

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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What Does the Bible Teach?

Do Not Labor For The Food Which Perishes

MEN HAVE ALWAYS misunderstood the Person of Jesus Christ and the purpose of His coming into this world. In John chapter 6, we read of a great multitude of people who had followed Christ, because they had seen signs which He performed on those who were diseased. Since they had been following for many hours, Christ wanted to feed them. The number of people was around five thousand and there was no food available for that many people. But there was a lad in the crowd who was carrying with him five barley loaves and two small fish. Christ took that small amount of food in His hands and gave thanks to God for that and then fed the whole multitude of people from that small amount of food. Of course, everyone in the crowd was impressed and surprised beyond measure by seeing what Jesus had done, and even said, this is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.

But then we read that on the following day they again began to look for Christ. When Jesus saw them He told them something they weren't expecting to hear, He said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." (John 6:26-27). And then to show the strong contrast between the physical and the spiritual, Christ said

to them, “I am the bread of life.... This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, He will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world..... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.” (John 6:48-54).

Christ who became flesh and blood, that is, fully man, and gave His flesh and blood in His sacrificial death on the cross for all men as the propitiation for the sins of the world is the true life. Eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ is really feeding spiritually upon Christ, being dependent upon and sustained with His divine life. It is a metaphorical reference to the soul-saving benefit procured on behalf of the human family by Christ’s atoning death on the cross and the shedding of His blood. The eating and drinking refer to the soul’s proper appropriation of that benefit. The soul’s true and only food leading to eternal life is the given body of Christ and His shed blood. Jesus was teaching them that more than the physical food, which they were seeking or anticipating from Christ, they needed the spiritual food—which was Christ Himself! By giving His body and shedding His blood He gave Himself a ransom for all, making salvation and remission of sins available to all. (Mark 10:45; 1 Timothy 2:6; Matt.26:26-28).

The people, as the record says, in Christ’s audience, however, misunderstood what Christ was teaching, obviously concluding that somehow He was demanding that they literally eat His body and drink His blood. Because of their repugnance of such a thought, it says, “....many of his disciples went back and walked with him no more.” (John 6:66). From this incidence we also learn that to understand any passage or teaching from the Bible it is necessary for one to look at the background of what is being said. Because if we do not read to understand in its specific context, we can easily misunderstand and draw an entirely wrong conclusion.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

J.C. CHOATE

NO DOUBT YOU HAVE heard the term, gospel, used many times. You have probably heard it used in relation to Christ as the gospel

of Christ. But you may not know what the gospel is, and all that it involves. In this study we hope to clear the subject up for you.

The word gospel means good news or glad tidings. The Apostle Paul Writes, "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things !" (Roman 10:15). But what is the good news? Well, if someone gave you Rs. 10,000 that would be good news, wouldn't it? Moreover, you would want to tell everyone about the good fortune that came to you. Similarly, the good news of the gospel involves a gift—and that gift is Christ. But the good news of Christ is that he died, was buried and was resurrected. That means that Christ died that man might be saved from his sins, and with his resurrection from the dead he assured one and all of a resurrection and the hope of eternal life. Yes, that is good news.

Now we want to notice a statement by Paul in Romans 6:17, 18. Here he says, "But. God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." To be a servant of something is to bow down to it, to submit to it, to obey it, to serve it. But what changed them from being servants of sin to being servants of righteousness. Paul says that they had obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to them. That is, they had sincerely obeyed the form of doctrine that was preached to them. You will now note that he does not say that they obeyed the doctrine, but that they had obeyed a form of the doctrine. Is there a difference? There most certainly is. We shall see.

Before going on to study the form of the doctrine, we want to ask the all important question: What is the doctrine? For the answer, we will turn to 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Hear the same writer as he says: "Moreover, brethren. I declare unto you, the gospel which I preached unto you. which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand ; By which also ye are saved: if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to scriptures ; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." So the doctrine is simply the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Now if the doctrine is the death, burial and resurrection of Christ then what is the form of it, and how can one obey the form of it?

Paul explains this also in the first part of Romans 6. Let us begin with the third verse. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Romans 6:3,4). Now what is he saying? Simply this, if the doctrine of Christ is the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ, then in obeying a form of that doctrine one must die to his sin, be buried in the waters of baptism, and then to be brought forth or resurrected from that watery grave to walk a new life with Christ. In other words, when one repents or turns away from his sins, then he is dying to his sin. This Pictures the Lord's death on the cross. When one is buried in the water in obedience to the Lord's command, then he is picturing the Lord's burial. Finally, when one comes forth from the waters of baptism, he is picturing the Lord's resurrection from the tomb. Another way of putting it is this. The Lord died. So in like manner one dies to his sins. The Lord was buried. In a similar way one is buried in a watery tomb. The Lord was resurrected from the grave. So one is resurrected from the watery grave of baptism.

