

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

*“Every Way Of A Man Is Right In His Own Eyes, But
The Lord weighs The Heart”
(Proverbs 21:2)*

We can tell how men look, but the Lord can tell what they are. God looks on the heart, and sees the thoughts and intents of the heart. We all think too favorably of our own selves, as if there were nothings amiss in whatever we believe and practice. Every way of a man, even his by way seems right in his own eyes. The proud heart is very ingenious in putting fair face upon a foul matter, and in making that appear right to itself, which is far from being so. Remember King Saul, about whom we read in the Bible in the book of 1 Samuel chapter 15? He was sent by God on a mission to utterly destroy all that there was at Amalek, without sparing **anything**. He did go there to do what he was told to do. But while he was returning back, he met Samuel, God's spokesperson on the way, and very proudly declared to him, “I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” But Samuel said to him, “What then is the bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? Saul's answer to Samuel was, “They”, that is, the people he had taken with him to destroy Amalek, “brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.” (1 Samuel 15:15). Was King Saul's answer acceptable? Did he really do what he was told to do? Surely not. Yet he thought and he was convinced in his heart that he had done

all that he was commanded by God to do. He had thought God would be certainly pleased with what he had brought to offer him as sacrifice from his mission. But we read, Samuel told Saul, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." God was not pleased with King Saul, and as a result, he was told, "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king." (1 Samuel 15:22,23).

Jesus said, of the day of judgment, "Many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons on Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." (Matthew 7:22,23). How confident and sincere did they appear! In their own judgment they were the best suited for the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God. But Christ told them, I never knew you! He said, depart from me you who practice lawlessness, or as the KJV says iniquity. What was amiss? What was wrong? Their failure is not that of inactivity, but indulgence in the wrong activity; they did what the Lord had not authorized them to do. How serious! They did not only deceive others, who thought they were doing the Lord's will, but were themselves deceived. Their great error was doing what they thought was right, as King Saul had thought, instead of doing that that God had said. Is there a lesson for us to learn?

Many souls shall diligently serve the Lord and do many "mighty" things in His name, only to discover at the last day of God's judgment that they have never ever served the Lord at all! Because all they had done, though very diligently and selflessly and zealously, yes, in His name, was actually not done by His authority. This solemn warning of Christ should stop every man short and suddenly till he is sure beyond all possibility of deception that He truly is doing God's will. A religious motive, however pious, can never compensate for disobedience.

PREACHING THE KINGDOM

J. C. CHOATE

Throughout the Old Testament a great deal was said about the

coming of a *spiritual kingdom*. Isaiah foretold that in the last days *the Lord's kingdom* would be established (Isaiah 2:2,3). Daniel said that God would set up a *kingdom* which would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44). Joel said that the Lord's Spirit would be poured out upon all flesh at that time (Joel 2:28,29), and Peter explained that Joel's prophecy was fulfilled in the momentous happenings recorded in Acts 2.

John the Baptist came preaching that *the kingdom of heaven* was near at hand (Matthew 3:1,2), and Christ said that some who were standing in His presence would not taste of death until they saw *the kingdom* come with power (Mark 9:1). Finally, Christ said that He would build *His church* upon the rock, the fact that He was the Son of God (Matthew 16:18,19; 1 Corinthians 3:11). He promised that He would give to the Apostles the keys of *the kingdom*, the authority to tell men and women what they could do to enter *the kingdom or the church*.

In Acts 2 we see that the prophecies were fulfilled concerning the establishment of *the kingdom* in Jerusalem as the power of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles and they began to speak with tongues, or in other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance. This was *the kingdom* that John had said was soon to be established, the one that was from heaven, and the one Christ had said He would build. The Apostles, then, used the keys of *the kingdom or the church* as they preached the gospel for the first time and revealed to sinful men how they could be saved. Those who heard, believed, repented of their sins, and were baptized for the remission of their sins were saved and added to *the church* by the Lord himself.

The kingdom and the church were therefore the same institution, being *the house of God or the spiritual body of Christ* (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 12:27). Paul, speaking to the church at Colosse, said concerning God, "*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*" (Colossians 1:13). The Hebrew writer said, "*Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*" (Hebrews 12:28). Now of *what kingdom* was he speaking? *The kingdom of God, the kingdom* which was from heaven, *the Lord's church*, comprised of people the Lord saved and added to it, making them members of *His body, the spiritual body of Christ*, again being *the church* (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18).

Now after the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, the record says concerning Christ, "*To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking things pertaining to **the kingdom of God***" (Acts 1:3). In other words, Christ was giving final instructions to the Apostles concerning *His kingdom or church* which would shortly be established in Jerusalem. He went on to exhort, "*But ye shall receive the power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts 1:8).

So in Acts 2 *that kingdom, the Lord's church* itself was established with some 3,000 obeying God and being added to it (Acts 2:40). The gospel was preached again and again both in Jerusalem and in Judea with thousands more obeying the Lord and being added to *that same church*. But there is more. At this point, the record says, "*Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ to them*" (Acts 8:5). Continuing, we read, "*But when they believed Philip preaching things concerning **the kingdom of God**, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women*" (Acts 8:12).

