

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 46

August 2015

No. 4

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Make It As Secure As You Know How

AS THE BODY OF JESUS, after his death on the cross, was laid in the tomb and a large stone was rolled over it, the chief priests and Pharisees of the Jews came to the governor Pilate and asked him to allow them to make the tomb secure, because they were afraid that the disciples of Jesus would come by night and steal Him away and declare to the people, He has risen from the dead, as Jesus had claimed that He would on third day after His death. Pilate said to them, "You have a guard: go your way, make it as secure as you know how." (Matthew 27:65). **The chief priests and the Pharisees were worried about the body of Jesus, just as we most times are worried about the needs and security of our physical bodies. Yet, are we really secured? The fact of the matter is, we live under the shadow of death each day, twenty-four hours.** The wise man said, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth." (Proverbs 27:1). People, every day, everywhere, are dying of diseases, accidents, earth-quakes, and other reasons. Where do they go? Of course, their bodies are burnt or buried. But what about their spirit or soul? Where do they go and live? The soul never dies, because it is made after the likeness of God, his creator (Genesis 1:26,27). Are we spiritually secured? Do we know where we are going? Can we know where we are going? Is it possible to know and make secure the eternal destiny of our soul in heaven? If people will not go to heaven, they will surely go to live in hell.

No, not to spend eternity, as eternity cannot be spent, it is forever. We cannot choose to go to heaven by following our own feelings or imaginations (Romans 1:18-23). Neither by following men and their teachings (Proverbs 14:12). The only sure way is Jesus Christ, who said, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."** No mere man could have said this. No one else has ever said this. Why did Jesus say this? He said this, because who He was.

The Bible introduces Jesus to the world by saying, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1,14). The purpose of His coming on earth is stated, in 1Timothy 1:15, in these words: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Thus God, in Jesus, became man to save man from sin, so that through Him and by being in Him one could become worthy to enter heaven to live with God eternally. It is because of this Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Speaking of Christ the Bible says, "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." (2 Corinthians 8:9). "For He (God) 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). "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8). Isaiah, the prophet, in Isaiah 53:5, had declared, He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. Based on these facts, the Bible declares, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1). **Friends, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus**, because Christ was condemned to die on the cross instead of them in their place. **The most important question therefore is: How does one get into Christ?** We read, "For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:26,27). There is no other way. To get into Christ, one must believe in Christ and after repenting or turning away from all wrongs must

be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins to get the benefit of Christ's propitiatory death for sinners. (Acts 2:38).

However, as important as it is to get into Christ through faith in Him and obedience to His command (Hebrews 5:8,9; Mark 16:16), it is equally important for the Christian to remain faithful in Christ until death. (Revelation 2:10). The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:24 compares the Christian life to a race, where only the winner gets the prize. The Christian must give first and foremost place to the commandments of God in his life. (Matthew 6:33; 1 John 2:15-17; Ecclesiastes 12:13). Should not get conformed to the world, but be transformed according to the will of God. (Romans 12:1,2). Must not be a seeker of things earthly, but must set his mind on things heavenly. (Colossians 3:1-3). **Time is flying. Make it as secure as you know how.**

THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

J.C. CHOATE

Lesson Twelve

History Of The Church

In Acts 2 the stage is set for the establishment or beginning of the Lord's church or kingdom. The Apostles are in Jerusalem, the Spirit is poured out upon them, many nations are represented since they are gathered for Pentecost. Peter and the Apostles proclaim that this is the fulfillment of that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel, Christ has died and thus the last days have begun. Repentance and remission of sins are preached, about 3000 souls hearken to the preaching of the gospel and are baptized, and the Lord added them to his church. Then from Jerusalem the gospel goes throughout Judea, on to Samaria, and finally unto the uttermost parts of the earth until every creature under heaven had heard it (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16; Colossians 1:23).

The church flourished in the days of the Apostles and spread rapidly. After the conversion of Paul, he made three missionary journeys, not only preaching the gospel to the Jews but to the Gentiles as well. As a result there were many converts, and

congregations of the Lord's church were established throughout Asia and Europe. But this was not easy, inasmuch as there was much persecution. First, the church began to be persecuted in Jerusalem. Because of this the disciples were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:1-4). As time went by, the Romans blamed the Christians for many of their problems and made sport by punishing them in their arenas in Rome and throughout the Roman world. Paul was finally imprisoned and taken to Rome for trial. Secular history tells us that all the apostles except John were martyred for the cause of Christ. Hundreds and thousands and perhaps millions of Christians also lost their lives.

