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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Justification Is Received Through The Faith Of Jesus Christ

JUSTIFICATION in legal language means to “acquit” or “to state officially in court that somebody is not guilty of a crime.” In the New Testament it refers to God’s gracious act (Romans 8:33), grounded in the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 4:25), by which He accepts into right relation with Himself the sinner who in faith trusts himself to Christ. ***The true Scriptural justification “by faith” has no reference at all to the faith of sinner, but to the “faith of the Son of God” by whose perfect faith the sinner is justified.*** Justification means God’s reckoning a man righteous who has no righteousness of his own. The individual who believes in Christ and repents of all wrongs, and is baptized for the remission of sins according to the Scriptures (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), is justified, accounted righteous, while still a sinner, by the blood of Christ. God, at that point, declares the believing obedient person righteous, while he is ungodly. If God changed him first, he would not be ungodly. The sinner’s faith, repentance and baptism is not a “meritorious” work. It is simply giving God the credit of revealing the truth of His grace in the gospel of Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). ***It is Christ’s shed blood, and that alone, which is the procuring cause of God’s declaring an ungodly individual righteous or justified.*** While God’s grace is



the reason for it, man's faith and obedience to His commands is simply the instrumental condition to receive His grace. ***Righteousness is not something that may be achieved by man in any manner, but is received by faith.***

The ability to merit or earn salvation is simply not in mortal people. No man is ever saved in his own personal identity as possessing any true righteousness of his own. (Isaiah 64:6). ***It is the perfect faith of Jesus Christ which constitutes "the righteousness of God," and it is that, "the faith of Christ" which saves and justifies, and not the sinner's faith.*** This is in perfect harmony with an extensive body of teaching found in the New Testament as cited from the following Scriptures in the Authorized Version, the 1611 edition commonly known as "King James Version."

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; **Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe : for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness : that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Romans 3:21-26).

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but **by the faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified **by the faith of Christ**, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Galatians 2:16).

"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise **by faith of Jesus Christ** might be given to them that believe." (Galatians 3:22).

"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is **through the faith of Christ**, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Philippians 3:9).

All of the above cited Scriptures from the Authorized Version were unfortunately changed in the English Revised Version since 1885 to read, in each instance, "faith in Christ" to bolster the theory of justification by "faith only." The very notion that God could impute justification to a sinful man merely upon the basis of believing in Christ is a delusion. Justification in any true sense requires that the

justified be accounted as righteous and of undeserving of any penalty whatever, and no man's faith is sufficient ground for such an imputation.

On the other hand, the faith of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Bible is indeed a legitimate ground of man's justification, because Christ's faith was perfect. Speaking of Christ, Hebrews 5:8-9 says, "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." The faith of Christ was the obedient perfect faith, lacking nothing whatever, and therefore the obedient faith of the Son of God, sinless and holy, is the only ground of justification. People are saved "in Christ" having been incorporated into Him by faith. To be in Christ is that device contrived by God Himself by which a man might truly and legitimately be justified by the faith of Jesus Christ. The belief that God's righteousness is some imputation accomplished by the sinner's faith is totally unfounded.

CAN A CHILD OF GOD BE LOST?

J.C. CHOATE

MANY IN THE RELIGIOUS world teach that once a person is saved, he will always be saved; he cannot fall away, and he cannot sin to the point that he will be lost. To support this doctrine, they boldly quote such scriptures as John 10:27,28: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand," Another favorite passage is Romans 8:35-39: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?... I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angles,... nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus."



Does the Bible teach that a saved person cannot be lost? Are these verses upholding such a doctrine?

It is true that once a person becomes a Christian, a child of God, a member of the Lord's church, he will always be a child of God and a member of the church for which Christ died. Once one

has been born again(John 3:3,5), he cannot be unborn.

But just as in a physical family, a child may behave in such a way that his parents are compelled to disown him, so the Scriptures show that even in God's spiritual family, a child may also be disinherited.

Does this mean that the Scriptures are contradictory? that the assurances in John and Romans are not correct? Certainly, every word inspired by God is true! But it is possible for humans to misunderstand what is said, or even to wrongly construe the meaning, causing a seeming contradiction.

What did Jesus actually say in John 10? He did not say that it is impossible for one of His sheep to be lost. What He was saying was that no person or spirit is strong enough to forcibly overcome Him and to jeopardize the security of His sheep. Jesus has the power to protect and keep all who give themselves to Him.

In Romans 8, the same assurance is made. No created thing is strong enough to separate us from God. As Jesus said in His prayer in John 17:12, "Those whom You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, except the son of perdition..." The very wording of Jesus' statement shows that one who had been His was now lost—Judas—and how was Judas lost? Because he allowed Satan to enter his heart and to tempt him to betray Jesus; then, unlike Peter who denied Christ and was forgiven when he repented, Judas was lost beyond forgiveness when he took his own life.