So what do we have? We see how the Lord instructed the Apostles concerning *the kingdom of God*, and then Philip preached *Christ* to the Samaritans. But, amazingly, in doing so he also preached *the kingdom of God* to them! Why was there so much emphasis on *the kingdom or the church*? Because it was the culmination of God's efforts for mankind; it was the vehicle through which He would provide salvation. It was from God, it had been prophesied, the Lord had promised it, and the saved were added to it! *Its importance cannot be overstated.*

Sometimes we hear people saying the church is not important and that we should not talk about it so much. It is true that the church is not *the saviour*, since it is made up of *the saved*, who are human beings; but *Christ* is *the saviour* of the church, having died for it and having purchased it with His own blood, and therefore we must be members of it if we want to be saved and to go to heaven.

If you remove from the scriptures all of the things said about *the kingdom or the church*, how much would you have left? Furthermore, if *Christ* built *the church*, is head of it and saviour of it, serving as its foundation and calling it by His name, if He has promised to return for it and present it to God, how could anyone think that it is unimportant? And how will men know about it, of its divine origin,

of its purpose and mission, and of its tremendous place of importance in God's overall plan unless we preach it to the world?

In conclusion, let us appreciate the church, love it as the Lord loves it, be thankful to be members of it, and let us eagerly tell others about it so that it may truly spread throughout the entire world. As Paul said, "*Unto him be glory in **the church** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*" (Ephesians 3:21)

DON'T PLAY WITH SIN

ALLEN WEBSTER

Sin is no plaything. First we toy with sin, and then sin toys with us. To begin with, we play master, and it plays slave; then we switch, and it doesn't want to take turns anymore.

The prodigal boy in Jesus' story is an exception (Luke 15). The truth is, most prodigals never come home. Oh, they think they will. They plan to ... someday. They may even start back toward home ... several times. But it's a long way back. It's embarrassing to admit you've been wrong. Sin's entanglements are confusing to unravel. Bad habits are hard to break; bad friends are difficult to give up; bad reputations are hard to live down.

What happens to most prodigals? They enjoy the "pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:25) and then marry someone from the far country. Somebody they met at a party or a bar. Somebody they "experimented with." Somebody that never knew the Lord and doesn't care much about knowing Him now (cf. 1 Samuel 2:12; cf. 3:7). On Sundays, they prefer the "lake" to the "Lord." When it comes to reading, they prefer the day's news to the Good News. They still drink a little (on the weekends), still smoke (a pack a day now), still use bad language (when they are "with the guys" or in a foul mood), still watch bad movies and ... well, you get the picture. They're still in the pigpen. It's hard to leave.

His sin started as a Peeping Tom watching his next door neighbor take her bath (2 Samuel 11:2). He looked (she was beautiful), lusted (she was naked), sent for (it's hard to say "no" to a king), and slept with her (11:4). That was about as long as he had planned to stay in "the far country" (a one-night excursion). Unfortunately, David found out that when he was through with sin, sin wasn't through with him.

A few weeks later, he received an unwelcome note. It must have been tightly sealed with “King’s Eyes Only” scrawled on the envelope. It was probably spotted and smeared with tears. He opened it to read the four words he must have secretly dreaded ever since another man’s wife got out of his bed: “I am with child” (2 Samuel 11:5).

He was back on board the sin train—and it was going to keep him much longer than he wanted to stay. You know the downward spiral his life took from there. Deception. Hypocrisy. Conniving. Dishonor. Murder. Coverup. Quickie marriage (2 Samuel 11:6-27).

Ask David

The next scene is God’s prophet paying the former shepherd a visit and telling a parable about a rich man, a poor man, and a pet lamb (2 Samuel 12:1-5). The poor man loved his lamb like it was his own child. He had kept it a long time. It ate at his table. The rich man killed it to feed to a passing guest.

Perhaps David (who thought this was a true story) thought of a pet lamb he had while he was growing up. His face flushed with anger, and he rendered this judicial decision: “He shall pay back fourfold” (12:6). Unwittingly, David had just pronounced his own sentence and rewritten the script for the last two decades of his life. The rest of David’s years read like a plot out of daytime television. Sin was about to take him for a long ride.

- Ask David how far sin will take you as he lies for a week in the dirt begging for the life of a dying baby.
- Ask him at three A.M. on the seventh day when he hasn’t slept or eaten (2 Samuel 12:16).
- Ask him again as he walks home from the burial (12:19).
- Ask him again later when he learns that his daughter has just been raped—while on an errand on which he sent her (2 Samuel 13:12-14).
- Ask him again when he finds out that one of his sons is the rapist. Put yourself in this father’s place “when king David heard of all these things” (2 Samuel 13:21).
- Ask him again when the message comes that his son had just been murdered—because David had sent him into harm’s way.
- Ask him again when he finds out that another son is the murderer (2 Samuel 13:30-34).
- Ask him again when he doesn’t see his own son’s face for five years.
- Ask him again as he flees his palace one night, barefoot and weeping, because that son is trying to kill him and take his

kingdom (2 Samuel 15:30).

