

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

“For What Is Your Life?”

SHAKESPEARE WROTE, “Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more.” Despite the propensity of men to discourse on this subject, however, nothing ever written surpasses in beauty and power the words penned in the Bible: “For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” (James 4:14). Man can fix the hour and minute of the sun’s rising and setting tomorrow, but none of us can fix the certain time of a vapor’s being scattered; such is man’s life, it appears but for a little time, and then vanishes away. It vanishes as to this world, but there is a life that will continue in the other world; and, since this life is so uncertain, it concerns us all to prepare and lay up in store for that to come. However, almost all people go about with the evident expectation of continued living in this world, without realizing that the human life is like a vapor that appears for a while and then vanishes away. For us, another year has gone, and that is another reminder of just how fleeting our time on earth is.



While man’s physical life is uncertain (1 Peter 1:24-25), his spiritual life is certain. Having been created in the image and after the likeness of God, his Creator, (Genesis 1:26, 27), man is destined to live forever like his Maker. Yet, the irony is man is trying to save

the one he cannot save, and in the process is losing the other which he must save by following God's Way. (John 14:6). The need for preparation for the life to come is of no importance to earthly and materialistic man. Nonetheless, compare to eternity, we are here on this earth for a precious few moments. When Christ was on earth, He taught, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." (Luke 12:15). The material things of this life are not really as important as eternity where every person must enter and live forever after the life of this earth. (Matthew 25:46). So, "What is your life?" Is it focused on the things of the world? Or on things heavenly in preparation for eternity? Wasted years of seeking for earthly and temporal things, wasted opportunities of choosing the physical over the spiritual characterize the majority of human existence. Listen to Jesus: "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The soul of man is the most precious and valuable commodity on earth. There is nothing that man himself can do or give to save his soul from the wages of sin. "For the wages of sin is death," and, "All have sinned" but the good news of God for all is, "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23; 3:23). The sweetest message of the Bible is: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." (Romans 5: 6-8). "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21). All of this shows how much God cares for us, because He loves us.

Man's life in this world is uncertain, but eternity is sure and certain. How much more time on earth do I have? I don't know. Do you? Why not accept God's gift of eternal life in heaven, by believing in His Son and obeying His command, (Mark 16:16), and living thereafter in Him a faithful life until death, (Revelation 2:10), while there is still time and opportunity? **Wishing all readers of The Bible Teacher a very happy new year 2017.**

IT'S EASIER TO BE A CHRISTIAN THAN NOT TO BE ONE

J. C. CHOATE

WE OFTEN HEAR *HOW hard it is to be a Christian*. One must give up and refrain from so many things. Because of our strict way of life, we lose friends and we are often criticized.

Even our children are shunned and laughed at, causing them to have complexes. Some will even say that we are very limited in the religious world since we cannot fellowship those of other beliefs. And on and on the negatives go. Why? Because we are Christians and we are trying to live the Christian life, which Jesus Himself said is a strait and narrow way (Matthew 7:13,14).

There are those who quickly point to Bible characters, both in the Old Testament (Hebrews 11) and in the New Testament (Read Revelation), to show how much God's people suffered during those times. Even Christ was rejected and crucified, and all of the Apostles, except for John, died for their faith. Then look at the Dark Ages and all who lost their lives because of their faith in Christ. The conclusion would be that if those horrible things could happen in the past, they can happen again in the future—and they do happen even today in a limited way.

Believers in Christ, then, can paint a very negative picture of the cost of Christianity.

Of course the color of the picture all depends on where one places his emphasis, whether he has genuinely repented of sin and left the ways of the world (Luke 13:3; 1 John 2:15-17), or if he is still trying to hang on to that old way of life.

The majority in the world are deeply involved in sin: adultery, immorality, indecency, drinking, dancing, deceit, abusive behavior, cursing, lying, stealing, gambling, being enemies of God and of mankind, and even enemies of themselves. Now what is so good—so easy—about that way of living? Is that life of sin something which brings lasting joy and pleasure, something that would benefit us, something that we could look forward to, that we could recommend to our friends, and encourage our family members to indulge in? Is the pleasure of drinking oneself sick worth the “hangover” the next day, or cirrhosis of the liver? or is the “fun” of immorality worth dying



with syphilis or AIDS? or are the “thrills” of any of the other sins actually worth the consequences—bankruptcy, broken homes, mental illness, loss of trust, loss of family and health and security?

