

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 47

August 2016

No. 4



What Does the Bible Teach?

*"If Anyone Desires To Come After Me,
Let Him Deny Himself....."*

TO BECOME A FOLLOWER of Christ one must deny himself. That is to say, one becomes a Christian by choosing to deny oneself to follow Christ. In denying oneself one must understand that there are no high positions, no places of ease and honor, no wealth or power to gratify any earthly ambitions of men as one might erroneously expect in the company of the followers of Christ. The plain teaching of Christ is that one must be willing to accept the challenges of daily cross bearing, if one is to come after Him. "If anyone desires to come after Me," Christ exhorted, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Luke 9:23). The cross is the symbol of suffering and pain and death. The cross was invented by the Persians almost five hundred years before Christ for punishing any hard core criminals. Christ was put to death under the Romans by the foreknowledge of God to become the propitiation for the sins of the world. (Acts 2:23; 1 John 4:10). When Christ said one who wants to become my follower must be willing to take up his cross daily and follow Me, He meant there would be daily challenges in the life of a Christian which he must be willing to face by denying himself, his own will and ego, by putting God and Christ and His kingdom first in his life. (Matthew 6:33; 10:34-39). As Christians we frequently meet with crosses in our daily living, in neighborhood, in markets, in work places, etc., and though we must not pull them upon our own heads yet, when they are laid for

us we must accept them and carry them after Christ and make the best of them.

Every so often someone want to become a follower of Christ without counting the cost. There was one man who once told Christ, "Lord, I will follow you wherever you go." In reply Christ told him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." (Luke 9: 57-58). What was Christ teaching him? He was teaching him to count the cost, before joining Him! There is a cost one must be willing to pay if one want to become a follower of Christ or a Christian. During the time of the apostles in the first century A.D., when Christians were made to suffer great persecution in various ways for being Christians, the apostle Peter told them: "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter." (1 Peter 4:15-16). They were told to be prepared to face persecution for being Christians. They were not promised any kind of relief, simply because they were the followers of Christ. Rather, they were told to glorify God because they were made to suffer as Christians.

Sadly though, some today, who claim to be preachers of the gospel of Christ, are misleading and deceiving many simple people by smooth words and flattering speeches, by calling people to come to Christ for all kinds of material gains and physical benefits. Christ is being presented by them as one who will heal people of all kinds of diseases in their bodies, and will help them in their jobs, marriages and other earthly matters. The apostle Paul said, "such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." (Romans 16: 17, 18). Stating the sole purpose of Christ's coming into the world the apostle wrote: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15). Christ sent His disciples to preach the gospel to the whole world (Mark 16:15), the gospel is that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), and he warned those who would pervert the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that they would be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-9; Matt. 7:22-23).

Christ, by the will of God, died on the cross for the whole world, as the propitiation for the sins of entire humanity (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2), so that those who accept Him and believe in Him and obey Him may have hope of eternal life in heaven. But He requires of His followers to “Be faithful until death,” and promised, “and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10).

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

J.C. CHOATE

IN ALL OF THE HISTORY OF mankind there has been only one virgin birth. To some people this is but a myth, but to those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, it is a reality. Christ is real and genuine to them because of it.

A virgin is one who is pure, spotless, and chaste ; a young woman who has never been married, who has never had sexual intercourse. It is not according to natural law for such a woman to conceive and bring forth a child. To the contrary, after the creation of Adam and Eve, it was God's instruction that man and woman should come together in marriage for the purpose of procreation. This law has continued from that time to this, During all of history there has been but one exception, and because it is the only exception known to man it has been both hailed and rejected.

Thinking from a human standpoint, one would naturally find fault with the idea of a virgin birth. He would point to nature, to science itself, as well as to everyday experiences, to show the impossibility of such a thing. What such people overlook, though, is the fact that all things are possible with God. Considering divine intervention there is no problem in understanding how a virgin birth could have been a reality.

Religiously speaking, there have also been attacks made on this doctrine. Especially has this been the case among the liberals and modernists of our times. Even in the New English Bible the term virgin has been replaced with the words, “young woman.” There is a big difference, though, in virgin and young woman. A virgin can be a young woman, but a young woman might not be a virgin. So the idea is that with the expression of young woman being used, in time this will undermine and eliminate the idea of a virgin birth.

Of course this is just the beginning. If there was no virgin birth,

then Christ was no more than any other man, and the translations that omit the record of the virgin birth are simply an attempt to prove that he was just a human being. If he was a human being then how could he have been the Son of God any more than the next man might be? If he was not the Son of God then neither was he in position to be the Saviour of mankind. This would lead to a rejection of the death, burial, and resurrection, the judgment, heaven and hell, etc., not to mention the very Bible itself.

All of these allegations and denials are intended to bring Christ down to the level of humanity. They do it not to reject him as a great person, a great leader, a great teacher, but beyond that nothing is left. Christ and his teaching, then, are described in the sense of a social gospel, good moral rules, a philosophy of life, much as the philosophies that others have introduced to the world.