But all of this was done through personal choice. Yes, it is true that there is no power on earth that is strong enough to wrest us from the hands of God—but by our own choices we may walk away from Him, to be lost eternally. If this was not possible, God would be unjust, forcing people to remain at His side in spite of the fact that they desired to leave Him. From the beginning, He has never interfered with the power of "free will" which he gave to Adam and Eve, and to all humans through them.

If it was not possible to leave God and be lost, the many passages of Scripture which encourage faithfulness and warn of the danger of being lost would be totally unneeded and false. Let us consider some of these verses:

"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

"...You have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its

place—unless you repent” (Revelation 2:4,5)

“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God, He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son”(2 John :9).

“For some have already turned aside after Satan”(I Timothy 5:15).

“...at the end of this age... The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire...”(Matthew 13:37-43).

God has always given humans the freedom of choice, to love and obey Him, or to leave Him. Adam and Eve were created as perfect beings. No sin was in them. They were safe, and with God. But they chose to disobey God, and they fell into sin, even as we today can fall into sin by our own choices to do evil instead of good.

RIGHT DECISIONS

JOHNNY RAMSEY

OUR LIVES ARE VISUALLY the sum total of the decisions and choices we make day by day. When we stand before God on Judgment Day, we will fully realize how monumental were the steps we took along the pathway of life. When we decide the direction, emphasis and focus of our hearts, we truly mark our eternal destiny. A choice made early in life can have a devastating impact on the final years of our sojourn on earth. We do reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7-8) by our free-will decisions. Christians often sing these sentiments at baptismal services:

O happy day that fixed my choice

On Thee, my Savior and my God...

In the last Old Testament book, we are told that the people of God decided to rob Him of their time, money and attitude. Worship had become tedious (Mal. 1:13), divorce was rampant (Mal. 2:16) and proper sacrifice was forgotten (Mal. 1:7-8). Such decisions ruined their rapport with Deity and made a shambles out of their existence. Sounds very much like the atmosphere of our own day. To decide that we ought to save money by holding back what we should give to God is a foolish mistake by shallow folk who will never know the joy of generosity: *“It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35).

Contentment does not come from what we have, but from whom we belong to. Romans 8:31 says it very cogently, *"If God be for us, who can be against us?"* Joel 3:14 brilliantly reminds us that multitudes are in *"the valley of decision."* To vacillate between whether we serve God or the world is a deadly mistake (1 Kgs. 18:21). We are either for the Lord or against Him (Matt. 12:30). There can be no fence-straddlers in covenant relationship with the Savior (Matt. 6:24). There are only two destinations—heaven or hell—and we choose, by our actions, where we will live eternally (Matt. 25:46; 7:13-14). The easy road is the wrong path. It takes determined effort and spiritual commitment to wind up in glory. That is why the majority will be lost, because it takes no backbone at all to follow the path that leads to eternal ruin! Wise men realize the truth of this maxim: "Being one jump ahead is not any good, unless we are headed in the right direction."

Someone has properly explained that our success will be measured by what we do with the circumstances of life rather than by the circumstances themselves. If a man stranded on an isolated island were to read an up-to-date newspaper of current society, he might choose not to be "rescued." For, at least, in his lonely existence there is no war, no strife, no vulgarity and no open rebellion. If more people would decide to live for God, truth and right, we could make our world a paradise instead of hell on earth.

The visit of the prophet Jeremiah to the potter's house sheds a lot of light on man's free moral agency. Notice these enlightening words, *"Cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hands, so are ye in mine hand"* (Jer. 18:6). When we voluntarily bend and yield to our Creator, our lives will be richer and fuller indeed. To recognize the sovereign power of Jehovah is a tremendous step toward life.

*Thou art the potter,
I am the clay;
Mold me and make me
After thy will
While I am waiting yielded and still.*

We should decide early in life (Eccle. 12:1) to put the Lord first in our loyalties. As a Christian one should choose to marry a devoted Christian. We need to decide to be honest and honorable in business and faithfully diligent in the church of the Lord. Such monumental choices will determine where we will be in eternity. *"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the Lord is near in the valley*

of decision” (Joel 3:14). We stand right now in the valley of decision. What will our future hold?

EVOLUTION OR CREATION?

DR. BERT THOMPSON

ARE YOU A DESCENDANT of an ape-like creature that lived millions of years ago? Did your forbears at one time swing through the trees on some remote island? Can you trace your “roots” back to some primordial slime that evolved by chance and environmental pressure, into the human being you are today?

We see television specials and read textbooks on the “history of man” in which we see mankind move from the swamp on all fours, straighten up, shed his tail, grow hair, and learn to think and talk. We see this alleged scenario almost daily through such magazines as **National Geographic**, **Time**, **Natural History**, and others.

Is this really what happened? Are you the result of billions of years of evolutionary changes? Are you the result of spontaneous generation that took place a long, long time ago—only to find its culmination in **Homo sapiens** of today? Or, were you specially created by God “*in His image*”? Did He, as the Bible indicates, create mankind “*male and female*” (Matt. 19: 4)? Are we, as the Psalmist wrote, “*fearfully and wonderfully made*”? (Psalm 139:14).

