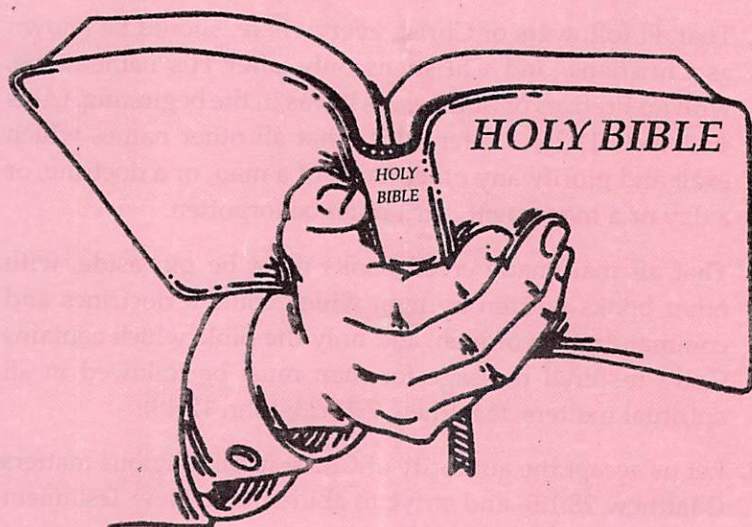


Monthly

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THE BIBLE TEACHER



OUR PLEA

LET THE TRUTH PREVAIL

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18). That congregations of the one church of the Bible everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the Church. (1 Corinthians 1:10).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands of salvation are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His Spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, 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?

*The Power Of God Unto Salvation For Everyone Is In
The Gospel Of Christ*

JUST AS it happened in the Old Testament time when preachers were preaching things which were pleasing to people, even though those things were not true, as we read in Jeremiah 5:30, 31, it is the same today, as we observe. People have developed itching of ears, and have turned their ears from the hearing of the truth to stories and fables as the apostle Paul had predicted that they would. (2 Timothy 4:1-4). People no longer are interested to hear the sound words of the Bible. They are happy to hear preachers telling them about themselves and their experiences and how great and wonderful powers God has bestowed upon them, as they suppose, to provide physical healing to all kinds of people. They parade a long line of people as testifiers to the greatness of the wonders they have performed elsewhere by "the power of the Holy Spirit" they believe. Christ is being projected as a miracle worker and not the Savior of the world because of His death on the cross for the sinners. But the question is: has God more concern for man's physical body, which is like the grass of the field and flower of the grass (1 Peter 1:24), or the soul of man which is eternal, made in the likeness of God and after His image? Why did God allow His Son to die on the Cross? (John 3:16). Why did Christ die on the Cross? (Romans 5:8). Didn't Christ say: "For what profit is it 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). To

those who were seeking Him for physical food he had this to say: "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." (John 6:27).

People today everywhere are more concerned about their physical bodies than the soul. Seems there is no one today who wants to know what should one do to be saved from sin. But all want to know how they can overcome their physical problems. Preachers are no longer preaching the soul saving message of the Cross. Most are preaching a perverted gospel. "But", as Jeremiah had asked, "what will you do in the end?" (Jeremiah 5:31).

For man's physical needs God has already provided all kind of foods and water and medicines, and thank God for all of these. Yet God is more concerned for the salvation of our souls than the physical body. For He, as man's Creator, knows that our bodies are from the dust of the ground and will return to earth. But man's soul is eternal, made in the likeness of God, yet because of sin the souls are perishing. (Isaiah 59:1, 2). Because of His great love for us He sent His Son, and allowed Him to die on the Cross for our sins. The Bible says, He made Him to be sin for us so that we might become in Him righteous, worthy to live in heaven. (2 Corinthians 5:21). The gospel of Christ, we read at Romans 1:16, "is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." Jesus Christ died on the Cross for our sins and that He was buried, and that He rose again from the dead, is the gospel, according to 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. This is the gospel message which the apostles of Christ and all His followers preached everywhere in the beginning. (Acts 8:4). The apostle Paul declared that there is no other gospel. (Galatians 1:6-9).

Now, if we are going to preach the gospel of Christ today, should our message be any different? Should we not preach the same gospel of the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which Paul, Peter and John and the rest of the followers of Christ preached in the beginning? And should not the people who believe in the gospel be told to do the same to be saved from sin what people in the beginning were told to do? They were told to "Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38).

On the day of judgment, Christ said, "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?"

And then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:22,23). Is there a clear message for many preachers today?

Putting Off The Old Man Of Sin

Lesson 12

BAD LANGUAGE

J. C. CHOATE

PLEASE TAKE a few minutes to study with me from the Bible, the word of God. I want to continue to discuss the theme of putting off the old man of sin that we might put on the new man of righteousness in Christ. This is just simply an expression to describe what happens when one becomes a Christian. He gives up the bad things in his life and replaces them with good things. Of course you may think that you are not all that bad, and you may not be bad in the sense that many are. I should point out, however, that all of us are bad in the sense that we are all sinners, that is, we are all lost without Christ, but through Christ there is forgiveness and the hope of a better world.