Is this all that Christ was and is? Was he no more than an imposter, a fake, a deceiver of men? If he was not born of a virgin then what else can we say about him since he *claimed* to be more than man? But he was born of a virgin. It was prophesied that he would be. Isaiah said, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14). Also, the place of his birth is prophesied by Micah. (Micah 5:2). Then this was fulfilled as follows: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her first born son: and he called his name JESUS." (Matthew 1: 18-25). Also, read Luke 1.

In these scriptures we see that the virgin birth of Christ was both prophesied and fulfilled. God was the Father and Mary was the

mother, thus Christ was born without an earthly father. This was a miracle. God chose this method of bringing his son Jesus to this world. Being born of woman, living among men, he knew the needs of man and no one could deny this. (Philippians 2:5-11; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 4:15). He further proved his divinity in the miracles that he performed and through his death, burial, and resurrection. (Acts 2:22; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8).

To accept the virgin birth of Christ is to accept all of the other things pertaining to him. To reject it is to reject Christ, and God himself. Remember that this was no ordinary thing. It was made possible only through the power of God. When we understand this we will have no problem in accepting the virgin birth. Because of it we know that Christ was not just another man but he was the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

Why Would GOD Want to Save SOMEONE Like ME?

ALLEN WEBSTER

WHEN THE DEVIL ENTICES a person into a sinful life, God never thinks, "That's okay. I didn't want him anyway." Every lost soul brings tears to God's eyes and pain to His heart. He wants all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11).

Still, some feel unworthy of God's love. *Why would God want to save someone like me?* they think. It is not about us and what we have done; it is about God and who He is. There are four reasons God wants to save "someone like you":

He made you (Genesis 1:26-27; Acts 17:28-29). We do not carelessly discard something handcrafted; neither does God.

He bought you (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19). He has a lot invested in you. His only Son's blood was a high price to pay, but you meant that much to Him.

He has chosen you (Mark 16:15-16). God could have chosen to do His work on earth in any number of ways; but He has chosen to work through His people. If Christians do not tell others the gospel, they will never learn. In a world of billions, He desires that each one of his children tell others of His love.

He loves you (John 3:16; Galatians 2:20). God loves the rich,

the poor; the educated, the uneducated; the up-and-coming, the down-and-out. God loves all sinners, every sinner, each sinner, everywhere, all the time. Most important, He loves you!

Yet many feel hopeless regarding the prospects of their salvation. Let us directly address four reasons some feel spiritually irredeemable:

“I have sinned too much”

Some think they committed so many sins so many times for so many years that they crossed a threshold beyond the point of return. They feel that God could never forgive so much.

It is true that sinners do not deserve forgiveness. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23a). It is also true that no sinner is unsalvageable. Paul continues: “The gift of God is eternal life (6:23b). “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18).

There is no limit to divine grace. God’s boundless grace is sufficient for man’s ceaseless sin. Jesus even forgave Saul of Tarsus, who killed Christians and made havoc of the church of Christ (Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9:1-21; 22:16).

How many can be saved?

- “Whosoever believeth in him should not perish” (John 3:16).
- Christ gave Himself a ransom for *all* (1 Timothy 2:6).
- Salvation appeared to *all* (Titus 2:11).
- God is not willing that *any* should perish (2 Peter 3:9).

Jesus wants to adopt you and move you into His house in heaven (John 14:1-3). Not all will come to God, but there is room—and a welcome mat—for all in heaven.

“I committed an unpardonable sin”

Someone says, “I cannot be saved regardless of anything I do now, for in the past:

- I murdered someone.”
- I killed people in a war.”
- I took a life as a drunk or careless driver.”
- I spoke blasphemously against God and the Holy Spirit.”
- I committed adultery and broke up someone’s home.”

Murder and adultery have serious consequences and must not be taken lightly by society or the church, but they are not unpardonable. David was guilty of both, yet he was forgiven after repentance and confession (2 Samuel 11-12; Psalm 51). Jesus sent

the “woman taken in adultery” away uncondemned (John 8:1-11). Those who murdered Jesus were offered remission of sins—and about three thousand immediately accepted (Acts 2:36-41). ‘

The basic definition of the “unforgivable sin” is simply rejecting the gospel. It is not a mere impulsive, rash exclamation against the Holy Spirit that once spoken condemns a person forever.

The Bible speaks of three kinds of sins:

- Sins that have been forgiven (2 Samuel 12:13; Ephesians 4:32);
- Sins that are forgivable but are not because the conditions of pardon have not been met (Acts 3:19, 1 John 1:9);
- The unpardonable sin (Matthew 12:22-32; Luke 12:9-10).

Consider to whom Jesus said this. When Jesus taught on the unforgiveable sin, the Pharisees had just seen Him work a miracle, heard Him preach salvation, saw His perfect example, and were still so hard-hearted as to accuse Him of being in league with Beelzebub, the prince of devils. This showed a callousness that put them in great spiritual danger. A person who persistently rejects the New Testament evidence for Christ’s deity today (cf. John 20:30-31), in principle, exhibits the “same Pharisaic attitude. If he does not repent, he will commit the unpardonable sin.

