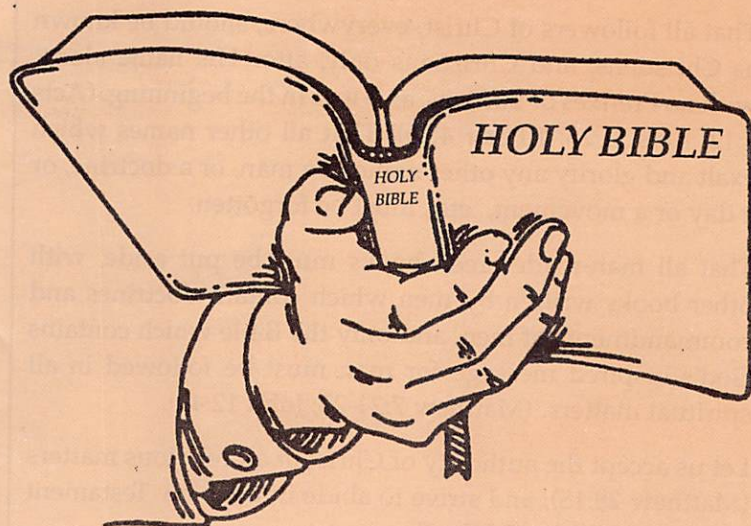


THE BIBLE TEACHER



OUR PLEA LET THE TRUTH PREVAIL

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

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Five Things Will Definitely Take Place At The Second Coming Of Christ

WHEN CHRIST was going back to heaven after His death, burial and resurrection, and as His disciples with great amazement watched Him going out of their sight, two men in white apparel had suddenly appeared to them and told the disciples: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Not only does the Bible teach that Christ will return one day, but it also reveals the purpose for which He will come back. (Matthew 25:31-46; John 14:1-3).

First, the Bible teaches, at the coming of Christ, all the dead, both the saved and the unsaved, the righteous and the unrighteous, will be raised by the power of God. While He was on earth, Christ had taught, "Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." (John 5: 28, 29). The apostle Paul too in one of his epistles to Christians had written, "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord,

that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

Second, the Bible teaches, all the resurrected bodies will be changed or transformed at the moment of resurrection. We read, "But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.... So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.... Now, this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Corinthians 15:35-38; 42-44; 50-54). Thus, at the second coming of Christ, which will take place up in the air (1 Thess. 4:17), and not on earth (2 Peter 3:10), God will raise up all the dead, and all who will be raised, together with those who will still be living, will be changed by His power, to become incorruptible or immortal.

Third, the Bible teaches, all will stand before God to be judged and to be rewarded according to God's righteous judgment. We read: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10). In Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14, the wise one in his exhortation wrote: "Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment,

including every secret thing, whether good or evil." The apostle Paul, after preaching the gospel to the Athenians told them, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:30, 31). On the day of judgment, the Bible says, there will be only two categories of people before God—the righteous who are in Christ, and the unrighteous, the ones out of Christ, those who will inherit the eternal life in heaven and those who will go away into everlasting punishment. (Matthew 25:46).

Fourth, the apostle Peter, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God in one of his epistles had written that when Christ will come back to judge the world, this present earth and whatsoever we observe up in the sky will be burned up and will be no more. He wrote, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. In which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10). Continuing further, he wrote, "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." (2 Peter 3:11-13).

Fifthly, and finally, the Bible teaches that at His coming, He will receive His kingdom, the church, (Matthew 16:18,19), and will hand over the same to God, the Father. "Then comes the end," the apostle Paul wrote in his epistle to the Corinthians, "when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For He has put all things under His feet. But when he says, all things are put under Him, it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him Who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

When Christ will come back no one knows (Matthew 24:36; 25:13; Mark 13:32). But when He will come back that will be the

last day of this earth and of everything that is on earth. At His coming all the dead bodies will be raised; all resurrected bodies together with the living will be changed and become immortal; all will stand before him—both body and soul (Matthew 10:32)—to receive judgment; the present earth and heaven (sky) will be no more; Christ will deliver the kingdom, His church, to God the Father, that God may be all in all.

Putting Off The Old Man Of Sin

LESSON 11

BRIBING

J. C. CHOATE

WE ARE showing you the wisdom of putting off the old man of sin in order that you might put on the new man of righteousness in Christ Jesus. To do this we are discussing some of the social evils of our day and encouraging that these things be removed from our lives in order that we might replace them with good things.