What does the evidence say? It’s not enough for someone to venture a mere opinion. What we need here is evidence adequate to the situation. Is there any? Indeed there is.

The fundamental law of biology is the **Law of Biogenesis**. *This law* (and there are no known exceptions to it in nature) *states that all life comes from preceding life of its kind*. As Dr. McNair Williams said in an Oxford University Medical publication: “*Modern medicine and surgery are founded on the truth enunciated by Pasteur, that life pre-ceeds only from life, and only from life of the same kind and type.*”

Evolution postulates *spontaneous generation*—life arising from non-life. Yet all available scientific evidence establishes beyond the shadow of a doubt that spontaneous generation simply does not occur. Experiment after experiment has shown that only life can give rise to life. All the while we are asked to believe that *somehow*,

sometime, somewhere spontaneous generation did occur, and here we are as a result of it.

Evolution postulates *an ever-increasing upward trend in complexity*. We are told that nature moves upward, from disorder to order, from the simple to the complex, and that this is how evolution has actually occurred. Yet this is in direct contradiction to one of the most basic, most fundamental laws of science—the **Law of Entropy**. This law (also known as the **Second Law of Thermodynamics**) *states categorically that all systems move toward higher entropy*. That is to say, *all systems go from order to disorder, from complex to simple. All things are becoming more and more random, not structured*. And eventually, if the Universe lasts long enough, the Earth would die a “heat death” because energy is becoming less available for use as time goes by.

Building According to Plumb

MICHAEL L. KING

HAVE YOU WONDERED WHY it seems that elements of our society are at odds with each other? Why are families characterized by chaos and competition? Individual and personal crises plague many to the devaluation of self-worth, and church members all too often are at a standoff. One could easily be reminded of those in the ancient city of Athens who were “*very religious*” people who were seeking the Lord, but in all the wrong places (Acts 17:22-29).

There was a time when Israel struggled to keep their spiritual perspective. They stooped to base behavior and embraced pagan and heathenistic gods who gave notoriety to most any conduct imaginable! God made His law known, using the great man of God, Amos, to serve as spokesman. Amos declared, “... *the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more*” (Amos 7:7,8).

For many years and in many lands the plumbline has been used as a standard or rule in determining perpendicular or “uprightness.” A plumbline is suspended from “above,” extending from a “higher source” to which everything else is relatively constructed. In Amos 7:16 Amos said, “*Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord....*” Dear friend, the source from which the “plumbline” of righteousness is suspended is God. The line which extends into the midst of man

is His Word. When man establishes his life in agreement with the extended Word, his life will be upright and in harmony with all others who are building similarly. When a person's life or teaching contradicts or transgresses (goes against) the standard, his life can be classified as disorderly, standing at odds with God and His people (2 Thessalonians 3:6). The true basis of fellowship with God and those who are His "upright" is compliance to His Word (1 John 1:7-9). Christ was wounded for the transgressions which we have committed (Isaiah 53:5).

The great righteous God spoke His righteous Word to save an unrighteous people. The plumbline of righteousness will sanctify us, allowing us to build a life in compliance with His holy will (John 17:17). We must not be amateur carpenters, but allow the Master Craftsman to align us with uprightness. Guesswork can only condemn our souls and cause our building to be for naught—*"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it..."* (Psalm 127:1). Jesus is *"... the author of salvation unto all them that obey him"* (Hebrews 5:9).

The Power of ONE Word

OWEN COSGROVE

WHEN MARTIN LUTHER BROKE ties with the Roman Catholic Church in 1517, the last thing in the world that he wanted to do was to start another religion. His great yearning and desire was to reform the apostate church and to bring it back to the pristine beauty of the Scriptures.

When he denied the supremacy of the pope and church councils, saying that they often contradicted each other and themselves, he was excommunicated by Pope Leo X. In his trials at Worms, Germany, he refused to repudiate anything he had said unless it could be proved to be contrary to the Scriptures and to reason. When Charles V of Germany placed him under imperial ban, his friend, Fredric the Elector, kept him in hiding for ten months. During this time he translated the New Testament, a monumental work that immortalized the German language and set the nation free religiously.

The doctrine of SUPEREROGATION, driving oneself unmercifully to try to earn salvation, was so repugnant to him that he went to the other extreme, declaring that a person is saved by

faith alone without any activity on his own part. Luther, a brilliant scholar with a doctorate in theology, became so obsessed with his belief in salvation by faith only that it predominated his thinking.

When he translated Romans 3:28, "*We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,*" his prejudice overcame his scholarship and he inserted the word ONLY: "We conclude that a man is justified by faith ONLY without the deeds of the law." Someone soon noted that James 2:24 directly contradicted his dogma: "*You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*" Luther's reaction was to reject the entire book of James, calling it "an epistle of straw."