Consider when Jesus said this. It was a time of transition from Old Testament law to New Testament gospel. At that unique time in history, it was possible to live in the latter days of God’s dispensation, continue through Christ’s life, and move into the Spirit’s dispensation.

- Thus one could reject the Old Testament—even blaspheming God—yet repent and accept Jesus’ preaching and be saved.
- The same person might reject both the Old Testament and Jesus’ teaching— even blaspheming Jesus—yet later obey the apostles’ inspired preaching on or after Pentecost and be saved.
- However, if he rejected the Old Testament, Jesus’ sermons, and the Spirit’s words, there was no other coming dispensation. To reject the New Testament was to reject God’s last lifeline.

One who blasphemes the Spirit cannot be saved in that condition; so long as he remains a blasphemer, he has no hope of grace, mercy, or salvation. If one worries that he has committed this sin, it is unlikely he has, for he shows that he still believes in God, desires salvation, and fears being lost. If this motivates him to obey the gospel, he can be saved (Mark 16:15-16).

“I have not received a sign that God saved me, so I must not be of the elect”

If you are of the impression that God flipped a coin and you lost, rest assured that He did not. If you asked God to save you and nothing happened, do not worry that He decided to reject you for some reason. If you heard that you speak in tongues if the Spirit saved you, do not fret. This is not the case. The sky does not change color depending on how much evil happens on the ground beneath it. It is the same with God's love.

Preachers influenced by Calvinism have taught many to expect a special miraculous call by the Holy Spirit (called “irresistible grace”) to save them and confirm that God elected (predestined) them to salvation. Such a miracle would violate four Bible truths:

- God's impartiality toward man (Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:11).
- Man's free moral agency (Joshua 24:15).
- God's economy of government (1 Corinthians 14:40). Economy is the most expedient and intelligent system of operation. Is it easiest to save each man differently or to put the message in a book for all to read?
- The principle and order of the great commission (Mark 16:15-16). Why send disciples to tell every creature of salvation if they cannot respond to the preaching? In Calvinism, the written Word has no power until the Holy Spirit makes the sinner respond. Why preach, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” if one is saved by a miracle and baptized later? A subjective “better-felt-than-told-experience” is not to be trusted more than an objective understanding and complying with Scripture (Isaiah 8:20; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jeremiah 17:9). The Bible teaches predestination (Ephesians 1:3-11), but not a Calvinistic version of it. This text says all blessings are “in Christ” and that we are chosen “in him.” To be in Christ is to be in His body, the church (Galatians 3:26-27; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4). In short, then, God predestinated that each person could be saved in the church. God voted for us; the devil voted against us; we cast the deciding vote.

“I have a sin I cannot quit”

It is true that we must live a holy life to enjoy God's approval and fellowship (Luke 13:3; Romans 12:1-2). God's forgiveness is not temporary, but we can return to a sinful life and lose our salvation (2 Peter 2:20-22).

To be addicted to a sin is a serious problem, but it is by no means hopeless. God made us some promises that help in this situation. Keep in mind that God is powerful enough to do anything He wants to do and is honest enough to do everything He promised to do.

- God does not expect perfection. He looks for “good and faithful” servants (Matthew 25:21), not perfect ones. He knows we make mistakes. Solomon said, “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecclesiastes 7:20; cf. Isaiah 53:6). “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psalm 130:3). John wrote, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” (1 John 1:8).
- If we mess up and fall, we don’t have to give up; we can get up and start again as many times as we need. As His children, if we confess our sins we will be forgiven (1 John 1:9). If we are to forgive others seventy times seven times (Matthew 18:21-22), then how many times will God forgive?
- If you have tried and tried but nothing works, remember that breakthroughs can happen even after years of failure. Ponder Paul’s simple promise: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).
- Physical addictions are overcome by spiritual strength (Ephesians 6:12-18). God gives us the spiritual tools to overcome any sin. Weapons at our disposal include fasting (1 Corinthians 7:5), praying (Ephesians 6:18), Bible reading (Psalm 119:11), meditating on Scripture (1 Timothy 4:15), and the support of other Christians (Galatians 6:2).
- When you feel you cannot win, read John’s assurance: “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Also read Paul’s promise: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- If you feel you are spinning your wheels, remember God is working on you and won’t quit. “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).
- When you feel Satan is too strong, rest assured that he can be defeated: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw

nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:7-8). Satan is a sore loser and will not leave us alone, but he fights a losing battle as long as we remain committed to God.

- We must never quit trying to overcome (Galatians 6:9), make excuses (Luke 14:18), or cover up our sins (Proverbs 28:13).

Someone said, "People might criticize us, condemn us, gossip about us, find fault and nitpick us, berate or belittle us, accuse us, but God just loves us." He wants nothing more than for us to succeed and make it all the way to heaven.

THE RESURRECTION "COVER-UP STORY"

ROYCE FREDERICK

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAD spent much effort getting Jesus executed by the Roman government. Now that He was in the tomb, they were determined to keep Him there. With the permission of Pilate, the Roman governor, the enemies of Jesus sealed His tomb and placed some soldiers there to guard it.

