *"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. **Whosoever desires** (emphasis added), let him take the water of life freely"* (Revelation 22:17).

We know that *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promises"* (2 Peter 3:9); therefore, if you feel distanced or "cut out of God's will", who has withdrawn or brought about the disassociation? The distance can be overcome if we are willing to *"... submit to God. Resist the devil and He will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded"* (James 4: 7-9).

## ***Is Thy God Able?***

TIM D. SHOEMAKER

Daniel had spent the night in the lion's den, but it was king Darius who was unable to sleep in his palace. In Daniel 6:20 we read that very early in the morning Darius came to the den and cried out, *"O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, who thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"*

The question raised by Darius is one that is still asked by men today. They want to know if the God of the Christian is able today to deliver. Who can blame them, for who wants to serve a God that is unable to help? Such an one would not be the true God, but only an idol (Jeremiah 10:5). However, the answer to their question is a resounding "Yes", for indeed our God is able to deliver.

God is able to save. *"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth*

*to make intercession for them*" (Hebrews 7:25). In the context of this verse the writer of Hebrews speaks of Christ as our High Priest who is superior to all others who served as high priest. All previous high priests had been unable to continue in that office because of death. Jesus is superior because He ever lives to make intercession for us. There is no danger that our High Priest might die and leave us without One to intercede on our behalf for the rest of our journey. Therefore, He is able to save to the uttermost those that come to Him.

In other words, there is full assurance to all Christians that Christ is able to bring about our ultimate salvation in heaven because He is always making intercession for us. Paul, in his letter to the church at Rome, spoke of this great work of Jesus saying, *"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us"* (Romans 8:33,34).

God is able to keep us. *"For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day"* (2 Timothy 1:12). In spite of all that Paul suffered in his service to Jesus, he was not ashamed, because he had put his full trust in Jesus. He was convinced that Jesus would guard his (Paul's) soul until that day when all men would be rewarded for what they had done in this body. Just as Jesus had committed His spirit to God (Luke 23:46) with the full confidence that God would care for Him, so Paul, in that same assurance of God's ability to guard and protect, committed his soul to God also.

Our Lord is able to help those who are tempted in this life. *"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted"* (Hebrews 2:18). The word "succour" is from the Greek word *bon-hew* which means "to run to the aid of those who cry for help; to advance to the assistance of anyone..." Because Jesus has undergone temptations like all of us, He is able to help us in our time of temptation. When God chose One to be high priest, the requirement was that that One be understanding of those who came acknowledging their sin and the need for His sacrifice for the forgiveness of their sins. Likewise, Christ, as our High Priest, suffered being tempted, that He might be helpful to us when we are tempted. The writer here confirms that He is able to do that.

# TRUTH

JACK W. CARTER

Without appealing to Scripture to make my point, I want to say that with all of my heart I believe that our entire relationship with God, including our hope of heaven, depends primarily upon our attitude toward the truth of God's Word.

I feel compelled to mention this as often as possible because it is becoming more and more evident that more and more of us are trifling with truth.

I have come to believe that one of the reasons why this is true is that many of us have not made up our minds about the Bible.

Is it really a reliable book? Is it really the inspired Word of God? Does it mean exactly what it says, or can we disregard some of it? Is it outdated?

Inasmuch as this is the book that tells us about heaven and our eternal destiny, it would seem that we should give our Bibles serious thought and seek to answer all of these questions. However, often we do not! Why?

## *Faith Comes By Hearing God's Word*

JERRY A. JENKINS

It has been estimated that 3.1 billion people around the world have never heard the Gospel message of redemption. Half of the world's population has never learned what Jesus did for them at Calvary. Perhaps what is even worse, it has been noted that half of the members of any "Christian" religious group will never read the Bible. Sixty-five percent of those who believe the Bible have never read the entire New Testament.

If these statistics are accurate, one no longer needs to speculate why our world is becoming less and less godly. Some may be awaiting a special outpouring of the Spirit in some miraculous manner upon their lives. This will not happen. The age of spiritual gifts was to end when that which is perfect had come. Paul affirmed, *"Love never fails; but if [there are gifts of] prophecy, they will be done away; if [there are] tongues, they will cease; if [there is] knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be*

*done away*" (1 Corinthians 13:8 NASB).

That which is perfect refers to the complete revelation from God. James states: "*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 deed*" (James 1:25 KJV). The New Testament is described as the law of liberty, or freedom, because it is a law producing freedom from the servitude of sinful passions and lusts.

The New Testament is called the law of **liberty** partly because it calls us to a *state* of liberty, teaches us the *way* to true liberty, and offers us the *assistance* of a spirit of liberty. It is called the **law** of liberty partly because it exempts no one, but deals with all persons freely, without respect of persons. The Gospel, or Word of God, then, is truly the world's *law of liberty*.

