

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## Editorial

### What Does the Bible Teach?

*"Blessed Be The Lord, Who Daily Loads Us With Benefits"*

A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR to all readers of The Bible Teacher. Isn't it wonderful to know that there is a God, Who daily loads us with multiple blessings! (Psalm 68:19). The air we breathe, the sunshine we enjoy and rain that pours from sky; there are all kind of seasons, night and day. Think of how much vegetables and fruits and meats that are consumed by us humans each day globally, and nothing goes out. It is simply mind boggling! Isn't? Sure man grows vegetables and fruits and raises animals for food. But God provides sunshine and rain and seed and everything else necessary. He empowers seeds to come out of the earth with another body and to be fruitful. Genesis 1:11 reads, In the beginning when God had created all things, He had said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth, and it was so." All kinds of vegetations on earth were created by God to yield seed after their own kind, so that they may continue to reproduce ever after. And the same was true of all kinds of living creatures, including man. (Genesis 1:20-28). Not only had God created all things in the beginning, but He continue to sustain and maintain them by supplying their needs to live. Thanks be to God Who daily loads us with benefits.

Today we are living in a world of science and technology, where we have all kinds of gadgets and machinery to make our daily

living most comfortable and enjoyable. Communication has become so easy and accessible with the availability of cell phones. Television has brought the world into the living rooms of people. Then there are computers, washing machines, air-conditioners, cars, aero-planes, etc. all of these things have added speed and comfort to our daily living. Sure, all these things were made in factories or in places of manufacturing by men of intelligence. But think! Who gave man the wisdom and intelligence to make or produce such marvelous things? And who created all the materials from which man obtain iron, steel, brass, aluminium, copper, glass, etc., etc. from which all components of all machinery is made? Is it not God, Who created all things in the beginning? (Genesis 1). Man makes things by God-given intelligence and ability out of the things God had created in the beginning. Why is man, unlike animals, whom God has created, so much intelligent and capable that he is able to think, discover and invent and make such wonderful things on earth? Because the Bible says, God had created man in the beginning in His own image and in His own likeness. (Genesis 1:26, 27). Man is intelligent because God is intelligent, after whose likeness and image man was created by God. Writing about God, the Psalmist exclaimed, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon, and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:3, 4). At Psalm 19:1, he wrote, "The heavens declares the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork." When a surgeon performs an intricate surgery, he does that with God-given intelligence and ability, with the instruments and equipments that were made with materials God had initially created and made available. When I swallow a medicine to get well, I think of God who has made all ingredients, minerals, and chemicals out of which man with his intelligence and research made that medicine. All credit for all things, in fact, goes to God. **Who daily loads us with numerous benefits.**

Yet, God's benefits or blessings are not limited to man's physical needs alone. Since man is two parts, as God had created him in the beginning, body and soul (Genesis 2:7). Because of His love for mankind, God came down on earth from heaven, in Jesus Christ, to provide man the way of salvation from sin and to make man worthy of heaven. Jesus taught, "Man shall not live by bread alone,

but by every word of God." (Luke 4:4). He also said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6). Later, the apostle Paul wrote, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Timothy 1:15). When God in the beginning had created man, man was without sin. But by his disobedience to God's commandment as man became sinful, man needed a redeemer. Jesus Christ was sent by God from heaven to fulfill the role of a redeemer for man. To redeem man from sin, God allowed Him to die on a cross and thus to become the propitiation for sins of man. The Bible says, "For He made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21) He is, by His sacrificial death, the propitiation for the sins of the world. (1 John 2:2; 4:10). When anyone today comes to Christ by believing in Him and obeying His commandment, he/she becomes worthy of entering heaven to live with God forever. (John 3:1-5; Mark 16; 16; Acts 2:38).

It is too wonderful to know that we have a God who not only created us, but continues to provide us with our daily needs. We are experiencing His providential love and care every day in our lives. He is our spiritual Father, and is not a respecter of persons. He loves us all so much that He was willing to even die for us, instead of us, to save us from the consequences of our sins. It is written in one place in the Bible, "That though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9). May we learn to be always mindful and thankful and grateful to our Father in heaven for His love and benefits with which He loads us daily.

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## THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

**J.C. Choate**

*Lesson Five*

# Name of the Church

IF THE CHURCH IS TO BE scriptural, then it must have a scriptural name. However, there are many man-made churches with many man-made names and titles. How did these come about? Some

of these names were given to honour their founders, such as "Lutheran." Some of them exalt a doctrine such as baptism or a method of doing the Lord's work. Some of them glorify a day such as the day of Pentecost or the Sabbath day. Still others place emphasis on the form of government by underlining the work of the presbyters of the church. But all of these, and any others that might be mentioned, take all of the glory, praise, and honour that belong to Christ, and give it those names, titles, and descriptions that have originated with men.