In spite of the persecution, the church only grew and spread. It was not persecution that gave the greatest blow to the church, but that which took place within the church itself. The Apostle Paul foretold of the day in which there would be a falling away. In other words, he was saying that the day would come in which many of the members of the Lord's church would drift into error. But let us notice what he says: *"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

In speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus, Paul said, *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears "* (Acts 20:28-31).

As Paul warned, there were those from within the church that rose up and began to lead away many of the followers of Christ. Secular history tells us that the falling away began with an attack on the government, or organization, of the church. The Lord's plan was that each congregation should be independent of the others with its own elders and deacons. However, as time passed many of these congregations began to exalt one elder or bishop over the others, and finally permitted one of these bishops to rule over several congregations, with the eventual outcome being that one was appointed the universal bishop over the entire church. Of course this didn't happen overnight, but over a period of many years, and so by 606 A.D. the first Universal Bishop became the head, or the Pope, of the apostate sector of the church, resulting in the Catholic church as we know it today. What happened to the Lord's church? The faithful few continued, perhaps even unnoticed as a whole, but the Lord had promised that his kingdom or church would stand forever, and that it was to do.

As far as the religious world was concerned, the Catholic church dominated. As a matter of fact it so controlled the world that the next several hundred years came to be known as the Dark Ages. This was because the Catholic church refused to allow the Bible to be read by the common people, saying that only the priests were qualified to read and understand the Bible and thus they would tell the people what the Bible taught. Naturally this meant that they told the people only what they wanted them to know.

During this period of time even the Catholic church divided into the Roman and Greek branches over such teachings as sprinkling and mechanical music. As time went by the Roman Catholic church through her councils, etc., added many other doctrines and teachings to her system. Finally in the fifteen hundreds the Catholic church had become so corrupt doctrinally

and morally that a man by the name of Martin Luther sought to reform the church, he himself being a priest. However, he was excommunicated, and he left the church to teach and practice that which he thought was right. Out of this came what is known as the Reformation movement, or Protestantism, and out of this came what we know to be modern day denominationalism. The course of Luther sparked off an attempt in many parts of the world to return to the Bible. In spite of this, they did not fully succeed.

In the seventeen and eighteen hundreds there were denominational people in Europe and America who grew tired of division and confusion. Gradually they began to leave the errors they were in and to return fully to the Bible. Their desire was not to begin a new church but to return to the one they could read about in the scriptures. That they did, and since that time the plea for pure New Testament Christianity has been heard around the world with millions leaving the teachings of men to simply be Christians and members of the Lord's church, with the Bible as their only guide.

Christians, going into all parts of the world to preach the truth, have discovered the church in its purity already existing in parts of Africa, India, Russia, Poland, and many other places. That church therefore exists today as it has always existed. It is not necessary to trace it all the way back to the beginning to prove that it is the one church of the Bible. The pattern of the church is in the Bible and when we follow it we are the Lord's church. The seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11) and it produces the same thing today that it produced in the days of the Apostles—Christians and members of Christ's church. We know the Lord's kingdom was to stand forever. It has therefore been in existence somewhere ever since the day it was established and it will continue to stand forever, with no man or devil having the power to destroy it. This is the Lord's kingdom, his church, being victorious from beginning to end, and finally to dwell ever more with the Lord.

(To be Continued)

DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

BILL WATKINS

I NEED TO BEGIN THIS article with an apology. I am going to

deal with very basic issues that some will see as dull and others will believe are unnecessary. That is not what I am apologizing for, however. I apologize for not speaking and writing more often about the basics. Without these very basic principles, we lose our identity and our way.

Does it really matter what we teach, what we believe, how we worship, how we are saved or how we define the church? Does it really matter that many churches are all teaching different doctrines and all believing that they are right with God?

Does it really matter when statements such as “We’re all going to the same place anyway” become conventional wisdom? Are there really many roads to heaven? Is one church just as good as another? Is it just a matter of personal taste to join the church of your choice?

What we believe and teach really matters! Paul wrote: “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8 NKJV). Some traditions, principles and philosophies cheat us out of the truly valuable things of life.

Paths and Destinations

Do you really believe that “We’re all going to the same place”? Can anyone convince you that going to Allentown, Pa., is the same thing as going to Honolulu, Hawaii?