We will now proceed with our lesson, which is that of BRIBING. I know that you will agree with me that this is a present day evil that effects the lives of all people in one way or the other. It is also something that reaches down and touches every phase of our lives. But the question is, what can we do about it? Is there any hope of ridding ourselves of it?

What is bribery anyway? It is simply offering someone in authority something to set aside a law or a rule to grant one a favour. Many pay a policeman to keep from having to pay a larger fine. Parents pay some people of a school an additional sum of money to get a seat for their child in that school or college. Many pay a set fee to someone to get a job. And of course there are hundreds and thousands of kinds of bribes. Surely this is not right, and it isn't. It hurts the government and the majority of the people. Only a small percentage profit from it. Yet, most all indulge in it. The government is involved, but also those of the medical profession, the schools of the country, merchants, law enforcement officers, workers, the rich, the poor, the young and the old, and on and on with all others. Have I left anyone out? Then they are either bribing or receiving bribes in most cases. It is just that bad.

Some of the so-called bribes that are given are actually gifts

to encourage a continuation of good service. Others give tips to show appreciation for service rendered. Although no one should have to give to be sure that there is a continuation of good service. Concerning the tips, the question would be, would the waiters at the restaurants, or wherever, give you the kind of service that you would appreciate if you quit giving the tips? But there is a big difference in doing this and in bribing someone to break a law or a rule on your behalf.

One of the problems is that when people have enough money then they will often attempt to use their money to their way, and this encourages the ones in authority not only to give into that but also to begin to expect it. So the fault is not altogether with those who are in authority. If people in general would put a stop to offering bribes then the problem would come to an end. Another problem that encourages bribery or taking bribes is because salaries are so low that many feel forced to find some extra income. Therefore, if they are in position to be bribed, for a certain amount of money, then they are usually weak enough to do it. Surely those who are giving out these salaries know that is not enough to live on, and that these people will resort to taking bribes. They most certainly know that, and they also know that when those under them take bribes that they will also get their cut. So that is the problem.

Bribing is nothing new, however, since we read about it even back in the Old Testament. We are told that Samuel was a great prophet of God. Many fine things could be said about him, but he had problems with his children. We read, "And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba. And his sons walked not in his ways; but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment." (1 Samuel 8:1-3). That is a sad commentary on the way Samuel's sons turned out but the wonderful thing about the Bible, and one of the proofs that it is from God, it tells both the good and bad sides of man and how God dealt with him.

In spite of the way Samuel's sons turned out, at least he was a good man, and when he confronted the people, they had to admit it. We read, "And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you; and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this

day. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand. And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness." (1 Samuel 12:1-5).

The Psalmist David spoke of those, "In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me." (Psalm 26:10, 11).

Amos, the prophet of God, spoke to those of his day, by saying, "For I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right."

Coming on over to the days of Jesus, we have the Lord being crucified and then soldiers were placed at the tomb to guard against the disciples' coming to steal his body away. But in Matthew 28 we are told that Christ came forth from the grave, "And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." (Matthew 28:4). After Jesus then departed, we read, "Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." (Matthew 28:11-15). So you can see what happened. Jesus arose from the grave, miraculously, but the religious leaders of the day were so set against him that they took those who actually saw him come forth from the grave and offered them a large sum of money to tell the story that the disciples came and stole his body away. They were also assured that if word came to the governor concerning this matter then they would take care of it. Then as a result of them telling this story then many of the Jews actually believed it even though it was a lie.

So the problem of bribery has always been there. But what should we do about it?, In the first place, as Christians we must obey the laws of the land, and not bribe officials to break the law on our behalf. Paul said, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for warth, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." (Romans 13:1-7).

Next, don't accept bribes and refuse to pay them. It may cost you some extra time and problems but in the end if you will stand your ground then you will be successful in receiving what you need without having to.

Become a Christian and quit bribing altogether. Sure some believers in Christ bribe, too. The problem is that many people are too anxious to speed things up, and to get what they want, and so they'll go on and give some money to get what they want right there. That is a mistake. To do that means that you will have to pay again and again.

Respect those who work for you and give them a living salary. If you are not getting enough to live on, instead of taking bribes on the side, try to find means and ways to earn more lawfully.

Refuse to deal with those who bribe. Or report them to those who are over them. You might reason that this is only asking for trouble. It is either do that or continue to pay bribes. You might even have to do without some things, but again it is going to take some sacrificing on the part of someone, and even a lot of people, to ever put an end to this type of thing.