Your life will be deeply enriched as your faith grows. This faith comes only by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). We can change the world with the pure Gospel He has given to mankind.

## *Presuppositions And The Bible*

HOLLIS MILLER

Jesus believed that men who willingly listened to Him were able to understand His teaching. On more than one occasion He said: "*He that has ears to hear, let him hear.*" What else could Jesus have meant than that those who would listen to Him would be able to understand? Yet, many failed to understand because their minds were closed by presuppositions.

As was true during the earthly ministry of Jesus, so it is today. Presuppositions often keep individuals from understanding the Scriptures. One who approaches the Bible under the guidance of Calvinism will not be able to understand the biblical teaching that God would have all men to be saved. Such passages as 1 Timothy 2:4, Hebrews 2:9, and 2 Peter 3:9, which teach that God would have all men to be saved, will be given a different slant from what they "seem" to be saying.

The Jews crucified Jesus because their presuppositions about the nature of the Messiah to come were not met by the Messiah that came (John 1:11). The philosophers at Athens did not listen

to Paul very long because of their presupposition that one cannot rise from the dead (Acts 17:32).

So long as one presupposes that salvation is by faith only, the biblical teaching about baptism will not be understood. Should the presupposition that *many faiths can save* reign dominant in one's thinking, the New Testament teaching that there is only one saving faith will not be comprehended (Ephesians 4:5; Acts 4:12). The presupposition that the New Testament is culturally affected will lead one into a more liberal view of its teaching than would otherwise be the case.

When one approaches the Bible, all presuppositions need to be laid aside. The Word of God, which is intended to lead mankind into truth, cannot instruct one as it should so long as one "knows" before investigating what the biblical text says.

Dear reader, let the Word of God, and not presuppositions, guide you.

## ***Homosexuality Will Damn Your Soul***

DEMAR ELAM

We live in a day and age when all manner of sin and evil is expected to be accepted, condoned, and/or overlooked. Homosexuality is a sin that will damn an individual's soul in hell. Yet the "alternate lifestyle" is receiving growing acceptance in today's world. How can this be?

God's Word is so clear regarding homosexuality that it takes a complete denial of truth to accept this way of living. I read these words in 1 Corinthians 6:9,10: *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the Kingdom of God."*

We do not render the homosexual a favor when we fail to point out to him that his course is set on fire of hell. Broadmindedness to the neglect of truth will only result in a sinner remaining a sinner and being lost. "Let us not mistake the stretching of the conscience for the broadening of the mind." Regarding this issue (as well as any other), only the truth will be profitable. The truth, in this instance,

is that our God will not receive the homosexual into that heavenly home unless he repents.

Paul dealt with those practicing homosexuality in Romans 1:26-32, *"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet."*

*"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."*

Please note that—through inspiration—Paul condemned men who burned in their lust toward one another, men with men committing what is shameful. Homosexuality is shameful, and dare we give it the least air of respectability today, in outright contradiction to the condemnation clearly spoken by the Almighty God of Heaven?

We must point out to the homosexual that even though God loves every soul—as Christians must also love and grieve for those in error—yet He will not condone and overlook the sins committed in violation of His Word. He has repeatedly condemned homosexuality in the Scriptures and has said that those who practice such things are worthy of [spiritual] death (Romans 1:32). Notice, also, that in verse 32 Paul states that individuals should not approve of those who practice such things.

The homosexual charges the Bible believer with prejudice and bigotry. However, it isn't prejudice on the part of Christians that makes them speak out against this sin. God Himself clearly labels homosexual behavior as **sinful**.

But to better understand how homosexuals and lesbians excuse their behavior by rejecting the authority of Scripture, and then demand that everyone else also reject that authority on the basis of their thinking alone, note the statement made recently by a leader

in "Soul Force", a group that promotes the acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle: "When asked to defend a hermeneutic that supported same-sex relationships, the SF individual, in part, said that we likely misunderstood the Bible passages, but *when it came down to it, Paul was just wrong about some things. He was wrong about women, was wrong about slavery, and was wrong about same-sex relationships.*"

A practicing homosexual cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. This is not **my** judgment. It is God's (Romans 1:26-32). Who are we, as beings made of dust, to raise a voice in contradiction to what the Creator God has said?