In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus said, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Is the “way that leads to destruction” the same as the “way which leads to life”?

The Bible does teach about one place where all of us will go. Romans 14:10 is clear that the only place to which all of us will go is the judgment seat of Christ!

Does it really matter if people believe there are many roads to heaven? Do we accept this idea in any other area besides religion? Are there many roads to the *Gospel Advocate*? The company is located on Elm Hill Pike in Nashville, Tenn. Unless you drive on this one road, you will never arrive there.

The Bible is our road map to heaven. It gives us the directions to arrive there successfully. There are many ways, but there is

only one “way of truth” (2 Peter 2:1-2). There are many ways, but only one way will give you rest. Jeremiah wrote, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls.’ But they said, ‘We will not walk in it’” (6:16).

Churches and Choices

Is one church just as good as another? Does anyone actually believe this? Is the church of Satan just as good as the church of Christ? Is a church that teaches Jesus is not deity the same as one that teaches He is? Is a church that denies the Father, Son and Holy Spirit the same as a church that acknowledges them? Is the church that teaches one must worship on the seventh day of the week the same as one that teaches that the Lord’s day is the first day of the week? Is a church that denies the accuracy of the Bible the same as one that teaches that the Bible is accurate and authoritative? Of course not!

Does it matter if you join the church of your choice? Why should we think the rightness of a church depends on our choice? Being a member of a church does involve our choice, but our choice does not necessarily make that church acceptable to God. Jesus died for the church of God’s choice. We need to be a member of that church!

It should go without saying that many times “our choice” is the wrong choice. Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.” Jeremiah wrote, “O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (10:23). Solomon wrote, “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered” (Proverbs 28:26).

How do we make the right choices? David said, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD” (Psalm 37:23).

Teaching and Worshiping

Does it matter what we teach? According to Jesus, it does. He said, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:15-16). John warned, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

According to Paul, what we preach matters. In 2 Timothy 4:2

he wrote, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." He said, "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. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8-9).

Peter wrote, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). He made it clear that what we believe matters. Notice 2 Peter 2:1-2 again: "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed." Believing a destructive heresy destroys us!

Does it really matter how we worship? According to Jesus, it matters. He said, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Notice that worshiping in spirit and truth is an imperative - we "must."

You have probably heard Leviticus 10:1-2 before. Having heard it before, however, does not make the warning less real. Moses recorded, "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."

Because "all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11), what example and admonition do you get from Leviticus 10:1-2? If "whatever things were written before were written for our learning" (Romans 15:4), what do you think God wants you to learn from this passage?

It really does matter what we do to be saved. If it did not, Peter would have had a different answer when the audience on Pentecost asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Why did he say, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" if it really does not matter (v. 38)? Why not just say, "Find your own path"?

What Matters

It really does matter that we believe. Hebrews 11:6 teaches that “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

It really does matter that we repent. Paul said, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

It really does matter that we confess Christ. The Romans were told, “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

It really does matter that we are baptized. Peter wrote, “Baptism now saves you - not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21 NASB).

Why not accept all that the Bible teaches concerning salvation? In the words of Peter, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation” (Acts 2:40 ESV). It really does matter!

THE CHRISTIAN AND LEGAL MORALITY

DENNIS LOYD

ON ANY STREET IN ANY CITY, citizens of this country are accustomed to seeing all kinds of warnings and directions about driving, parking, speeding, stopping, yielding and a good many more. We live in a nation governed by laws that cover almost every aspect of our being. Imagine driving down a street or highway with no signage. Where once a four-way stop sign stood, now nothing indicates the need to stop. Cars come and go at the will of the drivers with the result that chaos reigns and possibly a number of fatalities results.

What our laws do for us is far more valuable than whatever inconveniences we endure. Recently I was hurrying to complete some errands when I was forced to wait for a train at a railroad crossing. If the arms had not been there to lower across the road and the lights had not been available to flash and the engineer

had no horn to signal all us drivers, we might have barreled in front of the train or into its side with terrible results. Given a choice between stopping and waiting, that is obeying the law, or claiming my freedom to kill myself with a wreck, I will accept the delay and be grateful that the powers that be kept me safe.