Or maybe, out there in the world, we were actually *good moral people* and did not have such a wicked life to turn away from. Many would fall into this category. But we were still lost and enemies of God. We were still sinners, without hope or help in this world or the world to come. Did that life bring pleasure? Most serious-minded people would realize and admit that sin, in every form and to every degree, is destructive to all that it touches.

Now, while we were in darkness, in sin, lost, and unprepared to meet God, we came across the truth in one way or the other. We learned of Jesus and of the sacrifice He made on our behalf (Romans 5:8). We learned that He could save us from our sin through our obedience to His will, that He could make us sons and daughters in His family, the church, and give us the opportunity to live a good life in this world, with the hope of eternal life in the world to come.

So, we became Christians, freed from all of our sins, and born into the Christian life. Who would want to go back to those old ways, to live in sin, to be lost, and without hope? Who would long for such shameful sins again? Who would feel that he is being denied anything truly worthwhile?

Surely no genuine child of God would think that way. Rather, we rejoice that we no longer have the weight of sin on us, that we have been made free, that now we are with the Lord and that we have all of His blessings.

The younger an accountable being is when he obeys God, the easier it should naturally be to be a Christian. He has not had time to develop many bad habits to have to break, or to get so deep into sin that everything about his way of life has to change. He is therefore in position to more easily turn away from whatever wrong he is doing.

And the longer he continues the Christian walk, the easier it should be to be a Christian. As he regularly worships, surrounding himself with good company, and engaging in wholesome activities, his very way of life will be a shield from many temptations that destroy people out in the world.

Growing in “the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), the Christian will find it much easier to tell the truth than to lie, bad language will be repulsive to him, he will have no longing for strong drink, and immoral practices will have no appeal. The evils and troubles of the world

will have lost their strength to ensnare him, because they will have become abhorrent to his very nature.

On the spiritual side, he doesn't have to debate with himself and with others every Sunday about whether or not he will go to worship, how much he will contribute of his income, how involved he will be in the Lord's work, etc. All of those decisions were made when he was baptized, so he continues naturally and normally in his Christian life and growth, even as he does with his physical habits of eating regular meals, of getting his sleep each night, of earning his living, of being responsible for his family, and with the many other things in his life that are good and wholesome.

One may have a more difficult time when he obeys the Lord at an older age, due to bad habits already strongly formed, but he should remember that the Lord will be with him, and that He will not allow him to be tempted beyond what he is able to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 2:18). With the Lord all things are possible (Matthew 19:26). Oh, yes! *at any age*, living the Christian life can grow to be the easiest way to get along in this old world! The Lord has not asked us to do something we cannot do.

Are you a Christian? If not, you don't know what you are missing! **It is so much easier to be a Christian than not to be one.** And for sure, there are many more blessings that come to the Christian in this world, and in the world to come, than to those who do not belong to the Lord.

Really, there is no comparison!

Who Is Jesus?

BOBBY WHEAT

FOR ALMOST TWO THOUSAND years, people have been asking the question, "Who is Jesus?" Matthew tells us that "*when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?'*" (Matthew 21:10). Once Jesus was with His disciples in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. They were caught in a terrible storm, in danger of being capsized, and Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves, and the storm stopped. Those men asked the question, "*Who is this?'*" They had seen that "*even the wind and the waves obey him!'*" (Mark 4:41).

So, who is Jesus? Let us attempt to find an answer from the Bible about this very important person.

Jesus Is The Son Of God

John begins his account of Jesus' life with an affirmation that Jesus is none other than God Himself. He tells us in John 1:1, *"In the beginning was the Word."* This "Word" is Jesus (see verses 14 and 18), and He was not only *with* God in the beginning, but also *"the Word was God"* (John 1:2).

John also tells us that he wrote down information about Jesus' miraculous signs so that those who read his book *"may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God"* (John 20:30,31). Indeed, the testimony of those miracles is overwhelming. John tells of Jesus raising the dead, casting out demons, healing blind and lame people, walking on the water, and more.

Further testimony to the deity of Jesus comes from John the Baptist. He said of Jesus, *"I have seen and testify that this is the Son of God"* (John 1:34). He had seen the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus in the form of a dove at His baptism, and he had heard the voice from heaven proclaim, *"You are my Son"* (Mark 1:9-11).

Finally, as we have seen from Mark 1:9-11, God Himself testifies to the deity of Jesus. Thus, Scripture clearly shows us that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus Is Our Ransom

John tells us something of the scene he saw in heaven. *"And they sang a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation'"* (Revelation 5:9). Jesus, by shedding His blood on the cross, purchased men from sin.

