

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

There Is A Safe And Sure Spiritual Standard For Man To Follow

WHEN GOD IN THE BEGINNING had created the world, He had created everything in an orderly manner. The sun was created to rule the day and the moon was created to rule the night (Genesis 1:14-18), and that order still exists. When someone sows a particular seed he expects to see a plant grow from that seed of the same kind, because this is what God had intended from the beginning. (Genesis 1:12). There is a pattern in seasons, and we see that occur year after year without any change, from spring to summer to autumn and to winter. The earth continues to revolve upon its axis and rotates around the sun creating the sunrise and sunset. Without a pattern or standard we wouldn't know what to expect or to do. If there would be no rules and standards in this world, there would be a total chaos in every sphere of our living. We expect to buy our groceries and vegetables, etc. by a set standard of weight. What if every other grocery shop or vegetable seller set their own standard of weight and scale? When we buy land we have a set standard of measuring. A standard is that which is established by the authority as a criterion to assess or judge. If there would be no recognized objective standards, there would be confusion and chaos in our world.

In the same way an objective standard is absolutely crucial to properly ascertain answers to man's questions which pertain to

salvation from sin and eternal life in heaven. Man recognizes and accepts the presence of sin in him. The existence of so many religions and ways of worship of God to appease God proves this. Man realizes that he needs to be saved from sin to enter heaven where God is. But how do I know I am saved? How do I know I will have access to the eternal life in heaven?

Some people depend on their own feelings as a standard. "Because I feel it in my heart," they say. Their feelings, for such people, are the authoritative standard of their salvation from sin. Proverbs 16:25 says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." Man's own conscience cannot be the true objective standard for salvation. The conscience does not tell man what the truth is. One may live in all good conscience and yet be wrong. This was the case with Saul (Paul), as he himself admitted. (Acts 23:1). Conscience is the result of man's learning, and it depends on the source of its learning. If one learns wrong, he will believe wrong.

Then there are those who hold that dreams and visions constitute an objective standard for them. As some usually would state in their testimony, "Several years ago I was awakened in the middle of the night and saw an angel standing in the doorway where I was sleeping, and the angel spoke to me and said, "you are a child of God". Listen to the apostle Paul as he told the Galatians, "But even if we, or **an angel** from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8). Dreams and visions are simply not the true standard. One should not depend on dreams and visions or a "still small voice in the night" to give God's answer to one's salvation.

Many religious groups publish books which contains a set of principles or religious beliefs which they sincerely follow. Their worship and all of religious life revolves around the contents of those creed books. They fully depend on those creed books for their every spiritual question.

For many people these creed books are authoritative in all religious and spiritual matters. They regard such creedal statements as the revelation of God, and as a result they are little concerned about what the Bible actually teaches. They believe there is no need to read the Bible. Their entire faith depends on their creed books.

But who has the authority over all religious and spiritual matters? All authority inherently resides in God. Because God is the creator

of the world and of man. (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-3). It is He who by virtue of the fact that He is the creator has the right to stipulate conditions with which man must comply in order to be saved and remain saved. "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds." (Hebrews 1:1-2). God speaks to us today by His Son Jesus Christ. Who after accomplishing God's will for the salvation of man through His propitiatory death on the cross for the sins of the world, (1 John 2:2; 4:10), and His subsequent resurrection from the dead, before going back to heaven, told His disciples, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." (Matthew 28:18). Christ has been given by God ALL authority. In turn Christ has delegated His authority to His apostles, as they were guided by the Holy Spirit, in accordance with Christ's promise to them. (John 14:16; 16:13; Matthew 18:18; Acts 1: 5-8). These apostles along with prophets (men who were endowed by the Holy Spirit with miraculous gifts of prophecy) have revealed the will of God to man. (Ephesians 3:5; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16). So through the apostles and prophets the Scriptures are authoritative because they are God's word. The Holy Spirit of God so guided the writing of the Bible that the very words of the Bible are just as much the word of God as if God Himself were to speak from heaven that we might hear Him speak in an audible voice. Those who respect God and fear Him they follow only His instructions as He has stipulated them in His Bible.

So what does God want man to do to be saved? He wants all to believe in His Son Jesus Christ that He died for the sinners as the propitiation for man's sins. (John 3:16). Further, to those who believed in Christ, He commanded, through an apostle, to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**. (Acts 2:38). One must believe in Christ with whole heart, not half heartedly. (Acts 8:37). To repent means to change one's direction or to resolve leaving the old way and belief to follow the new. (Acts 19:18-19). And to be baptized means to go down under water, by the authority of Christ (Mark 16:16), to bury the old self and come out of the water to walk in the new life obtained in the Savior Jesus Christ through believing and obeying His command. (Acts 8:35-39; Romans 6:3-5).

The Bible and the Bible alone should be our standard in all

spiritual matters. How should we worship God. What kind of lives God expects us to live on earth. What are the things God wants us to follow to prepare ourselves to enter into eternal life of heaven. God has provided us every information we need in His Bible. The Bible is man's safe and sure spiritual guide.

THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

J.C. Choate

Lesson Eight

Worship Of The Church

THE CHURCH IS MADE UP OF THE SAVED. Its purpose is to worship and serve God through Jesus Christ. Paul said, *"And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him"* (Colossians 3:17).