Legal Authorities in the Old Testament

The Old Testament offers numerous examples of individuals who teach us the importance of their respecting the legal authorities of their day. Joseph's respect for the leadership of the Pharaoh in Egypt grew out of the unfortunate experiences that took him to Egypt. In time, he was given great authority and became second in command in the land. His respect for Pharaoh led to Pharaoh's respecting Joseph.

Esther found herself in the court of Artaxerxes in Shushan, Persia. Even as the queen, she understood she had certain rights and certain limitations. When she learned of the impending disaster of the Jewish captives, she was urged by Mordecai to intercede with the king. She explained that she could not approach the king unless he summoned her. She agreed to make an appeal, knowing full well it could mean death to her. She said, "If I perish, I perish." Those words recognized the supremacy of the law. She had no authority to set it aside.

Legal Authorities in the New Testament

In the New Testament, Jesus showed respect for the laws of His land. He lived when two legal systems were in place. The Jewish authorities had Herod as king, and the Roman authorities had Pontius Pilate representing the power of Rome. The Jews chafed under Roman control. As Jesus grew in popularity, some of the leaders of the Jews, the Pharisees with the Herodians, came to Him with a question with harmful potential. "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (Matthew 22:17 NKJV). When one is limited to two choices, his answer can place him in jeopardy. Jesus delayed by saying, "Show Me the tax money," and then, "Whose image and inscription is this?" When they replied, "Caesar's," Jesus said, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (vv. 19-21). Those questioners are described as marveling (v. 22), being amazed that Jesus made no commitment except the obvious. Some things belonged to Caesar, and some belonged to God. In the realm of the government, Caesar had the right to issue money. God did not issue coinage.

With Jesus' words as a guide, we should consider three other texts that relate to our connection with the government, the legal authority. Romans 13:1-7 is the most complete statement in the Bible dealing with the Christian and the government. Paul asserts three fundamental principles. First, the Christian is to be subject to those authorities. "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities" (13:1). Second, he states that this authority is from God: "there is no authority except from God" (v. 1); "the authorities that exist are appointed by God" (v. 1); "whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God" (v. 2). Third, individuals can abuse the authority given to them by God. Peter's words in Acts 5:29 allow for an exception when man's authority exceeds the will of God. "We ought to obey God rather than men."

Jesus explained to Pilate the relationship between a governing official and God when He said, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11). God decreed that society functions better when governments are in place to work in cooperation with the populace. In times of floods or natural calamities, local, state and national representatives step in with offers of service that exceeds what any one individual could do alone. But those services are beautifully supplemented by other groups, community organizations and caring individuals to establish order out of chaos.

In Titus 3:1, Paul urged Titus to "remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work." Once more Paul relies on the charge to "be subject," that is to recognize individual and collective authority. In case some might misunderstand his directive "to be subject," Paul adds the charge "to obey." His purpose in these mandates is a theme of the book of Titus: "to be ready for every good work." With orderliness in the home, the church and the community, the ability to do good works becomes greater. Six times in Titus, Paul stresses that we are to be ready and able to do good work (1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14).

First Peter 2 lists several ways the Christian is to respect the law as represented by the king, governors or representatives of the governor (2:13-14). Then Peter explains the reason for this respect: "For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (v. 15). Lest we focus our attention on only one aspect of our existence, Peter offers this summary: "Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (v. 17). As children of God, we have ties with "all

people,” “the brotherhood,” “God,” “the king.” Those phrases represent our world, and the verbs used by Peter—“honor,” “love,” “fear” —indicate how zealous we are to be with each part of our world.

God gave us authorities for a purpose. Paul said each one is God’s minister (Romans 13:4). As such, each one deserves our respect, our honor, our appreciation and our subjection.

The next time you see a stop sign or even receive a parking ticket, don’t complain. Those who care for our well being are also part of God’s gifts to His children.

The Sinless Jesus

GERALD PADEN

MANY THINGS ABOUT JESUS’ earthly ministry are impressive - His virgin birth, His prayer life, His miracles, His inspired message, His resurrection. These and many other qualities inspire admiration. One stands out more than many of the others. He never committed sin. His sinless devotion to God and to man’s salvation is well attested to in Scripture. No one could convict Him of sin (John 8:46). He was the “lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19 NKJV). He needed no sin offering for wrongdoing; rather He “offered up Himself for the sins of others (Hebrews 7:27). Because He “knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21), He was well suited to be God’s perfect sin offering for mankind.