But early on the first day of the week, some of those soldiers came to the religious leaders and disturbed them with the news that Jesus was no longer in the tomb. They quickly decided to try to cover up the truth by giving the soldiers a bribe. They *"...gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, 'Tell them, "His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept. "And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure.' So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day"* (Matt. 28:12-15).

The religious leaders could not keep the **tomb of Jesus** sealed and occupied, so they attempted to seal **the lips of the soldiers**. Notice how ridiculous their "cover-up story" is:

(1) The penalty for falling asleep during guard duty was usually death. Therefore, we should become highly suspicious at **the open claim by the soldiers that they had fallen asleep**.

(2) Our suspicion should be further aroused by **the governor's failure to execute the soldiers**.

(3) We should be especially suspicious at **the lack of outrage by the religious leaders**. We would expect them to demand the execution of the soldiers.

(4) The “guard” or “watch” of soldiers at the tomb included at least three soldiers (see Matt. 28:11-12). It is strange for the soldiers to claim that they were **all asleep at one time**.

(5) It is totally unreasonable to believe that the disciples could roll away the large stone and steal the body of Jesus **so quietly** that a group of **sleeping soldiers would not be disturbed**.

(6) It is absurd for the soldiers to claim that they knew **what** happened and **who** did it, while at the same time claiming that they were **asleep**.

(7) With the Roman soldiers as “witnesses,” we should again be suspicious at the fact that **no attempt was made to arrest the disciples on the charge of grave-robbing**.

There was no dispute at all concerning the fact that Jesus of Nazareth actually **lived**, that He died on the cross, and that **His tomb became empty**. Even the bitter enemies of Jesus did not deny these facts. Instead, those enemies tried to explain **how** His tomb became empty. Their ridiculous “cover-up story” serves as testimony from His enemies that the tomb of Jesus **did indeed become empty**. It is not surprising that thousands of people believed the testimony of the witnesses who saw the risen Lord, rather than believing the “cover-up story” (Acts 2:32-41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7).

Two Commandments

J.L. LEIFESTE

“THEN ONE OF THE SCRIBES came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, ‘Which is the first commandment of all?’ Jesus answered him, ‘The first of all the commandments is: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. “This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.” So the scribe said to Him, ‘Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ So when Jesus saw that he answered

wisely, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And after that no one dared question Him." (Mk. 12:28-34; see Matt. 22:34-40)

This event probably occurred in Jerusalem during Christ's last public ministry upon the earth. We notice from Mk. 14, Matt. 26, and Lk. 22 that Jesus would soon face His trials and crucifixion. The Mosaic law was still in effect. And, at the time of the above incident, Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees had questioned Christ in attempts to discredit Him through His words. Now, one of the Pharisees who was a scribe, or a man well-learned in the law of Moses, asked Jesus a very provoking question. He asked Jesus to name the first, or greatest, commandment. Rabbis claimed that the Mosaic law held more than 600 precepts. And there was great contention concerning which commandment, or commandments, carried more importance or significance than the others. So, how would Jesus answer this question?

The First Commandment

Jesus answered in a manner that could not be denied, ignored, or even questioned. He spoke from God's inspired word (see Deut. 6:4-5). His words were part of the basic, accepted law of Moses for Jews. He evidently answered without hesitation. His answer was respectful and authoritative, which suited the subject. Furthermore, His answer contains principles which are also in His New Testament for Christians today (see Matt. 6:33; Jn. 14:23; 15:12; Rom. 8:28; 2 Thess. 3:5; 1 Jn. 4:19-21; 5:2-3; Jude 21).

His opening statement quoted that God is one. Our highest love must be toward the one, true God (see 1 Cor. 8:4; 1 Tim. 2:5; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Jn. 5:7). The word translated "love" is not an infatuation. It refers to a high, noble attitude, which includes reverence, respect, and honorable affection. Other emotions such as fear, trust, hope, and selfishness may be limited by personal needs and the desire to please self. But the love to which Christ referred is limitless. It seeks to please its object in a spontaneous, voluntary, and happy manner. God created us so that our obedience to this commandment produces fulfillment within ourselves. Whom should we love in such a way? We should love the One Deity who deserves such love—the One who made us, sustains us, and wants to save us eternally. To divide this love to any created being or to more than the one God, or to ignore this essential need of our spirit, is to be deeply ungrateful (1 Jn. 4:19).

Many people have questioned the actual and complete meanings of the words “heart,” “soul,” “mind,” and “strength.” These words involve many parts of an individual. They point to the center of the being, the force of life, the personality, the will, the affections, the desires, moral reflection, thought, reasoning, intelligence, understanding, sincerity, the purest purpose of each personality, and the realm of Divine influence upon each of us. Also, as this love is to be given in strength, it means loving God with the best of all our qualities and abilities. True religion begins with a committed love to God. The one, true God is to be the object of the noblest and most powerful love of the whole being—the entire person.