Jesus Himself told His disciples that His purpose in coming to earth was to be an atoning sacrifice. He said, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45). When Jesus died on the cross, He became a ransom, using His own life to pay for ours.

Jesus Is Our Judge

The fact that Jesus died for us also brings a serious responsibility to each of us. We no longer belong to ourselves, but to Christ (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). If we belong to Him, then we must be willing to obey Him—not an unrealistic expectation from one who died for us and who will be our judge.

We learn in 2 Corinthians 5:10 that *"we must all appear before*

the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” What we do today will be recounted before Jesus, our Righteous Judge.

A standard has already been established by which we shall be judged—the Word of God, the Bible.

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:12,13).

The writer tells us two things here. First, the Word of God is an instrument of judgment. Second, it is Jesus who wields the instrument; He is the one “to whom we must give account.” This picture of Jesus as judge is reinforced by John’s description in Revelation 1:16, where he tells us that Jesus has a sharp, double-edged sword coming out of His mouth. It is the sword of judgment; it is the Word of God.

Obviously, the New Testament has much more to say about Jesus than just these three points. A person cannot, however, understand more about Jesus if he is not convinced of the truth of these three statements. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is the one who paid for our sins. Jesus will be our judge.

“Who is Jesus?” If that is your question, an answer has been given. Search the Bible for yourself and examine the truth it reveals about Jesus. Then answer this question —“Do you *know* Jesus?”

HAPPINESS

SHAN JACKSON

WHEN WINSTON CHURCHILL ASSUMED the office of Prime Minister of England on May 10th, 1940, he began his acceptance speech with these words: “I feel I am walking with destiny, and all of my past life has been a preparation for this hour and this trial.” There is much truth in that statement for Christians as well. This earth that we call home is not our home at all. This planet we call earth is not home; it is simply a place of preparation, a temporary residence. As the songwriter says,

"This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through.
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door.
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore."

Or, as Paul said it, "*We are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 5:6).

I want to call your attention to one of the most famous proverbs ever penned by the "wise man." Solomon said, "*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine*" (Proverbs 17:22). Happiness is, or should be, a common thing in the life of a Christian. Happiness is a trait that should be an everyday friend to every one of us. "Happiness," Solomon says, "is like medicine." Happiness to our heart is like medicine to our body. Perhaps he learned this truth, not only from God, but also from his physical father. David said, "*Happy is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight (that which makes him happy) is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night*" (Psalm 1:1,2). Here the Psalmist is saying that happiness is a knowledge of God and God's will.

And, as much as anything else, happiness depends on attitude. Jesus often spoke about attitude. He said, "*These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace*" (John 16:33). Then He added, "*Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*" For some, happiness is an elusive pot of gold at the end of some unfound rainbow, ever searching, never finding. But for those who understand God's divine purpose, it's as easy as 1, 2, 3. (1) God wants us to be happy. (2) God will help us to be happy. (3) Let's be happy.

4 Kinds of Worship Mentioned in the New Testament

KEN TYLER

1. Vain Worship

JESUS SAID IN REFERENCE to the scribes and Pharisees of His day, "*But in **vain they do worship me**, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*" (Matthew 15:9). Notice carefully that Jesus described the worship of these people as being "*in vain.*" The reason

He gave for their worship being in vain was that they were *“teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”* Today most people say, “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere.” If this were true there would be no such thing as the commandments of men. We must realize that if we teach the commandments of men our worship will be in vain just like the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day.

2. Ignorant Worship

Listen carefully to these words of Paul as he preached in Athens, Greece, *“... Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you”* (Acts 17:22,23). In verse 30 of this chapter Paul called upon the people of Athens to repent of their **ignorant worship**. Today many gods are being worshiped in this world, but I hope we know there is only one God. Jesus told Satan in Matthew 4:10, *“... Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”*

3. Will Worship

Paul asked in Colossians 2:20-23, *“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.”* Paul in this passage is dealing with false teachers who were placing restrictions on these brethren that are not found in the New Testament. He, like Jesus, referred to *“the commandments and doctrines of men.”* **Will worship** simply means what I want instead of what God wants. Unfortunately, a lot of people have inserted into various worship services what they want instead of what God commands. Though their error may be unintentional, the result is the same—commandments and doctrines of men.

4. True Worship

Jesus said in John 4:23,24, *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in*

truth.” Notice carefully that Jesus said our worship must be “*in spirit* (heart) *and in truth*” (according to God’s Word, John 17:17). Vain worship, ignorant worship, or will worship will not do. Our worship must be “*in spirit and in truth.*” Then, and only then, will we be true worshippers.