Unjustified Rationalizations

Some men discredit Jesus by attributing His sinless purity to the fact of His Deity. Those same men ignore that He “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). He was indeed “in the form of God” and “equal with God” (Philippians 2:6). But to become a man, He had to surrender voluntarily both the form of God and His equality with God. He had to empty Himself of every expression of His divinity, with all its attendant powers, privileges and prerogatives. That had to be the greatest emptying recorded in Bible history (vv. 5-8).

He faced temptation on common ground with all humanity. He exercised no privileged immunities that preserved Him from the allurements of temptation. “In all points tempted as we are” settles the issue (Hebrews 4:15). He did not have a God-granted edge

over any man. All the divine assistance He used to resist sin is also made available to every man, for God faithfully provides a way of escape from every temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). Jesus successfully sought and used God's way of escape. His temptations were lifelong because Satan "departed from Him until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13). He was pure, but He paid a high price for His innocence. He "suffered, being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

Others might assume that Jesus was not tempted as strongly as we are when in reality He was tempted far beyond any man. His temptations were also Messianic. No other man will ever face these words: "If You are the Son of God" (Matthew 4:6). Someone said it is easier to find a man who has never sinned than to find one who has sinned only once. After the first sin, the next one is easier. Jesus never lost His integrity. All men know how easy it is to sin. None but Jesus knows how difficult it is not to sin. He "resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:4).

Temptations Are Power Issues

Satan exposed Jesus to "every temptation" (Luke 4:13). His temptations in the wilderness were not likely a casual setting. This could have been the same area where Israel in generations past fell victim to Satan's ploys. At least in His resistance to the tempter, Jesus relied on God's message to Israel when they were tempted and subsequently succumbed to sin. The theology expressed in the verses He cited gave Him His way of escape. Notice the power issue suggested by Satan in each temptation. Also notice how Jesus drew on the lessons Israel failed to learn from the book of Deuteronomy.

Misuse Your Power

The setting of the first temptation followed 40 days and 40 nights of fasting, and Jesus naturally was hungry (Matthew 4:2). When Jesus became a man He suspended all of His divine powers and privileges. That suspension tended to intensify the temptation. Satan played on His hunger and suggested that He suspend the suspension. "If You are the Son of God," he suggested, then "command that these stones become bread." Satan wanted Jesus to suppress His total identification with the human family and employ divine power not available to other men.

For Jesus to abuse His human mission and to misuse His own divine power to negate the temptation would have reversed the emptying mentioned in Philippians 2:5-8. Jesus' reply was decisive.

“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3). Jesus acknowledged man’s body and soul nature. Bread feeds the body. The Word of God feeds the soul. The body is temporal; the soul is eternal. Jesus refused to sacrifice eternal relationships for temporal benefits. That was the mistake Israel made when they were in the wilderness. So did Esau (Genesis 25:27-34). Satan’s first power scheme failed.

Abuse God’s Power

The second temptation was acted out from the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 4:5). The issue in that temptation was an abuse of power belonging to the Father in heaven. The appeal revolved around a presumptuous misuse of God’s power. Satan would have Jesus dazzle the people by God’s miraculous rescue after Jesus foolishly jumped off the temple pinnacle. Such an action on Jesus’ part would impose on God’s prophetic promise to protect Him from harm. In fact, Satan cited the promise given in Psalm 91:11-12, even mentioning that the Father will “give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up.” Satan should have read the rest of the Psalm. Verse 7 could apply to Jesus in His battle against sin, because it says, “A thousand may fault your side, And ten thousand at your right hand.”

Although multitudes fall at the right side of Jesus by giving in to similar intrigue of the devil, Jesus does not take the bait. Rather, Jesus remembered the failure of Israel in the wilderness. He quoted Deuteronomy 6:16: “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God’ “ (Matthew 4:7). Jesus would not get out on a limb, cut it off and then burden God with a presumed rescue. All sin tests God and imposes on His mercy and grace to cover it. Satan’s second power play failed.

Satan Offered His Power

From an “exceedingly high mountain” Satan displayed before Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory” (Matthew 4:8). The third temptation would entice Jesus to make use of Satan’s power. Both the kingdoms of the world and their glory would be given if Jesus would “fall down and worship” Satan. At least that way Jesus could avoid Calvary.