- Ask him again as he ducks flying rocks and flinches from cursing insults (2 Samuel 16:13).
- Ask him again when he—along with all Israel—hears that his son has slept with ten of David's wives in a tent on top of the king's palace (2 Samuel 16:22).
- Ask him again when his close friend betrays him and wants an opportunity to murder him (2 Samuel 17:1-2).
- Ask again between his sobs as he grieves that his beloved son is swinging from an oak by his hair with three darts through his heart (2 Samuel 18:14, 33).

Sin took David farther than he ever wanted to go.

How far is sin taking teens?

- Have you witnessed the anger, sadness, depression, hate-fulness, and hopelessness of a life Satan gives back after an extended stay in the far country?
- Have you looked into the vacant eyes of a young person who has been living a worldly lifestyle for several months?
- Have you been around the miserable pessimist who has lost faith in God and the Bible?
- Have you seen a youth robbed of innocence and purity?
- Have you sat with a teen who cries until she/he runs out of tears because the consequences of sin have become personal instead of theoretical?
- Have you been to rehab with a young person whose body has the “shakes” of withdrawal, the hollow eyes, the bloodless face, the wasted body?
- Have you attended a teen's funeral whom sin took so far that he decided death by bullet or pills was better than life?

Solomon said, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). The far country will keep you longer than you want to stay—maybe even for eternity.

Broken Homes

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Jesus tells us to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). It would be impossible to obey this injunction and marry a follower of Satan. Someone has said it well:

“He that marries a child of the Devil may expect trouble with his father-in-law.” The writer of Proverbs tells us emphatically that the house of the wicked shall be overthrown (Proverbs 12:7; 14:11). The urgent warning of the prophet Isaiah unto King Hezekiah is appropriate to each one of us: “Set thy house in order, for ye shall die, and not live” (II Kings 20:1).

A home is not in order, in God’s sight, until both parents and children realize their duty and obey it. There are certain obligations incumbent upon each if we are to make our homes “a foretaste of glory divine.” Unless Christianity is real in our homes, we are in the process of raising children in an atmosphere of insincerity and shame. Nothing is more detrimental to future stability than a pretentious religion void of solid conviction and loyal devotion. Children can easily see through the veneer of pseudo-spirituality. And conversely, nothing is more faith-building to child than the opportunity view daily the dedication of parents in love with God and His word. Parents need to know the Lord, and the way of His salvation! It is not enough to know the book, chapter and verse, we must know the Lord! Paul said, “I know WHOM I have believed” (II Timothy 1:12). The word of Christ must dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16). Parents who claim to be Christians should constantly evidence the presence of Jesus in their lives (Galatians 2:20), and manifest the joy of serving the Lord, even as Paul wrote in Philippians 4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.”

To have a home that glorifies God, parents need to be keenly aware of the power of their influence. Far too many of us are similar to the old caretaker of an apartment building. He was asked how he could possibly remember all the conflicting orders hurled at him each day. His answer is a classic reminder of so many folk who lack backbone to deal with their children; “I just throw my mind in neutral, and go where I am pushed.” But the Bible tells us “train up a child in the way he should go,” and we nurture him “in the admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

We dare not sin against our children by failing to take a stand for godliness (Joshua 24:15; Matthew 6:33). One of the saddest verses in all the Bible tells us that “Eli restrained not his sons.” The tragic results in the lives of those boys are chronicled in the book of I Samuel. The sons of Aaron died a shameful death (Leviticus 10:1-2), as they followed the example of their father who had once been flippant toward God in the “golden calf” (Exodus 32:24). We cannot afford the luxury of sleeping on the job of parental responsibility!

Advocate, Intercessor, Mediator

JASON HART

It comforts Christians to know that Jesus is ready to make intercession for us when we sin. First John 1:9 reads, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” For the Christian, Jesus is the “Voice” for the good of mankind. He serves in three roles to Christians: He is 1) an advocate; 2) an intercessor; and 3) a mediator.

Imagine a general practitioner—maybe your family doctor. He has educated himself in the general practice of medicine. However, he is not in a position to perform major surgical procedures or to diagnose some major illnesses without a specialist’s guidance. For example, if you have a severe heart problem, he would refer you to a cardiologist. He would speak on your behalf to the specialist, pleading the symptoms of your problems, and serve as an impartial “go between” to see that your heart-care is fully provided. Therefore, he would act as an advocate of your problem, an intercessor for your symptoms, and a mediator for your care.

Jesus serves in exactly the same ways.