There are three kinds of worship set forth in the New Testament. First, we read of ignorant worship. When Paul was in the midst of Mar's hill in Athens, he observed the many idols around him, and said, *"for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you"* (Acts 17:23). Just as there were those who worshipped ignorantly then, many do the same today. There are not only millions bowing down to idols and images, but many millions more are following various religious practices out of ignorance of the scriptures.

Second, the Lord's word speaks of those whose worship is vain. Christ said, *"And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men"* (Matthew 15:9). The majority of people worship in this manner today. They worship the Lord, it is true, but their worship is vain or void because it is according to the teachings and traditions of men rather than in harmony with the will of God.

Third, the word of God speaks of true worship, that which is in spirit and truth. We read the words of Christ, *"God is Spirit: and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:24). This is the only kind of worship that God will accept. This was true in the days of Christ and it is true in our present day. It is worship that is directed to God in spirit (in humility and understanding) and

in truth (as it is written). God does not force anyone to worship him, but those who worship him must do so on his terms.

1. They assembled to study. Although Timothy had been taught the scriptures from childhood (2 Timothy 3:15), Paul exhorted him as a young preacher, *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15). This would apply to all Christians and especially as they gather for worship. This is a time in which God speaks to his children through his word. In Acts 20:7 we read of Paul preaching to the brethren as a means of studying the word of God.

2. They prayed. After the people had obeyed the Lord on the day of Pentecost, we read, *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (Acts 2:42). Through prayer the Lord's people have the opportunity to speak to their Father in heaven. What Christian would think of assembling with other Christians for worship and not engaging in prayer?

3. They sang praises. Paul wrote to his brethren, *"speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:19). Also read Colossians 3:16 and Hebrews 13:15. There are two kinds of music. One is **vocal** and the other is **mechanical**. What kind of music does God want? He asks for vocal music. Paul says that we are to make the melody in the heart to the Lord. This eliminates mechanical music. The early Christians sang praises to God. Centuries later man added mechanical music, but God has not ordained it and God will not accept it. Christians cannot praise God with mechanical music any more than they can praise him with mechanical prayers.

4. They assembled to partake of the Lord's Supper. We have an example of this in Acts 20:7. In Matthew 26:26-28 and 1 Corinthians 11 we are taught to partake of bread in remembrance of the body of Christ and that we are to partake of the cup, or fruit of the vine, in remembrance of the blood of Christ. That we are to do even up to this day.

5. They gave of their money. Paul commanded the brethren in Galatia and at Corinth, *"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come"* (1 Corinthians 16:2). Also read 2 Corinthians 9:7.

These early Christians met on the first day of each week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2) to worship God. They were warned, *"not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:25). Christians today are to engage in the same acts of worship on the same day, and therefore have the same admonition. The worship of the church is so simple and to the point that many stumble at its simplicity. They think it should be long and drawn out with much tradition and formality, going through monotonous actions, the repetition of prayers, etc. But this is not so. God has revealed his will concerning worship and it is not given to man to alter it in the least. It cannot be added to or subtracted from without having the Lord's curse pronounced upon those who do so. God has spoken, and his people must obey. Then and only then can God be worshipped, praised, and honored.

(To be Continued)

In the Garden of Gethsemane

WINFRED CLARK

There are some spots on this earth that bring to mind some sad events. Surely the Garden of Gethsemane stands out in the mids of those who are children of God. This is the spot on this earth where our Lord prayed fervently. It is there that his sweat became as great drops of blood. Yes, Gethsemane stands out!

Take a moment to see what factors emerge from the scene at that place. You will find the record of it in Matthew 26:36-56. The central figure around which all else revolves is the Lord.

1. YOU WILL SEE HIS FOREKNOWLEDGE. Jesus knew exactly what to expect. All one has to do is go back to passages such as John 13:1. He knew his hour was come. He knew the time was upon him. He had even named the night (Matthew 26:31). Yes, he knew he was about to die. This is bound to have caused a burden.

2. YOU WILL SEE HIS FRIENDS. He has carried with him eleven men. Eight are left at the gate, while three others go farther into the garden. But, while he prays, they sleep. That seems so out of place! Surely they could watch for a little while! But they do not.

3. YOU WILL SEE HIS FEELINGS. He offered up "prayers

and supplications with strong crying and tears" (Hebrews 5:7). Yes, he had feelings too. He could grow tired, and hungry, just like we do. He can thus be in touch with our feelings (Hebrews 4:15-16).

4. YOU WILL SEE HIS FEAR. The Hebrews writer makes mention of this (Hebrews 5:7). No, he was not afraid of God; but he did have respect for what God had said. He would not carelessly handle the word of God. He would not approach his responsibility to that word in a flippant manner; and neither should we.

5. YOU WILL SEE HIS FAITHFULNESS. It is, "Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39, 42). He does not ask to be excused because he was the Son. He does not think relationship means release from responsibility. No; he will be faithful. **But what** will it cost? You know the answer to that, **and so do I.** It would cost him his life. He would have to go from Gethsemane to Golgotha, and then **to the grave.** That was an awful journey; but faithfulness would require it.

Yes, the garden of Gethsemane was a painful place, but visiting there by faith can be most profitable.

Do You Have Heart Trouble?

W.A. HOLLEY

"Thy heart is not right in the sight of God," said Peter (Acts 8:12-24).