Again, Jesus reverted to God’s instructions to Israel during their wilderness experience to help Him resist such a grievous sin. “For

it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve'" (Matthew 4:10, quoting Deuteronomy 6:13). Jesus thus acknowledged that only One is worthy of man's worship and service. Satan is not that one. If the devil expects Jesus to help him build his evil kingdom, then he is wasting his efforts. Jesus did not misuse His own suspended power, nor abuse the Father's providential power, and certainly did not make use of Satan's usurped power.

Jesus' Formula for Success

All men need to discover the formula Jesus followed in His resistance to sin. From our perspective, it was imperative that He be sinless, because our salvation rests on His innocence. From His perspective, it was equally, if not more, important that He not sin. His integrity was at stake. His untarnished union with God, His loving relationship with the Father, and His delight in the Father's esteem must not be sacrificed to momentary gratification of physical appetites or personal pride. A violated conscience must never disturb His sleep.

Devotion to a heavenly mission must never be bartered for any earthly benefit or exclusion from any human suffering. Jesus' bearing exposed a singleness of purpose that was His daily bread, the staff of His life. "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34). Better to be nourished by that food than to feast on stones turned into bread.

"My God, Why ...?"

DAVID THURMAN

IT IS A DIFFICULT SCENE TO IMAGINE. A good man, a holy man, in fact, a perfect man, being led to His death. Another man is compelled to carry the cross. Finally, the ghastly parade reaches its end. Jesus is nailed to a cross between two thieves. The crowd is mixed. Some make fun of Him. Some weep over Him. But in the midst of it an even more terrible moment arrives. *"Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth-hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?' that is, 'MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?'"* (Matt. 27:45-46).

Jesus knows He is dying. He knows the end is near. When the

darkness fell on the land, He knew as well that His Father had forsaken Him. He cried out, perhaps in pain and frustration, but probably due to the emptiness He felt at God's absence. In his cry, the Son of God asks the age old question, "Why God?" that mankind continues to ask even today.

Because of Our Choices

The answer to this question begins centuries ago in the garden of Eden. Man was placed in the garden and enjoyed unlimited access to God. God blessed man in every way and created for him an environment without pain or trouble. But God honored man and left him with one characteristic above all others. Man could choose for himself to serve God or not. *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in ' the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.'"* (Gen. 2:16-17). How all of creation must have held its breath, knowing God had created all things, yet now put in man's hands the decision to serve the Creator, or choose to disobey. God respected man enough to allow Him to choose for himself if he would obey God or not. God blessed Adam and Eve with the power to choose. God respects you enough to let you decide for yourself as well. God wants your love and obedience, but will always honor your right to choose for yourself if you will obey Him or not.

Because We Chose Evil

"And the serpent said to the woman, 'You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate'" (Gen. 3:4-6). Satan convinced Eve she would be better off disobeying God. The fruit looked good, looked as if it would make her life better, looked as if it held great promise to make her like God Himself. So, she ate and gave it to Adam and he ate. Sin entered the world. One by one the first people on earth ate of the poison that was disobedience.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). We too made the same choice in our lives. Each of us has chosen to eat of the poison that is sin. Satan promises great things if we will only eat. We will be happier, smarter, stronger, like God

Himself. But in the end, we suffer the same consequence as Adam and Eve. They were driven from the garden, driven from God's intimate presence and condemned to death. We too have sinned, every one of us, and we have been driven from God's presence as well. *"And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all"* (1 John 1:5). God will not be where sin is. Worse, we are condemned to death as well because of our sin. *"For the wages of sin is death"* (Rom. 6:23). So, we find ourselves in the same predicament as Adam and Eve. We are given the right to decide for ourselves, but we have chosen to disobey. Now we have passed under the penalty for our sin. We are separated from God's presence and condemned to death.

Because of God's Nature

As we have seen, God is light and sin cannot be in His presence. What God desired with mankind has been lost due to the consequences of our sins. Once we had tasted the poison fruit Satan offered, we could never go back and put sin back in its place. We had passed from life to death.

But God's nature is more than mere righteousness. God is more than holiness. *"God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"* (1 John 4:8-10). God is love and out of love He sent His Son to live on earth. God is just and cannot allow sin into His presence, but God is love and cannot stand to watch His loved ones die. And so, on a lonely night in a stable Jesus was born of a virgin, sent to reclaim what man had chosen to lose. *"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29). God respected man enough to let him choose to obey or disobey. Once man had sinned God **loved** man enough to send One to redeem him from his sin.