First, He is our advocate. He advocates to our Father our sinful condition and chooses to help us commit our change before God. First John 2:1 reads, “And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

Second, He is our intercessor. He intercedes on our behalf, to plead our cause to God whom we have offended. Our symptoms are laid on the table before God, and mercy is pleaded on the condition of repentance. Romans 8:34 says, “It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Hebrews 7:25 reads: “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Third, Jesus is our mediator. He is actually our only mediator. He is the “go between” that attempts to bring reconciliation to the relationship between God and men. First Timothy 2:5 says, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

If you will let Him, He will be your advocate, intercessor, and mediator. He wants you to come out of your sins and be with Him forever.

What Is The Duration Of Hell?

BOB PRICHARD

It is common in today's religious world to reject the biblical teaching of the reality of hell. Many claim that the old "eternal hell fire" is out of character for a loving God, and that when this life is over the unsaved will simply cease to exist.

This is an appealing doctrine to many, because it eliminates the possibility of punishment for sin. However, Jesus said that the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46). Paul wrote that those who do not know God and refuse to obey Him, "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Hell, the ultimate abode of the wicked, is translated from the Greek word *Gehenna*. It differs from *Hades*, another Greek word rendered as hell in the King James Version. *Hades* is the abode of all the dead, righteous and unrighteous, before the resurrection. The literal *Gehenna*, from which hell is derived, was a narrow gorge near Jerusalem that represented the worst of Jewish history. Years earlier they stained this valley with the blood of their own innocent children offered in sacrifice to the idol, Baal. In Christ's day, *Gehenna* was a continually burning garbage dump, the name of which He appropriated to describe the final abode of the wicked.

The Scriptures often describe hell as a place of unending punishment. Jesus spoke of the day when His angels would gather those who do iniquity and "cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:42). John described hell, saying, "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night" (Revelation 14:11). Other passages describe hell as "outer darkness" (Matthew 8:12), a "furnace of fire" (Matthew 13:42), and "eternal fire" (Jude 7).

Jude said Sodom and Gomorrha, the wicked cities that were "giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). The term *eternal* literally means "always being." Hell is just as eternal as heaven (Matthew 25:46). If the fires of hell burn out, then the light of heaven will go out on the same day. The good news is that hell can be avoided! Jesus died that we might be saved. We can all obey His gospel and dwell in heaven forever.

“Know That You Have Eternal Life

CLEM THURMAN

Near the close of his letter, the apostle John wrote, *“These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God”* (1 Jno. 5:13). Christ never intended that we be filled with doubt and *“like the surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed”* (Jas. 1:6). We are to *“draw near with full assurance of faith”* (Heb. 10:22), because *“He is faithful that promised”* (Heb. 10:23). The last verse of Heb. 10 declares, *“We are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul.”*

Can we really have that “blessed assurance” that we are right with God (Rom. 1:17)? That we are saved (1 Cor. 1:18)? That we are prepared to meet God (Amos 4:12)? Or must we remain in that limbo of uncertainty, wishing to be right with God but never knowing for sure that we are? John states, without equivocation, *“You may know that ye have eternal life.”* I believe he gives, in this same letter, the reasons why we can know that.

“WE ARE WALKING IN THE LIGHT”

The apostle wrote in the first chapter, *“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but 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”* (v. 5-7). The Christian is *“called out of darkness and into his marvelous light”* (1 Pet. 2:9), he then is a *“child of the light”* (1 Thes. 5:5) and is to *“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness”* (Eph. 5:10). Because we are *“children of light”* (Eph. 5:8), there are certain blessings that result.

Walking in darkness means that we have no fellowship with God (1 Jno. 1:6). But *“if we walk in the light”* we have fellowship with Him and He with us (v. 7). Because we are *“children of God”* (1 Jno. 3:1), He deals with us as a perfect Father with children whom He loves. Walking in the light also means the constant cleansing by the blood of Jesus Christ (v. 7), so that *“there is no condemnation”* (Rom. 8:1). Because Christ died to cleanse us from sin (Rom. 3:23-26), we can have assurance that *“we have eternal life”* as long as we *“walk in the light.”*

“WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS”

“Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 Jno. 2:3). The test is so simple: if we belong to God, we will live like God tells us to live! When you study those great “heroes of faith” in Heb. 11, you see in every case that they believed God and therefore they DID what God told them: *“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice... By faith Noah prepared an ark... By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed”* (Heb. 11:4,7-8). The pattern continues throughout the chapter, and it continues in the life of every person who *“has eternal life.”* Jesus is still asking, *“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?”* (Lk. 6:46).

One becomes a Christian by obedience to the Lord’s commands: *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved... Repent, and be baptized every one of you... Whereas ye were the servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness”* (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:17). That is the reason Peter wrote later, *“Ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth”* (1 Pet. 1:22). As a child of God (Gal. 3:26-27), obedience must continue: *“As children of obedience”* (1 Pet. 1:14). The apostle Paul expressed it this way: *“We are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh, for if ye live after the flesh ye shall die. But if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live”* (Rom. 8:12-13). Only such obedience can give us assurance that we *“have eternal life.”*

“WE ARE WORKING HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS”

While man’s righteousness is *“as filthy rags”* (Isa. 64:6), God expects us to work His righteousness as He reveals it to us: *“I am not ashamed of the gospel... Therein is revealed the righteousness of God”* (Rom. 1:16-17). As the psalmist wrote, *“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness... Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness”* (Psa. 23:3; 45:7). It is not enough that we *“deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,”* we must also *“live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world”* (Titus 2:11-12). To live righteously is to work His righteousness, to be engaged in His work.