You may also reason that everyone is doing it and what can one person do to change things. That is just exactly why it goes on. Those who accept bribes are counting on people like you to do

nothing about it, but rather to join in and pay your share.

Bribing will stop when the people get tired of paying extra for that which they should be getting at the regular price. Surely you could use that extra money, couldn't you? Besides, it is wrong. If you will think about that long enough then maybe it will begin to hurt your conscience when you bribe, and hopefully, you will eventually quit it altogether. For you see, bribery will die when people like you quit bribing. You can blame the other fellow for it but actually, the problem may very well come back to you.

Become a Christian and quit bribing altogether. Sure, some believers in Christ bribe, too. Some of them are weak, too weak. But we should not engage in this, practice.

In closing, let me urge you to obey God and become a Christian. How do you do that? By simply believing in God, and Christ as the Son of God, by repenting of your sins, by confessing your faith in Christ, and by being baptized in water for the remission of your sins: Isn't that simple? Think about it, and if you are really interested, then we'll be happy to discuss it further with you.

ANTINOMY OF SCRIPTURE

HUGH FULFORD

IN STUDYING the Scriptures, it is important to recognize the principle of antinomy. Failure to do so results in warped and one-sided conclusions that have not taken into consideration the total teaching of God's Word regarding a matter. The sovereignty of God and the free will of man, God's grace and man's obedience, and God's keeping of the saved and the possibility of apostasy are but three areas (among many) in which antinomy must be recognized.

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, the word "antinomy" means: "(1) Opposition; contradiction. (2) Contradiction between inferences or principles that seem equally necessary and reasonable."

Many passages speak of the sovereignty of God. "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy" (Romans 9:16 NKJV). "And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work" (Romans 11:6). To read only such passages as these may lead one to assume

falsely that man has no will or choice. Those scriptures that speak of God's work have led some to conclude that man is totally passive so far as his salvation is concerned.

In the same vein, those passages that speak of the wonderful and amazing grace of God have led some to conclude erroneously that salvation is unconditional.

An e-mail article recently came to me in which the author (who views himself a latter-day reformer among us) used the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15) in an effort to prove that God forgives man without man's meeting any conditions for forgiveness - without any acknowledgement of guilt or regret for wrongdoing.

Make no mistake about it, the story of the prodigal son is a beautiful and wonderful story showing the heavenly Father's love for His wayward children. The love, mercy, compassion and forgiveness it illustrates cannot be over emphasized. But the story of the prodigal son is not to be taken to teach more than it was designed to teach. It wonderfully sets forth the big, forgiving heart of God, but it is not intended as a total presentation of all that is involved in one's forgiveness.

With reference to the sins of an alien, we might examine the case of Saul of Tarsus. When Christ appeared to him on the Damascus road, Saul asked: "Lord, what do you want me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Christ did not respond by saying: "Nothing, Saul; there is not anything you can do to be saved." Rather, the Lord said: "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (v. 6). Unless the Bible communicates a contradictory message (which it does not), it is very clear that sinful man must do something to be saved.

With reference to sins we commit as Christians, John wrote: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Clearly, this passage makes a confession of the Christian's sins a condition for forgiveness.

As to the security of the believer, Christians can bask in the promise of Christ: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:27-29). Yet, the child of God must beware "lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men,

according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8). The Christian must understand that "if you do these things [set forth in 2 Peter 1:5-9] you will never stumble" (v. 10). We must not overlook that small but important word, "IF."

What we see at work in all of these passages is the principle of antinomy. Some statements of scripture give emphasis to God's side of a matter with no intent or purpose of saying anything about man's side. Other passages speak of the human side of that same matter with nothing being said about God's involvement in the situation. Separating them and stressing one to the exclusion of the other creates a warped and unbalanced view of the matter and leads to confusion. Looking at the complete array of biblical teaching on the matter shows both sides to be valid, reasonable and necessary.

Antinomy is like the two sides of a single coin. Look at one side and you see one thing; look at the other side and you see something else. Yet the two sides are all one coin. So it is with the things of God. Some passages speak of His gracious activity in salvation; others speak of the conditions with which man must comply to receive that salvation. Understanding and basking in God's wondrous activities are the antidote to any and all legalistic and Pharisaic attitudes among the people of God. Recognizing the conditional nature of a right relationship with God will thwart all efforts to make the church more inclusive than God Himself made it, and it will stymie the inclination to bow at the shrine of current culture and political correctness.