True worship on Sunday, the first day of the week, consists of **partaking of the Lord’s Supper** (Matthew 26:26-29; Acts 20:7; Acts 2:42) **preaching** (Acts 20:7), **praying** (1 Thessalonians 5:17), **giving** (1 Corinthians 16:1,2), and **singing** (1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19). We must realize this is the only worship acceptable to God.

It is my prayer that this article will help you better understand acceptable worship. Remember, our worship must be “*in spirit and in truth.*” This is what the church of Christ is endeavoring to do. We plead with people to go back to the New Testament and believe and practice only what is written there, only those things which were believed and practiced by Christians of the first century. Why not visit with the local congregation in your community and arrange for a personal Bible study to examine these truths for yourself?

WORSHIP IS INSIDE OUT

JIMMY JIVIDEN

DO RELIGIOUS RITUALS SEEM COLD? Do sacred ceremonies seem meaningless? Is worship impersonal, merely an exercise in demanded duty? Do worship periods make you feel as if you are an audience watching a professional performance?

If you answered “yes” to any of the above, then read on.

The Bible teaches that worship is a spiritual fellowship with God. It is not emotional excitement, magic rituals, or holy words, but submission of our own will to the will of God.

This submission involves the inner man—his mind to reason, his heart to feel, and his spirit to will. If you do not understand the words of worship, if what you say and do in worship is not from your heart, and if your will is only passively involved, then worship cannot take place. The Bible teaches that worship must be “with the spirit” and “with the mind” (1 Corinthians 14:15). Worship must be more than watching a performance.

This submission involves following the will of God revealed in the Bible. There can be no substitutions of human innovations or neglect of what God has revealed. Good intentions do not count. If they did, every man could make his own idol and worship his own way. The true God is worshipped "in truth" (John 4:24).

Worship is a deep spiritual expression of a grateful heart.

Worship is a rational understanding of what is thought, said, and done in the worship experience.

Worship is a humble submission to God, approaching Him as He has directed in His Word.

The Bible teaches that true worship comes from the heart and involves both the spirit and the understanding of the worshipper. More is involved than going through traditional rituals and the stimulation of emotional response.

"FOR EXAMPLE"

WINFRED CLARK

YOU HAVE HEARD SPEAKERS use this term time and again. Such is done by those who seek to illustrate a point or proposition. But you will also find this method used by inspired men time after time. "For example," there is a discussion by James on the subject of patience. He tells his readers, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." Here is the command to be patient but he does not leave it at that point. Notice: "Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" (James 5:7). He used an example to emphasize the truth taught.

We know there are occasions when people will refer to something as an example when such is not the case. How many times have you heard someone refer to the thief on the cross beside Jesus and then say that such is an example of conversion under the gospel? That man cannot be used as example for such. However, he could be used as an example of one who was able to see the truth about Christ even while others would put him to death.

"For Example" Of Patience:

We are not left in doubt concerning this very important matter. James said, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of

patience" (James 5:10). He then goes on to speak of the patience of Job (James 5:11). So, when we come to study the subject of patience, we have no doubt about its meaning. We are able to see it in the lives of the prophets who faced difficulty. Surely we find it in the life of Jeremiah. He is one who prophesied for years and years without any seeming success. But he did not falter from the task that was before him. Think of all the trials and difficulties of Job, yet he served God. He did not give up. These are great examples. They should be of great help to all of us. These are examples that will help us to be sure that what we call patience is really patience.

"For Example" Of Conviction:

The writer of the Hebrew letter saw the great need for conviction. Only those who had strong convictions would be able to withstand the onslaught against their faith. Yes, some have taken "joyfully the spoiling of their goods" (Hebrews 10:34). But there were others whose hands were hanging down and their knees had become weak (Hebrews 12:12). There were those who faced the possibility of failing the grace of God (Hebrews 12:15). So what is the word of exhortation to these? Listen carefully to what he has to say: "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Hebrews 13:12-13). You know the price our Lord had to pay for his convictions. You know what it cost him to face those who did not agree with him. You know that Jesus would not sacrifice his convictions. We are therefore told to imitate his example by doing the same thing in principle. We cannot afford to allow our convictions to waver. If he was willing to die on the cross because of his convictions, then surely we are not paying too high a price by suffering the kind of persecution we might have to face. He faced the "contradiction of sinners against himself" (Hebrews 12:3). But even that did not cause him to alter his convictions about the truth of God for one moment. You still find him hanging on the cross and making a statement so that the scriptures might be fulfilled (John 19:28).