Jesus told the disciples, *“We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work”* (Jno. 9:4). The life of the Christian must be directed toward serving God constantly. It is only when we *“seek first the kingdom of God*

and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33) that we can have assurance that we *"have eternal life,"* That devotion, to *"present your bodies a living sacrifice"* (Rom. 12:1), will cause one to say with Paul, *"I will most gladly spend and be spent... For me to live is Christ"* (2 Cor. 12:15; Phil. 1:21). With regard to His work on earth, Jesus said, *"I am come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me"* (Jno. 6:38). If we would have eternal life, that must be our attitude.

"WE ARE MOTIVATED BY LOVE FOR GOD"

When Jesus was asked, *"What is the first commandment of all?"* His reply: *"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"* (Mk. 12:28-30). We can never *"know we have eternal life"* until we know that we love God. Love motivates us to worship, *"God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth"* (Jno. 4:24). This is the very nature of one who is made in the image of God: *"He made of one every nation of men... that they should seek after God"* (Acts 17:26-27). The motivating force that causes us to seek for eternal life is our love for God.

John shows that love for God will lead us to reject the allure of a sinful world: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. . The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever"* (1 Jno. 2:15-17). That is the *"eternal life"* John writes about in 1 Jno. 5:13, love for God that leads to doing His will. Seeking after God means keeping our hearts pure (Prov. 4:23) and maintaining purity of thoughts (Phil. 4:8); that is what love for God will do. As John wrote later, *"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous"* (1 Jno. 5:3). Only when our lives are motivated by love for God can we have the assurance that we have eternal life.

"WE LOVE OUR BRETHREN IN CHRIST"

John writes in 1 Jno. 3:14, *"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren."* He even states later, *"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen"* (1 Jno. 4:20). Love means having a helpful attitude (Jas. 2:14-16), willing to share time and money with those in need (1 Jno. 3:17-18). Love for brethren means complimenting instead of criticizing, finding favor instead of fault, accepting instead of arrogance, concern instead of complacency,

service instead of severity (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Our love for the brethren will even help convince unbelievers that we are following Christ (Jno. 13:35).

The Lord's inspired writer exhorts, *"Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works"* (Heb. 10:24). In a similar vein, *"If a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness"* (Gal. 6:1). Love doesn't jump on a man when he is already down, it seeks to lift him up. Love does not publicize shortcomings, but in gentleness seeks to restore one who falls short. Love seeks reconciliation, not confrontation. The admonition of the apostle Peter still applies, *"Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covers a multitude of sins"* (1 Pet. 4:8). If we are constantly tearing brethren down instead of building them up, it is obvious that something is badly wrong. Only when we love our brethren can we truly know that we have eternal life.

"WE LIVE BY A SURRENDERING FAITH"

John writes, *"This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith"* (1 Jno. 5:4). The faith that saves begins with faith in God: *"He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him"* (Heb. 11:6). We believe *"God is"* and we also believe that God *"is a rewarder"* of those who have obedient faith (Heb. 11:4-19). But we must also believe in Jesus: *"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"* (1 Jno. 5:5). We believe that Jesus is Lord (Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9-10), king (Acts 2:29-36), mediator (1 Tim. 2:5) and the only Savior (Jno. 14:6; Acts 4:11-12).

Our faith in Christ must change the way we think, speak and live. That attitude of, *"Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth"* (1 Sam. 3:10), must find reality in our everyday lives. We must learn to pray, and live, as Jesus did: *"Not my will, but thine, be done"* (Lk. 22:42). That means that we *"walk by faith"* (2 Cor. 5:7), that we *"live by faith"* (Rom. 1:17). The apostle Paul wrote of his life, *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me"* (Gal. 2:20). That is the kind of faith we must have, if we would have eternal life: a faith that not only changes, but forcefully directs, the way we live.

Do you have eternal life? Listen as John explains, *"The witness*

is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 Jno. 5:11). Eternal life is in Christ, so the question is: "Are you in Christ?" If your faith has led you to repent of your sins and be baptized "*into Christ*" (Acts 2:36-38; Rom. 6:3), you are in Christ. Then, walking in the light in obedience to God's will, working His righteousness through your love for God and brethren in Christ, your surrendering faith gives assurance to you from the word of God: "*These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.*"

OUR GOD FOREVER

BILL DILLON

Do you want to hear one of the secrets to great living? Listen to Psalm 48:14: "*For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.*"

The above truth gives strength to the weak; comfort to the wearied; soul-healing to the sin-broken; peace to the troubled, and hope to the dying.