Going back to Romans 6:17, 18, we see how it was. possible for the Romans to be the servants of sin and then to become servants of righteousness. They merely heard the gospel preached, obeyed a form of it as already pointed out, and thus ceased to be the servants of sin and became the servants of righteousness.

That is, in obeying the Lord they were saved from their sin, it was for this reason that Paul could say, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith as it is written. The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16, 17).

It is because the gospel has the power to save that Christ Commanded the apostles. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15,16). When a group of people was convinced that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and wanted to know what they should do to be saved,

the apostle Peter answered, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38). Now in these statements from Christ and from Peter, we see that when the gospel is preached and the hearers believed it, repenting of their sins, then they were baptized. Once again, this involves dying to sins, being buried in baptism, and being resurrected from the watery grave.

To sum it up, we would point out that there are facts to believe. One must believe the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Next there are commands to obey. Based on one's faith, he is to repent and be baptized, and this means that one is to die to his sins, buried with the Lord in baptism, and be resurrected from the watery grave to walk a new life with Christ, or to live the Christian life.

There are also promises of the gospel that follow one's obedience to the Lord. These promises include salvation, or the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, being added to the church, and the hope of eternal life. We have already referred to Acts 2:38 where it states that those who repent and are baptized receive the remission of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then in Acts 2:47 the writer says that the saved are added to the church. In Romans 6:3, 4 Paul says that when one is baptized, he enters Christ. He says likewise in Galatians 3:26, 27, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Then in 2 Corinthians 5:17 he says, "therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Finally, he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3). So there are many blessings that come only to those who obey the gospel.

Next, the question arises, what will happen to those who do not obey the gospel? This time Paul says, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). The Lord is coming again one day and he is going to take vengeance on two classes of people. First of all, he will punish those who know not God or those who are found ignorant of God. But why? Because there is no excuse for one going through

life without a knowledge of God. All that is around us points to the fact that there is a God, and if there is a God then he has a will for man; and if he has a will then one should come to know it, believe it, and obey it that he might be saved. In other words, one cannot escape the Lord in the last day on the basis that he is ignorant. Second, he will punish those who have not obeyed the gospel. These are the people who have learned the Lord's will but have neglected to obey it. The writer of Hebrews 2:3 asks the question, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" The answer is that there will be no escape. Now then, if one will be lost if he fails to obey the gospel then that means that he must obey the gospel to be saved. Surely the Lord would not require the impossible. And as we have already noticed, when one obeys the commands of the gospel then the Lord saves that individual.

Finally, there is one Christ, and there is one gospel, in writing the Galatians Christians. Paul declared. "I MARVEL that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some: that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel-unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-9). Paul had preached the one pure gospel to them. Now he says that if someone should come and preach another gospel then he would have the curse of the Lord resting on him. Paul said that this would be true even if the one preaching the new gospel were him or if it were an angel from heaven. That means that the one true gospel had been preached and that the Lord will not tolerate a change. What gospel did Paul preach? We have already observed that in the foregoing study.

There are many gospels being preached today in the name of Christ. One teaches one thing and another teaches something else. But just remember there is one pure gospel. How then can we know that we have that gospel? By comparing that which we have with what the Bible teaches. Better still, go to the Bible to begin with and believe and obey the teachings of Christ—then you'll be right.

The gospel of Christ is so simple and easy to understand. When you hear the gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—believe those facts, and obey the commands of repentance and baptism then the Lord will save you and add you to his church.

Then share the gospel with others, for this good news is for all, even the whole world.

The Marvelous Providence of God!

ROYCE FREDERICK

The blessings which God **provides** are far too vast for our human minds to fully comprehend! Even so, we should study the **providence** of God in order to grow in our appreciation of God and His love for us.

TWO “KINDS” OF PROVIDENCE

The Bible shows us that God provides many blessings for all people—and then He adds **more** blessings for the people who love Him and obey Him. Some people classify these blessings in two categories; **basic providence** and **special providence**. The terms “basic” and “special” do not fully express the marvels of God’s blessings, but they do serve as good communication tools for our study.

As we study the blessings provided by God, we need to remember that **all** of these blessings come from **one source**. They all come from the same power of the **same God**—the one true and living God. *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning”* (Jas. 1:17).

BASIC PROVIDENCE

BLESSINGS WHICH GOD PROVIDES FOR ALL PEOPLE

There are many things which God supplies for all people. For example, He provides all of our food. When He had finished creating all things, God told Adam and Eve (the first man and woman), *“See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food”* (Gen. 1:29). After the flood, God told Noah and his family, *“And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs”* (Gen. 9:2-3).