Man-made names and titles are wrong for several reasons. First, they cause division. They make distinctions where God did not intend distinctions to be. They separate people. They oppose the very prayer of Christ as recorded in John 17 when he prayed that we might all be one. Second, they are condemned in the Scriptures. In 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 the Apostle Paul showed his brethren the error of wearing the names of men, thus dividing up into parties and sects. Third, the names of men are substituted for the Lord's name. Yet, we read concerning the name of Christ, *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). Fourth, man-made names and titles are misleading, confusing, and create the wrong impression among unbelievers. They cause unbelief. Fifth, they will cause all who wear them, and all of those who are turned from Christ because of them, to be lost. For these reasons, they are wrong and sinful.

As to the church, Christ promised to build it (Matthew 16:18). It is said that he purchased it with his own blood (Acts 20:28), that he was the saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23), and the head of it (Colossians 1:18). It is only natural that it would wear his name to honour its founder, builder, saviour, and head. So when Paul wrote to the church at Rome, and sent along the greetings of the congregations in his area, he said, *"The churches of Christ greet you"* (Romans 16:16). Then in speaking to the church at Corinth, he said, *"Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually"* (1 Corinthians 12:27). But since the body is the church (Ephesians 1:22,23), he was simply talking about the church of Christ. It is also called the church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 20:28), the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9), the kingdom of Christ (Ephesians 5:5), the kingdom of his dear Son (Colossians 1:13), the kingdom of our Lord (2 Peter 1:11), the church (Acts 13:1), the

church of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15), the church of the Firstborn (Hebrews 12:23), etc.

So the church is not called by any one exclusive name or descriptive phrase. At the same time, it should be remembered that that which belonged to God belonged to Christ and vice-versa. Also, those names all refer to the church that Christ built. If it is not the church of Christ, then whose church would it be? Furthermore, with all of these names and descriptive phrases of it, it would seem that one would really be desirous of getting away from the scriptures to have to choose another name for the Lord's church. But let us stay with the Bible and call the church what the Bible calls it. Then we will be right.

As to the names of the members of the church, the scriptures make that clear also. To begin with, the Prophet Isaiah said that God would give his people a new name (Isaiah 62:2). That name was borne by Paul many years later (Acts 9:15), but it was not to be given until the Gentiles had had an opportunity to obey God. All of this was fulfilled in Antioch of Syria when the disciples were first called Christians there (Acts 11:26). Later, we read where Paul was preaching to King Agrippa, and he responded by saying, *"Then Agrippa said to Paul, You almost persuaded me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28)*. Finally, we read where Peter said, *"Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter" (1 Peter 4:16)*.

It is therefore plain that the followers of Christ in New Testament times were Christians and Christians only. The Lord would have us to be the same today. If we wear names and titles tacked on to the name Christian then that means we are not true Christians. The name Christian distinguishes one from the rest of the world and that is all the Lord requires.

In both the name of the church and its members, the name of Christ is to be exalted. Why? Because it is the family name (Ephesians 3:14,15), a name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9-11), and the name in which salvation is to be found (Acts 4:12). Therefore, we are to believe in the name of Christ (1 John 5:13), confess that name (2 Timothy 2:19), repent and be baptized in that name (Acts 2:38), meet for worship in that name (Matthew 19:20), do all in his name (Colossians 3:17), that we might have eternal life through his name (John 20:30,31).

With the foregoing in mind, surely no one could say that there

is nothing in a name. There is certainly no salvation in the names and titles of men, but those who wear them will be lost because of them. On the other hand, there is salvation only in the name of Christ.

(To be Continued)

## ***“Be Ye Stedfast”***

CLEM THURMAN

*“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).*

The church at Corinth had lots of problems. The apostle Paul had dealt with many of these in this letter. They had divisions, denominating themselves into different groups, and Paul shows that was wrong (1 Cor. 1:10-17; 3:1-9). Evidently some were seeking worldly wisdom, so Paul exhorts them to adhere to the “word of the cross” (1:18-25), showing that the power in that word is because God is the Author (2:1-15). They defended a brother who was guilty of fornication (5:1-13), they engaged in lawsuits against each other (6:1-11), they even tried to defend their own fornication (6:12-20). He answers questions about marriage relationships (7:1-40), and shows the importance of individual Christian liberty (8:1-13). He defends his apostleship (9:1-27), then discusses the problems they had regarding their worship (10:1-11:34). Their jealousy about spiritual gifts was discussed in chapters 12, 13 and 14. Some denied the resurrection, so he answered that (1 Cor. 15:1-57). Then follows the statement in our text,

It is easy to waver, especially when things get difficult and we feel threatened some way. So he says, *“Be ye stedfast, unmovable.”* James wrote on this subject, also: *“But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting; for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways”* (James 1:6-8). In other words, we are not to be *“quickly shaken in our minds”* (2 Thess. 2:2). We are always to *“stand fast in the faith”* (1 Cor. 16:13).