The Second Commandment

Jesus added more to His answer. He taught that a commandment of second importance was similar to the first. He again went to God’s word (see Lev. 19:18). This commandment is not equal to that of loving God. It is similar because it emanates from loving God. Love is the highest moral duty (Matt. 7:12; 1 Jn. 4:21). Man is created in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27). God is love (1 Jn. 4:16). So we should be like Him and love our neighbor with a great and noble love. Who is our neighbor? Christ explained this in a parable (Lk. 10:25-37). We cannot divide men into groups: those who deserve godly love and those who do not deserve it. By following the teachings of Christ, we offer the noble, godly love of Christ to every person (Lk. 6:27-38; Matt. 5:43-48). This is one reason that we offer the gospel message to every person (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8). Love is the basic principle of serving God through Christ (Rom. 13:8-10; 1 Cor. 13). The gospel shows pure love (Jn. 3:16-17; Rom. 5:5; 8:2-4; Eph. 6:23-24; Heb. 10:12-17; 1 Jn. 2:1-11). God is the first object of our love because He deserves and demands it. Mankind is the second object of our love because we cannot separate the second commandment from the first (Rom. 8:5-6; 1 Jn. 4:20-21). Christ’s answer showed that a pure devotion to the one God and loving service to mankind is the true religion (see Jas. 1:27).

The Scribe’s Reaction

Regardless of the original motive of the scribe’s question, he admired Christ’s answer and apparently realized the basic truths in it. The scribe’s admission that God is one God was to be expected. He also agreed that man must love God with the complete personality. He admitted that man should love his neighbor as

himself. And he voiced his understanding that these two commandments outweighed all of the offerings and sacrifices required by the Mosaic law. Because of his understanding, Christ told him that he was not far from the kingdom of God.

Conclusion: Christ summarized all of the Mosaic law in two essential commandments. His listeners already accepted the statement that God is one. That will always be true (Ps. 90:2; Isa. 40:28; Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17). The principles in Christ's answer are also included in the New Testament for Christians, even though God removed the Mosaic law (2 Cor. 3:6-13; Gal. 3:24-25; Col. 2:14; Heb. 7:12; 9:15-17; 10:1-10). We must love God with our entire person. And, because we—and all people—are made in God's image, we must also love mankind.

Christ died to save men and women from their sins. God has revealed Himself to man through His works, His word, and His love. The Bible shows this. Love must be given voluntarily. God has offered His love to us. We must return love to Him. When the love of God fills us, it then flows out to mankind around us. Godly love produces godly love. Therefore, it bids us to the spiritual and selfless life upon the earth, which is the true Christian life. By answering this scribe's question, Jesus Christ delivered, in obvious and uncontestable wisdom, a concise and total definition of true religion. *"And after that no one dared question Him."*

Are All Men Born In Sin?

ROGER SHIFLET

SO MANY PEOPLE TEACH that man is born in sin, and many who have not studied the Bible believe that it is true. But the Bible does not teach that Adam's sin has been passed down to all the human race.

In Ezekiel 18:20, the Bible says, "...*The son shall not bear the guilt of the father....*" This one verse is sufficient to prove that children do not inherit the sin of Adam. Also, when Jesus spoke of little children, He did not say that they were in sin; rather, He said, "...*of such is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 19:14).

It would be very unfair of God to condemn a child eternally because of the sins of his ancestors. Instead, the Bible teaches that every individual will one day stand before God and be judged,

not according to what someone else did or did not do, but according to what he (the individual being judged) did. *"...For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...So then each of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Rom. 14:10,12).

In every person's life there comes a time when he knows what is right and what is wrong. When he chooses to do what is wrong (what is opposed to the will of God as taught in the Bible), he sins. But little children, who do not know the difference between what is right and what is wrong—who cannot choose between what is right and what is wrong—have no sin. This is what the Bible teaches. This is what we should believe.

THAT STRANGE FIRE

ALFRED A. MEEKS

IN LEV. 10:1-2 WE ARE TOLD, *"Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, and put incense on it, and offered profane [strange] fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."*

According to Lev. 16:12, for the Day of Atonement, the incense was to be burned with fire taken from the altar upon which the sacrifices were made, fire that was never allowed to go out. We do not know where these two priests obtained the "strange fire," nor why they chose to ignore God's instructions, but they did. God told them the fire He wanted. When they used something else, God showed His displeasure.

God has always expected people to follow His instructions just as He gives them. He is never pleased with anything else. Aaron's sons **may** have thought, "Fire is fire. Any of it will burn the incense. What difference does it make?" They learned it did make a difference.

The New Testament gives God's instructions about how He wants us to live today. Whether or not we are pleasing in His sight is determined by whether we follow His instructions as well as we can. When God gives us a command, we have no right to substitute something we think is just as good. Nothing we can think of is "just as good" as what God commands. As in an example we studied before, Noah built the ark of gopher wood, because that is what

God commanded, and the ark saved the life of Noah's family.

In the New Testament, God says that in order for a person to be saved from sin, that person must be baptized in water (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21). He also says that baptism is a burial (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). When God says it is a burial, that leaves out sprinkling. If you think "sprinkling is just as good as burial," remember **"that strange fire."**

In worship of Him, God commands us to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; Jas. 5:13). Since God did not command a musical instrument such as a flute, or a drum, or a cymbal, or any other thing we can make, we have no right to add them. If you should think it makes no difference, you should remember **"that strange fire!!!"**

THE DIVINE PATTERN IN WORSHIP

W.A. HOLLEY

"WHO SERVE UNTO THE example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount" (Hebrews 8:5).