What a difference one word can make when it is added to the word of God—even with the best of intentions. No wonder God forbids our adding one thing to or taking one thing away from His word. Even one word is too much.

Of course, Luther's translation, if applied consistently, would rule out repentance, confession, baptism, giving, prayer, study, attendance, the Lord's Supper, morality, and every other commandment of the New Testament as having anything to do with our salvation. They would all be claimed as results of salvation instead of conditions.

Many verses speak of salvation by faith. None speaks of salvation by faith only. Oh, what a difference one word can make! Think what could have been done with the Ten Commandments by changing just one word in each one! What a difference Satan's ONE word made when he spoke to Eve! That is why God's Word must not be tampered with. Let the Bible speak, and let us obey.

Rightly Dividing: The Word Of Truth

DON L. NORWOOD

HOW DOES ONE RIGHTLY divide the word of truth? What does this mean exactly? In the American Standard Version the translation reads: "*Handling aright the word of truth.*" This is the idea that one handle God's word, the truth (John 17:17), in the right manner.

The Bible contains the revealed mind of God; shows the actual state of mankind as he stands before God; it explains the way of salvation for mankind; it predicts the doom of sinners who will not repent; the happiness of believers; and all who will handle it aright

will be wise, safe, and holy. Christ is the grand central theme of the Bible; human good is its design, and the objective is to glorify God.

One way to mishandle the word of God is to teach something in substitution for what the word actually teaches (Example: Matthew 15:1-13). Another way to mishandle the word is to take a word or a sentence out of its context and force it to teach something other than what it actually teaches.

To properly understand the Word we need to consider the following questions:

- Who is speaking in the portion that we are reading?
- To whom is the portion of scripture speaking?

At what time in history is the scripture speaking?

- Under what dispensation of time is this being written or spoken?

When one properly considers these things the scripture will always reveal what and to whom it is speaking.

The Bible has two main divisions:

- **Old Testament**—which contains thirty-nine (39) books:

5 books of the law

12 books of history

5 books known as poetry,

17 connected generally with prophecy

- **New Testament** has twenty-seven (27) books:

4 gospel accounts

1 book of history

21 letters

1 book of prophecy

The Bible covers three dispensations of time:

- **Patriarchal**—God spoke to the heads of families and revealed His will to them individually.
- **Mosaical**—God made a covenant with the nation of Israel and through Moses the mediator, God gave them a written law. This law separated them from all other nations, as God's chosen people through whom Christ would come into the world in the flesh. From the time the law was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai until Christ died upon the cross, this Mosaical dispensation was in effect. It covered about fifteen hundred years of time.
- **Christian**.—This age began when Christ died upon the cross, fulfilling the Old Testament and replacing it with the New Testament (Colossians 2:11-14, Galatians 3:19-29). The

Christian dispensation will end when Christ comes again to end time and execute the judgment of all mankind (2 Peter 3:1-18).

Whether recognizing Christ as the Messiah or not, the whole world is under the Christian dispensation of time now. This means that it is imperative that people everywhere in the world learn and obey the gospel of Christ in order to become reconciled unto God and to have the promise of eternal life with Him in heaven (Acts 17:30,31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Mark 16:15,16; 1 Peter 4:17,18).

The knowledge that Christ and His Apostles imparted to mankind through the scriptures of the New Testament includes all that pertains to life and godliness, all that a human being needs to guide him through his life on earth and to an eternal home with God (2 Peter 1:3).

Boldness by Jesus' Blood

CLEM THURMAN

"HAVING THEREFORE, BRETHREN, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water, let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised: and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works" (Heb. 10:19-24).

That man, separated from God by his rebellious sins, can again have boldness to come before God, is one of the great truths of the "gospel of grace." We are told that *"All have sinned"* (Rom. 3:23), and *"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you"* (Isa. 59:2).

How can one who is made in God's image, and then departed in sin from Him, have the boldness to return? The answer is, *"by the blood of Jesus Christ."* When Jesus came into the world, it was to *"seek and save the lost"* (Lk. 19:10). This was the expression of God's love for lost man: *"For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life"* (Jno. 3:16). But, as stated in Heb. 9:22, *"Without the shedding of blood is no remission."* Except by the blood

of Christ, none could “come back” to God: *“For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross”* (Col. 1:19-20).

The refrain of a favorite old hymn is, “There is power, power, power in the blood.” When we consider that there is no means of access to God except by the blood of Christ, that refrain is even more meaningful. Jesus said, in Jno. 14:6, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* There isn’t any other way, but Jesus Christ. As our text states; we have boldness *“by the blood of Jesus.”* And because of His death, the shedding of His blood making access to the Father possible for us, certain conclusions follow. These are found in the verses which follow: Heb. 10:22-24. These show both privileges and obligations that result from the shedding of Christ’s blood for us.