Now think with me for a little while about BAD LANGUAGE. We all know that it is through language that we communicate with each other. Another way of putting it, we talk to each other in a common language like English and convey our thoughts and ideas to one another. Now in doing this we can do it with the use of good language or bad language. We can use good words or we can use bad words.

Among those who speak English, and especially in the western part of the world, I don't know why it is, but many people are bad to use the name of God or Christ in their conversation. There would be nothing wrong with that except for the fact they are prone to use them in a bad way, in a vain way, or in the form of cursing. A lot of this is done out of habit. Therefore it doesn't even make sense, it is just said without thought. The Bible then would classify such speech as vain or empty or worthless. Then there are many in this part of the world who do not know English all that well and so they pick up words from foreigners that they don't understand, but because they hear them so often, then they begin to use them. Some of these words are bad words, curse words, words that they

merely repeat without understanding the meaning of them, and therefore words that they should not be using. I would encourage you therefore not to be using words that you are not familiar with because you might be using bad words.

The Bible has somewhat to say on this subject. One of the ten commandments was, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." (Exodus 22:7). Although the Law of Moses is no longer binding on man, since it was replaced by the law of Christ (John 1:17), still we are taught to reverence the name of the Lord, to hallow it, to count it as holy, and certainly not to curse it or to use it in vain. (Matthew 6:9; Revelation 4:8). The Apostle Paul said, "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not." (Romans 12:14).

The name of God is often used in the sense of cursing others. But it is like I have said, this type of cursing has become a slang expression, and used out of habit. Still it is wrong to curse in the name of God. Again, Paul tells us, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:17-21). That means then that we should not call on God to curse anyone. To ask him to do such a thing is wrong or to use his name in an attempt to curse someone is using his name in a vain way. Finally, it is not our business to seek vengeance and to attempt to curse any one. If someone has done wrong then leave it to God to deal with that person.

Another way God's name is misused is when a person swears by it. This is where one declares that he is telling the truth by the name of God. Christ said to those of his day, "Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is

more than these cometh of evil." (Matthew 5:33-37). James says likewise, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." (James 5:12). Both Christ and James says that it should be enough to simply say yes and no. To prove that we are telling the truth, we should not have to use the name of God, the Bible, or anything else.

Another form of bad language is that of telling dirty jokes and using vulgar language. There always seems to be someone around who is ready to tell a dirty or ugly joke, but what is funny about something that is dirty or filthy? I certainly get no pleasure from hearing such. All of us need to protest when we hear such and that would soon put a stop to things like that. But if we tell them or if we laugh at such jokes then naturally this type of thing will continue. Not only are vulgar and sexy language used in these dirty jokes, but there are those who freely use sexy words in their general conversation. It is so sad that our society has dipped so low that such language has become common place with many. We likewise hear jokes and language like this on television, in cinema in magazine and newspaper articles. It embarasses good and decent people but I am afraid that we are in the minority.

The apostle Paul told Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (1 Timothy 4:12). So should every Christian be an example in the things that he says, always speaking good and wholesome words, those things that would not be embarassing to anyone or out of place wherever one happens to be. Again we read, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." (Colossians 4:6). Then Paul exhorted, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed." (Titus 2:7, 8). I think then that you can see that a Christian will speak only good and pleasant words, not those things that are ugly, distasteful and bad.

Then other bad language would include that of gossip, always finding fault, and lying. James discusses the tongue in James 3 and shows how that we control horses by putting bits into their mouths, we control great ships with a small helm, but even though the tongue is so small, it is so difficult to control. He goes on to

say, "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be untreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace." (James 5:8-18).

Going on, Paul said, "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men." (Titus 3:2). James said, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (James 1:19-21). Finally, Paul says, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." (Colossians 3:9,10).

We could go on and on giving scripture after scripture that forbids us to curse, swear, lie, gossip, and use bad language in any way. The word of God encourages us to speak good words, to always tell the truth, to speak highly of others, and to respect and reverence the name of God.

The Lord tells us that we should be careful as to what we say because one day we will have to answer for the things that we have said, whither they be good or bad. Christ said of those of his day, "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall

speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment, For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matthew 12:34-37).

So my friends, you can tell what kind of a person one is by listening to his speech. What kind of person are you? What kind of language do you use? Have you been able to control your tongue? If not, then you are in need of help.

Jesus can help you. He can save you. He can change your life so that you will be a new person, a changed person. Your thinking will therefore be changed, and as a result your speech will change. Wouldn't you like that?

If you will believe in God, and believe in Christ as his Son, and if you will repent of your sins or turn away from them, and if you will confess Christ before men as the Son of God, and then be baptized for the remission of your sins, then the Lord will save you and make you his. I pray that you will want to do this.

Jesus: Head of the Church, or Figurehead?