PRACTICAL FAITH

DUANE WARDEN

"PRACTICAL" IS a nice word. A sharp kitchen knife, a screwdriver, a half-inch wrench are practical items. Practical things make life easier, help us do what needs to get done, save time and energy. Although "practical" is a nice word, it is also a word with deceptive limitations. It would be a dreary world if the only way we knew to measure the value of an item was in terms of practicality. We might find it difficult to quantify the practical value of friendship or beauty.

Judging the difference between short-term and long-term

practicality is often difficult. An adage goes, "There is nothing more practical than a good theory." A theory can arrange scraps of information into a coherent system; it can help us understand. Coherent arrangement of data is necessary for advancements in agriculture, medicine, technology and a host of endeavors. Not many years ago computer pioneers were asking whether or not there was anything practical they might do with microchips. It often takes time to determine the practicality of a matter.

MEASURING FAITH

Perhaps we should measure faith by the same criteria of practicality that measure a table knife or a hammer. A case can be made that Christianity does not fail the test. Christians argue that Christ has shown them how to find more satisfaction and joy in life. Some would say that being a Christian has made them more productive, healthier in mind and body, better adjusted socially. The perception is that Christians generally have stronger homes and more rewarding marriages than the non-Christian population. The teachings of Christ demand that a person be more honest, more diligent in pursuits, thriftier, more adept at interpersonal relationships. All of this, we might reason, transfers to one's business or employment. The Christian is likely to be more prosperous. Being a Christian pays - it pays in the size of one's bank account.

In addition, because God is on his side, the Christian is often healthier than the worldly man. Some years ago a book written by a physician titled *None of These Diseases* made the rounds. It became immensely popular and is still widely read. The thesis of the book is that by following the teachings of God, both Jews and Christians are healthier than non-Christians. The author argues that ordinances of the Law of Moses had hygienic purposes. Christians are not likely to be plagued by diseases resulting from alcoholism or drug addiction.

Some people argue that knowing Christ gives spiritual resources that minimize or eliminate emotional distresses, perhaps even mental diseases. Christianity works. We'll keep it. It's like having a good half-inch wrench in the tool shed. Christ confers benefits on the faithful - benefits that are measurable in stable homes, personal gratification, money, good health, in the sheer volume of laughter in one's life.

THE FAILURE OF PRACTICALITY

A practical approach to Christian living is apt to have little time for serious study of the Bible, certainly no time to learn its original languages. Those things aren't practical. Marriage seminars and a place for young people to play basketball are practical.

One might argue that the gospel is a panacea for the ills of life. One might argue that way, but if he does he is out of step with the Law, the prophets and the gospel. There is a God-focus to the Bible that never lets the reader forget that the end of human life is the glorification of the Creator. Try as we may, it is difficult to see how the priestly rites of Leviticus serves human ends, *None of These Diseases* notwithstanding.

Job makes it clear that a godly man, upright in all his ways, can suffer tragedy. The children of Christians die. Believers get caught in earthquakes, floods and fires. When they do, their homes perish along with those of non-believers. To confess Christ is no guarantee of festivities and joy. To confess Him for that reason is to blaspheme. Habakkuk has shown us God-centered religion: "Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields produce no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls - Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:17-18 NKJV).

The biblical demand for obedience has hardly dampened the enthusiasm of those who want to sell Christianity like a real estate scheme on a late-night infomercial. Should the gospel be marketed for the benefits it brings? Some men have built great churches with thousands of members using this approach. Are they right? Have we used the wrong approach to evangelism? Maybe believers should buy time on late night television and have a smooth-faced, handsome couple testify how healthy and prosperous they have become since being born again. One guest could testify that he was down and out, a drug dealer and miserable, then he became a Christian. New sources of revenue opened for him. His health improved. He introduced friends to Christ who in turn had become rich. How wonderful it is to be a Christian.

THE CALL TO GODLY LIVING

There is no higher reason for obeying God than the quest for His glory; there is no higher motivation for serving Him than love for the Creator. Neither Moses, Isaiah, Jesus nor Paul advanced

the message of God with appeals to the benefits that will accrue in this world. On the contrary, Jesus said, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you" (Luke 6:26). Paul wrote, "For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know" (1 Thessalonians 3:4).

Prophets and wise men call us to God because He is the holy, just and righteous Creator to whom the creation is accountable. It cheapens their message to suggest that the call for godly living is desirable for the same practical reason one should own a sharp knife or buy a good automobile. The message of prophets and holy men is directed toward God's glory. When Christianity's practicality becomes the focus of the appeal of the Christian message, God has been assigned a role of insignificance. When Christian living becomes merely practical, adherents have substituted idols for the God of heaven.