But then Paul adds, *“Always abounding in the work of the Lord.”* As distasteful as it seems to many folk, *“work”* is going to be the

basis of the final judgment (Eccle. 12:14; 2 Cor. 5:10). Jesus said, *"We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work"* (John 9:4). Why did God, through grace, make it possible for us to be saved through faith (Eph. 2:8-9)? Read the next verse: *"We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works"* (Eph. 2:10).

In closing, the apostle says, *"Your labor is not vain in the Lord."* When John views the certainty of death, he writes of the beautiful hope which is given to those who are in Christ: *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them"* (Rev. 14:13). The reason it is important for our works to be remembered, in Christ, is that our eternal inheritance is based on that. Peter stated that God, *"Begot us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you"* (1 Pet. 1:3-4). Let us, then, be steadfast in our work for the Lord Jesus Christ, for our labor is not vain in the Lord. He promised that.

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## *Friendship With The World*

DAVID H. WARREN

"FRIENDSHIP WITH THE world is in opposition to God," wrote James, the brother of our Lord. "Therefore, whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (4:4, all translations are mine).

### **The World Hated Jesus**

Perhaps Jesus Himself explained it best when His brothers wanted Him to accompany them to the Feast of Tabernacles held just six months before His death. "You go on," He told them. "My time has not yet come, but any time is right for you. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me, because I testify of it that its works are evil" (John 7:6-7). According to Jesus, the world at this time did not hate James or the rest of His brothers, for all of them at this time were friends with the world. Indeed, they were a part of the world, for at this time they did not believe in Jesus (John 7:5). They had nothing to fear in going to Jerusalem to attend the festival. But

Jesus knew that His enemies would be waiting at the city gates to arrest Him (vv. 1, 11), so He waited until the middle of the feast to enter Jerusalem (v. 14), after His enemies had given up and counted Him as a no-show.

### **What Is the "World"?**

The "world" in James 4:4 is the domain of the devil, the sphere of Satan. It consists of everything under his control, including planet Earth, for he is now "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31) and "the god of this present age" (2 Corinthians 4:4). "The whole world lies in the power of the Evil One" (1 John 5:19), including all the lost of humanity who ignorantly do his bidding.

Thus, friendship with the world is in reality friendship with the devil himself. But he is hardly anyone's friend, for he prowls the earth like a lion stalking unsuspecting prey (1 Peter 5:8). And he has but one goal in mind: to take as many people to hell with him as he possibly can.

### **Satan's Plan for the World**

Satan is no longer trying to win a war, for he knows that he has already lost. He already stands condemned (John 16:11). First he was kicked out of heaven and cast down to the earth, when he led a third of the angels (Revelation 12:4) in a futile rebellion against God.

"And there was a war in Heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he did not prevail, and there was no longer any place for them in Heaven. And the great dragon was cast down—the ancient Serpent, the one called the 'Devil' and 'Satan,' he who leads the whole world astray—he was cast down to the Earth, and his angels were cast down with him" (Revelation 12:7-9).

And then on earth, when Christ came to save mankind, Satan tried to thwart God's plan. But Christ conquered him through the cross and sealed his doom with the empty tomb. Filled with fury at this final defeat, Satan now awaits that place specifically prepared for him and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

Hell was designed for the devil and his angels and not really for any of us because God wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). God does not want any of us to be punished eternally with the devil and his angels (2 Peter 3:9).

But the devil has his own plan. Unable to strike back at God



directly, he now intends to hurt God in the only way he can—through His children! With the time that he has left on earth, Satan seeks to lead as many as he can away from God. This is his vengeance against God, his attempt to break God's heart.

"Woe to the Earth and the sea, because the Devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short" (Revelation 12:12).

### **The World Will Hate You**

Those of us who choose to follow Jesus and to be His friends must face up to the fact that we will be hated by the world just as Jesus was hated by the world. At the Last Supper, Jesus warned His disciples:

"If the world hates you, know that it first hated Me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, for this reason the world hates you. Remember what I told you: No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:18-20).

Likewise, Paul warned young Timothy: "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). True Christians can never really be friends with the world, for just as surely as the world hated and persecuted our Lord while He was on earth, so the world will hate and persecute all who follow Him.

### **In the World, Not of the World**

On the night before His death, Jesus prayed to His Father in behalf of His disciples:

"Now I am coming to You, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of My joy. I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the Evil One. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. Just as You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17:13-18).