ROYCE FREDERICK

QUEEN ELIZABETH II recently celebrated her 50th year as Queen of England! She is highly honored and loved. However, elected officials actually govern the nation.

Jesus "... *is the head of the body, the church ...*" (Colossians 1:18). But some men want to take control—and give the church a "head transplant"! They are "...*not holding fast (firmly) to the Head...*" (Colossians 2:19).

Is Jesus truly Head over the church where you attend, or merely a "figurehead"? If we praise Him in sermons and songs, does that make the church truly His church? He asks, "*But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?*" (Luke 6:46).

Many sermons are aimed at helping us follow Jesus as Lord of our life. We need those. But our life includes our participation in the local church. By our giving, labors, and attendance, we endorse and support the local church. If you or I see the church departing from the will of Christ, we must speak up—in kindness—and help correct the wrongs. (See 1 Corinthians 12:12, 26,27; 2 John 9-11; Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; Ephesians 5:11).

Our Head tells His church how to behave. Jesus said "... love one another. ...*By this all will know that you are My disciples ...*" and He prayed, "*that they all may be one ... that the world may believe that You sent Me*" (John 13:34,35; 17:21). Division and strife dishonor our Head. When we cling to God's will and each other, many more will come to Christ.

Our Head tells His church what to teach. There are two choices: (1) walk by opinion, following men's teachings, treating Jesus as a figurehead, OR (2) walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), following God's written word, for "*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17), thus honoring Jesus as Head.

Our Head tells His church what to call itself. What religious name do you wear? What is the church called where you attend? Can you find those names given to the Lord's people in the New Testament? Christ gave one name to His people: "Christian" (1 Peter 4:16). He did not give a name to the church, but uses terms such as "body", "temple", "church of God", and churches of Christ—and often includes the location (Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 3:16; Romans 16:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:1). God owns everything, but gave all authority to Christ (Matthew 28:18). So, the church primarily belongs to Christ. Why name the church after Paul, John, any other man, any doctrine, or a feast day (1 Corinthians 1:10-13)? Christ died for the church, built it, and owns it (Acts 20:28; Matthew 16:18). He is its "head" and should have "preeminence" in all things (Colossians 1:18), including what we call His church.

Our Head tells His church how to worship. His word instructs us to partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, sing, pray, give, and listen to His word (Acts 20:7; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 14:15,16; 16:1,2). If we added incense, musical instruments, candles in front of images, or bananas in the Lord's Supper, we would not be following our Head, because His word does not tell us to worship in those ways.

Our Head tells His church how to organize. To lead the local church and its work, the Lord's plan is that we have "*elders in every church*" (Acts 14:23; see Titus 1:5). The New Testament also calls them "bishops" (overseers) and "pastors" (shepherds). And we should select "deacons" to help with special labors (see Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). Every time the New Testament mentions a church and its elders, at least two elders are leading

the church. But many churches have departed from the Lord's plan, omitting the elders. Some are overseen by one man, others by a "board" of men, and some by men in distant places.

Will you honor Christ as Head by obeying His will in your daily life and in the church?

The Church: Measures of Greatness

WAYNE BARRIER

ORGANIZATIONS THAT are trying to increase productivity and effectiveness often establish quality control programs. This involves defining measures of success and achievement. What about measures of success and achievement in the world's most important organization—the kingdom of Christ? How do we measure success in the church? I believe there are several areas of measurement that should be considered. Those that will be discussed now are the measures of great things and greatness, based solely on some key passages of Scripture in the book of Matthew.

The Greatest People: In Matthew 18:1-4, Jesus gives a definition of the *"greatest in the kingdom of heaven."* This passage quotes the disciples of Jesus, asking, *"Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them and said, Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*

The Greatest Position: Jesus, in Matthew 20:20-28, addresses the issue of the greatest position in the kingdom of heaven. The mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and great apostles of Christ, asked Jesus about their position in His coming kingdom. Notice the response in verses 25 through 28 as He says, *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant, and whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

The Greatest Principle: In Matthew 22:34-40, Jesus answers a question concerning the greatest commandment in the law. Read

verses 36-40, *"Teacher, what is the great commandment in the law?"* Jesus said to him, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself: On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*

The Great Commander and Mission: As Jesus nears the time of His return to heaven, He states the clear and distinct mission of the church in Matthew 28:18-20. We call this "The Great Commission". Jesus says, *"All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

The Greatest Organization: In Matthew 16:18 Jesus says, *"Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* Nothing is greater than this church, and nothing on earth can destroy it.

These statements in Matthew are not difficult to understand. They are not the only passages in Scripture to help us measure quality, success, and achievement in the church, but they certainly cover a broad range of areas. They reflect the great love God has for us (John 3:16) and are consistent with the teachings in 1 Corinthians 13:13, that the greatest power or spiritual gift is love. We can benefit by incorporating them into our efforts to serve as Christians.