Thousands of our citizens die from physical heart attacks each year. Many are alarmed because of this problem. Doctors, heart examinations, treatments, even open-heart surgery, represent efforts to correct various heart problems. We applaud all such noble efforts. We need to understand that doctors, medicines, surgery, and hospitalization represent God's gifts to sick and suffering humanity (Luke 5:30-32).

But there is another type of heart trouble mentioned in the Holy Bible. As the Bible uses the term HEART, what does it mean? "The word HEART is used in Scripture as the seat of life or strength; hence it means mind, soul, spirit, or one's entire emotional nature and understanding ..." (Cruden's Complete Concordance).

In the light of the foregoing definition of the Bible "heart," do you suffer from heart trouble? The Bible answer is YES, if...

(1) A sinful life indicates a severe case of heart problems. We shall quote: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders,

adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man ..." (Matthew 15:19-20). What is here needed is a heart that has been cleansed and purified through obedience to God (I Peter 1:22-25).

(2) One's heart is not right with God, if one's tongue is out of control. David the Psalmist said, "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity: who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words: they that shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not..." (Psalm 64:2-5). Jesus taught, "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 12:36-37).

(3) If you love the sinful attractions and allurements of the world, you have a serious heart problem. An inordinate desire for the "cares and riches and pleasures" indicates one's priorities are misplaced (Luke 8:11-15). Those who put their trust in things of the world, have forgotten God (I John 2:15-17; Hebrews 11:24-26) Demas made this fatal mistake (II Timothy 4:10).

(4) Real heart problems characterize one who is a busybody. Who are busybodies? Those who lead a lounging, gadding, gossiping, meddlesome life. Many can attend to everybody's business, except their own. Scriptures to read are: II Thessalonians 3:11; I Timothy 5:13; I Peter 4:15.

(5) A sure sign of heart trouble is found in one who possesses a low "flash point"—a temper, violent, and ready to explode. Such a person (man or woman) is headed for trouble because he always has his fighting clothes on, and his stinger out. Others hardly know how to deal with such a person because they cannot predict what his reaction will be! We suggest that Ephesians 4:31-32 be memorized, and its principles be applied daily.

(6) An overwhelming desire for 'a place in the sun' reveals a severe case of heart trouble. Diotrephes was such a person (III John 9-11). He seems to have been looking for power, honor, prestige, position. Jesus taught that the way to be great is to become the servant of all (Matthew 20:25-28). Greatness is not for sale in any department store—it must be earned. Some folk, if they cannot be in the lead, refuse to do any thing!! (Philippians 2:8; I Peter 5:5).

(7) Those who love money and other material things are suffering from heart trouble. It is the LOVE OF MONEY—not money

itself—that is the root of all kinds of evil (I Timothy 6:5-12, A.S.V.). Those who TRUST in their riches cannot go to heaven (Mark 10:23-27). Judas loved money so much that he was willing to sell Jesus for 30 pieces of silver—the price of a slave—\$15.00 in our money! (Matthew 27:3-9).

(8) Others suffer from heart trouble because they have an inordinate desire to be popular, wishing to please everyone, at almost any cost. Many possess no convictions, but seem to compromise almost any principle, if such will gain them favor. Peer pressure is far too important to many boys and girls (older people, too)! Here is where many girls lose their virtue, and where many boys and girls begin drinking, cursing, using narcotics, and smoking tobacco and marijuana, and the like (Proverbs 1:10-19). Joseph did not allow Potiphar's wife to seduce him (Genesis 39:7-16). Suggested reading is Ephesians 5:11; Galatians 1:6-10; Romans 15:3).

(9) Heart trouble afflicts those who have no love, compassion, and concern for the lost, and for the less fortunate. Jesus showed his compassion for the sick, the hungry, and for the lost. Can we ~ recipients of his grace - afford to do less? These works he did for the people to show that he also had power to save the souls of men (Mark 2:1-12). Do we love God so little, we fill our hearts and minds with filth, trash, and rubbish, instead of with the word of God? X-rated movies and pornographic viewing cannot build a strong and abiding faith. Faith comes by hearing God's word (Romans 10:17).

Read the Bible daily, spend much time in prayer, attend each service of the Lord's church, use your talents to the fullest extent, and stay busy doing the right things, and your heart can be right with God.

“Dull Of Hearing”

DEAN FUGETT

IN MATTHEW 13:15, Jesus accused the Pharisees of “dullness of hearing.” In the Hebrew letter, the Hebrew Christians were told that they were “dull of hearing” (Hebrews 5:11). In neither case did this mean that they needed mechanical hearing-aids. It was not a physical illness from which they suffered, but a self-inflicted spiritual malady. They simply refused to listen with understanding to the

things being taught that could have brought them to a closer relationship with God. They didn't want to hear anything other than that which they already believed!

Many today suffer from this same affliction. They refuse to even listen to something that is different from their present beliefs and opinions. They have already determined what they will believe, what they will listen to, and thereby have closed the door to any blessings that may come through the hearing of the truth of God (John 8:32). Some have concluded that there is no truth of which they are not presently aware and in which they are not presently occupied.

This prejudice has completely deafened many to any effort of God to convert them. They have concluded that they will not be judged for what they have not heard. In this they are willingly ignorant of the truth that they are accountable to God for all unused opportunities. This includes the opportunity to hear! Many are failing to avail themselves of the opportunity to 'hear' by forsaking the assembling of themselves together (Hebrews 10:24-25). Thus they fail to receive the exhortation that could be the very deciding factor in their external salvation.