Like Jesus, we Christians must live *in* the world, but we must never become a part of it. The people of this world are sexually immoral, greedy and deceitful (1 Corinthians 5:10). While living in

the world, we must keep ourselves "from being stained by the world," and this includes our speech (James 1:26-27).

More than that, we must refrain from falling in love with life here on earth. The apostle John wrote: "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world will pass away along with its desires, but he who does the will of God shall remain forever" (1 John 2:15-17).

As those who are *in* the world but not *of* the world, we must not only avoid the sins of the flesh but also never become so enamored with this life that we cannot bear to leave it behind, for one day the earth and everything in it will be burned up (2 Peter 3:10). We must "fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

### **Friendship With the World?**

One year before her death at the age of 39, Elizabeth C. Clephane (1830-1869) wrote the words to the hymn "Beneath the Cross of Jesus." In stanza 5 of the original poem (some hymnals have it as stanza 3 or 4), we find the statement "content to let the world go by." Those of us who are *in* the world but not *of* the world must be content to let the world pass us by, for one day it will pass away. And with Paul, we must be willing to say, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

But there is a sense in which we should not be "content to let the world go by." We are not of this world, yet Jesus has left us in this world. Why? We have already made our decision to follow Him. Why should we have to endure more suffering and temptation? Why should we have to face more hatred from the world? Why should we battle anymore with Satan?

Perhaps we are here because there is one thing we can do here in this world that we cannot do in the next. Only in this world can we build friendships with those who are still *of* the world in the hope that we can pull them away from Satan's grip. Jesus knew how to be "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Luke 7:34; 15:2). And no one loved them like Jesus, for He knew how to be a true

friend to those who were still of the world without becoming a part of the world Himself.

In being their friend, Jesus never compromised His faith and morals. James also wrote about this kind of friendship: "Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins" (James 5:20). This is the kind of friendship the world needs.

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## *PRINCE of PEACE*

JOHN GIPSON

IT WAS NIGHT. An ordinary night, I suppose. In towns and villages many were sleeping, but in the stillness of this night an announcement was made from heaven that was destined to change the world.

Out in the fields some shepherds were keeping watch over their flock. Luke tells us what happened. "An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests' " (Luke 2:9-14).

Isaiah's wonderful prophecy, uttered hundreds of years before, was now fulfilled. The Prince of Peace had been born!

### **The Desire**

In every good heart there is a yearning for peace. We desire peace from warfare and strife, repose from the constant rush of being here and there, peace from external forces, and relief from our internal conflicts. As Alexander MacLaren observed, "Sooner or later, the mad, whirling dervish of life will slow down, falter, and grind to an irresistible stop where the facts of unrest and soul disquietude must inevitably be faced."

Unfortunately, our desire for peace has often been frustrated by seeking it in the wrong places. Peace is not to be found in

human achievement, the pursuit of pleasure, the acclaim of many, the dulling of the senses through alcohol, or the cessation of labor. Tragically, in our search for peace we have neglected to hear the voice of the Prince of Peace.

### **The Refrain**

From the lips of Jesus we often hear the refrain, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you .... I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace .... Peace be with you .... Go in peace .... Your faith has saved you; go in peace .... Peace be with you!" Peace was the message of Christ. Paul declared, "He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near" (Ephesians 2:17). What a preacher! What a message!

Yet, in the midst of this constant refrain of peace, we hear Jesus saying, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).

### **The Misunderstanding**

If we have a problem with this apparent contradiction, it is likely that we do not understand the kind of peace Jesus had in mind. If we think of peace as always having an easy and tranquil life, we have missed the mark. Even the Prince of Peace did not enjoy this. We follow His eventful life through priestly hate and pharisaical invective until He is eventually crucified. Jesus bequeathed His peace to His disciples, but the record clearly reveals they did not have an easy time in the world.

Confused? Perhaps a word from Jesus will help. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). Did you notice? The peace Jesus offers and the peace of the world are two different things entirely.

The peace Jesus affords is not resting, dreaming or having nothing to do. Mark well the Master's busy life. Neither is this peace an exemption from temptation. Jesus was tempted, and so are we. Our life is described as a warfare, but we are provided with armor to engage the spiritual powers of evil. His peace does not mean that we are freed from trials or suffering. Think again of what Christ endured, and know that the servant is not greater than his Master. Jesus does not deceive us. He clearly states that in the world we shall have tribulation. Christ's peace doesn't grant immunity from injustice, hatred or the wrongs others may do to us.

## **What Jesus Offers**

Jesus offers peace with God. Mankind has no greater need than to be friends with God, but our problem is that our sins have separated us from Him. Into this breach steps Jesus making peace by the blood of His cross. He reconciles us to God! What a blessing! Paul says, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

Are you looking for peace within? Who among us has not known the searing pain of a guilty conscience? Yet peace is available. It is to be found through faith as our bodies are washed with pure water and our hearts are sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience (Hebrews 10:22). The apostle Peter cites the salvation of Noah and his family and assures us, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21 kjv). Christ brings us the gift of a clear conscience.