Who is this God? He made heaven and earth, and controls the march of events. He fashioned the stars, the moon, and the sun. Without His knowledge, not one sparrow falls to the ground, and by Him the very hairs of our head are numbered (not a difficult task in my case!). He feeds the birds and supplies men with their daily bread. He is capable of taking better care of us than we can of ourselves. Yes, "*... it is He that made us ... and we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture*" (Psalm 100:3). He is a holy, just, gracious, and loving God—our God!

On nothing can we trust, save in this great God. One day this earth and all that is within it shall pass away, but God will remain, imperishable through the ages.

The life God has given is not fixed or stationary. We are tending somewhere at all times. In life, move we must. But in what direction do we move? Are we going upward or downward? God is our guide. He is the Light that knows no darkness. His ways are sure and certain. His counsels are sound. He is the God of knowledge. He knows us and our trials. He cares for each of us as if there were in the world no other than you yourself.

Let this God be your guide throughout life, and even unto your

dying hours. He will graciously lead you in the path of righteousness by His own loving hand. Guided by Him you shall never perish.

*"Our changeful lives are ebbing to an end,
Onward to darkness and to death we tend;
O conqueror of the grave, be Thou our Guide,
Be Thou our Light in death's dark tide;
Then in our mortal hour will be no gloom,
No sting in death, no terror in the tomb."*

NO ROOM IN THE INN

JACK HARRIMAN

The Son of God was born in a stable *"because there was no room for them in the inn"* (Luke 2). Why did the innkeeper not make room? Surely a room could have been made available for *the Son of God!*

Perhaps he did not make room for Jesus because he was not EXPECTING Him.

Many in this day have not made room for Jesus in their lives because they do not expect Him to come (at least not soon). If we knew the Lord would be returning tomorrow, repentance would take place, the like of which has not been seen since the days of Jonah and Nineveh! The Lord **is** coming again (Acts 1:11), and perhaps before tomorrow morning (Matthew 25:13). The only reasonable course of action is to be prepared for that coming.

Perhaps the innkeeper did not make room for Jesus because he did not RECOGNIZE Him.

It was prophesied that Jesus would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) in the days of the Roman Empire (Daniel 2). It seems that the innkeeper should have been asking every young, expectant woman if she were a descendant of David. Men today do not make room for Jesus in their lives because they do not recognize Him. Blind indeed is the man who cannot recognize the heavens and earth as the work of God's hands, or who can read the Bible without seeing its Divine characteristics.

Perhaps the innkeeper did not make room for Jesus because he did not WANT Him.

"We do not want this man to reign over us," they said (Luke

19:14). Many today simply do not want this Man to rule over them. Still others would receive Him, but only on their own terms. Men want Jesus without obeying the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:7,8), without the church (Ephesians 5:22-27), or without giving up sin (Romans 6:1,2). But these are not **His terms**.

Will you make room for Jesus in your life?

Faith Or Feeling?

FRANK CHESSE

Are you walking by **faith** or by **feeling**? How you answer this question will determine your eternal destiny. How do you know you are saved? Many people respond to this question by saying, "Because I feel it in my heart." How tragic that one would allow something as important as salvation to be based upon mere feeling. In no other area of life does one allow feeling to be the basic criterion for determining the rightness or wrongness of a particular thing or course of action.

One does not bake a cake by "feeling." Instead, a recipe is consulted in order that one might know the proper ingredients to use, the correct amount of each ingredient, and the proper temperature at which to bake. A contractor would never attempt to build a house by "feeling." Rather, he consults a blueprint in order that he might know exactly how the house should be constructed. One would not think of taking a cross-country trip by "feeling." Instead, a road map is consulted so as to know the exact route to take, when to turn right, left, etc.

Furthermore, in baking a cake, one would not argue for the use of fifteen additional ingredients on the basis of the failure of the recipe to specify that such ingredients were not to be used. If a blueprint calls for three bedrooms, a wise contractor would obviously not act so presumptuously as to add a fourth bedroom and then attempt to justify his actions by saying, "But the blueprint doesn't say not to." A traveler desiring to reach a certain destination does not feel at liberty to go in just any direction on the basis of the road map's failure to eliminate such routes with a "Thou shalt not...."

Many people seem unable or unwilling to apply this same logic to religion. We are commanded to "*walk by faith, not by sight*" (2 Corinthians 5:7). God's Word is the only source of faith (Romans

10:17). Thus, to walk by faith is to walk according to the teachings of the Word of God. It is not possible to engage in an act “*by faith*” if that act is not authorized by the Word of God. God’s Word is a divine recipe, blueprint, or road map.

One cannot know he is saved simply because he “feels” saved. One cannot know that his worship is acceptable to God simply because he “feels” that it is. Neither is it possible to know that one is on the road to Heaven merely on the basis of feeling. God’s Word, which is our blueprint or road map, must be consulted. As Moses was careful to follow the divine pattern for the construction of the physical tabernacle (Exodus 25:40), even so must we exercise diligence in following God’s divine pattern for the construction of our spiritual lives.