This "dullness of hearing" is within the church as well as without. Note that Matthew's account was of the Pharisees (who "thought" they were righteous) and the Hebrew account is of Christians who were in the kingdom. In either case, when we refuse to hear or refuse to take advantage of opportunities to hear, we leave ourselves without excuse.

We should never become so foolish, prideful, or prejudiced in religion that we will refuse audience to anything other than that which we already believe. If we refuse to listen to another side and give critical examination to what we hear, we have become "DULL OF HEARING." That will condemn us!

"Wrong Is Always Wrong"

JOE T. SPIVY, SR.

"WRONG IS WRONG, even if you don't get caught. Let us remember that "The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3). Wrong is wrong, even if you do it for a good cause. The honorable purpose does not justify

a dishonorable deed or action. The end never does justify the means. All sin is transgression of the law (1 John 3:4).

Wrong is wrong, even if others are doing worse things. It will be of little comfort in the day of judgment if you should be lost, that others you knew did things which you considered to be worse than your own sins. Remember, 'The thought of sin is foolishness' (Proverbs 24:9).

Wrong is wrong, even if it does not bother your conscience. The conscience can be trained or educated to accept wrong doings, but even an honest sin or evil done in sincerity is sinful in the sight of the holy God. "... whatever a man sows, that shall he reap" (Galatians 6:7).

How true it is that wrong is always wrong. I am reminded of a young boy who skipped school to attend a steer show. The next day he had a note from his parents stating that he had been sick. A certain young girl missed school to go to town and buy a prom dress. She had a parental note the next day saying she had been sick and had to stay out of school.

A lie is a lie regardless of how it is "dressed up". A peanut is still a peanut, even if you dress it up in chocolate and sprinkle sugar over it. The fact that it has chocolate on it does not change the fact that it was and will continue to be a peanut. It matters not about the rhyme or reason for telling a lie, even blaming it on someone else, a lie is a lie and will remain such.

Lying is wrong and any sin not repented of (even a "little white lie") will keep a soul from heaven. Sin is always wrong regardless of circumstances.

"Come Back Home"

DON WILLIAMS

I HAVE JUST FINISHED READING Luke 15. I have read it many times before but once again I am impressed by its simplicity, and its statement of love for the lost. As I read this chapter, four words or phrases jump out at me.

Verse 11 - A **certain** man had two sons. Why are names given in Chapter 16, but **not** in Chapter 15? Why did Luke say he was a **certain** man? It seems to me that he is telling us that first, this was not just any man. It would take a special man to be willing to

forgive in the manner that he did. Secondly, the shift of importance is not on their names, but rather on their actions. The younger rebellious son lived in a terrible manner, but was forgiven by a marvelous, loving father.

Verse 13 - **riotous** living. Again, the word is not defined for us. Does it mean, as the elder brother suggests, that his brother has "devoured the father's living with harlots"? (15:30) Was the older brother only suggesting what he would have done, had he been in his brother's shoes? Perhaps, God does not define the word, lest we should think ourselves better than others when we forsake his way, but do **not** live in a riotous manner. A person is **equally lost**, whether he drowns in the "low life" of sin, or simply forsakes Christ and the church, and willingly dismisses himself from the Christian life he once lived. He may live a "good" life in the eyes of his neighbors, being kind and nice—yet still be just as lost as the one who becomes the "scum" of the earth.

Verse 18—sinned against heaven and before **thee**. When the young son realized where his sinful life had led him, he was ready to return home. He would come, asking forgiveness of God in heaven and also his father on earth. He had sinned and brought shame on both fathers—Almighty God and his earthly father. Is it not the case today that **public sin** brings shame and reproach to Christ, **and** the people that make up his Church? Thus, there is a need for public confession of wrong when one "quits" church, lives in the "world," and this decides to come back. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed." (James 5:16). The final words - Verse 24 - **dead - alive - lost - found**. They describe where the younger son once was, and where he now is. The son was lost to the father—the father did not know where he was living, and it was as if the younger son were dead—in fact, he could have been dead, for all the father knew. Now, though, he was found ~ he was back home, sleeping and eating where he ought to sleep and eat. He was alive and happy once again in the security of his home.

Are you **lost** today as a former Christian, having allowed sin to cause you to drift away from Christ and his Church? Please realize that there is **no hope** outside of Christ. Come back home and be **found** in Christ and in His church once again, being alive and active in his work. Come back to him, repenting and confessing your sins. We'll be glad to pray with you and for you for your

forgiveness. **COME BACK HOME!**

Dear friend, are you **lost** today, having never become a follower of Jesus? Then, today, while you have time and opportunity, come to Jesus believing in his word, repenting of your sins, confessing your faith in Jesus, and being baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Dear friend, **COME HOME TODAY!**

An All-Seeing Eye Watching You!