Jesus offers peace to a fragmented world. When our Lord came, a deep divide existed between Jews and Gentiles. Through His death, He broke down the dividing wall of hostility to make us all one (Ephesians 2:14). Truly, Jesus preached peace both to those who were far off and to those who were near. His peace is for all mankind and reconciles us with each other.

Jesus offers peace in the storms and trials of life. He warned His disciples that in this world they would have trouble but they could find peace in Him. All disciples therefore should take heart when they hear Jesus say, "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

In the words of Paul, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Have you found in Jesus your Prince of Peace? Life is not easy with its alienation from God, our troubled consciences, our conflicts with others, and the storms from without and within, but peace can be had. Isaiah's wonderful prophecy has been fulfilled.

# CREATION or EVOLUTION?

ERIC LYONS

YOU HAVE A CHOICE TO MAKE regarding the origin of the universe and everything in it. You can believe all matter popped into existence from nothing, or you can believe it was brought into existence by an eternal, spiritual Creator. In the scientifically advanced age in which we live, it has become popular to contend that cosmic and biological evolution are scientific while creation is illogical and unscientific. Many consider the Genesis creation account to be a myth while declaring the general theory of evolution to be a fact. What does the evidence actually reveal?

First, a study of the material universe reveals that all physical effects must have adequate causes that precede (or are simultaneous with) the effects (a truism known as the law of causality). We know that a paper airplane cannot carry an astronaut to the moon, nor can a fire extinguisher cool the sun. But what about the effect of the universe itself? What was its cause? Was the gargantuan universe caused by an explosion of a minute ball of matter or by an omnipotent Creator? Just as easily as you can know that a paper airplane is unable to transport an astronaut to the moon, you can know that naturalistic explanations are not adequate causes for the multiplied billions of galaxies that make up the universe. *God is.*

Second, from what we observe in nature, matter and energy are neither created nor destroyed. Scientists refer to this fact as the first law of thermodynamics. Atheistic evolutionists believe the universe began with the explosion of a tiny ball of matter several billion years ago, *yet they have never provided a reasonable explanation for the cause of the "original" ball of matter.* The fact is, a logical, *physical* explanation for the "original" ball of matter does not exist. The ball of matter could not have popped into existence from nothing or created itself. The only rational conclusion is that physical matter was *created* by Someone outside of the physical universe.

Third, evolution also contradicts what we know about the origin and reproduction of life. In nature, life comes only from life and that of its own kind (a scientific law known as biogenesis). If naturalistic evolution were true, life evolved from non-life billions

of years ago. However, no scientist has ever seen this happen, nor have they ever seen fish evolve into reptiles or reptiles into mammals. Once again, evolution contradicts the facts. The only logical alternative is to believe in the creation of life by a supernatural Creator.

The truth is, both heaven and earth reveal that "the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:3 nkjv). Rather, "the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them" (Exodus 20:11).

## Jesus Is Lord of Our Lives

JEFF A. JENKINS

THE ALL-CONSUMING GOAL in the life of Paul was to know Jesus and to become more like Him. In his letter to the Philippian Christians, Paul explained the goal: "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10 nasb). Paul was well aware that he had not yet reached the goal, yet he was always striving toward it (v. 12).

If Jesus is truly Lord of our lives and we are His subjects, this will be our goal as well. When the New Testament speaks of becoming more like Christ, it employs words like "sanctification" and "holiness." Certainly every child of God knows the importance of holiness, and all of us want to be holy. The question is how are we to become more holy? How can we become more like Jesus? In Philippians 3, Paul helped us with this. He admonished the Philippians and all who follow Jesus in three areas.

### Leave the Past Behind

Paul began by telling us that if we are going to become more like Jesus, we must let go of the past: "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead" (Philippians 3:13).

We must be willing to leave sin behind. We can never become all that God wants us to be if we continue living in sin. Paul said to the Romans that we must seek to rid our lives of sin (Romans 6:11-15). We must put off the old man and put on the new

(Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9).

We must also be willing to leave the guilt of sin behind. One of the reasons so many Christians struggle is that they are not certain of their salvation. They do not feel forgiven. When our God forgives, He forgets.

Think about the terminology Scripture uses to describe God's forgiveness: "For You have cast all my sins behind Your back" (Isaiah 38:17); "Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19); "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12); "'Come now, and let us reason together,' says the Lord, 'Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool'" (Isaiah 1:18).

Our God is described as the forgiving God who abundantly pardons (Micah 7:18; Psalm 103:3). The more we learn about God, the more we will learn about the meaning of forgiveness. The more we learn about God, the more we will be able to know that we are truly forgiven.