Our Help From Above

JOHNNY RAMSEY

THE BLESSINGS that flow into our lives emanating from heaven and the throne of God are great and wondrous, indeed. If we are lost, it will not be God's fault: *"This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim. 2:3-4). Satan seeks our destruction: *"Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Pet. 5:8). But God doesn't want anyone to be lost, that

is why He sent Christ (John 3:16). Our Creator has poured out infinite blessings upon us to encourage and sustain us—now and for all eternity.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE HOME

In the opening stanzas of the Bible we see the beauty and splendor of marriage and the home. The comfort and challenge of holy matrimony can bless our sojourn upon the earth and see us through the difficulties of life. Marriage is truly a foretaste of glory divine and can be "the vestibule of heaven." Those who utilize this marvelous arrangement can glorify God together, as Psa. 34:3 powerfully proclaims: *"Oh magnify Jehovah with me, and let us exalt his name together."* The family, as ordained by the Lord, is a truly magnificent motivation in the daily struggles that confront us in the midst of a debauched world. To share the love of God with our spouse draws us nearer to the heavenly values and to divine mandates.

Any society will soon deteriorate when godliness no longer emanates from its homes. The heart-beat of any nation can best be gauged by the structure of its family life. The mighty Roman Empire felt its very foundations sag when God was pushed outside the confines of the homes of ancient Rome. Jewish historians, Greek philosophers, English poets and American statesmen have all spoken, through the years, of the power and sanctity and preservation of the home. The most popular plaque ever displayed on walls and in the human heart is the one that reads simply; "Home Sweet Home."

The most hardened and toughest criminal can weep aloud when thoughts of home return. People who have lost nearly every semblance of emotion and sentiment can still be nostalgic at the sight of a little white house where they were born. Tears form quickly in the eyes of most of us when we are reminded by songs, poems or paintings of our childhood. Most best-selling novels have based their plots on thoughts that touch the heartstrings of folk who "turn again home." With most of us, the sweetest words will always be "Home" and "Mother." When the bulwark of the nation is crumbling beneath us, we cannot expect peace and joy and love in the atmosphere of the world. Unless we quickly restore the beauty of holiness to family life, this old earth is due for a much worse fate than nuclear destruction!

THE BLESSINGS OF THE BIBLE

The preservation of the Scriptures is a great blessing from heaven. Evil men, and even some religious systems, have dedicated themselves to destroying the precious word of God. But our blessed Lord would not allow cunning enemies to snatch the Bible away. *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it"* (Isa. 55:11). We can take much comfort in the fact that, *"The scripture cannot be broken"* (John 10:35). Jesus promised, *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"* (Matt. 24:35). We will be judged by the graphic teachings of Christ, as recorded in the Book of books (John 12:48).

To have a standard that never changes, and that is fair and understandable, is a brilliant help from heaven. The psalmist gives credence to this point: *"Jehovah is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I will take refuge; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower"* (Psa. 18:2). And 2 Sam. 7:28 declares emphatically, *"Thy words are true."* Heaven has protected and preserved the truth of God for us.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST

The perfect example of Jesus shows us how to live and what to emphasize day by day. The Savior was willing to leave the beauty of the realms above to come down to this sinful world to show us the way to glory. Why so many remain lost, in spite of our Redeemer's great love, is truly heart-breaking. A fine poet tells us the sorrow of wasting years in rebellion:

*To think of the years spent without Him,
How wasted they were I now see;
For the world is a snare,
And the power of prayer
Is the only way we can be free.
If only I'd found Jesus sooner,
If the past I could only recall;
But how thankful I am
For the blood of the Lamb,
And the fact that I found Him at all!*

When we center all of our energies in the Lamb of God (John 1:29) and turn away from the shameful world of carnality, we begin to grasp how important it was for Jesus to be *"tempted in all points*

as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). This gives us someone to closely follow and lean upon His perfection to challenge us to do better.

THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

The privilege and power of prayer is truly a blessing from God. The honor of staying in contact with our Maker warms our hearts and lifts our spirits. An old hymn reminds us of the pure delight when we commune with the Father as *"friend with friend"* as we come before His divine throne. The apostle Paul told the Athenians of *"The God that made the world and all things therein"* but then assured them, *"He is not far from each one of us"* (Acts 17:24,27). When we ask anything *"according to His will"* (1 John 5:14), our sojourn on earth is remarkably blessed by Him.

THE FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS

Another powerful help from heaven is the comfort and joy of our fellow Christians. In the midst of a very wicked world, an oasis in the desert of sorrow and sin is the association with those of *"like precious faith"* (2 Pet. 1:1). The apostle John refers to such as *"fellow helpers"* of the truth (3 John 8)!

The Lord informs us that our true and best companions are those who fear the Lord and keep His commandments (Psa. 119:63). Earthly friends can never fill the place that dedicated children of God do. To spend time with ardent soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ prepares us to *"fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life"* (1 Tim. 6:12). Barnabas, Timothy and Luke encouraged Paul to keep on diligently serving the Lord. Truly, the Lord will fight for us (Ex. 14:14) and the people of God will strengthen us, also.