Someone may say, “I labored in the fields to grow my food.”

Another may say, “I worked hard and earned the money to buy my food.” Someone else may say, “I prepared the food and made it delicious by cleaning, mixing, and cooking it.” All of these labors are important. But did you design the seed? Did you give it power to grow? Did you make your own arms and hands? Do you generate the sunlight each day? Are you able to produce a living plant or animal by merely mixing soil and water?

The power of life comes from the living God. Without Him, there would be no plants, animals, soil, water, light, hands, arms, minds, or strength to work. Men and women are able to work in the fields and prepare meals by using things which God has provided! “...*He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*” (Acts 14:17). All of the things we eat are “...*foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth*” (1 Tim. 4:3). We owe our thanks to God for every bite of food—and for our body’s amazing ability to take energy and nutrients from that food.

Many miracles were involved in bringing God’s basic providence to us. He used miracles to suddenly create the earth, sun, moon, stars, all life forms—and every atomic particle! (Gen. 1; Ex. 20:11; Ps. 8:3; 33:6; 146:6; Jn. 1:1-3; Heb. 1:1-2; 11:3; Col. 1:15-16). So, today, all of us benefit from those first miracles.

Today, the physical world continues according to natural, physical laws. But even now, nothing could continue without God. He is still holding all things together by His power (Col. 1:17; Neh. 9:6).

Each time I take a breath of air, or behold the beauty of a flower, I am receiving a marvelous gift from God! I could not exist for one moment without the help of God. The apostle Paul told some people in Athens, “...*in Him we live and move and have our being* [our existence]” (Acts 17:28).

God provides these “basic” gifts to all people on earth—even to people who hate Him and fight against Him. He provides them to people who do not even believe He exists. He provides these blessings to people who deny Him with the very mind and tongue which He gave them! “...*He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust*” (Matt. 5:45).

We ought to imitate God in this. He wants us to do good things for all people, even those who hurt us (Matt. 5:43-48; Rom. 12:14, 17-21).

How many years of life does God owe you or me? 100? 60? 20? God has never owed you or me even one moment of life. Yet, He

has freely given us many days and years! Does God owe you the ability to see, speak, run, walk, hear, or think? If you have been able to do any of those things, even for a moment, you should praise God and seek to honor Him by a life of loving obedience!

SPECIAL PROVIDENCE

BLESSINGS WHICH GOD PROVIDES FOR HIS CHILDREN

God provides special blessings for every person who loves Him and obeys Him. His people can say with confidence, *“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want...Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever”* (Ps. 23:1, 6). *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding: in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths”* (Pr. 3:5-6).

Some of God’s special help in Bible times was given by means of amazing miracles. The miracles in the Bible had several purposes: to show God’s love, to demonstrate His power, to reveal His message, and to verify His message (see Matt. 14:14; Jn. 3:2; 16:12-13; Mk. 16:17-20; Acts 2:1-12, 22, 43; Heb. 2:4). The miracles in the Bible clearly show that God has both the desire and the ability to help His people.

But even during Bible times, miracles were not the most important way God helped His people. The miracles were samples of the great power which God uses for His people every day without miracles!

God does not need a miracle every time He wants to help someone. He does not need to suspend His “natural laws,” or interrupt nature, each time He wants to bless a person’s life. He is wise enough and powerful enough to work for His people constantly “behind the scenes”—within His laws of nature.

Some people refuse to believe in God unless they see a miracle with their own eyes. *“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign [a miracle] from You.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man [Jesus] be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth’”* (Matt. 12:38-40). His resurrection from death would be the great sign for them. But that great miracle does not happen again for each person to see with his own eyes.

Hundreds of witnesses saw Jesus alive again after He had been killed and buried (1 Cor. 15:1-8; Acts 1:3). To one of those witnesses, Jesus said, *“Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed”* (Jn. 20:29). We who are alive today have not seen Jesus and His miracles. Instead, we must choose to believe or disbelieve the witnesses whose testimony is recorded in the Bible. *“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name”* (Jn. 20:30-31). Jesus said, *“I do not pray for these alone [the apostles], but also for those who will believe in Me **through** their word”* (Jn. 17:20). When we read *“their word”*—the inspired testimony of the apostles and disciples—it leads us to believe in Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16; 10:17). So, today, we receive eternal blessings from all the New Testament miracles.