Here is one additional thought about leaving the past behind: If we are going to be able to grow in our faith and become more like Jesus, we cannot dwell on our past accomplishments. Many Christians live in the past and believe they can rest on their own pasts as well as the pasts of others: "My parents were such good Christians"; "When I was growing up, I never missed church"; "I used to be committed to Christ, but my life has changed."

In the early part of Philippians 3, Paul discussed his heritage and his past: "I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless" (Philippians 3:4-6). However, notice how Paul said he felt about all of his past accomplishments after meeting Jesus: "Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:7-8).

### **Lean on Proper Examples**

We must lean on the right examples. In this text, Paul spoke of this idea negatively and positively. There are some things and



some people in this life that Christians need to flee. "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things" (Philippians 3:18-19 nasb). Peter reminded Christians "to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

On the positive side are many wonderful examples that we can follow: "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us" (Philippians 3:17). We do not follow them because they are perfect, but because they have proved themselves to be faithful.

Later, Paul said, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Only those who are seeking to follow Christ are worthy of our imitation. We would all do well to find people who have lived godly lives that we can imitate as we walk through our own lives.

### **Look to the Prize**

We must look to the future. It is not enough just to forget the past. We must also focus on the future, the eternal future. Where we are going to be in eternity should be the highest priority in the life of every child of God. What matters most in this life is not how far we climb the corporate ladder or how much money we make or what kinds of cars we drive or how big our houses are. What matters most is our eternal destiny - where we will live in eternity.

Paul spoke clearly: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself" (Philippians 3:20-21).

The word Paul used here for citizenship (*politeuma*) is similar to our word "politics." Paul was saying that regardless of where we live, regardless of who rules over us here on this earth, our government is in heaven. We always follow God rather than man! It is true, brothers and sisters, that we are strangers and pilgrims on this earth (1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13). Like those faithful saints of old, we are looking for a better place, our homeland (v. 14).

As long as we are here, "we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). Jesus has prepared a place for

those who will become and live as His subjects (John 14:1-3). When Jesus comes again in the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), He will take us home to live with Him.

We seek to follow Him, to become more like Him, to be sanctified and holy. If we remain faithful in our lives, He "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (Philippians 3:21). What we spend our entire lives seeking will be bestowed upon us by a loving Savior. The goal of every child of God will become the prize received by those who are faithful to Him. Praise God for the help of Jesus in being victorious: "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

## ***PARENTING TEENAGERS— Which Battles to Fight***

BILL BAGENTS

CHRISTIAN PARENTS LOVE and want the best for their children. Christian children love and want to show respect to their parents. Despite these facts, parents and children do not always see eye to eye. Conflict often escalates as children move to adolescence. Wise parents know that some degree of conflict is inevitable. It can even be beneficial by offering opportunities for communication and growth.

Advice for parents abounds. Some people say, "Pick your battles" or "You can't fight every battle." Others say, "Show 'em who's boss. If you let them win, you've lost control." What is right? What is best? What works?

### **Avoid Extremes**

Wise parents avoid extremes. At one extreme stand the pacifists. They avoid conflict at all cost. They remember Romans 12:18, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" and 2 Timothy 2:24, "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel" (nkjv). But these parents forget Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," and Proverbs 29:15, "The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother."

God never meant for children to run the home. Even as they approach adulthood - or perhaps especially as they approach adulthood - older adolescents need to know that their parents care enough to

challenge ungodly behavior.

At the other extreme stand the warriors. They avoid even healthy compromise. To them, every disagreement is the ultimate challenge of their God-given authority. There is no room for discussion. They remember Proverbs 22:15: "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him." But these parents also forget verse 6. And they forget Ephesians 6:4: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." They forget that God never meant for our homes to be war zones.

Even if we parents know to avoid these extremes, how do we know which battles to fight? Which battles are too important to lose? Which matters are too insignificant to challenge? What principles can guide us?

### **Times to Fight**

We fight when not fighting would dishonor God. Truth is truth, good is good, and evil is evil. Isaiah 5:20 warns, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Godly values must be taught and defended. Remember Eli and his sons, particularly 1 Samuel 2:29-30 and 3:11-13. The problem was not that Eli did not try (2:22-25). It was that God found his effort insufficient. He did not take the stand he should have taken.

We fight when not fighting would show apathy - when not fighting shows a lack of love. Remember the terrible incident with Amnon and Tamar recorded in 2 Samuel 13. David knew what Amnon did. He knew how wrong Amnon's actions were. "But when King David heard of all these things, he was very angry" (v. 21). That's it. David was angry but inactive. He was angry but detached. And we know it cost him, his family and the nation of Israel.