GOD BLESSES US WITH HOPE

One more blessing from God is the hope of eternal life in heaven with the redeemed. Christ went home to prepare a place for His own (Heb. 9:24). As our forerunner, He beckons us to join Him the realms of glory: *"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14:2-3). When we come to the end of the way after sojourning through this wicked world, the land of fadeless day will be so delightful and peaceful to faithful soldiers of Christ. The word of

God gives us motivation to persevere in the glorious service of the Master: *"God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord"* (1 Cor. 1:9).

Years ago we used to sing of the sublime joys that will enthrall us:

*Some day the silver cord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing;
But, Oh, the joy when I shall wake
Within the palace of my King.*

In that moment, heaven's help will in this life will be complete.

Music from the Heart Is a Melody to God

JASON FOX

ACTS 16:25—*"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."*

JAMES 5:13—*"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise."*

EPHESIANS 5:18-21—*"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."*

COLOSSIANS 3:16—*"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."*

HEBREWS 13:15—*"Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name."*

Everything we do is to be done *"in the name of the Lord Jesus"* (with His authority, Colossians 3:17). If there is authority, there must likewise be instruction to govern. Silence is not permissive, and the Bible is very clear on that. As an example, why was Jesus not permitted to be a Levitical priest? Was it because there was specific instruction given on who could be a priest? As for Jesus,

Hebrews 7:14 states, *"For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests."* Silence is clearly **prohibitive**, not **permissive**.

Although Ephesians 5:18-21 is not dealing specifically with music within a worship assembly, it is helpful to note these verses. The command is found in verse 18; we are to *"be filled with the Spirit"*. The verses that follow contain five participle phrases. A participle phrase is the manner in which the command is to be carried out. Verse 18 tells us **what we are to do**, while verses 19-21 tell us **how we are to do it**. In these verses, music has a strong emphasis, but inherent within these participle phrases are limits on what constitutes acceptable music. **Singing** is the clear example, with the **melody being made *only* within the heart**.

Under the Old Testament, singing and the playing of musical instruments in worship are clearly handled as separate and distinct activities, and the use of one is not inherent within or authorized by the other (2 Chronicles 29:27,28). Before the time of King David, instruments of music were never used in the worship to God. It was David himself who introduced this innovation into the worship.

It is without doubt that instruments played a major role in the Old Testament temple worship. In contrast, their absence within New Testament worship is striking. Both Scripture and secular sources make no mention of instrumental music within the worship of the early church. All references to music within the church during this time and for hundreds of years afterward mention singing only, which is a regulated activity. That is, even though we can sing, we cannot sing whatever we want. Not only is there no mention of instruments of music made within Christian worship, there are no guidelines to govern their use, but there are guidelines for singing: psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, only.

It is clear that salvation was not to be found under that Old Testament system; it took the blood of Jesus to bring salvation to mankind. Likewise, the music of the church has been moved from what the apostle Paul describes as "lifeless instruments" (1 Corinthians 14:7) under a covenant that could not give life, to living hearts (Ephesians 5:19).

The physical elements of the Old Testament worship, (e.g., the temple worship, animal sacrifices, the playing of lifeless instruments, burning of incense, etc.) can be contrasted with the New Testament where Christians are the temple of God (2 Corinthians 6:16), musical melody is made within the living heart

(Ephesians 5:19), and the fruit of the lips as a sacrifice emanates as praise to God (Hebrews 13:15).

Christian music is no longer in the lifeless instruments of old, but in the living hearts of those who are the temple of God.

A Challenge to New Elders

JACK P. LEWIS

ONE WHO desires to serve as an elder in the Lord's church "desires a noble task" (1 Timothy 3:1 NIV). It is to service that one is chosen, not to a position of power, not to material benefit, not to prestige, and not to gratification of ego.

This service demands that each one look at himself. In Paul's words, "Take heed to yourselves" (Acts 20:28 NKJV). Ezra, returning from the Exile, had "prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). An elder should be an example to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). The gospel is the story of what Jesus began to do and to teach (Acts 1:1). That is certainly the right order of emphasis. Whether it be faith, dedication, personal behavior or teaching, an elder cannot expect the people to become what he is not. In modern terms, an elder pledges himself to be a role model to the congregation. He is in the position Paul described for himself when he said, "Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1 NIV).

He further says, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:9 NKJV). The emphasized word in the New Testament is "follow." One has to go ahead if he is going to be followed.

Some biblical duties, beyond being stated in the Bible, carry the specific introduction of the word "must." When my mother said, "You must go to bed," I did not understand that it was optional whether I did or not. The statements about elders both in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are specific. The elder must be above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7). The people an elder leads are the first judges of whether he is above reproach, though ultimately God is the final judge. If in the people's estimation he is blameworthy, he

has to accept that judgment. It does not matter what his desires and intentions are. He cannot lead those people.