LET US DRAW NEAR IN FULNESS OF FAITH

“Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22). Here is the boldness we have to come before God: we are His children! *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the children of God”* (Rom. 8:14). The Lord told Nicodemus, *“Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”* (Jno. 3:5).

Note the correlation of these two passages with Heb. 10:22. When one is led by the Spirit (through the word He inspired), he is baptized into Christ and into His death (Rom. 6:3.4). Thus, as the body is *“washed with pure water”* (baptism), the blood of Jesus cleanses the heart. As Paul wrote it in Gal. 3:26-27, *“For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.”* Being children of God doesn’t mean we will never sin. But it does mean constant cleansing by the blood of Christ! John declares that God is light, then adds: *“If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 Jno. 1:7). Because we are the children of God, walking in His light, the blood of Jesus continues to cleanse us from sin! Thus; for the child of God, there is never a time when he cannot come *“with boldness”* before God.

Instead of *“fulness of faith”* (ASV), the King James Version has, *“full assurance of faith.”* And that says it beautifully! We have

assurance God will welcome our prayers, our service, our lives: not because we live perfectly through every day, but *“by the blood of Jesus.”* We read in Rom. 3:23-24, *“For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood.”* When we are *“led by the Spirit”* to have *“our body washed with pure water,”* we then have *“our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience”* by the blood of Jesus. And here is our assurance: *“These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life”* (1 Jno. 5:13).

LET US HOLD FAST THE CONFESSION OF HOPE

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised” (Heb. 10:23). There were many trials and problems to confront the Christian when the above was written. Even as today! But we are to hold fast: *“Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know your labor is not vain in the Lord”* (1 Cor. 15:58). The prize doesn’t go to the one who starts the race, but to the one who finishes it. At the end of life, Paul could say, *“I have finished the course”* (2 Tim. 4:7). And earlier the same apostle had written, *“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith”* (1 Cor. 16:13). If we truly believe God, we will not *“be quickly shaken in our minds”* (2 Thes. 2:2). We will trust Him.

In times of stress, it is so easy to let doubts gnaw at us. But we should have the boldness to come before God with assurance that He will hear and answer our prayers. However, there is a condition: *“But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting”* (James 1:6). We need to learn that we cannot cope with life’s problems alone. But God cares, and He will keep us. *“Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you”* (1 Pet. 5:7). God’s promises are received by faith (Heb. 4:1-3), and unless we trust God we cannot have the strength needed to overcome.

What a wonderful joy to have the faith that God will keep His promises! But that is what the Book says: *“He is faithful that promised.”* Men may disappoint us, but God will always do what He says He will. That is why Paul said, *“I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I’ve committed unto him, against that day”* (2 Tim. 1:12). Because God’s promises are true, Peter said that He has *“granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature”* (2 Pet. 1:4). What gives us boldness,

and strength? God is faithful, He keeps His promises.

Do trials come? *"To them that love God all things work together for good"* (Rom. 8:28). God never promised that problems would not come; He only promised that He will give the strength and opportunity which are needed to cope with those problems. When Paul asked that his *"thorn in the flesh"* be removed, the Lord answered: *"My grace is sufficient for thee; for in weakness is my power made perfect"* (2 Cor. 12:9). God will not remove all thorns from life's pathway, but He will give us the strength we need when we encounter the thorns. *"He is faithful that promised."*

LET US PROVOKE UNTO LOVE

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works ... exhorting one another" (Heb. 10:24-25). The word, "provoke," means: "stir up, agitate, cause to respond." Parents are told, *"Provoke not your children to wrath, but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord"* (Eph. 6:4). The giving of the Christians in church at Corinth *"provoked very many"* (2 Cor. 9:2). The word is used with both good and bad: provoke to anger or provoke to good. But because we are children of God, we have *"boldness by the blood of Jesus"* to provoke one another in a good way.

The great and first commandment? This question was answered by the Lord: *"The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these"* (Mark 12:29-31). When Jesus was preparing the disciples for His departure, He told them, *"A new commandment give I unto you; that you love one another, even as I have loved you"* (Jno. 13:34). But love doesn't just happen. Love grows where those concerned make it grow. When you are motivated by love, you will motivate those about you to respond with love. That is why Paul said, *"Let all you do be done in love"* (1 Cor. 16:14).

We are to *"provoke unto love."* What does that mean? Simply that we do those things that will cause others to grow in love. In the body of Christ, because we are cleansed by the blood of Christ and are children of God in the same family, we provoke one another to love.

LET US PROVOKE UNTO GOOD WORKS

How do we get people to work for the Lord? Friend, because we

have boldness by the blood of Christ, we *“provoke unto love and good works.”* We stir one another up, agitate, encourage. And the motivating factor in provoking others to good works is *“love”*—love for God and love for fellow Christians. When we really love God, we will serve Him. When we love our brothers and sisters in Christ, we will work for Christ and encourage others to do the same.