DILLARD THURMAN

PETER WAS REFERRING BACK TO Psa. 34:15, when he wrote: *"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."* (1 Pet. 3:12). We are prone to accept only that which is visible; and since we cannot see God watching, we are unmindful of His constant surveillance! So, it is difficult for any of us to remember always that there is an all-seeing eye watching our every act at all times! Yet we're told: *"The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of earth."* (Psa. 33:13-14). As the Omnipotent and Omniscient Creator of the Universe, He sees and knows all that takes place in the world! The Wise Man was conscious of this spiritual truth, and wrote: *"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."* (Prov. 15:3). There is no possible way to escape this all-seeing Eye of God! Job emphasized this: *"For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings."* (Job 35:21). Since God knows all our goings, we should be acutely aware of this, and live accordingly! We should have the same conviction as Hagar, in saying, *"Thou God seest me!"* (Gen. 16:13). Are you conscious of this, as you plan and proceed in your daily affairs?

GOD SEES AND READS US CONSTANTLY!

Our God, the Creator, made the whole universe, and controls the movement of every planet therein! His terrible wrath was shown against His people who turned from Him in disobedience! Should we marvel that He watches and knows of our thoughts and deeds? *"Hell and destruction are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?"* (Prov. 15:11). Man becomes

utterly foolish in thinking that he can fool God, and hide his sinful behaviour! *"Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?"* (Isa. 29:15). Three times Jesus said, *"And thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."* (Mt. 6:4, 6, 18). Israel trusted God to be ever watchful over them, and praised Him in psalm: *"He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."* (Psa. 121:3-4). God still watches over and cares for us!

Though many of these passages are so well known by Bible students, yet how much have they really influenced our personal lives? It is not enough to commit them to memory—these must also be committed to practice! The whole world must become conscious that our faith embraces a God that constantly cares for us! Are we conscious throughout every day that God is very near, regardless of where we may be, and that He is silently observing our deeds and hearing our speech? We can no more hide from God than could Adam and Eve in the garden! Before He asked, *"Adam, where art thou?"* (Gen. 3:9), God knew where Adam was, and what he had been up to! Even before He asked, *"What doest thou here, Elijah?"* (1 Kgs. 19:9), God knew why the prophet was hiding in the cave! God asked the two men questions, not for His information, but that they might take a personal inventory! God already held the record, but wanted them to face their predicament! Jonah was not hidden from God in the hold of the ship, nor yet in the belly of the whale! Man cannot escape from Him who *"neither sleeps nor slumbers!"*

HOW WILL THIS INFLUENCE OUR LIVES?

When the saints of God realize they are never alone, but are forever in the presence of God, they will act more like the children of God! When Christians are aware that they have the abiding presence of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, they also will *"walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."* (Eph. 4:1). Consciously walking under the surveillance of Almighty God will promote harmony in the church, love in the home, righteousness in the nation, and peace in the world! All bickering, gossiping and backbiting will disappear when we become aware that God Almighty is watching and listening! The soap ad reminds us: *"Dirt can't hide!"* But there is nothing that hides from God!

"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."(Heb. 4:13). I've often warned: "You can't pull the wool over the Lamb of God's eyes!"

A concerned mother realizes she can't be by the side of a daughter while she's on a date: but if this principle is deeply etched in the daughter's life, the mother need not worry! If both the mother and daughter know that God is watching and seeing all, the daughter will return safely; regardless of the temptation encountered! There is no cause for worry when God rides beside her as a chaperon! If the husband and wife both share this spiritual knowledge, the vows are safe, regardless of how far they are parted; or for how long! The husband will be true to the marriage while he remembers that, though his wife can't see him, yet the Lord does! Though the wife may never know, yet God does know! The wife will still be faithful for this same reason! *"Thou God seest me!"*

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT OUR WORSHIP?

Before leaving His disciples, Jesus promised: *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* (Mt. 18:20). The Son of God sits as an unseen guest, a silent observer, in every worship service of His saints! He and His Father are watching! How do you think this should affect our spirit of worship when we gather? What is the appropriate topic of conversation for the hour? What will be the tenor of our talk? Will you be able to see greater reverence and more decorum? But take that to each item of worship, and notice the effect it should have on our worship:

When you attend a birthday party, how do you sing "Happy Birthday to You"? Then, how do we sing praises to One who is a Most Honored Guest in the service? Where will our thoughts be centered, knowing both God the Father and the Son are near, and watching all the proceedings? Can we sing "My Jesus I Love You" deceitfully, knowing He is standing by, and hearing all? Are we conscious of this as we assemble to worship?

"His ears are open to their prayers;" but do we think of this when prayer is offered in His presence in our worship services? Wouldn't this knowledge erase hypocrisy and vanity? Yet as we pray in an assembly, we stand in the throne room of God! If we live right, His promise still holds: *"Then will I hear from heaven. ..."* This will explain Paul's words: *"I will pray with the spirit, and I will*

pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."(1 Cor. 14:15). We can easily attain this plateau of worship when we become conscious that we stand in the presence of an all-seeing God: that He is observing all we do, and hearing all we say!

When we assemble for the Lord's Supper, it is to memorialize One who died for us! But are we aware that He is also present? He said, *"I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* (Mt. 26:29). Do we feel this close communion with the Lord as we remember His death by partaking of the symbols of His body and His blood? In the presence of the great "Heart Searcher," would we let our minds dwell on carnal things? Here especially, we should bring every thought into captivity! Saints eat of the bread to remember His body and drink of the fruit of the vine to remember His blood in a spiritual sense, and in that sense also, Jesus is there! How would it affect our giving if we realized that we were being watched by the all-seeing eye of God? He would know accurately how we have been prospered by Him, and would also know how we *"show the proof of your love."* Others may not know when we have not given as we should, but God always knows; and He it is who keeps the records!