God provides special blessings for His children today. The greatest gift from God is the gift of His Son on the cross for our sins. The benefit of His death is **offered** to all people (Jn. 1:29; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 10:34; 1 Tim. 2:4, 6; 2 Pet. 3:9). For all who will accept this gift, it provides forgiveness, abundant blessings now, and eternal life with God (Jn. 3:16; 5:29). *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”* (Eph. 1:3).

God answers the prayers of His children. When a person obeys the gospel, he becomes a child of God. He is saved by faith when he is baptized into Christ. Paul reminded the Christians in Galatia, *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Gal. 3:26-27).

After you have obeyed the gospel, you have the privilege of asking for God’s special help because He is your **Father**. *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”* (Matt. 7:11). *“...For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”* (Matt. 6:32-33; see Jn. 16:23-27).

The special help which God gives to His children does not mean He provides everything we desire. He provides everything we need. Even Jesus prayed, *“Father, **if it is Your will**, take this cup away*

from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Lk. 22:42; see 1 Jn. 3:21-22; 5:14-15; 1 Pet. 3:12).

Do I really need perfect health and wealth? If I had them, would I love God more and serve Him better? Throughout history, humans have shown that they forget God quickly when they become wealthy and full (Dt. 8:10-20; Neh. 9:25-26). *"When they had pasture, they were filled; they were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore they forgot Me"* (Hosea 13:6).

Agur made this wise request of God: *"Two things I request of You (deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God"* (Prov. 30:7-9).

We should not want God to use **His power** for us without **His wisdom** guiding that power. He has much more knowledge than we do about what will really bless our lives now and forever. *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts*" (Isa. 55:8-9). When we ask God for His special help according to His will, we are trusting in both His power and His wisdom.

God brings good things out of bad things for those who love Him. Sometimes suffering makes Christians doubt God's providential care. We may think that suffering and problems will destroy us, but they may actually bring blessings to us and to people we love. *"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word"* (Ps. 119:67). *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes. The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver"* (Ps. 119:71-72). *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called-according to His purpose"* (Rom. 8:28; see 2 Cor. 12:9-10; Heb. 5:8).

Which child will grow to be stronger in body and character: the one who must work to help his family, or the one who has everything given to him and done for him? Paul wrote, *"...we also glory in tribulations [troubles], knowing that tribulation produces perseverance [endurance]; and perseverance, character; and character, hope"* (Rom. 5:3-4).

God makes a way for us to avoid sinning when tempted.

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

If you have obeyed the gospel, you are His child. You have the "basic" blessings which He provides for all people and the "special" blessings which He provides for His family. He has already given you His best gift. Why would you doubt that He will provide for all of your other needs?

"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:31 -32).

"GOD BE THANKED"

J.L. LEIFESTE

*"But **God be thanked** that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18).*

It is good to think about freedom. It is better when we can enjoy freedom. Of course, in order to have freedom, we must accept the responsibilities that come with it.

It is within the heart of every human to yearn for freedom of different kinds. All humans need spiritual freedom more than they need any other type. However, notice the first few words of the above scripture. Some people may think it is odd for a Christian to thank God, the Father, for making them slaves of righteousness.

People who are not Christians are slaves of sin (see Rom. 3:23; 2 Pet. 2:19). *"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16).*

We deliver ourselves totally to Christ when we obey from the heart that correct form of New Testament doctrine, His gospel (Rom. 1:16; 16:25-26; 1 Pet. 4:17). *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death,*

that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin” (Rom. 6:3-7). Also, we continue in full commitment as God’s servants (Jn. 8:51; Rom. 2:6-7; 1 Cor. 15:58).

When we surrender to Christ, we receive forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and eternal inheritance as God’s children (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26-29; Col. 1:10-14; Jn. 5:28-29; 1 Pet. 1:3-4).

We also receive a special peace and joy (Rom. 8:28-39; Phil. 4:4-7, 11, 13; 1 Pet. 1:6-9). We find these in every day of the Christian life.

It is far better to become servants of righteousness than to bear the heavy yoke of slavery to sin all of our lives—and suffer eternally (Jn. 8:34; 12:26; Eph. 6:6-8; 1 Jn. 5:2-3). *“But now having been set free from sin and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:22-23). God be thanked because we can be His servants!*

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

Leaders Prepare Leaders

ROYCE FREDERICK

Moses prepared Joshua. David prepared Solomon.

Elijah prepared Elisha.

Jesus prepared the twelve Apostles.

Paul prepared Timothy and Titus.

Even preachers die (Heb. 9:27). Are you preparing leaders to continue the work you have been doing?

After you leave this earth, what will happen to the church where you have been preaching? What will happen to the churches in your area? Are you training men to teach, preach, and lead? Are

you training men to become elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1:5-9)? Will the Christians remain faithful?