If one has behavior skeletons in his closet that he is not willing for these people to know about, he will not be able to glorify the Lord as an elder of His church. If one has beliefs that he does not want these people to know that he has, he becomes a wolf in sheep's clothing, not a true shepherd of the flock.

The second item to notice is that an elder is the teacher of the Lord's people. To the elders of Ephesus the instruction was to take heed to all the flock to feed the church of God (Acts 20:28). Accompanying that statement are the immediate warnings about shepherds in the group who degenerate into being wolves instead of shepherds.

In Titus 1:9 we have a second "must" statement. The elder must hold firm to the sure word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine.

There is a warning. Teaching is a serious business. Jesus warned of the dangers of leading others astray (Matthew 18:6) stating that it is better to have a large millstone tied around one's neck and be cast into the sea (which would be certain drowning). There is the caution, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" (James 3:1). Elders will have to give an account to God for the souls they are looking after (Hebrews 13:17). If by behavior, influence or teaching they lead people astray, it is a serious matter affecting their eternal destiny.

Yet another task involved in this work that carries a "must" introduction is that of convincing those who oppose the wholesome teaching (Titus 1:9). One has to know God's Word in order to do that. The shepherd has to fight the wolf.

An elder is a person without authority other than the persuasiveness of the Word of God. He is not a general in the army who can command a thing to be done. While the New Testament urges the congregation to follow the leaders, he has no force to punish the disobedient. He is not an administrator in a corporation. He cannot make people do right. He can only teach them, persuade them and warn them.

To do their work, elders have the persuasiveness of the Christian personality. They have the teaching of God's Word that they are able to give. The congregation, however, has the choice of accepting or rejecting it. Each choice carries its consequences.

This is a task to be accepted willingly, not out of constraint. It is not a means of gain. It is not a chance to domineer over people. It carries, however, the greatest of blessings. It will be wonderful to come to the end of the way realizing that someone was nearer the Lord because of what the elders were, what they taught, and what they did. "Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).

"When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (1 Peter 5:4).

Winning Husbands "Without a Word"

NEAL POLLARD

IN 1 Peter 3:1-6, Peter begins his inspired advice to wives in a very unusual way. He elaborates on a wife's responsibilities to her husband, but it all grows out of a startling statement. These wives were to win their husbands "without a word" (v. 1 NKJV).

The Bible stresses the importance of using words wisely (Isaiah 50:4; Proverbs 15:23; Colossians 4:6). Repeatedly, the Bible urges wise, timely, appropriate words in dealings with others. Perhaps only eternity will reveal how many wives have said the right word at the right time, resulting in their husbands obeying the gospel or husbands being restored back to faithfulness as Christians.

Being the spiritual leader is the role God has given the man. How sad that there are many homes where the man has handed over this job to his wife! Would it not be wonderful if a sweeping revolution would roll through the churches, and every man in every home would assume his God-given role of spiritual leadership?

Many godly wives are trying their very best to help their families go to heaven, but what does a Christian woman do when her husband is not pulling his load? Although some women do not properly assist their husbands in maintaining a Christian home by attending church services, living out Christian principles, or being involved in the work of the church, it is normally the man who fails in this matter.

Notice what Peter says to encourage women who must be the only Christian influence in their homes—he says to set the right example (1 Peter 3:1-2). Incredibly, Peter does not give a laundry list of verbal admonitions for the wife to use against her husband. Peter says not to speak at all!

In His earthly ministry, Jesus continually stressed proper influence (Matthew 5:13-16). Before whom does a woman have a greater opportunity to shine her light than her husband? Jesus gives some positive assurances in Matthew 5. If a person sets the proper example, it will be seen and God will receive glory. Christ makes no promise that a person will convert everyone who sees his or her good works, but that is not the main point of doing what is right. God says to do right because that is what He want from you.

First Peter 3:1 says that a woman may win a disobedient husband by her behavior. This puts a lot of pressure on the wife, but God believes a Christian woman can succeed under such circumstances.

I knew a Christian woman who was married to a man who continually fought her about attending every service and begged her not to go. He threatened her when she did go, and on a few occasions she had to walk to the church building. Finally, the husband attended church services with her. Eventually, he not only obeyed the gospel but also trained to be a preacher. He was the local preacher at the congregation where I first worked as an associate and told me the reason he obeyed the gospel is that his wife never once missed the services of the church for him. If she had skipped services, he said that he probably never would have become a Christian.

However, for every dear woman like her, many more women have caved in to the pleas, pulls and the pressures of non-Christian or unfaithful husbands. Often, these men ask their wives simply to miss Bible study or a worship service once. They promise they will attend church services with their wives in return for their missing church services for them. Hoping for the best, these wives compromise and go against what they know is right. Such compromise will not bring the husband closer to Christ. What these actions tell a husband is that his wife's will can be conquered.