KNOWING HELP IS NEAR!

Possibly no thought would add more zest to life and give it better direction than knowing that God is near, and cares for us! Peter exhorts us: *"Humble your selves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your cares on him; for he careth for you."* (1 Pet. 5:6-7). Just remember that God is really watching, and caring, every day! With the Psalmist, we can confidently say: *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."* (Psa. 23:4). God affords us that assurance, and it should be constantly in the minds of all them that love and trust Him!

Caring Enough to Cry

JOHNNY RAMSEY

IN LK. 19:41 IS ONE of the noblest views of Jesus, our Saviour:

"He beheld the city and wept over it." This was the city that *"received him not"* (Jno. 1:11) and the one that would ultimately shame and crucify Him (Heb. 12:2; Lk. 23:34). The only perfect One who ever graced this earth would be rejected, villified and mocked by the folk who just would not rush to the Lord's outstretched arms (Matt. 23:37). Jerusalem would not come to the Master that they might have life and that abundantly (Jno. 5:40; 10:10). Nothing short of tragedy could well be the epitaph on their spiritual tombstone! Living and dying in vain would be the result of poor decisions and vain existence that would find fruition in a desolate and hopeless temple (Matt. 23:38). Our blessed Friend could see all of this and weep for the shameful action of *"a gainsaying and disobedient people"* (Rom. 10:21).

Jesus cried because Jerusalem had been its own worst enemy in turning away from the blessings that were available. He had come to bring light for those in darkness, and they *"loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil"* (Jno. 3:19). Passages such as Lk. 1:70 and Jno. 1:5 point out the improper choice the Jewish nation made.

*O grant us light that we may learn
How dead is life from God apart;
How sure is joy for all who turn
To Him an undivided heart!*

When Paul, the resplendent ambassador for Jesus Christ, came to Athens and observed the rampant idolatry of that city, we read, *"His spirit stirred within him"* (Acts 17:16). How sad was the view of myriads bowing down before lifeless objects of their own making who could never hear nor bless nor help! Tears should flow today, as well, for millions who worship money, technology, education, pleasure and religious leaders rather than the Creator. The object of our devotion should be the One who *"is from everlasting to everlasting"* (Psa. 90:1-2). Truly, *"the eternal God is our refuge"* (Deut. 33:27).

Ezekiel and Jeremiah also shed tears for the people of their day. Because of Judah's lethargy, those valiant prophets were deeply grieved. Jeremiah's tears flowed because no one really cared that captivity had arrived, just as he sadly predicted. In Lam. 1:12 he asked the haunting question, *"Is it nothing to you?"* In Ezek. 8:17 that fiery preacher of repentance was constrained to rebuke, through tears, a flippant society: *"Is it a light thing to you, all who*

work abomination?"

The great, and often unsung, heroes of the restoration movement were men who often wept as they viewed the tyranny of Rome, the insipid nature of Protestantism and the uselessness of atheism. They cried out against indifference and stood up for Truth in the darkness of the ages. Their tears became firm resolve that resulted in an incessant appeal to, "Go forward, back to the Bible!" Their tears enhanced their vision in things sacred and divine as they considered "*the days of old*" (Psa. 77:5) and walked "*in the old paths*" (Jer. 6:16). Do we, today, really care? Have we shed any tears lately for the ancient landmarks? Do we care enough to cry? In a familiar hymn by Timothy Dwight we find these challenging points regarding the Lord's cause:

*For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.
Beyond my highest joy,
I prize her heavenly ways.*

May God help us weep over proper values.

Amazing GRACE

ANDY ROBISON

LONG BEFORE JOHN NEWTON penned the poem now known so widely in song, God's grace was amazing and prospering mankind.

When God's wrath was rightly kindled to destroy wicked mankind, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8 nkjv). Although Israel repeatedly rebelled against God (Exodus 32; Numbers 14:22), grace allowed a covenant (Exodus 34:9-10; cf. Jeremiah 31:2).

Over and over again, God spared "stiff-necked people" (Exodus 34:9) because of His plan and promise. He acted for His name's sake (Ezekiel 20:9, 14, 22, 44). God's preservation of mankind in general and Israel specifically was not deserved by their deeds. God's character of grace and mercy (Exodus 34:6; Nehemiah 9:17) prompted Him to spare them. You see, He had an ultimate goal in mind.

"Before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20), God ordained Christ to come. This sinless Deity in the flesh (John 1:1-3, 14) would be a fitting sacrifice to bear "our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). But God wanted to wait for the "fullness of the times" (Ephesians 1:10) to fully reveal His eternal purpose (3:1-6, 11). So He had to propel mankind past destruction (which He did in preserving the lineage of Christ in Noah - Luke 3:36) and maintain that genealogy despite the disobedience of Abraham's descendants, through whom all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3).

The Old Testament is a series of God's interventions to keep moving history along toward Christ (cf. Galatians 3:24-25). This was all despite man's evil and most definitely not because of any warrant through righteousness. Sin is man's perpetual problem (Romans 3:10-23). It separates him from his holy Creator (Psalm 5:4; Habakkuk 1:13; Isaiah 59:1-2). Before God made man, He knew He would have to exercise amazing grace to preserve a relationship with him. At the expense of great suffering, He did.