Throughout man's long and checkered history, God has never left man to find his own way through this world. That was true with Adam and Eve in the garden (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:16-19). God laid down strict rules designed for their guidance and instruction. Noah was given special instruction for the purpose of building the ark (Genesis 6:14-16; cf. II Peter 2:5; Matthew 24:36-39; Luke 17:26-27; I Peter 3:20-21). Incidentally, we suggest to our modernist friends that if Noah and the flood are no more than a hoax, Jesus is found to be a false witness.

When we come to the days of Moses, God orders that there be but one altar and one tabernacle for the worship of God. The Israelites did not have a multiplicity of altars and tabernacles. All heathen altars were to be torn down so that God's true worship should not become contaminated by the addition of idolatrous practices and concepts. God is a jealous God who will not permit His worship to be changed. This fact is shown by God's refusal to allow additions to or subtractions from His law (Deuteronomy 4:2, 32). Thus, the only true standard of ethics and godly service is the

revealed will of God — no less, no more. Will worship, (Colossians 2:20-23) and ignorant worship, (Acts 17:23) are completely beyond the bounds of Scriptural worship. Vain worship can never please God (Matthew 15:1-9).

“Make all things according to the pattern,” says God. We must worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). To worship God in spirit is to worship honestly, sincerely, truly, conscientiously, carefully. To worship God in truth is to worship according to the teaching, instruction, and guidance of the Spirit’s word. We must put our whole heart and soul into our effort to worship God ... no half-hearted efforts can be acceptable to Him.

No matter how honest, sincere, and conscientious we may be, all is to no avail unless we worship according to the divine pattern (John 4:23-24). We are not at liberty to add anything to it, nor are we at liberty to subtract any thing from it (Deuteronomy 4:4; 12:32; Revelation 22:18-19). As strange as it may seem, entertainment is not the object of Christian worship. Many churches are into the entertainment business in a humongous way. They have their choirs, quartets, dancing acts, stage productions, sensational healing services, and almost any other activity if it can bring great crowds. Sadly, we have to report that some of our backsliding churches are following in their same tracks. They are determined to have huge crowds no matter what the cost. Crowds mean more to them than the truth of God! Loyal Christians have news for them — their practices will not pass unchallenged!

To worship God “in spirit and in truth” involves a special day, the first day of the week, the Lord’s day (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Revelation 1:10). We should observe that Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1), the New Testament church was established on the first day of the week (Leviticus 23:15-16; Acts 2:1-4), the saved under the New Testament system were added to the church on the first day of the week (Acts 2:36-38, 41, 47), and the worship of God “in spirit and in truth” began on the first day of the week (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

The Lord’s day is not a “Christian Sabbath,” since the Bible never so designates it. The first day of the week represents its beginning; that Sabbath day represents its ending.

The items of worship are five in number. These items constitute the whole worship service as authorized by Almighty God. To subtract even one item of worship is to make the entire service null and

void. What are these items of divine worship? We shall number them:

(1) Singing spiritual songs; songs that teach and admonish one another. Songs that speak to the heart and soul of the singers are what God demands (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). We must not add mechanical instruments to the song service because God never commanded it, no inspired man ever authorized it, and no New Testament church ever practiced it. We realize that these words may seem rigid and inflexible, but that is exactly what we intended!

(2) Continuing in the apostles doctrine is the Lord's requirement (Acts 2:42). Some assert their distaste for Bible study in worship, saying that they want something more exciting and more stimulating, which shows just how far they have removed themselves from the Lord's way (II Timothy 2:15; I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18; Hebrews 5:11-14). We live by the word of God and the more we know of its teaching, the better we can live (Matthew 4:4, cf. Deuteronomy 8:3).

(3) Prayer is of great importance in the worship of God (Acts 2:42). The only way we can address God is through warm and sincere prayers. In your prayer ask God, through the name of Jesus, for food, clothing, health, and for peace and quietness in your family, in the church, and in your personal relationships with all others (Matthew 6:9-14; I Timothy 2:1-8; I John 3:22; 5:14; Colossians 3:17). Remember to thank God for all of His blessings which you have received (James 1:17).

(4) Terms such as "The Lord's Supper" (I Corinthians 11:20); "the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42) and "the communion" (I Corinthians 10:16) are Biblical expressions designating an act of worship. Such terms as "eucharist," "sacrament" and "church ordinance" are the inventions of men, but never used in the Bible. Jesus instituted the Lord's supper in an upper room of a house in Jerusalem on the night before his crucifixion (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; I Corinthians 11:23-26).

The Lord's Supper is a memorial service (I Corinthians 11:24-26). Jesus used, not marble, silver or gold, but two of the most common ingredients known to man to erect His memorial ~ unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. Men build memorials that eventually fade away, but Jesus instituted a memorial that is now almost 2,000 years tall, and growing taller with each passing day of the Lord. Saints gather each Lord's day to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Revelation 1:10).