God's people are to love Him with all their hearts and minds. He is to be uppermost in their thoughts. A desire to glorify Him moves Christians to worship with His people, to live good lives and to be faithful to Him. Any lesser motivation is to put up idols and to bow before them. May the church glorify the great God of creation. May Christians live and move and have their being in Him.

GOING TOO FAR IN WORSHIP

HARDEMAN NICHOLS

MAN IS by nature a worshiping being. An inherent respect for his Maker ought to be in every person's heart, but many have refused to honor Him. Others have chosen to ignore God's prescriptions, preferring rather to perform their own rituals of worship. Knowing this tendency, God has given clear examples and adequate warnings in the Scriptures against going too far in worship.

Jehovah does not always approve of worship, even that of Israel. Paul wrote of the deliverance from Egyptian bondage, "With most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters; as were some of them. Now all these things happened unto them by way of example; and they are written for our

admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Corinthians 10:5-7, 11 asv). Although the sacred history succinctly warned, God's people often repeated their errors of unacceptable worship. Today, we should learn from the mistakes of the past and obey the important principle of abiding in the New Testament teaching on acceptable worship.

John 17 contains the fervent prayer of our Lord as the shadows of the Cross approached. The night before His death, He prayed first for Himself and His apostles, then for all who would ever believe on Him "through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (vv. 20-21). He insisted all believers can, and should, be united by submitting to the Word received from the Father. Of the apostles, he said, "Now they know that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are from thee: for the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them" (vv. 7-8). Vital to the unity for which our Lord worked and prayed is respect for the authority of that Word.

The Marriage of Grace and Truth

In this age of antinomianism, authority is not a very popular concept; Jesus, however, did not apologize for His message that rang with the hymn of thanksgiving for His power. At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, it is noted, "The multitudes were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matthew 7:28-29).

There are attempts, among some in the church, to prove a dichotomy between obedience and grace, but our Lord placed them together. In John 1:17 we read, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Another passage concludes, "ye are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). Putting these two scriptures together, we see that we are not under the Mosaic Law, but we are under the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ.

From Heaven or From Men?

An important question to be asked before anything is taught in religion, "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" (Matthew 21:23). When His religious enemies asked Him this, Jesus did not rebuke them for posing such a vital question, but He exposed their hollow pretensions toward God's authority and countered: "The baptism of John, whence was it?

from heaven, or from men?" (v. 25). It always has made every difference whether one's worship is from heaven or from men.

A person may see nothing wrong with embellishing his religion with rituals of men and may seek to defend his practices with a wave of the hand, saying, "God has not said, 'Do not do such'." We must remember, however, that it is impossible for man to guide himself properly. Jeremiah said, "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (10:23). Just as surely as there is a God in heaven, we must have His direction and His guidance to know how to conduct ourselves before Him and how to worship Him acceptably. In Psalm 73:24, Asaph declared, "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." God's Word is the only true lamp to our feet and light to our path. Any attempt to light our own path in worship is futile.

Old Testament Warnings

Embedded with all His authority are those frequent warnings against going too far in worship. In Deuteronomy 4:2, God said through Moses, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you." With repeated emphasis, He said, "What thing soever I command you, that shall ye observe to do: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deuteronomy 12:32). Psalm 119:160 says it takes all of God's Word, without addition or subtraction, to have the truth of God upon any matter: "The sum of thy word is truth." God's Word is not some of the truth while man's wisdom furnishes the remainder. To add it to His Word would be adding error.

The Israelites were slow to learn this lesson. They wanted to be like the nations around them, despite these solemn warnings. Little by little, they were led away from God, and finally into the idolatry that brought the retributions of the shameful captivities as a result of going too far in worship.

Old Testament Examples

King Jeroboam led a rebellion of the 10 northern tribes and did not heed the warnings God had repeatedly given about going too far in worship. God had said, "Unto the place which Jehovah your God shall choose out of all your tribes, to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come" (Deuteronomy 12:5). But Jeroboam added new and that what to

the people were more convenient places of worship - Dan and Bethel - saying that it was too much for them to go to Jerusalem where God had recorded His Name (1 Kings 12:29). The king also erected golden calves to aid them in their worship (v. 28). He established a new time, the 15th day of the eighth month, for a feast like the Feast of Tabernacles (v. 32). God had commanded the seventh month (Leviticus 23:34). Jeroboam ordained priests from all the tribes (1 Kings 12:31). Moses spoke nothing concerning priests except from the tribe of Levi (Hebrews 7:14).