This grace is available for "all men" (Titus 2:11), rather than a supposedly predestined few. Still, availability does not equal universal application, but it is now appropriated through conditions of an obedient faith (Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 1:5; 16:26).

Somehow, in this great scheme of redemption, God managed to show ultimate love for people still sinning (Romans 5:6-10). Saved from a useless life of fulfilling lusts (Ephesians 2:1-3) - ending in a torturous, eternal separation from God (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) - men can now live abundant (John 10:10), contented (Philippians 4:10-13), renewed and purposeful (Ephesians 4:17-24) lives, ending in eternal bliss (1 Peter 1:3-4). And it all came by the free gift (Romans 5:15-21).

God remained "just" while becoming the "justifier" (Romans 3:26). "A wretch like me" can know holiness and see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14)! Amazing. Simply amazing.

OBEDIENT Faith

WILL HANSTEIN

FOUR TYPES OF FAITH ARE mentioned in the Bible. The first is a miraculous faith, which was capable of casting out demons

and moving mountains (1 Corinthians 12:9; Matthew 17:20). The second type of faith is a faith born out of personal conviction (Romans 14:22-23). The third type of faith involves a mental acknowledgement that God exists and that Jesus is who He claims to be (Mark 1:23-24; James 2:19). The fourth type of faith saves our souls (John 3:16). This is a complete trust in God and His commands to the point of complete obedience (Hebrews 11:1-6).

James described this fourth type of faith in great detail. He offered the example of Abraham as having a true, saving faith (James 2:21-24). God promised Abraham he would father a son in his old age (Genesis 18:1-15). God fulfilled that promise with the birth of Isaac (21:1-8). However, God then told Abraham to sacrifice that son (22:2). Abraham took Isaac and attempted to sacrifice him as God commanded. But God stayed his hand, and Isaac was spared (vv. 9-14).

James, through this example, showed how belief and works (the response to God based on that belief) are inseparable. Abraham's great faith was predicated on his action of sacrificing Isaac (James 2:21). He was justified because his faith involved action, not belief in God alone.

Faith without action is dead and useless (James 2:17, 20, 26). Stated another way, faith without action is incapable of accomplishing its desired tasks as a dead body is incapable of accomplishing its desired tasks. If Abraham had believed God's Word but never laid Isaac on the altar, his faith would not have been faith. It would not have accomplished the tasks Abraham needed it to perform, namely justification and righteousness (vv. 21, 23).

Our faith has a specific task it should perform as well. John 3:16 states clearly that faith in God leads to salvation. This is not the faith that demons have, which is a simple acknowledgment that God exists. Like Abraham's faith, our faith should manifest itself in *doing* what God commands. It is not simply belief, but action. Because faith without works is dead (incapable of accomplishing its desired tasks), belief without action is incapable of performing its desired task of saving the soul.

"What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" (James 2:14 nasb). The obvious point James was making is that belief without responding to the commands of God in trusting obedience cannot save the soul of anyone. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys!

The HOLY SPIRIT in the Life of the Christian

JAY LOCKHART

WHILE GROWING UP IN THE 1950s, I did not hear much about the Holy Spirit. Perhaps this was because some of our religious neighbors believed baptism in the Holy Spirit was for every Christian and miracles like those performed in the days of the apostles, including speaking in tongues and miraculous healings, were still being performed in our day.

We rightly rejected this point of view, but we were more comfortable talking about God the Father and Jesus the Son than we were about the third Person in the Godhead: the Holy Spirit. However, in more recent times our brethren have talked more freely about the Holy Spirit, especially in the life of the Christian.

It should be noted that in the book of Acts when one became a Christian, the Holy Spirit never came directly to him announcing the terms of pardon or that he was saved. There was always a human intermediary between the Holy Spirit and the alien sinner (see Acts 8:26-40). The treasure of the gospel is in "earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7 nkjv), and in order to be saved, one must hear and obey the gospel (Romans 1:16; 6:17-18). Our emphasis here, however, is not on the Holy Spirit and the alien sinner, but on the Holy Spirit and the Christian.

In regard to the Christian, the New Testament speaks of "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38), which Peter said will be received by those who repent and are baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins (see Acts 2:38-41; 8:36). A parallel passage shows that this gift is not salvation but the Holy Spirit Himself, who dwells in the Christian (Acts 5:32; see also 1 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:9).

The question often discussed among brethren is how the Holy Spirit dwells in Christians. Some have said it is an actual indwelling while others have said it is an indwelling only through the Word. Because those on both sides of the issue have, in most cases, dismissed any miraculous powers accompanying this gift, they have not thought it necessary to be divisive over the issue.

By this gift, the Christian is "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13), and this gift "is the guarantee of our inheritance" (v. 14). The word "sealed" carries the ideas of being "genuine" (as the seal on a legal document), "secure" (as the seal

on the tomb of Jesus - see also John 10:28-29; 1 John 1:7-9; 1 Peter 1:3-9), and "finished" (as the field bought by Jeremiah was sealed - Jeremiah 32:10).

Other things related to the Holy Spirit and the Christian include being led by the Spirit and the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God (Romans 8:14-16). These two things are done through our compliance with the written Word of God. Additionally, the Holy Spirit is involved with the Christian in bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), resurrecting our bodies (Romans 8:11), putting to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13), helping us to pray (vv. 8:26-27), and strengthening us to accomplish God's work (Ephesians 3:14-21). To limit these things to the written Word is to go beyond the teaching of Scripture.