Because of Jesus' Submission

Jesus understood what He had to do. But the Son of God struggled with it, because He knew what it all meant to Him. So, we see the Lord on His knees in another garden, this time praying that God would find another way. *"And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou*

wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Jesus was so distraught by what was about to happen, He prayed this prayer three times that night. Each time He asked God to find another way and let the cup pass from Him. But each time Jesus surrendered to God's will.

Jesus knew what would happen. *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus had lived in perfect obedience to God all His life. He had never once known a moment when God was not with Him. Now, Jesus would take on Himself the sins that we have committed. In that process He would become sin on our behalf, that we could be made right with God again. Jesus had never been without God, but was facing that because of your sin and mine.

Because of Your Potential

It might seem strange to think a fallen sinner who is away from God and under sentence of death has potential. But God sees in you something worth saving, something worth dying for. *"What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance"* (Luke 15:4-7). Just as a shepherd will rejoice and call his friends to celebrate with him when He finds one lost sheep, so God rejoices when just one lost sinner is reclaimed.

God made you to serve Him. God desires from the beginning to enjoy a close and intimate relationship with you. Your decision to sin broke that relationship apart. Now, you can reclaim what God intended for you all along by coming to God through the sacrifice of His Son. God still sees in you potential to serve Him and honor Him by your life. Jesus took your place, so you could return to the place God intended for you from the start. Which leaves only one more reason Jesus died.

Because You Get to Choose - Again

God didn't go through all this so you could keep on living in sin. Jesus didn't experience the absence of God and the guilt of sin so

you could live your life in continued disobedience. God, out of His great love for you, has offered you a second chance to choose. All of us have chosen sin, all of us are guilty before God. But all of us have a choice to return to God.

You must let Jesus take your sin. You must die to your sin and be buried to rise and live a new life. *“Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions”* (Col. 2:12-13). If you will accept Jesus death on your behalf, be buried with Him in baptism, you too can have all your transgressions forgiven and be made alive again. You can pass from death to life, if you will come to God through Christ. The only question to face now is, “My God, why would anyone reject your grace?” Don’t delay, reclaim your place with God through the death of his Son. Come to Him - Today!

DO GOOD THINGS FOR “SELF”

ROYCE FREDERICK

SELFISHNESS DOES NOT BRING HAPPINESS. The Lord warns us, *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself”* (Phil. 2:3). A selfish attitude hurts us and others, and it can destroy our soul eternally: *“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like...those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God”* (Gal. 5:19-21).

However, the Lord tells us that we **should** do some things for “self” — for our own good.

Study the Bible for Yourself

It is good to love your own soul. And, to take proper care of your soul, you must feed it with the divine wisdom which is found in the Bible (Matt. 4:4). *“He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; he who keeps understanding will find good”* (Pr. 19:8). Peter said

to Jesus, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life"* (Jn. 6:68).

In spiritual matters, we should not accept the teachings of men (Matt. 15:9, 13-14; Gal. 1:6-10). We should follow only what the Bible says. We need to be like the Jews in the city of Berea, for *"...they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so"* (Acts 17:11). We need to continually *"Test all things; hold fast what is good"* (1 Thess. 5:21).

Save Yourself

The apostle Peter said, *"Be saved from this perverse generation"* (Acts 2:40). In that verse, the King James Version says *"save yourselves."*

The Lord wants you to be saved. He is *"...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Pet. 3:9). However, He will not save you against your will. You must decide your own eternal destiny. He wants you to "repent" — decide to turn away from sin and turn to God by obeying the gospel (Acts 2:38; 17:30; 22:16). It is the Lord's "will" that you be saved. What is your will?

Take Care of Your Family for Yourself

You bring happiness or harm into your own life through the way you take care of your family. *"He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house..."* (Prov. 15:27). *"He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind..."* (Prov. 11:29). When you bring trouble upon your family, you bring a windstorm upon your own place of refuge.

How do you talk to your family members? Are you harsh, bitter, and hateful. *"The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh"* (Prov. 11:17). A happy attitude and happy words will bless everyone in the family, including you: *"A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones"* (Prov. 17:22). *"Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones"* (Prov. 16:24; see 15:4).

Husbands, do not think that you can be unfaithful to your wife without hurting yourself. *"Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul"* (Prov. 6:32). Be faithful, loving, and kind to your wife for her happiness and for yours. *"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself"* (Eph. 5:28).