“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). If you do not train men to lead, many of the people you baptized may fall away from Christ after you are gone. **Your work**—and their souls—could be lost forever.

Training men to lead the church can help **your own work** endure forever. *“If anyone’s work...endures, he will receive a reward”* (1 Cor. 3:14).

Teach men by your faithful preaching and godly life (Phil. 4:9; 1 Tim. 4:12-16). Let them serve the Lord’s Supper, lead prayers, lead singing, teach, and preach. Work with them in making decisions in the work of the church. Listen to them, encourage them, and give them gentle instructions. By doing this, you will save more souls while you are alive, and your work will continue after you have gone.

The Curse Of Pessimism

W.A. HOLLEY

What is pessimism? “An inclination to emphasize adverse aspects, conditions, and possibilities or to expect the worst possible outcome” (Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary).

It seems that there are those who make a career of pessimism. An optimist is willing to try; a pessimist is afraid to try. An optimist sees a glass of tea half full; a pessimist sees the same glass half empty. A prisoner who had been held in solitary confinement for several years, when asked how he managed to keep his sanity, replied, “I could look down and see the mud or I could look up and see the stars.”

Noah must have been an optimist because, being warned of the forthcoming flood, he, by faith, built the ark (Genesis Chapters 6-8; Hebrews 11:7; Matthew 24:37; Luke 17:26).

David was an optimist because, he against great odds, attacked Goliath the giant, and slew him (I Samuel 17:4, 23).

Paul was an optimist. Although he suffered many things at the hands of wicked men, he never became a pessimist. He said, “I can do all things through him that strengthened me” (Philippians 4:13). Thus, even though he was often whipped, stoned and imprisoned, he never gave up (II Corinthians 11:23,28).

At the very end of His life, when death was staring him in the face, Paul was still able to look on the bright side of things (II Timothy 4:4-8). What believer has not been strengthened by his stirring and challenging words as he comes to cross Jordan's rolling river?

Often times pessimism enters the Lord's church through some of its pessimistic members. They surrender victory before the battle is fought. Some are eternal pessimists. They continually look on the dark side of everything. They think the church is going to the dogs, and they secretly hope it will, so they can say, "I told you so." A pessimist will look for the worst, while pretending to work and look for the best.

For example, when brethren had worked hard to promote a much needed building program, one brother was heard to say, "I just hope I live long enough to tell them that I knew the whole thing would fail anyway."

The elders and the preachers plan visitation programs to invite the general public to attend Bible classes and gospel meetings, but the pessimist will not cooperate. They say "its no use. They will not come anyway. Why waste all this time? We have tried before and we have never made any inroads." And, so the program is stopped before it ever got started.

Brethren, we should understand that pessimism is deadly, contagious and a destructive disease. Pessimism can spread like the bubonic plague through the entire congregation. It robs one of all initiative; it turns opportunities into difficulties. The language of defeat is ever on the tongues of pessimists.

However, we must not mistake caution and common sense for pessimism. Paul stated this thought in these words: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all that ye do be done in love" (I Corinthians 16:13-14, ASV).

In another place, after discussing the mysteries of the resurrection, Paul wrote, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58, ASV).

Here is comparatively a rather small band of the Lord's disciples. They are commanded to go and preach the gospel to every creature (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). To them it must have seemed impossible. No money, no cars or airplanes, no television, no telephones, no printing presses, nothing, it seems - But they believe their Master, they obey His commands, they leave the City of

Jerusalem and begin telling the world about Jesus Christ. In a few years the gospel is “preached to every creature which is under Heaven” (Colossians 1:6, 23).

Isn't it amazing? We possess all the things which they did not have, yet, somehow we cannot carry the gospel to all the world as they did. Why? Is it because we lack the faith and the dedication which they possessed?? We ask, Why, why??

Have we been fishing too close to the shore? Luke 5:1-11, tells of how the Lord's disciples had been fishing all night, but had caught nothing. Jesus said to them, “Put out into the deep,” and when they followed His orders, they “enclosed a great multitude of fishes.” Brethren, our marching orders are to go and go we must!! There are thousands of congregations of the church of Christ that need to be established.

Optimism is the enthusiasm that works. Optimism is that power which helps us to overcome our frustrated efforts, our thwarted hopes, and our ever-present problems.

This is a time for profound thought: Peter believed that his life could be better, even though he had denied the Lord Jesus Christ three times. Judas' pessimism led him to commit suicide. What a difference.