Peter tells these wives that their husbands are observing their behavior. Are they consistent? Are they convicted? Are they careful? First Peter 3:2 states, "They see the purity and reverence

of your lives" (NIV). Peter, in essence, says that disobedient husbands are won or lost by the examples of their Christian wives.

Peter says to exhibit the right attitude (1 Peter 3:2,4). Three qualities are urged by Peter in these verses relating to the wife's attitude: respectful behavior (v. 2), a gentle spirit (v. 4), and a quiet spirit (v. 4). This can result in a reverent, humble and peaceful attitude in the home. Imagine how difficult it is for a Christian wife to maintain a right attitude in the home when the husband is being disobedient to God's Word. However, attitude is apparently more effective than verbal admonition.

Attitude, whether positive or negative, is usually contagious. If a wife grows sour and bitter in the face of trial, she may never win her wayward husband.

Nothing hurts the case of one who is right more than bitterness. Paul says, "Let all bitterness ... be put away from you" (Ephesians 4:31 NKJV). Bitterness involves a spiteful, harsh and resentful attitude. Perhaps there is no greater test of character than acting right when being treated wrongly by the kind of mate Peter describes. This eliminates nagging, guilt-trips, threats or withholding of self. A good, cheerful, gentle, civil and pleasant attitude can accomplish great things (Proverbs 15:30). God's wisdom is, among other things, peaceable and gentle (James 3:17). This is what Peter is asking from the Christian woman in 1 Peter 3—an attitude that responds, not spitefully, but in kindness; not bitterly, but beautifully; not with gritting teeth, but with gentle tone; not sarcastically, but softly; not with a pout, but politely!

As Edgar Guest wrote, "Life's battles don't always go to the stronger or faster man, but sooner or later, the man who wins is the one who thinks he can." The attitude the Christian wife exhibits can have such tremendous influence on the disobedient husband.

Peter says to place the right emphasis on what is most important (1 Peter 3:3-4). It is so essential to have the right priorities in any home. Especially is this true in a situation where one mate is failing. Peter gives a contrast between the external and the internal, flesh and spirit, and the seen person and the hidden person of the heart. This makes sense since the man in such cases is obeying the flesh (Romans 8:5). What are Christian women to do when their husbands are "[living] according to the flesh [and setting] their minds on the things of the flesh"?

More than ever, godly women must keep the kingdom first in their lives. They should not compromise their convictions or morality

for their husbands. They should not compromise their commitment to God for their husbands. For the sake of their souls, the kingdom must be first in their lives (Matthew 6:33). What will a Christian woman gain if she gives in to a husband who pulls her away from Christ, even if she saves the marriage (16:26)? Is she willing to lose her soul to save her marriage?

Peter says to overcome the wrong motives (1 Peter 3:6). Peter mentions the motivation of "being afraid" in this verse. A Christian wife whose husband is not living right is prone to fears. "What if he leaves me?" "What if he loses all interest because I will not compromise for him?" "What if he gets mad?" These "what ifs" can greatly influence, either consciously or subconsciously, the decisions of the wife, but this is a sinful fear.

Addressing persecution later in the chapter, Peter counsels, "Do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled" (v. 14). Does this advice not apply to the wife of a disobedient husband? The Bible urges a fear of God over that of any man (Matthew 10:28). Satan wants godly women to live in fear of losing their husbands, but even if these women were to lose their husbands by being faithful to Christ (1 Corinthians 7:15), they still must choose God first.

In 1 Peter 3:1, the Word presents a trial—husbands who "do not obey the word"; a target—that they "may be won"; and even a technique—"without a word." Peter says to set the right example, show the right example, stress the proper emphasis and shun improper motivation.

Through patient, consistent Christian living, godly women may very well win their husbands to Christ or encourage them to again be faithful as Christians. However, it must be understood that this is not the top priority. If a wayward husband is converted or restored, wonderful! Yet, it might never happen. Christian women still must do what is right and necessary for them to go to heaven, and for that reason they must be faithful.

Persistent Christian living so often pays off in winning the lost. A woman has a much better chance of winning a wayward mate by staying true to Christ than she does by giving up or giving in. Continue in faithfulness (Revelation 2:10). Christian women in these situations are inspirations and examples to more persons than just their unfaithful or non-Christian husbands. They are a blessing to the church of which they are members. Never lose hope.

Where Are The WORD Men?

DAN R. OWEN

ONE OF the great questions that lies before churches of Christ is whether the Bible will continue to be preached authoritatively from pulpits in the years to come. This is a point of considerable concern because of the shift in emphasis in many of our educational institutions that train our ministers.

A few years back I completed a doctoral dissertation that involved, among other things, the stated curriculum objectives of the colleges of Bible in schools sponsored by churches of Christ. That study demonstrated that at that time almost no meaningful objectives were driving the programs in these schools. In other words, those training the ministers did not have a clear picture of what their graduates 'were supposed to be able to do when they graduated. In many cases, the course of study followed by those graduating from colleges of Bible had little relationship to one's becoming a responsible proclaimer of the Word of God.