It is imperative that we recognize the unreliable nature of feelings. Subsequent to war, women have sometimes remarried, “feeling” that their husbands were dead, only to discover months or years later that they were alive. Truly, feelings are deceptive and unreliable. What seems right from a human perspective may be wrong. “*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Proverbs 14:12).

Feelings are often produced by the acceptance and belief of testimony. For example, a man receives a message stating that a loved one has just been killed in an automobile accident. He is immediately overwhelmed with grief. A short time later, he receives another message informing him that a terrible mistake had been made: the previous message was in error, and his loved one is alive and well. Immediately his feelings undergo a dramatic transformation. He is filled with joy. One’s feelings respond in direct relation to the nature of the information or testimony received. If one receives a sad message and believes it, he will be sad, regardless of whether the message is true or false. This is why feelings are so unreliable, both in everyday life and in religious matters.

Many people are in religious error because they have allowed their feelings to be their guide, and their feelings are based upon religious teaching which is not in harmony with the Word of God. One can feel just as spiritually secure in error as in truth. Prior to becoming a Christian, Paul was a devout Pharisee. He described himself as one who was “... *taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God...*” (Acts 22:3). He had lived in all good conscience before God (Acts 23:1).

Paul felt spiritually secure. He felt that he was right, but he was wrong. Had Paul been determined to “walk by feelings,” he would never have renounced Judaism and embraced Christianity.

Far more is involved in “walking by faith” than just believing in God and the deity of Christ. Even the devils “*believe and tremble*” (James 2:19). Jesus spoke of certain Jews who “*believed on him*” (John 6:30), yet He later described these same Jews as children of the Devil (John 8:44), because they refused to employ their faith in action by complying with His will. Among the chief rulers of the Jews, many believed on Christ, “... *but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God*” (John 12:42,43). Agrippa believed what the prophets said concerning Christ, yet he fell short of becoming a Christian (Acts 26:27,28). “*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*” (James 2:24).

The faith that saves is the faith that obeys. The faith that avails is that “... *faith which worketh by love*” (Galatians 5:6). In order to please God, one must be characterized by the “*obedience of faith*” (Romans 16:26). Who shall enter the kingdom of Heaven? Jesus answered, “... *he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven*” (Matthew 7:21). Salvation is reserved for a select group, “... *them that obey him*” (Hebrews 5:9).

Consequently, man is saved by divine grace and blood when he responds to God’s will in obedient faith. Having heard, believed, and obeyed the will of God, man enjoys the reality of salvation by grace, and thus experiences a “great feeling.” A Christian does not appeal to his good feelings as “proof or evidence” of his salvation. He appeals to divine truth as is set forth in the Bible, and his compliance with that truth. “*And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32). However, employing one’s faith in obedience to the will of God, and thus enjoying salvation by grace, certainly affords ample reason for good feelings.

Are you walking by **faith** or by **feeling**? Remember, the untaught heart is “... *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...*” (Jeremiah 17:9). Solomon affirmed, “*He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool...*” (Proverbs 28:26). Place your trust in God and His Word, not in the fickle nature of human feelings.

Salvation In Christ Is Salvation In His Church

BASIL OVERTON

"Therefore, I endure all things for the elect's sake that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10). Salvation is in Christ Jesus. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Salvation from sin can be had nowhere except in Christ Jesus.

To be in Christ is the same as being in the church of Christ. *"To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: ... And let the peace of God rule in your hearts to the which ye are called in one body" (Colossians 1:2; 3:15). Those at Colosse who were in Christ were in one body. But that one body is the church. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).*

Christ is the Savior of all men in the sense that all men who *want* to be saved *can* be saved. Only those *will* be saved by Christ who *do* what He tells them in the New Testament to do to be saved. *"Though he were a Son yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; being then made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8,9).*

When a person obeys Christ, he believes the Gospel; he *believes* that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 3:23). He *repents* of his sins (Acts 17:30). He is *baptized* into Christ (Romans 6:3). When one thus gets into Christ, he is saved *by Christ*, for salvation is *in Christ*. That is why baptism is necessary; baptism puts one *into Christ* (Galatians 3:27). That is why Peter said: *"... Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38).*

Reasons Why Some Do Not Obey the Gospel

JOHN THIESEN

Why don't all people who have heard the Gospel obey it and become Christians?

It is difficult to understand why not, especially when we consider the marvelous benefits of becoming a child of God; the forgiveness of sins, peace of mind, purpose in life, and after you die, a glorious body given in the resurrection to wear throughout eternity! Who would knowingly turn down these good things?

Various reasons are given for failure to respond to the Gospel invitation. Let's look at some of these hindrances.