God did not accept Jeroboam or his digressions from His will. The Holy Scriptures said, "And this thing became a sin" (1 Kings 12:30). It was worship "which he had devised of his own heart" (v. 33). In the next chapter, God sent a true prophet to cry out against these additions. It is sinful to presume upon the silence of God and to add to His Word.

This bitter lesson had to be learned by as great a man as David. The Philistines had taken the ark of the covenant. After suffering afflictions because of it, arrangements were made for its return. David sent an embassy to recover it. "They carried the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart ... and when they came to the threshing-floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put forth his hand to the ark; and there he died before God" (1 Chronicles 13:7-10). David was displeased and in essence said, "How am I expected to get the ark home, if you kill the one sent to bring it?" So he named the place Perez-uzza, that is, "the breach of Uzza."

Upon sober reflection and study, however, David humbled himself and learned the lesson that needs to be observed by all. They had gone too far when they had violated the details God gave about the transportation of the ark. God had instructed the sons of Kohath of the tribe of Levi to carry the ark, and Uzza was not one of them (15:2). They were to bear the ark upon their shoulders; instead it was placed upon a cart. Perhaps they reasoned, "There is no command that prohibits us from using oxen and a cart." But there was no word from God authorizing such, either.

David then summoned the priests and Levites and said, "Ye are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the

ark of Jehovah ... For that ye bare it not at the first, Jehovah our God made a breach upon us" (vv. 12-13). They had gone too far.

Admitting his sin, David continued, "God made a breach against us, for that we sought him not according to the ordinance" (v.13). Due order was what God had authorized. "And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of Jehovah" (v. 15).

Today, due order is what God has authorized for us in the New Testament. While dispensations have changed, this very principle of not going too far applies now, just as it did then; and even more so, for we have come "to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape who turn away from him that warneth from heaven" (Hebrews 12:24-25). Previously He cautioned, "A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (10:28-30). Then He warns, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (v. 31). It is going too far that brings such disapproval from God.

True Worshipers

Our heavenly Father is seeking worshipers today who will abide in His teaching, and His approval rests upon those who do so. There are adequate precautions in the New Testament, as there were in the Old, against going too far. Moses promised a new Lawgiver would come (Deuteronomy 18:15-18). Peter said this was a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus with this warning attached: "And it shall be, that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:23). Christ came as God's greatest spokesman ever. He said after His resurrection, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). His commission to make disciples of all nations follows. Those baptized were to be taught "to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (v. 20). That beautiful promise rests upon the condition that we continue to do and teach

what Christ commanded.

The Father is seeking a certain kind of worshiper. Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). Joshua said, "Now therefore fear Jehovah, and serve him in sincerity and in truth" (Joshua 24:14). To worship in spirit means with sincerity, and in truth means to abide in the commandments that God has given.

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into truth (John 16:13). All truth that pertains to the Christian life -how to serve God acceptably, how we are to worship, how to live, what to teach - has been revealed in the Word. It is a perfect guide (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Peter said, "His divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). The New Testament of Christ has it all, and we are warned against going too far. Our Lord said, "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples" (John 8:31).

The Meaning Of Silence

To be "silent where the Scriptures are silent" has never meant that God allows what He has not expressly prohibited. It means that we are not to permit avenues of worship which God has not authorized in His Word. The Bible says, "If any man speaketh, let him speak as it were oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). Because all spiritual truth has been revealed by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13) and confirmed by his apostles (Hebrews 2:1-4), it is even more incumbent upon us to heed the warning of Proverbs 30:6: "Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." This is another way of saying it is going too far in worship to presume upon the silence of God and to add to His Word.

We are to do the will of the Father -to submit to what has been bound in heaven. Jesus promised the apostles, "What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). The Greek, used here and in 16:19 and translated "shall have been bound/loosed," means the church is obligated to observe heaven's laws; heaven should not obey men's laws. The apostles' teaching had already been bound by God, and no man has a right to loose what God has bound or to bind what God has loosed. The Scriptures teach, "Contend earnestly for the faith which was once

for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). It means earnestly to contend for the body of belief which was once and for all delivered to us in the New Testament.

Do Not Go Beyond

There are specific warnings in the New Testament about going too far in these matters. In 1 Corinthians 4:6, Paul said, "Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written." That principle is not to be applied simply to what we think of other men, as the context applies it. This was a familiar injunction that all Christians knew, for they had heard it over and over again. It was a "saying," as some of the new translations have rendered it: "Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that ye may learn from us the meaning of the saying, 'Do not go beyond what is written'" (NIV).