Some will question the importance of works, saying that we are justified by faith only. But the basis of the judgment is works. *“We shall all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad”* (2 Cor. 5:10). Again, *“The dead were judged, every man according to his works”* (Rev. 20:12). It is hypocrisy to sing praises to our faith while we do not work for Him Who died for us. As James declares, *“Faith without works is dead ... By works is faith made perfect ... Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only”* (Jas. 2:14-24). Cleansed by the blood of Jesus, we have boldness to *“provoke unto good works.”*

Yes, we have boldness by the blood of Jesus to *“draw near in fulness of faith,”* to *“hold fast the confession of our hope”* and to *“provoke unto love”* and to *“provoke unto good works.”* All of this is made possible by the blood of Jesus Christ. *“For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life”* (Jno. 3:16). And because of that wonderful love, and that great sacrifice, we are enabled and emboldened to come to God. As the apostle wrote it in 1 John 3:1: *“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are.”*

BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY

RAY HAWK

“BUT OF THAT DAY and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32).

The above passage indicates that only the Father knows the day and hour Jesus will return to judge the world. Not even Jesus knows! Since Jesus himself said he did not know, any passage we find in the New Testament which indicates a time limit would not be a passage talking about his literal coming in the clouds to destroy

this world and judge mankind. After all, if Jesus does not know when he is returning, he could not very well say, "Behold, I come quickly," could he? The word "quickly" is an adverb of time. The Greek word, *tachu*, means "shortly, without delay, soon, suddenly, readily, or quickly." It is used in passages that always mean a short time. "Agree with thine adversary quickly" (Matthew 5:25). "And go quickly, and tell his disciples" (Matthew 28:7). "She arose quickly, and came unto him" (John 11:29). "... else I will come unto thee quickly" (Revelation 2:5). "Surely I come quickly; Amen" (Revelation 22:20). The word is never used in the New Testament to indicate a long period of time such as 500 or 2000 years!

If we find a passage in the New Testament which states Jesus will return shortly or quickly, it cannot be talking about a coming in our future which only the Father knows about, but must be talking about a coming which transpired in the first century. Since the Holy Spirit was sent to tell the apostles and prophets things to come, whatever they revealed would be what Jesus spoke (John 14:18; 16:13). But, Jesus did not know the day nor hour. So, when a time is given as being in their lifetime, it cannot be his literal coming in judgment, for we know that has not taken place. Whatever coming it was, it has already happened, because the Holy Spirit said it would and it took place in the first century. That coming was not a literal coming but the coming of Jesus in judgment upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

"But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come" (Matthew 10:23). This passage is stated by Jesus to the apostles. He said they would not have covered the cities of Israel before he came. This passage cannot refer to a second literal coming, but must refer to the fall of Jerusalem and Jesus' coming through the Roman army.

"For the Son of man shall *come in the glory* of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, *till* they see the Son of man *coming in his kingdom*" (Matthew 16:27,28). When you compare this passage with Mark 8:38-9:1 and Luke 9:26,27 you can see Jesus is speaking of the completion of his kingdom on earth during the lifetime of his disciples standing before him at that time. Verse 27 may confuse the reader until he compares the language found in Matthew 24:30,31; Mark 13:26,27; and Luke 21:27,28. These are time

passages that relate to the destruction of Jerusalem. The kingdom was established on Pentecost and saints were in it before A.D. 70, but it was not perfected (*teleios*, I Corinthians. 13:8-10; Ephesians 4:11-13) until this coming of Jesus (Acts 2:1-4; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9).

“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (Philippians 4:5). The phrase, “at hand” is from the Greek word, *eggus*, and means to bend the arm so that the hand is near. It came to mean near, at hand, nigh, ready. This word is found in thirty passages and always translated as nigh, near, ready, or at hand. Once, in Acts 1:12 it is rendered “from” in the KJV but from the context means near. This passage indicated Jesus was at hand or near in his coming. This cannot have reference to a coming in our future. It must refer to a coming in the lifetime of the Philippians. Besides, a time limit is put upon it and since no one knows when Jesus is coming back literally, it has to refer to his coming in A.D. 70 which was known by given *signs* (Matthew 24:3,30).

“For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Hebrews 10:37). The expressions “a little while” and “not tarry” puts this coming in the framework of the first century. It refers to a known coming which cannot be that one spoken by Jesus in Mark.

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord ... Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:7,8). Since Jesus did not know when he would come according to Mark, this coming has a time limit and must be accepted as a coming that was nigh or near for those James wrote to. Some might say the expression “nigh” is figurative and 1000 years is but a day to God. But, James isn’t speaking to God, he is speaking to men. The word “nigh” is from the Greek word *eggizo* and is never used to indicate 1000 years. In fact, it is the same word used in Matthew 3:2 and 4:17 “for the kingdom of heaven *is at hand*.” If it means 1000 years in James it would have to mean 1000 years in Matthew! Are we ready to accept that error?