Threat Of Apostasy

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Convenience has always been the mother of apostasy. Therefore the church, in every age, has been in the throes of and on the verge of departing from the truth because mankind seeks the easy way out! It takes courage, fortitude and determination to remain loyal and faithful and no effort at all to leave the moorings of the gospel. The line of least resistance makes crooked rivers and useless members of the church! The notable passage before us now, the fourth chapter of I Timothy, is a classic reminder of the constant challenge to remain committed to the Lord's cause forever and never to take that first short step on the long journey of apostasy that eventuates in hell. There are five major teachings in the evangelistic epistles known as I and II Timothy and Titus. These five principles of gospel truth permeate the thirteen chapters of the three books:

- (1) Qualifications of Elders
- (2) Preach The Word!

- (3) Keep The Church Pure
- (4) Live As An Example
- (5) Rebuke False Teachers

It is uniquely true that all five of these issues are desperately needed if we would offset error and stamp out apostasy. Very few would ever depart from the faith if we universally had qualified bishops, Bible-reaching evangelists, stalwart congregations, brethren who practiced purity of life and men of God who rebuked sin and exposed error! Sadly, in many local areas, several of these ingredients of soundness are missing and in some places they are actively opposed. It seems that the only thing some brethren oppose are those courageous folk who oppose untruth!

In II Thessalonians 2:7 Paul made it very clear, as God's inspired ambassador, that the mystery of lawlessness was already at work in the first century. In I John 4:1 and II Peter 2:1 great servants of the Almighty plainly stated that many false prophets had already gone out into the world. Apostasy had marched upon the scene and had to be openly opposed and bluntly dealt with. Through the intervening centuries Satan and his emissaries have not been lazy or silent and today God's army must be on the alert constantly lest the devil gain an advantage over us (II Corinthians 2:11). If we fail to reprove such (Ephesians 5:11) we become partakers of their evil deeds (II John 11). Elders, especially must be on guard (Acts 20:28-32) and be able and willing to convict the gainsayers (Titus 1:9).

Paul made it crystal clear to Timothy, in the section before us at this time, that in his own day many would depart from the system of faith and even teach doctrines of demons. Such would harden the hearts of hearers and teachers alike and cause apostasy within the ranks of soldiers of Christ. Students of church history know full-well that such came to pass minutely. Sorrow upon sorrow resulted from the contamination of the pure, pristine stream that flowed from the mountain of the Lord's house (Isaiah 2:1-4; I Timothy 3:15). Had it not been for the courage and conviction of a small band of devoted saints, through the centuries, Satan and his host would have been victorious. The sufferings faithful and valiant Christians endured is a monumental tribute to the providence of God and the tenacity of the saints who would not turn their back upon the heavenly cause mandated by the Savior (Romans 8:18). When the Ephesian church tried those claiming to be apostles and proved them to be false, Christ commended the brethren there (Revelation 2:2). In Hebrews 3:12 and II Peter 3:17 members of the church were

challenged to remain loyal to God and never to depart from steadfastness in the kingdom. In Hebrews 2:1-3 Christians were encouraged to hold to the solid moorings of the gospel and never to drift away from nor to neglect the great salvation!

In the first few centuries of Christianity we see in the recorded history several examples of how apostasy comes about. In 251 A.D. we read of Novatian who wanted to compromise on the mode of baptism. In 325 we learn of Constantine who violated the fundamental issue of freedom of choice by forcing Christianity upon the people. In 416 the Roman church killed a man named Pelagius for the organization of the church produced Popery due to the oligarchy - or rule of a few - known as the Metropolitan Bishops in the fifth century. Instrumental music in worship was promulgated by Pope Vitalian in the middle of the sixth century after Christ. The clergy-laity system developed when robes and titles came upon the scene. By the Council of Ravenna in 1311, Rome declared that sprinkling was the official mode of baptism. Lent, confessionals, purgatory, and praying through Mary and the saints had all gradually developed so that pure New Testament Christianity was exceedingly difficult to find! Elders in every church (Acts 14:23) overseeing the flock of God among them (I Peter 5:1-4) had almost vanished from the earth. Instead of simple worship and godly living (John 4:24; Matthew 5:8) one could mainly see pompous, hierarchal religiosity (Mark 7:9-13). By the seventeenth century religious division and confusion was the order of the day and the pristine beauty, of that for which Christ died, was obscured (Acts 20:28). The major points of emphasis should always be:

A. Christ Is Pre-Eminent And Not Man!

(Colossians 1:18; Matthew 28:18).

B. The Scriptures Are All-Sufficient!

(II Timothy 3:16-17; Romans 4:3)

C. Emotions Cannot Rule Over The Bible!

(Jeremiah 10:23; Romans 10:1-3)

D. Loyalty To Men Cannot Dominate!

(II John 9: Deut. 12:8; Proverbs 21:2).