John also emphasized the necessity of establishing all that we do in worship from the authority of the New Testament. He wrote, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9 ASV). There are some people who insist this applies only to the teaching about Christ's deity. All of the teaching of the New Testament is a denial of that view. It is only delaying the inevitable to apply this only to the doctrine of Jesus' deity. This statement cannot be limited exclusively to confessing that Christ came in the flesh because to confess His deity logically demands our submission to His teaching. Jesus said in Luke 6:46, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" The things He taught are important along with the fact of His deity. He is therefore chiding leaders who do not see the importance of staying with the things found in Christ's teachings.

SOME APPLICATIONS FOR US

Mechanical instruments of music are not found in worship in the New Testament church. Music is there, but it is vocal and not with instruments. It is written, "Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips which make confession to his name" (Hebrews 13:15). There are eight passages of Scripture which describe the kind of music in worship in the New Testament age: Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:9; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12;

James 5:13; and Hebrews 13:15. Two others were mentioned before the establishment of the church: Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26. All of them specify vocal music. We should realize that God demands in John 4:24: "They that worship him must worship in spirit [with sincere hearts] and in truth [as he has commanded in his Word]."

Every early historical record of worship declares the church sang. It was ca 670 before there was an introduction of a mechanical instrument into the worship of any congregation. Why would the early church not have used instruments, if it makes no difference? Mechanical instruments had been a part of Old Testament worship since the time of David. The Bible says of King Hezekiah, "He set the Levites in the house of God with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for the commandment was of Jehovah by his prophets" (2 Chronicles 29:25). The psalms of David, such as Psalm 150, commanded instruments of music in Jewish worship, and they were inspired (Acts 1:16). But when Jews became Christians in the first congregations, they no longer used instrumental music. Why? Because they knew the saying: "Do not go beyond what is written."

Detecting False Teachers

John urges Christians to test every doctrine by the apostles' teaching. He wrote, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). How can one detect a false prophet from a true prophet? He gave the test, "He that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (v. 6). Any doctrine can be tested by this standard. What does the Scripture say? It is going too far in worship when we go beyond the New Testament. Luke, the early church historian, wrote, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42).

How tragic it is that some of our brethren today have gone beyond the Word of God. The literal root meaning of heresy is "to choose"; hence, it is a self-willed opinion which is substituted for submission to the truth. Heresies are listed with the other works of the flesh in Galatians 5:20-21 where we are warned, "They who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Peter said they are "destructive heresies" (2 Peter 2:1).

Any teaching not found in the Word is not from God. There can

be numerous man-made or self-made religions. In discussing some of the "precepts and doctrines of men," Paul describes all of them as, "will-worship."

Going Too Far

In application of this principle, we conclude it is going too far in worship today to add such innovations as mechanical instruments of music. In Matthew 15:9, Jesus said, "In vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." The words "a cappella" mean "in church - in the chapel." In the early centuries singing was without instrumental music in the church.

God requires more than just offering something from the lips. He commands, "Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). To hum, whistle or yodel is not doing what God has commanded. Our sacrifice of praise involves our hearts while "teaching and admonishing" (Colossians 3:16).

Solos, choirs, praise teams and dramas are appeals to theatrics. Our Lord condemned that in Matthew 6:1: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen, of them." He then proceeded to give some examples.

Some people are attempting to defend solos as scriptural because Paul said, "When ye come together, each one hath a psalm" (1 Corinthians 14:26). But the passage does not say, "Each one sang a psalm." Paul is discussing miraculous gifts of inspiration and confirmation of the Word in this part of the letter. Psalms were not always sung. Even the psalms of David were often spoken. The final psalm of David is introduced, "Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse saith, and the man who was raised on high saith, The anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel: The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2-1), and the psalm continues. This scripture does not say, "The Spirit of the Lord sang by me, and His Word was in my vocal cords." The psalmist is saying these words, and twice it is recorded, David "saith," not "sang." The Corinthian passage regulates miraculous gifts, including the revelation of psalms. As in the case of David, the inspired psalm at Corinth, upon being revealed, could have been spoken and taught to the congregation. What they were doing in confusion in the church was an aberration corrected by Paul who said let all things be done unto edifying. The occasion falls short of proving the case for solos and choirs.