We fight when not fighting would show lack of character. "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13). What is true of Christian living is true of Christian parenting: courage is essential. In this we see the wisdom of God's plan for two parents, united in mission. They support one another. When one wavers, the other bolsters both. Godly parents fight when not fighting means abdicating their role as parents, when not fighting diminishes their character or destroys their credibility.

Some people recommend to parents, "Fight only when you can win." Because of the character issue, we must disagree. Sometimes godly parents fight although they know they cannot win, at least not today. Positions are entrenched. Immaturity and pride are in play. Still,

they fight for godliness and truth. They fight because of what they would be if they did not.

### **Times Not to Fight**

Just as there are times when godly parents must take a stand, there are times *not* to battle with our children. Wise parents do not fight just because others have fought or do fight. A tremendously strong tendency is within all of us to reproduce or perpetuate our families of origin. We tend to continue the same flaws and fights we grew up with. In addition, we tend to bring battles and baggage from our youth into adulthood. We must be honest, insightful and wise enough to avoid this trap. We must rely on prayer and the guidance of Scripture.

We do not fight just because we always have. A key management principle says, "If we keep doing what we have always done, then we'll keep getting what we've always got." The human relations version of that principle says, "If what you've been trying isn't working, try something else." Some battles have gone on for too long or they have been so badly handled that they must be given up. Resolution will not come. No one will win the battle. The only way to mitigate the damage is to stop fighting.

We do not fight when the issue is just a matter of preference or opinion. Funny clothes and strange hair may embarrass or even grieve us. Usually, teenagers grow out of such things. Natural consequences often have a way of extinguishing such behavior. If a teen's "unique" appearance costs him a scholarship or a job opportunity, he has motivation to change. We need the patience and wisdom to wait for that motivation.

As parents, we dare not put our needs or preferences ahead of our love for our children. Philippians 2:3-4 offers great help: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interest of others." This truth is just as important in the home as it is in the church.

We do not fight when we cannot keep our cool. Galatians 6:1-2 and Romans 12:17-21 remind us of the importance of our attitude in times of conflict. If we cannot keep a Christian attitude in these times, we will quickly find ourselves fighting as the world fights. Even if we can out yell our teens, the victory is not worth what it costs. Threats and manipulation work just as poorly. First Peter 2:22-23 challenges us to follow in the steps of Christ, "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."

## **Times to Stop Fighting**

We stop fighting once we have made our position clear. First Peter 3:1-2 offers such insight! Even in a matter as important as the conversion of a spouse, there are times to stop direct, verbal efforts. What is true with the spouse is true with the children: do not nag. Nagging quickly shrinks to the level of irritating background noise. The words are not heard; they are just resented. They do not help; they just grind away at the relationship. Once we have gone on record and stated the needed truth, we must find wisdom enough to let our lives do the talking.

We stop fighting if we realize that winning the battle of the moment has become our primary objective. Christian parents do not fight to win debates or to preserve power. We love our children. We want to see them growing and blessed in Christ. Our objectives are to help, to protect, to nurture and to encourage.

We stop fighting if we realize that fighting is all we are doing. Every healthy relationship is based on: mutual respect and positive communication. If we have fallen into the cycle of "negative only," we must retreat and regroup. Once we have taken up the challenge of Ephesians 4:29-32, we try again. We never stop trying. With God's help, our love never fails. It never fails because it flows from His love. It never fails because it never gives up.

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## ***BIBLICAL AUTHORITY***

GREGORY ALAN TIDWELL

IF YOU VISITED SEVERAL denominational or independent churches on the Lord's day, you would see the many different ways that these congregations conduct their worship and the work of the church. You would probably decide Christianity is arbitrary - it is something determined by human whim.

In one church, you might see people burning incense, lighting candles and praying before statues. In such a congregation, the affairs of the church are managed by a hierarchy, headed by the pope in Rome. At another church, people might be shouting and clapping as a rock group jams and struts on the stage. At yet another church, you might see a drama group or a dance team might provide a routine. Administrative power in such churches would likely center on the pastor. Who sets the limits on what the church does? Is it God, or is it man? Most religious groups have a man-centered approach: What makes me feel good in worship? What will bring more people into church? What can we do to

have an exciting, emotional experience? What songs can be performed that will entertain the congregation? What kind of band should we have to attract young people to our services? What music and sermon will make outsiders comfortable in our church?

## **Marketing the Church**

In a competitive market, the secret to success is giving the customer what he wants, at a price he likes. And in the trendy world of church growth, adapting the work and worship to suit the whims of our culture has become a marketing miracle.

We are used to having everything customized to our wishes. If the church wants to grow, shouldn't it adapt itself to what people want? Most religious groups have neglected to ask some important questions: What religion pleases and glorifies God? What does the Bible say about God's plan for the church? These questions cannot be answered by pollsters, sociologists, psychologists or the church growth experts but only by God as He speaks to us in His inerrant Word.