In Revelation 2:5,16; 3:11 and 22:7, 12, 20 Jesus says he will return quickly! Mark 13:32 says he doesn’t know the day nor hour, only the Father. Yet, in Revelation he tells John, the Ephesians, Pergamos, and the church at Philadelphia that he is coming quickly. The quick return must be his coming in judgment upon Jerusalem and the temple (Matthew 24:1-35). It cannot refer to a literal coming to end the world and judge mankind, for Jesus does not know when

that is! To make these passages apply to a future coming is to twist them out of context, make words into things they do not mean, and miss the entire meaning and application of Revelation!

Other passages to consider in this study are Matthew 24:3,27,30,31; 26:64; Mark 8:38-9:1; 13:24-31; Luke 9:26,27; 17:20-37; 19:41-44; 21:7,20,27,28; John 21:21-23; Acts 2:20; 3:19,20; 6:13,14; Romans 13:11; 16:20; I Corinthians 1:7,8; 13:8-10; Philippians 4:5; Hebrews 10:37; 12:22-29; James 5:7,8; I Peter 4:7,13,17; I John 2:18; Revelation 1:1,3; 3:11; 22:6,10.

Notice the ending of Revelation 22:20,21: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Jesus told John he was coming quickly. To that remark, John, understanding the impact of the word "quickly" said, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." John was not asking Jesus to come 2000 years later, but right then! Since Jesus did not know when he would come back in, Mark 13:32, this quick coming must refer to one he knows about and recognizes it will be quickly. That is the only interpretation of these words.

RESCUED FROM THE FIRE

ANCIL JENKINS

"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire!" (Zechariah 3:2)

Life is serious business. How many take no thought to death or even life until one is here and the other is gone. Our writer here speaks of the seriousness of life.

FIRE IS AN EMBLEM OF SIN. Like fire, sin is subtle. We may not know even of its existence, until destruction has come. Like fire, sin is destructive. Fire will destroy or change almost everything put into it. So sin will alter or corrupt the life of anyone who remains in it.

THE BRAND IS THE EMBLEM OF THE SINNER. A piece of wood is fit for the fire. They are compatible. A piece of wood in the fire is in danger of destruction. It cannot save itself, it must be saved. Only Jesus can and will do this by his atoning death and shed blood.

THE PLUCKING OUT OF THE BRAND IS EMBLEMATIC OF SALVATION. There are two ways of saving a piece of wood in the fire. One may pluck it out, or to put out the fire. Jesus had destroyed

the power of sin by his resurrection. He has then given us the ministry of pulling brands out of the fire. Let us be in awe of our great task and ask God's help as we go into this work.

FORGETTING THOSE THINGS

ROY FULLER

THE GREAT APOSTLE PAUL who was no stranger to abuse, mistreatment, persecution, and often the very threat of death is a great source of inspiration to the weary Christian sojourner as he writes: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). Except for Christ himself perhaps no other man has had so much to forgive and forget as the beloved apostle, and yet, it was only by the grace of God and the power of Jesus Christ that he was able to do so. Thank God we have access to that same grace and power today (Rom. 5:2). The problem for so many of us today is the inability to "forget those things which are behind"; thus we are greatly hindered in our forward progress.

In the human family it is often the case that mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers are at odds with one another and remain so because of the inability to forgive and forget. The insult or injury may be trivial in nature but it divides and alienates. It festers and grows like a cancerous malignancy until permanent and irreparable harm is done to the relationship. The body of Christ is not spared the devastating effects of this basic human weakness.

Sometimes I wish that we could turn off our memory just as quickly and easily as we turn off our TV sets. Realizing however that we cannot, our only recourse is to pray for the strength that only God can supply. Paul said: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). Now wouldn't it be just wonderful if we could have absolute control over our memory? We could just, forget all of our sad and unhappy experience, the unkind words and insults. We could remember all of the precious moments of joy and elation, all of the good and none of the bad. But alas, 'tis not to be so in this life, because this is a basic human characteristic. We will not have this problem in the eternal abode, but here on

earth we have to cope with ourselves as we are and with our fellow man as he is.

Since the characteristic of forgiveness is divine in nature, we recognize that we must attain “to some degree of the divine nature if we are to forgive” at all, and the greater the attainment the better. Peter tells us that we are made “partakers of the divine nature” through faith and obedience to Jesus Christ (II Pet. 1:1-5). He also tells us that we can “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior” (II Pet. 3:18). He further tells us that this growth is to be attained by partaking of the sincere milk of the word (I Pet. 2:2).

May God help us all to attain that measure of grace whereby we can say with the Apostle Paul: “Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth to those things which are before.” Brethren, that which is before us is the great mission of the church to preach the gospel of Christ to every soul on this planet in our generation. Beloved, that is more important than you or I, vastly more important than our present problems or hangups, or anything that has ever happened in the past. Let us all petition the Lord on bended knee to give us the grace and strength to forget the past, forget ourselves, exalt Christ, and get on with the business of evangelizing the world (Mk. 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20), for therein will we find the true purpose of Christianity and attain for ourselves the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

On Laying Up Treasures In Heaven

W.A. HOLLEY

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, says, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Matthew 6:19-21).