A Plea to Change Agents

Our hearts are grieved when any person is not loyal to the faith. We pray for them. We do everything that should be done by love. But if one makes up his mind to go beyond the Word of God in worship or to defend those who depart, Jesus' words to Judas apply, "What thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27). It will be less harmful to the church. But be warned: you will have opened up the floodgates, and you cannot stop with your initial departures. You will bring in other innovations because you did not heed the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written."

TRUTH: FEW FIND IT

CHAD MAPLES

WHEN STANDING for the truth, you can expect to be confronted with many challenges of faith. Newborn babes in Christ may feel pressure from their peers at school or work; who may insult or embarrass them for becoming a Christian. Christianity has not always been accepted by our society. What do we do when Christianity is in the minority? Paul answered this question in Romans 1:16 when he said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (NKJV).

There have been great men who have suffered emotional stress because they thought they were alone in their walk with God. After Elijah's great victory on Mount Carmel against the prophets of Baal, he ran for his life. One might think that after God displayed a performance such as the fire that came down from heaven, Elijah would remain zealous for Him. Yet fearing for his life, Elijah hid from Jezebel (1 Kings 19). In verse 9, God asked, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He responded, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life" (v. 10). God encouraged Elijah by telling him that there were 7,000 Israelites who had not bowed a knee to Baal (v. 18).

How many of us have been Christians when it was not popular to be one? How many of us have been willing to stand up for the truth despite man's reliability on fables and the doctrines and

commandments of men? As long as we profess faith in Christ, there will always be critics. We may feel outnumbered, but we should remember that Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

The world ridicules us when we stand for truth, but some people within the brotherhood of Christ even rebuke us for the truth we teach. Many have fallen because of the influence of this crowd. They have accepted various doctrines that originate outside of the Bible and have been proved false. Whether caused by a desire for popularity or the attempt to justify the sin in one's life, these doctrines are corrupting the Lord's church.

To defend these doctrines, people may say the truth cannot be known. They are convinced there are gray areas for which we have no explicit condemnations in the Bible. If the truth cannot be known, then what are we to do? If someone claims that you cannot know the truth and then tries to teach you something about the Bible, why should you believe such a man? How does he know that he is right in biblical matters if he claims the truth cannot be known? "What we as humans often fail to realize is that we are not in the search for truth because it is lost; we are involved in the search for truth because, without it we are!" (Bert Thompson, *Reason and Revelation*, Apologetics Press, Montgomery, 1997; p. 3).

As we progress in restoring the church, how do we answer the call for change? Why should we change if what we are doing is right? Right has been and always will be right, and wrong is always wrong. We must be "ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). Let us be as liberal as the Bible in method and as conservative as the Bible in doctrine.

In 1836, Alexander Campbell wrote: "The few have had a conflict with the many in every attempt towards reformation since error got the better of the truth. This for a long time must uniformly be the case. Therefore, none ought to be discouraged because of the number or influence of those leagued in support of error. The history of the world is replete with information and encouragement on this subject. Truth fairly represented, and enforced by the good example of its advocates, has ever triumphed, and will continue to triumph

till the victory is complete." (*The Christian Baptist*, Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville, 1955 reprint; p. 173).

What more encouraging words are needed for one's stand for the truth? Surely the truth will win over error in the end. The truth can save a man's soul from hell if he submits to it. People who reject the truth and sound doctrine will be left without excuse on the Day of Judgment (Matthew 7:21-23). People who have been baptized for the remission of their sins and stay faithful to God and His beloved Truth will have heaven to gain. "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

NO CONDEMNATION

KERRY HOLTON

HERE IS GOOD NEWS: "*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1). What a wonderful blessing! Those who have entered into union with Christ stand uncondemned.

What does it mean to be in a position where there is "*no condemnation*"? It means that Christians have been freed from the effect of their sins. It is sin in a person's life which condemns, condemns him to death. Condemnation, then, is the result of man's sin (Romans 5:16, 18). The entire human race was tried for sin. The verdict was read: "Guilty," it said. The sentence was condemnation.

But Jesus died for sin and condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8: 3). Through His act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men (Romans 8:3, 4). They have been spared from condemnation, for in Christ Jesus they have been set free from that which causes condemnation—the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). Christians stand uncondemned. They have been acquitted of their sins. The verdict has been read, and it is "Not Guilty!" Rejoice, Christian! There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ, who are not walking after the flesh but according to the Spirit!

"My sin—O the bliss of this glorious thought—
My sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the
Cross and I bear it no more; Praise the Lord,
Praise the Lord, O my soul."

—H.G. Spafford



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