If we try to please God, we will not always be comfortable, entertained or necessarily happy. Our "God is a consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24 esv), and coming into His presence with a sinful heart is a fearful thing (Hebrews 10:27). True religion will bring us to repentance as we are convicted of our sins (Isaiah 6:5). Repentance will expose the darkness in our souls and make us long for the righteousness that comes only from Christ (Matthew 5:6). Biblical faith looks to God and glorifies His name but is seldom pleasing to the irreligious world.

## **God's Way: Neither More Nor Less**

In order to please God, we must follow the principle laid out in Deuteronomy 12:32: "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it." This concept embodies the slogan, "Speak where the Bible speaks; be silent where the Bible is silent."

Theologians refer to this approach as the Regulative Principle, the idea that anything not specifically authorized is prohibited for God's church. As Proverbs 30:5-6 reminds us: "Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar" (nasb).

Churches adhering to the Regulative Principle will insist that God, in His wisdom, provided certain ways in which we are to serve Him. Acceptable religion is outlined in Scripture. Religion of our own creation will not be acceptable to a perfect and holy God. It is God's right to decide how we may serve Him. Introducing innovative practices into

religion invariably undermines God's appointed pattern.

## **Unauthorized Religion**

King Ahaz turned away from God to seek an alliance with Assyria, as described in 2 Kings 16:10-18. Ahaz traveled to Damascus and saw a great altar. He wanted one like it in Jerusalem and ordered it to be built in the location previously occupied by the old bronze altar. The old God-appointed altar was, however, not destroyed. It was simply placed in a corner (v. 14).

This story shows how unauthorized practices inevitably, but often with great subtlety, displaced the way approved by God. King Ahaz assured his more traditional subjects that no insult was intended to the old God-appointed altar. That decree closed, "The bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by" (2 Kings 16:15 esv). Human innovators often pay lip service to God's authority while simultaneously embracing unauthorized religion. Consider, for example, congregations that offer both a contemporary and a traditional worship service.

Perhaps the most notable example showing the danger of unauthorized religion is found in Leviticus 10:1-2: "Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord."

Their sin was the offering of strange fire that God commanded them not. But had God specifically forbidden it? There is no text of Scripture you can find from the beginning of Genesis to this place where God said, in so many words, "You shall offer no fire but one kind of fire." And yet, Nadab and Abihu were consumed by fire from God for offering "strange fire."

The Hebrew word translated "strange" (*zār*) could also be translated "unauthorized." Nadab and Abihu offered "unauthorized fire." Leviticus 16:12 says that when a priest is to burn incense he must do so using coals taken directly from the altar. Nadab and Abihu used coals from an unauthorized source. The important feature to note is what they did was not commanded.

If we want to please God, we should have no wish to offer strange fire, no matter how "exciting" the strange fire would be to the spectators. Our religion must be more than putting on a show. If it were not for the grace of God, many congregations today would be consumed as Nadab and Abihu were.

## **Straight Is the Gate and Narrow Is the Way**

A passage of Scripture that tells Israel how to avoid corrupting biblical worship is Deuteronomy 12:28-32: "Observe and obey all these words

which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God. When the Lord your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it" (nkjv).

Church history shows God's people have often been drawn away from the simplicity of pure religion into all manner of man-made innovations.

At its root, unauthorized religion lacks faith in the message God provided in Scripture. J.D. Bales in his book, *The Finality of the Faith*, states: "The revelation of God to man on this earth reached its consummation and completion in the first century. Speaking to certain men in the first century, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things, and guide them 'into all the truth' (John 14:26; 16:13). In contrast with the incomplete revelation which was made during His personal ministry (for He left many things unsaid), all the truth - the truth in its entirety - was to be delivered to them by Christ through the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-15). Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. We know that He did not speak falsehood or make empty promises. Therefore, when He said that they would be guided into all the truth, we can rest assured that this is exactly what happened. Furthermore, since the promise was made to them, it had to be fulfilled before they died. If they all passed on without the complete truth being revealed, the promise of Jesus failed. Since Jesus Christ is the teacher of truth, not falsehood, we know that these men in the first century had the complete truth revealed to them" (34).

Because God has spoken in Scripture, it is an insult to God for us to add anything to the religion beyond what the Lord has authorized. Human innovations in religion are a fountain of heresy and apostasy.

The Regulative Principle is a useful standard for deciding how we ought to serve God. It ensures our religion is consistent with the Bible. God, speaking through Scripture, is an adequate guide to lead us in our faith. Humans are fallible; at the heart of anything we create will be imperfection. However, the Bible is the infallible and sufficient Word of God that leads us into all truth. If we follow God's lead in serving Him through Scripture, we can rest assured that our service is not in vain.