Love of sin. Many are not willing to give up some of their sins for Christ. These mean too much to them, and the idea of parting company with them is unthinkable. That's what Jesus meant when He said, *"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil"* (John 3:19). The love of sin has too strong a hold on them. But Jesus asked, *"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* (Mark 8:36). What particular sin is really worth clinging to the point of losing out on eternal life? What is worth more than life? Not even the whole world!

Some don't see their need for a Savior. These are people who do not see themselves as lost. They think of themselves as good, law-abiding, and of high morals. They may feel that they are doing as well as they can, and that God ought to be satisfied with that. They may have high standards, but what about those times when they do sin, as all men and women do? The Bible says that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). They need a Savior to die for those sins, and Jesus is the only one who can fill that role. It is only in Him that they may receive a cleansing through His blood (1 John 1:7).

Fear of being ridiculed. Jesus said that at His glorious coming He will be ashamed of anyone who was ashamed of Him in

this world (Luke 9:26). I would rather stand with Jesus now and be shunned by some of my peers than to live eternally with those same people in hell at the Lord's coming.

Inconsistencies of some professing Christians cause some to turn away from Christianity. But why should I allow a few hypocrites in the church to discourage me from being with all the faithful Christians there who are in the majority? Why should I be headed for the same dreadful place awaiting the hypocrites?

Some are afraid their sins are too bad to be forgiven.

However, Jesus said that "... *him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*" (John 6:37).

Finally, there are some who **are postponing the matter**. They think they are going to live another day and have plenty of time to get right with God. James warns these, "*Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*" (James 4:14).

None of these excuses are acceptable to God. Of excuse-makers the Lord said, "... *That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper*" (Luke 14:24).

WASHED

LEON BARNES

Everything tends to get dirty. Even people must be washed often or they both look dirty and the smell indicates a problem. But the greatest need for washing is one which is not seen from the outside at all. It is the need for cleansing on the inside. Sin enters every life and stains us with its filth (Romans 3:23). We have all, like sheep, gone astray, each one to his own way. This sin in our lives separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1,2; Ephesians 2:1-3). Unless something is done to cleanse us from sin and its effects on us, we will suffer eternal ruin away from God (Romans 6:23).

Because of God's amazing love and grace toward us, He has made it possible for all of us to be cleansed from our sins. We can be washed and made as clean as if we had never sinned at all. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Paul described the horrible sins one can get into and the fact that if we continue in them we cannot inherit the kingdom of God. He listed: "*Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers,*

effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers." He then said, *"And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord and in the Spirit of our God."* No matter how dirty and filthy we have become in sin, we can be washed through the blood of Christ and have a new start. By such a washing we can become justified in the Lord's sight and set apart for the greatest service of all.

It is this washing which sets us apart as the church. In Ephesians 5:25-28 Paul was describing the church when he said, *"Husbands love your wives as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, that He might present it unto Himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."* The church is not innately good. It has been cleansed. It is made up of those who have been dirty in sin, but have been cleansed. It is the washing which will make it possible for God to have us presented as a glorious, spotless, wrinkleless church. This washing is done in water.

In Titus 3:5 Paul explained the washing further. He said, *"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."*

The strange thing about this washing is that it doesn't have anything to do with cleansing the outside, but the inside. In 1 Peter 3:20,21 the Bible says, *"Who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."*

The washing is done in water at the time of baptism, but the cleansing is done to the heart or conscience by the blood of Christ. Remember Revelation 7:14, *"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb."*

The question isn't, Have you ever gotten dirty on the inside? It is, Have you been washed? And, Are you living daily as one who has been washed, remaining in the cleansing flow of the blood of Christ? Truly the church is made up of those who have gone far down into sin but were washed and made clean in Christ's blood.

But to have the cleansing, one must be washed in the water by the Word, or have the washing of regeneration as described in John 3:3-8.

Have you been washed?

“AND GOD...”

PETER MOSTERT

“In the beginning,” the Bible says, *“God created the heavens and the earth.”* Since no one, except God, was at the creation, Christians believe this to be so by faith in what the Bible says. There are many people, however, who believe that the earth and everything in it came about by chance.

If life just happened, and we live and die without purpose, existence would be miserable. It is both logical and reassuring to believe in God, and also in His Word! *The Oxford Dictionary* says that “God is a being worshiped as having power over nature and control over human affairs.” A Bible encyclopedia says that “God is intelligent, eternal, true, good, pure, just, merciful, most free and of infinite power and wisdom.” Believing in God makes a whole lot of sense.

A second consideration is a belief that the Bible alone is God’s Word for people today. Many books have been written by religious people claiming that God has given them a special message. The Bible says, however, to *“Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 3). Peter adds, *“His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us”* (2 Peter 1:3). To this Paul says, *“Continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of... all scripture is inspired of God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that every man may be adequate, equipped for every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:14-16).

There are many appeals to entice a person away from a belief in God and the Bible. These attractions may look inviting, but are actually “clouds without water.” They make promises that cannot be filled. Only God, who is above all creation, can give a promise and keep it—His Word alone is faithful and true.