Scholars say that “break through” means, literally, to “dig through.” The thought is that a thief could, using a knife or trowel, dig through the dried mud and wattle of those primitive houses, in about a half an hour or less time, and take away whatever treasure there may have been cached therein. Hence, it is essential for children of God to understand that all earthly treasures are always in danger of being lost, either through negligence, or thievery, or

calamity. And if by no other means, when one leaves this world, one cannot carry his earthly treasures with him (1 Timothy 6:6-10). In a very true sense, we save only what we have given to the Lord!

To lay up treasures in heaven, we must set our affection on spiritual things. The apostle Paul wrote, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2).

If we wish to lay up treasures in heaven, we must SEEK the kingdom of God first (Matthew 6:33). The thought is, we must let the will of God and the kingdom of God occupy the uppermost place in our thoughts and affections. To put the kingdom of God first involves our money, our material wealth. But it involves much more than our earthly treasures; it requires the proper use of our time and talent, as well.

Furthermore, to lay up treasure in heaven comprehends the doing of the will of God—obeying his commandments. From the pen of the beloved John, we read these words: "And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4).

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

We must understand that God keeps our record; somehow, he maintains a close scrutiny over every aspect of our lives, our words and deeds. We may think that the Internal Revenue Service keeps a close check on our financial affairs, but be it remembered that God is an even closer observer. God Almighty is aware of each member of the human family, whether good or bad (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 13:7-9; 20:11-15). Paul wrote, "Not that I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account" (Philippians 4:17).

It is here suggested that "your account" is ever in the full view of God. It is unlikely that you will ever give too much to the Lord. Let us, therefore, be generous, free-hearted, magnanimous, marked by abundance and ample proportions, in our giving to the cause of the Lord.

"But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly: and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver"

(II Corinthians 9:6-7).

We should not be ashamed for others to know how much we contribute to the Lord, although we should not wish to parade it before the world (Matthew 6:1-4). Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-11, were unwilling for others to know what they gave, but the Lord knew just the same.

Walking In The Truth

FRED DILLON

"I REJOICED GREATLY THAT I found of thy children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father..." (II John 1:4).

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (III John 4). Christians have a command, to "walk in truth."

Truth is eternal and it brings great joy—causes us to "greatly rejoice" when we hear and know that our brethren, God's children, are holding fast to the truth.

Why is truth so important? First, because it is God's Word, God's instructions, God's teaching. Also, because we are "sanctified" by the truth. As Jesus taught us in His prayer to the Father, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Secondly, because souls are cleansed by the truth (I Peter 1:22). "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

Contrary to some modernist thinking, we can know the truth (John 8:31-32). "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

However, to know the truth, one must study and learn the truth. This is the great failing of mankind today in all lands. We must learn to "rightly divide" or "handle aright" the Word of truth (II Timothy 2:15). And, this calls for deep and regularly-scheduled study of the truth: God's revealed will, the last will and testament of Jesus Christ. As Paul cautioned the Roman saints, "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4).

Not only did the Savior emphasize the importance of truth, but His apostles—Peter, Paul, and John—explained the importance of truth to Christians in their New Testament letters.

Paul (Ephesians 4:15), "But speaking the truth in love may grow

up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

Peter (I Peter 1:25), speaking of the truth: “But the Word of the Lord endureth forever, and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”

John (II John 2), “For the truth’s sake which dwelleth in us and shall be with us forever.”

It is sad and discouraging at times to hear of the so-called intellectuals within the church and out of the church, as they compromise or make apologies for the church, for teaching on baptism, for congregational singing without the instrument, and such like.

BRETHREN, WE MUST NOT HAVE AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF IN DEPARTING FROM THE LIVING GOD (HEBREWS 3:12).

In summary, there is the truth about salvation—(Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 2:11-14, Mark 16:15-16, and Acts 2:47.) There is the truth about redemption and forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:13-14). There is the truth about everlasting life (I John 5:11). There is the truth about completeness (Colossians 2:10). There is the truth about the church (Matthew 16:18, Acts 2:47, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 1:22-23). There is the truth about baptism (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:12-13).

There is truth about faithful obedience to God’s will (Matthew 7:21, Hebrews 5:8-9 and Revelation 22:14).

There is the truth factor about everything. We may not know it, but we can learn it from God’s Word as Peter showed us in II Peter 1:3, “According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

Respect for God’s Word is a badly-needed commodity, not only in the world, but even in the Lord’s church among our own brethren. We need to learn the truth, believe the truth, obey the truth, and learn to love and live by the truth. When all of us are willing to “speak the truth in love,” then we will have come to the point where God wants us to be.

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether” (Psalm 19:7-9).