In the Bible, the old "thus says the Lord" philosophy was followed by faithful prophets and evangelists. The prophets simply told people what God had said. They were not theologians, but messengers. The Lord Jesus spoke by His own divine authority, then sent out His ambassadors, the apostles, to share His authoritative message with the world. Ancient evangelists were told to teach others faithfully what Jesus and the apostles and prophets had said. They passed along a divine tradition that was given by inspiration to others. They did not create the message. They simply passed it on as faithfully as possible.

The Restoration Movement in America began as a call to return to God's Word and its precepts. Rooted in the restorations of Samuel, Hezekiah, Josiah and Nehemiah, the goal of restorationists was based soundly on the theological truth that people enjoy the favor of God only inasmuch as they try to submit themselves to His revealed Word. These basic values produced preachers dedicated to the careful study and accurate proclamation of the Word of God, the seed of the kingdom. Knowledge of the Word was highly valued among us because we understood that the Word was our divine guide and strength. So, where are the Word men today?

Today, people go to colleges of Bible and major in many different things. Some major in youth ministry, getting a plateful of

developmental psychology, educational principles, sociological studies, and a little Bible. Some major in counseling in order to help troubled marriages and families, but they learn little about the Word of God. Some major in theology, reading different theologians and understanding much about the history and development of various doctrines, but they have little biblical knowledge. Some Bible majors learn to research "the literature" and learn much about languages, archaeology and theories about the development of the text, but end up with precious little actual knowledge of the Bible text. Some are homiletics majors and become experts in various ways to communicate orally. They are great speakers if not men of the Word. Some major in church growth and become familiar with sociologically proven methods of increasing congregational numbers. Much of the curriculum for prospective preachers goes all around the Bible but does not find the Bible itself as its core.

A recent publication of ACU Press titled *God's Holy Fire* advances a philosophy that may explain why many young ministers are not so deeply committed to knowing and teaching the Word without compromise. The authors of this work have capitulated to naturalistic assumptions in their views of the origins of the text. They seem to accept readily the assumptions of form and redaction critics and take a much lower view of inspiration than did our forefathers.

If I have not misunderstood them, their approach to biblical interpretation is largely an existential approach, based more on feelings and experience than on a strictly literary approach to the text. The most telling reason for this seems to be their view of the text itself and its less than divine origin.

Those of us who do not accept naturalistic assumptions and naturalistic approaches to the text still believe in the divine inspiration of "all scripture." We believe that it is actually God-breathed and not just profitable or useful in some quasi-spiritual, pragmatic way.

As God revealed His law to Moses on Sinai, and obviously expected His people to understand it and obey it, so we believe He expects us to understand what Jesus and the apostles have said and do our best to obey their teachings. The Lordship of Jesus Christ means that He rules over our lives through the teachings of His revealed Word.

As Peter admonished his readers to remember "the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior" (2 Peter 3:2 NKJV), so we must admonish those who hear us. We are, as Ezekiel was,

watchmen for the people of God, giving God's warnings to the righteous and the wicked alike. Our job is to preach "the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2).

All this being said, where are the Word men, and specifically, where are the young men with a real passion for and dedication to the Word? Where are those people for whom a "thus says the Lord" settles every matter? How will we find young men who will dedicate their lives to the study and preaching of God's Word?

Churches and individuals can have a great influence in this matter. Preachers who have a passion for the Word should take young men in their congregations under their wing and share this passion, giving them a vision for preaching the gospel as Paul did with Timothy and Titus. Young men with such a passion need to study the Bible and biblical languages. They need to have the history and introduction and homiletics courses as well, but they need to emphasize the text of Scripture in their study. They need to memorize the Scriptures and be dedicated to the principle that every lesson derives directly from the text of God's Word. They need to be sure they are faithful to the large, overall messages of the books of Scripture and be sure to keep smaller passages in their true context. They need to preach and teach with the authority of Scripture, announcing the good news of grace and calling for obedience. Churches need to ask prospective preachers what they believe and why they believe it and expect them to give a "thus says the Lord" in their answers. Churches need to demand men of the Word from our preacher training schools and refuse to hire or support them if they are not men of the Word.

The future of the Lord's church depends upon its submission to the Word of God. This has always been the deciding factor in the relationship between God and His people. May God raise up more young men who will truly dedicate themselves to the proclamation of the Word! May God give new courage to our current preachers to proclaim the message of Scripture honestly wherever the chips may fall! May God give elderships the spiritual strength to demand biblical preaching! May God give us Bible professors who are more interested in equipping proclaimers of the Word than they are in acceptance with the wide, watered down mainstream of evangelicalism! May there be a great revival and restoration in our time because of a divinely empowered resurgence of true spokesmen for God!



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Mr Philemonrajah

P.O. Box 15, Arasardi, Madurai-625010

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