You receive great blessings for yourself when you take good care of your family.

Take Care of Yourself for Yourself and Others

If a large airplane suddenly loses its air pressure, oxygen masks are released for each passenger. At the beginning of each flight, the crew members tell the passengers how to use these masks. They instruct parents to put an oxygen mask on themselves first, before taking care of their children. It sounds like they are telling each parent to be “selfish.” But it is important that the parent take care of “self” first, so he or she will be able to properly care for the children.

In a similar way, each of us needs to take care of our own soul first, before we can properly help our family members and others. Jesus said, *“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye”* (Matt. 7:3-5). Notice the warning from Paul: *“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, **considering yourself** lest you also be tempted”* (Gal. 6:1).

Preacher, be careful to avoid sexual temptations. *“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart”* (2 Tim. 2:22; see 1 Tim. 5:2). Be sure that God’s word is the guide for your teaching and your life. *“Take heed to **yourself** and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this **you will save both yourself and those who hear you**”* (1 Tim. 4:16).

Elders, *“...take heed to **yourselves** and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood”* (Acts 20:28).

“Shepherd the flock of God...being examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:2-3).

The best thing you can do for those you love is to **show them** the way to heaven.

Seek Heaven for Yourself

We should want to obey God because that makes Him happy (Lk. 15). But He also wants us to seek heaven for our own eternal

happiness. Jesus urges us, “...lay up **for yourselves** treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Matt. 6:20). Some of the Christians in the first century were reminded, “...you...joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession **for yourselves** in heaven” (Heb. 10:34). An incorruptible body and an eternal home await those who love God and serve Him faithfully!

Selfishness hurts “self.” But when we seek good things God’s way, through humility and unselfish love, we gain abundant blessings for self and for others!

With What Body?

T. PIERCE BROWN

SOME ARE STILL RAISING THE question that was raised in Paul’s day as suggested in 1 Corinthians 15:35, “But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” In our opinion, the same answer that Paul gave should still be given, but it seems apparent that Paul’s answer still needs some explanation. Some very astute scholars have, in my judgment, assumed some things that are not so about the answer and related matters.

We may want to note that when Paul said, as in the KJV, “Thou fool” he was not using the word that Jesus used in Matthew 5:22, when he said a person who calls his brother a fool shall be in danger of hell fire. But he does use a word that indicates that a person is not reasoning properly who assumes that the resurrection of the body means that the same body that was put in the grave would come out. If a body were put in with a leg missing, the leg would be missing throughout eternity. If the body had been nailed to the cross and had the prints of the nails in its wrists, we would see those prints in eternity. This is clearly not the case, even if the song says, “We shall know him by the prints of the nails in his hands.”

He specifically says in verse 37, “And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain.” It is clear that the body that comes out is not the body that was put in, but it is identified

with the same person. If you sow wheat, it is proper to say that wheat comes up, yet it is not in the same form as it was put in the ground. A person is certainly “foolish” if he does not know that much.

Sometimes it is assumed that the resurrected body of Jesus proves that our resurrected bodies will look like the body that was buried, eaten by the fish, burned, or otherwise destroyed. This is a false assumption. The resurrected body of Jesus was the same body that was put in the grave. Paul specifically says that ours will not be. Not only is that so, but 1 John 3:2 says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” Note carefully that John indicates that we do not know what we shall be like, although we shall be like him. They knew what Christ’s body was like when he was raised from the dead, but they do not know what it is like now, for John says so. It must be that his body was not yet glorified as John 7:39 says. Romans 8:17 indicates that we will be glorified with him, which agrees with John’s statement that we shall be like him. The logical conclusion is that while he was on the earth, with flesh and bones, able to eat and digest fish (Luke 24:42), he had the same body with which he was buried and raised. But since flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50) he was changed when he ascended to heaven out of their sight (Acts 1:9), much like Enoch (Hebrews 11:5) or Elijah. (2 Kings 2:11.)

So it is certain that we will be the same individuals when our bodies are raised, but it is also equally certain that the body will not be the same structure any more than a stalk of corn is the same structure as the grain of corn that is put in the earth. But it is still proper to say, “We put corn in the earth, and corn came up.”

However, the “bottom line” (if there is one) should be, “What difference does it make? If we are to be like him why should we even bother wondering and speculating about the exact details?” Are you satisfied to know that it will be glorious beyond our ability to understand?