In the Bible, the power of God is often in evidence by the Spirit of God (see Zechariah 4:6). The Spirit can act within the will and nature of God to do anything God wants Him to do. God may use the Spirit in providence and answered prayer if He chooses to do so. We should be willing to say anything about the Holy Spirit that the Bible says but reluctant to limit the Spirit where the Word of God does not limit Him. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out" (Romans 11:33).

PROPHET, PRIEST & KING

J. RANDAL MATHENY

THE OLD TESTAMENT gives examples of the anointing with oil of prophets, priests and kings. As the Messiah, the Anointed One, Jesus gathers in Himself these roles.

As Prophet, He brings God's *revelation*, fulfilling our need for knowledge of God and His plan. As Priest, He brings God's *reconciliation*, fulfilling our need for forgiveness to return to His presence. As King, He brings God's *reign*, fulfilling our need for power to do His will and serve Him acceptably.

A prophet represents God to man, serving as God's spokesman to deliver His word to His people. Jesus calls Himself a prophet (Luke 13:33), but He is far greater than the Old Testament prophets because He is the Son of God (Hebrews 1:1-4). He is the Word (John 1:1), the expression of divine thought, revealing the mind of God.

His example also reveals God's character. Even His blood

speaks, proclaiming the better way of forgiveness over vengeance (Hebrews 12:24).

Jesus insists that His teaching is not His own but comes from the Father who sent Him (John 12:49). His teaching is now complete; nothing more needs to be added, and it remains as the Spirit's revelation to man today.

A priest represents man to God, offering sacrifices to atone for his sins. Israel's priests offered animal sacrifices, but Jesus offered Himself. His sacrifice on the cross was complete, but as priest He continues to intercede for His people.

The letter to the Hebrews presents Jesus as the supreme High Priest whose office provides motivation to faithfulness (Hebrews 4:14). With the single sin-offering of Himself, Christ once for all provided atonement for sin (9:26). He is the "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5 NIV84).

A king wields supreme authority in his kingdom and holds power over his subjects for their good if he is a benevolent monarch. Jesus was given and retains all authority (Matthew 28:18). The title "Lord," given to Him in the New Testament, testifies both to His divinity and His sovereignty. Although His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36), He exercises authority over the world and sends His subjects into the world to proclaim His reign (17:18).

One of the great dangers in the kingdom comes from those who "pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 4 nrsv). He "is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and the Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15).

As prophet, Christ leads His people; as priest, He acquires them and restores them to God; as king, He keeps and empowers them to do the will of God.

Repentance & SALVATION

JUSTIN ROGERS

REPENTANCE IS UNIQUELY SUITED to human beings. It is the act whereby we acknowledge guilt and resolve to try again. Repentance is the opportunity for a second chance. Although the Bible assigns to God the emotion of repentance (e.g., Genesis 6:6), it is merely anthropomorphic, for the Bible teaches that God "is not a man ... that He should repent" (Numbers 23:19 nkjv; cf. 1 Samuel 15:29). Man, by

contrast, must learn to repent. As we seek to become like God - holy and perfect (Leviticus 19:2; Matthew 5:48) - repentance is an essential step in our salvation.

What Is Repentance?

Repentance in the Bible can be emotionally motivated, in which case it refers to "remorse." The Hebrew term *nacham* and the Greek term *metamelomai* capture this emotional aspect well. After God's instruction, Job felt remorse, declaring, "I abhor myself, and repent [*nacham*] in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). Judas felt remorse for his betrayal of Jesus (Matthew 27:3).

Repentance can also be intellectually motivated. The Hebrew term *shuv* implies a change of course, a conscientious decision to turn around (Jeremiah 3:14; Ezekiel 14:6). The Greek term *metanoeo* means "to change one's mind." This is the term translated "repent" most often in the New Testament (Matthew 3:2; Acts 2:38).

Repentance and Salvation

In the New Testament, repentance is connected with salvation in two ways. First, repentance *precedes* baptism (Acts 2:38). One cannot receive forgiveness without "godly sorrow," which leads to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). In Acts 3:19, the two imperative verbs - translated "repent" and "be converted" - signify a change of mind (*metanoeo*) and a change of direction (*epistrepho*). Repentance prepares the heart for baptism and for a life of righteousness.

Second, repentance in the New Testament is necessary *after* baptism. No one can live a sinless life, even after baptism (Romans 3:23). It is possible to "fall from grace" and to lose one's salvation (Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 3:12). Believers in such danger must repent of sin (2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 6:1), and we must "bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matthew 3:8 esv; cf. Acts 26:20).

Who Must Repent?

Repentance is necessary both for sinful individuals and for sinful congregations. Five of the seven churches of Asia were told to repent (Ephesus, Revelation 2:5; Pergamum, 2:16; Thyatira, 2:21-22; Sardis, 3:3; Laodicea, 3:19). Failure to repent for these churches would have resulted in a loss of status and of salvation (2:5).

Individuals also must repent of sin. No one can receive forgiveness without repentance (Acts 17:30). There may be a point at which a sinner becomes hardened to repentance and cannot be restored (Hebrews 6:4-6). But the Lord waits patiently for all men, "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