(5) Giving is an act of worship. To give acceptably, one must

purpose to give (II Corinthians 9:7), as one has been prospered (I Corinthians 16:2), and one must give cheerfully (II Corinthians 9:7). In one's giving one must not give to be seen by men (Matthew 6:19-21). We must NOT lie about our giving (Acts 5:1-11). The word "fellowship" (Gr. KOINONIA) in Acts 2:42 is translated "contribution" in Romans 15:26. To reap bountifully, we must give bountifully (II Corinthians 9:6; Luke 6:38; Matthew 6:33). To fail to give as the Lord has prospered you is to fail to worship God Scripturally.

Will Good People Be Saved?

WALTER SWAIN

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, a popular book was written entitled, WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE. It pointed out that our goodness, or morality, does not always determine our state or conditions in this life. Even good people must endure the vicissitudes of life and suffer at times. This is true.

But, I would like to mention another fact of life; that is, good people are not necessarily going to be saved. Our goodness, or morality, does not determine our spiritual state or condition, in this life or the one to come.

The false impression of many in the world is that nice people go to heaven. Because one is friendly, doesn't throw rocks at his neighbor, and lives a fairly decent life does not guarantee one a passage to eternal life. Even many who are religious, and faithful to the man-made religion that they practice will be lost.

Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, is an example of a "good man" who was lost. He is described by Luke in Acts 10:2 as a "devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." One would assume such a good man would be saved and headed for heaven. But, not so. Luke tells us an angel came to Cornelius and told him to send for Peter who would "tell him words whereby he would be saved" (Acts 11:14). Cornelius was a good man who was lost.

Jesus also revealed that some who claimed to follow Him would be lost. In Matthew 7, he speaks of those who call Him Lord, who had prophesied in His name, had cast out demons, and done many mighty works. But, His sad words to them are, "depart from Me, I never knew you" (Matthew 7:22). These were good, religious people who were lost.

The fact is, goodness does not save us. The blood of Christ, applied to one's sins in obedience to the Gospel saves. The new birth in baptism changes our spiritual state and allows God to add us to His eternal kingdom. Then, we are to be good, and live obedient, moral lives. Goodness does not save us, but is the result of our being saved.

Many good people are lost because they have not heard the Gospel, believed the Gospel, and obeyed the Gospel. Their goodness is to be complimented in this evil world, but they must not be deceived into thinking that their goodness will save them eternally. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Paul declares in Romans 3:23. We are all sinners.

It will be a sad day in judgment when many discover that "being good" was not enough to keep them out of hell. We must be regenerated by the power of God from above if we are to be saved. Then, we are to live an obedient life according to His will to attain heaven. Goodness is necessary, but it will not save us by itself. Goodness is not enough.

A MATTER OF TASTE

CHARLES T. ABERNATHY

THE APOSTLE PETER WRITES, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, (I Peter 2:2, 3). In describing that sincere milk of the word, Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

The Word of God is a spiritual feast. The man in Psalm one, verse 2 finds it delightful. We often teach and admonish one another with spiritual songs like, "Sweeter than All," and "Sweeter as the Years Go By." But perhaps the sweetest taste of all is found in this statement of God's gracious gift. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57). Read that entire chapter a time or two, and answer this question: "Can you think of anything sweeter than that victory?"

The New Testament helps us understand what one taste means by describing its opposite. Note what Luke 22:61 & 62 says about bitterness, "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and

wept bitterly.” Peter knew he had disappointed the Lord, and it left a bitter taste.

Peter saw bitterness in Acts 8:21 thru 23. He told Simon, “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God. if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” We see from that account that Simon the sorcerer was in opposition to God’s gracious plan of salvation. A complete reading of that account shows that fear was a part of Simon’s bitterness. And, as we know from Hebrews 10:27 the end result of willful sin without repentance is “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” Can you think of anything more bitter than finding yourself in opposition to God on judgment day?

In conclusion, there is no better advice on matters of taste than this: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

Three Important Questions To Ask Regarding Present-Day: “Tongue Speaking”

GLENN COLLEY

MANY RELIGIONISTS TODAY practice and teach “speaking in tongues” during their public assemblies and private devotions. In the church of Christ we do not, and this often raises questions from our friends and associates. Occasionally one of our members is made to feel less than “spiritual” because he or she has never spoken in “tongues.” Questions like, “You mean you’ve never spoken in tongues? How sad. What kind of church do you go to?” or, “I can’t imagine Christianity without miracles. I speak in tongues all the time. Don’t you think that Christians who don’t are quenching the Spirit?”

However, we must understand that in the final analysis, the “proof” offered for present-day tongue speaking is wholly subjective, and never objective. By “subjective” I mean the arguments defending present-day tongue speaking are based on what the speakers feel in their hearts. They “know” it is right because they “feel” it is right.

They “know” this is the Spirit’s work, because they “feel” it is the Spirit’s work. By “objective,” I mean the arguments truly from proper examination of the Word of God. Since this tongue speaking is either from God, or from the fertile imagination of men, it becomes very important that we approach this with an objective attitude.