Within the first century there were many severe groups that perverted the gospel (Galatians 1:6-9). There were cruel enemies of the cross of Christ (Philippians 3:18-19) that led away disciples of the Redeemer. The most prominent group referred to in Scripture were the Judaizers who tried to elevate the rites of the Mosacial arrangements above the covenant which Christ mediates (Hebrews

8). To allow such an emphasis caused Paul to remind brethren that Jesus would have died in vain (Galatians 2:21). The Gnostics had several errors concerning the nature of the Savior that led to carnal actions that polluted the morals of its followers. I John 1:1 contradicted the Docetists who denied that Jesus came in the flesh. The Ophites were basically Satan worshippers who foolishly endeavored to see how wicked they could be so as to please their god - the devil! Sadly, we have lots of folk today who seem determined to go to hell because of a liberated lifestyle.

PORNOGRAPHY

MIKE BENSON

"Shouldn't a person have the right to watch, or read *whatever* he pleases? As long as he watches or reads in the privacy of his own home, and *nobody* gets hurt, what difference does it make?

1. What a person "sows" in his mind determines how he will act. "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. . ." (Proverbs 23:7a). "*Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life*" (Proverbs 4:23).

"Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit.

Sow a habit, reap a character.

Sow a character, reap a destiny!"

2. It is incorrect to suggest that "nobody gets hurt", for in reality, EVERYBODY gets hurt", Consider:

- "A battery of researchers reported at the Canadian symposium that in the field of violent / pornographic movies, prolonged exposure to X-rated as well as R-rated films caused male college students to be 'desensitized' to rape and violence and more accepting to the rape-myth that women say no when they really mean yes."
- "The FBI estimates that recreational killers murder 5,000 people in the U.S. Most of them, say FBI officials, feed on pornography."
- "A 1984 study released by the University of New Hampshire revealed that states with the highest readership of porn magazines such as *Playboy and Hustler*, etc., also had the highest rape rates."
- "Human Development Specialist Dr. Shirley O'Brien of the University of Arizona says that child pornography victimizes as

many as 600,000 children in the United States. Victims include children as young as 3 years old and as old as 18.”

- **Does the individual who reads and watches pornographic material hurt himself?** *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life”* (Galatians 6:7-8). **Is it really possible for “nobody to get hurt”?**

3. A Christian is to think on that which is PURE. “Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8). See also II Corinthians 10:5. As Wayne Jackson notes, “Pornography, sexually explicit movies, etc., have paved the way for many an act of rape, adultery, incest, homosexuality, and other equally vile sins. . . . *One simply cannot feed upon the impure and be pure!*” See also Matthew 5:28, II Peter 2:14.

How Inspired Word Came to Man

DILLARD THURMAN

Communication is still one of the greatest problems that plague mankind. Friendships are lost, businesses ruined, homes wrecked and bloody wars fought due to lack of proper communication. So, when God wanted to reveal His will to mankind, He chose a means to make it abundantly clear and understandable. Since man had sinned and could not meet God face to face, God spoke to man by prophets of old. This was explained by David, “*The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue*” (2 Sam. 23:2).

By means of the Holy Spirit, God gave His word to prophets. These prophets, in turn, gave it to the people. All through that process, God preserved the purity of His message: “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets ... Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*” (Heb. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). The prophets were strictly warned against corrupting that message: “*The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell it as a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my*

word faithfully" (Jer. 23:28). Prophets spoke only as God gave them utterance (see also Acts 2:4), and were not allowed to improvise or alter God's message.

A GREATER REVELATION SET FORTH

In the Old Testament, prophets declared the terms of acceptance with God, but could not offer eternal life: *"For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law"* (Gal. 3:21). The old law was not designed to give life, and therefore was taken away, being nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:14-17). The reason was assigned, *"For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the Weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law could make nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God"* (Heb. 7:18-19). Since the gospel dispensation is far greater than the law, we expect God to use improved communication in revealing His will to man. And He does.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). That is clear and concise and is accepted in fulness of faith by all who love and respect the word of God. God has spoken to man by His Son, who was duly qualified to speak for His Father! *"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him"* (John 3:34). This was no ordinary prophet, and His words were not ordinary utterances. The Son was given authority to speak for God, *"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63). His words were spiritual in nature, and life-giving in their fruit.

JESUS WAS GIVEN ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY

God chose Jesus Christ to deliver His word, and man cannot turn from that word with impunity. Jesus said, *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak"* (John 12:48-49). There can be no doubt of His claim to be God's spokesman to mankind.

Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth from Isa. 61, *"The Spirit of the Lord, is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord"* (Luke 4:18-19). Handing the book back to the attendant,

Jesus said: *"This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."* He clearly claimed to be the prophet through whom God would speak to all mankind (Deut. 18:18-19; John 12:49-50). Jesus stands preeminent among all the prophets God has sent, and one who accepts the message of the prophets cannot be consistent in rejecting Jesus. As He put it, *"For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me"* (John 5:46).

Keeping the words of Christ is the basis on which prayers are answered. *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you"* (John 15:7). Our confidence can be placed in the words of Him whom God hath sent, for He promised, *"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away"* (Mark 13:31). God placed His seal of divine approval upon Him with the declaration, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him"* (Matt. 17:5). All men are to heed and honor the words of this Speaker come from God. Even to this good day, the heavens and earth are sustained by Him who is *"upholding all things by the word of his power"* (Heb. 1:3).

THE SPIRIT PROMISED TO THE APOSTLES

Even while engaged in His personal ministry on earth, Jesus began to show His chosen that He was soon to leave. He braced them for the ordeals that lay ahead by promising them *"the comforter"* (John 14:16). He spoke of His kingdom, *"There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power"* (Mark 9:1). Note that this kingdom would come during their lifetime *"with power."* He later clarified this by telling the apostles, *"Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me"* (Acts 1:8).

Jesus had before promised the Holy Spirit, who would empower the apostles: *"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you"* (John 14:16-17). This promise was for the apostles only, who at that time had the Spirit dwelling with them. It was specifically stated that the world could not receive this promise.

THE SPIRIT INSPIRED THE APOSTLES

The Lord promised the apostles, *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"* (John 14:25-26). The Holy Spirit would remind the apostles of what Jesus had told them - this could not have been a

promise to other people! To this the Lord added *"the Comforter"* would be given to these who were His witnesses and who *"have been with me from the beginning"* (John 15:26-27).

Jesus clarified the work which the Spirit was to do for the apostles, concluding with, *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth"* (John 16:13). Surely such passages should convince all that Jesus intended to speak through His apostles by the Holy Spirit after He departed. The fulfillment of these promises is clearly shown: *"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance"* (Acts 2:4).

THE AUTHORITY IN THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE

After Jesus left, it was yet necessary that the will of God be proclaimed. The apostles had the responsibility to take His message to the world: *"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature . . . He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me"* (Mark 16:15; Luke 10:16). One cannot reject the apostles' doctrine without rejecting Christ and His Father! One cannot accept God while rejecting Christ. Jesus was emphatic when He told them, *"Verily, Verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me"* (John 13:20).

The apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit as Jesus promised, said: *"We preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake ... But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us"* (2 Cor. 4:5,7). They knew the source of this saving message, and they knew Who bestowed salvation: *"But our sufficiency is of God: who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament"* (2 Cor. 3:6). The old testament was ministered by prophets and priests. The spirit of the new testament was ministered by the inspired apostles of Jesus Christ.

THE APOSTLES REVEALED GOD'S WILL

As the Father gave His will to His Son, Jesus passed it on to His apostles, and they gave it to all men to be believed and obeyed. The riches of glory permeating the gospel could not be known of old, but is now revealed to us by inspired men (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Paul wrote, *"We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. . . Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth"* (1 Cor. 2:7,13). Though this wisdom was hidden for ages, the mystery was dissolved when the Holy Spirit revealed it through inspiration.

God intends that we know and understand His message to us. *"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit"* (Eph. 3:3-5). Thus, by inspiration in the apostles, we are enlightened where mystery had before reigned. And when we *"read, may understand."* Thus, today all can read, understand and obey God's will to obtain every spiritual blessing. The apostle Paul further defined the source and authority of what the apostles taught, *"When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God"* (1 Thes. 2:13).

THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE MUST BE OBEYED

The last word Jesus gave His disciples before parting with them was: *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15-16). Salvation full and free was offered to all men who believed, but the unbelieving would be lost. There must be sufficient faith generated in the heart by God's word (Rom. 10:17) to lead to obedience to His terms of pardon. It is not enough to merely acknowledge God's truth - the maid with the evil spirit did that (Acts 16:17). Salvation is based on more than mere belief: *"Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness"* (Rom. 6:17-18). They obeyed that *"form of doctrine"* when they had died to sin, been buried in baptism and raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

The pattern of *"faith which works by love"* (Gal. 5:6) is clearly shown. *"For ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"* (Gal. 3:26-27). Those who put their trust in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and are baptized into Him and raised to new life are *"born again"* (John 3:5). *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Cor. 5:17). We should not expect salvation without obedience. Look at the example of Jesus, *"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"* (Heb. 5:8-9). Friend, why not render obedience to God's will and be saved?