## HAPPINESS

SALVADOR B. CARIAGA

*"Never have a people had more and more but enjoyed it less and less. The standard of living has gone higher and higher, but the standard of life has gone lower and lower. In a land of abundance, we never learned how to abound." —Anonymous*

**Someone said that there are three secrets to happiness: Money. Money. Money.** Superficially, this might sound admissible or even logical, but that's all it is, *superficial*. It does not reach down deep inside where it matters the most. If you don't believe that, list all of the most progressive countries in the world and you will find in them the highest crime, suicide, and divorce rates anywhere. Money does not equate to happiness or peace of mind. So how can we have real and true happiness? The number one book and bestseller of all times, read by more people than any book ever published, translated into over 2,000 languages, survivor of centuries of persecution, offers the following answers.

First, it tells us to **depend on God**. Of all people, we know that *humans* are not dependable. We even let ourselves down. We cannot depend on *things* either. They are temporary, futile, and even dangerous. On the other hand, you can count on *God*. He is everlasting, all-powerful, and all-knowing. He is the shelter in the time of storm ... He is the Rock of Ages ... the Alpha and the Omega (see Psalm 23; Philippians 4:6,7; 2 Corinthians 4:8,9,16,17; Matthew 11:28).



Second, **accept what you are and what you have.** Stop pretending! Get past the denial stage. Accept pain, sufferings, disappointments, and move on with your life. Paul says *"learn to be content in whatever circumstances"* (Philippians 4:11-13; see also 1 Corinthians 7:24; 1 Peter 5:7).

Third, **live in the present and not in the past.** Someone once wrote,

"Yesterday is gone, it's gone forever.  
Tomorrow may never come, but  
you have today.  
Use it. Don't waste it.  
Savor it. Enjoy it.  
There will never be another day just like today.  
When it is gone, it's gone forever."

(Suggested reading: Matthew 6:25-34; Philippians 4:4-13; 2 Timothy 6:6-10).

Finally, **aim for worthwhile goals.** First things first, and on the top of our priority list must be the things of the *Word*, not of the *world*. Jesus reminded us to *"seek first the kingdom of God ..."* (Matthew 6:33). Paul said, *"Set your mind on things above ..."* (Colossians 3:2). People who aim for money, power, and fame above all else will find themselves wanting in the end.

In conclusion, the great apostle Paul summed it up by saying, *"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things"* (Philippians 4:8).

## ***JESUS, THE MAN OF VISION***

DAVID CHADWELL

The incredible Jesus could look at a person and see an unimaginable potential the person himself never saw. He looked at an outspoken, impetuous Peter and saw a man capable of opening the doors to God's eternal kingdom. He looked at the demon-possessed Mary Magdalene and saw a woman capable of incredible love and commitment. He looked at the murderous Saul

of Tarsus and saw a Christian spokesman whose message could redirect religious history. He looked at the adulterous Samaritan woman and saw a person who would drink the living water — and bring others to the fountain.

Jesus saw the most unlikely things in the most unlikely people. In eleven men He saw the means of informing the world about the crucified, resurrected Son of God. And what unlikely men they were! They were fishermen, a despised tax collector, a political/religious fanatic, and other equally undistinguished men from a rural area.

Jesus' vision for people did not arise from their exceptional abilities, their unique talents, or their insightful wisdom. Rarely were they people of exceptional education, experience, nor were they well-traveled. In each case, the potential Jesus saw and the vision He had arose from a single factor: *their ability to trust God*.

None of these people had to become what Jesus saw. They were quite capable of continuing lives of fishing, demon-possession, adultery, tax-collecting, persecution, and fanaticism. Yet, they were equally capable of being powerful tools in the hand of God. Because they would respond to love and grace, because they would accept forgiveness, because they would live for eternal purposes, they became all Jesus envisioned them being.

It is unlikely any of them realized just how powerfully and extensively God was using them. When the leadership of the Jerusalem church turned on Peter for preaching to the Gentiles, when Paul sat in prison urging Timothy to continue Paul's ministry, when the apostles watched severe persecution slow their work and thin their ranks, they could not have realized God would be using their example and message 2,000 years later.

Jesus sees your potential just as clearly as He saw theirs. That potential does not rest on your incredible talents, ability, or wisdom. It rests on *your willingness to trust God and live for something beyond the here and now*. If you can believe in Jesus' vision, if you can trust His power to bring your life to its full potential, Jesus will use your life in ways which exceed imagination. But that power rests in Jesus—not in you.



## **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 i.. 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, Chitranjan Park, New Delhi-110019 and *Printed at*: Print India, A-38/2, Mayapuri Phase-I, New Delhi-110064. *Editor*: Sunny David (Cell: 09810896789, E-mail: theinspiredbook@gmail.com).

Regd. No. 26921/71

Postal Regn. No.  
DL(S)-17/3154/2012-2014  
Licence to Post without Prepayment  
No. U/SE/25/2012-2014  
Posted at Lodi Road HO  
on 10-11 January 2013

Total No. of pages 24+cover

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