Any time we engage in a religious discussion to determine God’s will, and one participant starts basing his arguments on how he “feels in his heart,” the productive discussion is squelched. No one can dispute how another person feels, and feelings are not our standard! We must determine right from wrong by carefully examining’ God’s word (II Timothy 2:15).

Consider three important questions for present-day tongue speakers:

**1. “THROUGH WHAT MEANS DID YOU
OBTAIN THIS ABILITY?”**

There were two ways—ONLY two ways—by which people obtained the miraculous gift of tongue speaking in the New Testament: The baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), and through the laying on the Apostle’s hands (Acts 8:17-20). People today who say they have this miraculous ability, have to get it through one of these two ways. Unfortunately, neither of these are available today.

It’s easy enough to deduce that since all the apostles died long ago, no one can hope to receive the miraculous gift through their hands. Those old bones have long since been reduced to dust.

Most who practice “Tongue- speaking” today, and who are concerned with Biblical authority, claim to have this gift from the baptism of the Holy Spirit. “Baptism” simply means immersion, thus, to be directly immersed with the power from the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament there are two obvious occurrences of this baptism, and an implied occurrence (Acts 2:1-6, Acts 10:44-48, II Corinthians 11:5).

Notice please however, that today there is only ONE baptism! There is a glaring inconsistency among most tongue-speakers today because they believe in TWO baptisms: the baptism in water, and the baptism of the Holy spirit. Ephesians 4:4, 5 says,

“There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism...”

That means one of the two baptisms has ceased! Since we know that water baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and water baptism puts us in contact with Christ’s death (Romans 6:1-5), we know that water baptism must continue. However, there

is not one single mention of Holy Spirit baptism after Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:5 that there is “ONE baptism.”

There was a time and purpose for miraculous gifts like tongue-speaking which sometimes required the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That time and purpose are gone.

2. “WHAT KIND OF TONGUE IS THAT?”

The word “tongue” or “tongues” is found fifty-five times in the English New Testament. Forty-seven of those times it comes from the Greek word “Glossa.” “Glossa” simply means, “Tongue, the little member in the mouth.” However, it is almost always (90%) used in it’s figurative sense meaning “spoken language.” In all of these cases, it refers to a spoken, intelligible, human language and never anything else.

Only twenty-five of the times the word is used does it refer to a gift of speaking a language by a miracle.

Do not be misled by the phrase, “unknown tongue” in the King James translation. I Corinthians 14:4 for example says, “He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself ...” The word “unknown” is in italics in each of the six times it is used beside, tongue. The italics mean that it was inserted by translators to make the text more readable. It is not in the original Greek text. Occasionally it conveys a wrong idea. These were not tongues unknown to all people, but rather unknown to those who were speaking them. THAT was the miracle!

Do not underestimate the weight of this point in the discussion. Present-day tongue speakers ALWAYS speak in gibberish, NEVER in true languages which they have not studied. If the tongues in the New Testament were true languages, and they were, then what is practiced today has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit, or Jesus Christ, or the church of the New Testament.

3. “WHAT KIND OF EFFECT DOES THIS EXHIBITION HAVE ON UNBELIEVERS?”

I Corinthians 14:22 says, “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not ...” This gift was to impress NON-CHRISTIANS, not Christians. What reaction do you think comes from unbelievers today when they hear the gibberish pouring from the mouth of emotionally - driven charismatics? They mock! They laugh! Children through the years have “snuck in” to these services to be entertained by the crys and gibberish and gyrations of these religionists. No miracle of God

would ever cause such a thing! Spiritual gifts, including the ability to speak in other languages, were designed to build faith in God and His word, not to make men mock.

Contrast these current practices with Acts 2:4-6: “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilians? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? ...” That day they listened. That day about 3000 were baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins (vs. 38-41).

Garland M. Robinson, in discussing I Corinthians 14 writes, “The whole context completely refutes their supposed doctrine. The problem in Corinth was their abuse of spiritual gifts, especially “speaking in tongues.” For some reason they coveted this gift above all others and loved to exercise it in the assembly. Paul’s writing of chapter 12-14 was to correct their misuses and explain the true purpose of such miraculous gifts. When Paul said their tongue speaking was “not unto men, but unto God,” he simply was indicating that it was not understood by those present, not that it was not intended to be understood. His point is clear that if any spoke in tongues, there must also be one to interpret what was spoken (v. 5), else, none would be able to profit from it. He said such utterances were useless. They were just spoken “into the air” (vs. 9). Even the one speaking in the “tongue” (language) does not benefit from it since no one interprets what he said (vs. 14). Tongue speaking under such circumstances would be understood by no one but God, so wherein is the benefit to men? It would defeat the whole purpose of speaking in a foreign language since its goal was to communicate the will of God for the purpose of producing faith in the unbeliever!” (Light for Living, Nov. 13, 1988)

In conclusion, let us always speak the truth in love. People who practice their limited form of miracles often are wholly convinced of the validity and reality of the miracles, including tongue-speaking. Because concerns of the miraculous sometimes dominates their religion, realizing that Bible miracles have ceased leaves a large hole in their faith. Be always compassionate.