"For Example" Of Holiness:

In a world that has lost its way and is wallowing in the mire of sin, there is surely the need for an example of holiness and purity. There can be no doubt at all in the mind of the honest student of the Bible that God has set before us the example of holiness. Listen:

“Because it is written, Be ye holy for I am holy” (I Peter 1:16). The immediate context of this is found in verse 15 of the same chapter. Notice, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (I Peter 1:15). You will see that we have set before us the example of holiness. God is holy and pure. He is the supreme example and we are thus left without excuse.

What would following this example of holiness do for this world in which we live? It would surely eliminate the conflicts that are so rampant all around us. We have this within families, and between husbands and wives.

“For Example” Of Love:

There are numerous passages that tell us to love one another, and then there is the phrase “as I have loved you.” Christ or God never asked us to do anything that they were not willing to do themselves. Notice, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another: as I have loved you” (John 13:34). Jesus knew that he was dealing with a difficult topic among those men. There had been some quarrels among them as to who would be the greatest and that could surely be a test of their love for one another. They had been together for about three years and they had come to know many things about one another. They were aware of the weaknesses and strengths of one another. They knew the shortcomings. But in spite of that, our Lord told them that they were to love one another. But he did not just leave it at that point. He said, “as I have loved you.” That is the example that they were to follow. They could not say that it could not be done, for Jesus told them that he loved all of them. So, in spite of the shortcomings and weaknesses, he still loved them.

There is another side to this matter also. He loved them and he knew more about them than they knew about one another. He knew that Peter would deny him and that the rest of them would flee, with the exception of John. Yet, he still loved them. That is the example.

“For Example” Of Giving:

Paul said, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (II Corinthians 8:9). Do any of us have any doubts about what Jesus gave for our benefit? This verse tells us that he left heaven with all that it had to offer for our benefit. We know, though that much more than this was at stake. We know that he came and gave his life. He gave his all. He withheld nothing

that was needed for man's redemption. We are told that he moved from rich to poor for our benefit. Does that tell me anything about my giving? Does that give me an example that I should seek to imitate? How does what I give compare with the example that I have for giving? Remember that these are not given just to fill space in the Bible. They are there to help me to learn. I hope I may.

Finding Truth By Instinct

DAN JENKINS

THOUGH THE BOOK OF Jude is one of the shortest books in the Bible, it is filled with treasures. While Jude's first intent was to write about the common salvation, the entrance of false teachers among the church forced him to modify his epistle. His descriptions of such men help us understand why many do not find the truth.

False teachers do not understand the source of truth. Jude says, "But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves" (Jude 10). The New American Standard Version translates this more graphically. "But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, as unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed." Truth has always been objective, it cannot be known subjectively. It comes from revelation, not intuition. Yet the false teachers of the first century thought they could find truth by following their instinct.

Paul shows that without revelation man cannot know truth. He contrasts knowledge of God's will by inspiration with that of "truth" which one might claim to get by natural means. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:14).

In our day two kinds of individuals seek God, but they are vastly different. Both have a Bible in their hands, but their hearts are not the same. One comes to the Bible seeking to make his own will subject to the will of God. The other comes seeking to make God's will subject to his. One comes seeking to discover only what God says. The other comes seeking to discover how he can make what God says, mean what he wants God to say. One comes willing to accept the results of God's teachings, the other only to accept it if

it seems right to him. One discusses truth by saying, "I think ... I don't see how God could... It just doesn't seem right to me ... Many scholars say ..." Are you living by inspiration, or by instinct? It makes a difference!

The Answer To Our Soul's Needs Are The Things Of God

ELWOOD HOLT

WE SHOULD RISE UP from our beds with God uppermost in our hearts. We should take Him with us as we go to our respective jobs. I verily believe that the Lord will bless those who put their trust in Him. The Bible teaches us that he will, and by faith we are to do our part, then trust in Him for the promises.

A Sunday-school teacher, after telling the story of the rich man and Lazarus to a class of boys, asked this question, "Boys, which would you rather be, the rich man or Lazarus?" One boy promptly replied, "I would be the rich man while I live, and Lazarus when I die." This, my friends, is the choice that millions make, or think they can make, but nothing could be more impossible. We cannot have the things of this world while we live and the things of God when we die. Oh, I do not mean that we cannot enjoy this world. We can. It is a beautiful world and we all love it. We love the clouds, the breezes, the green meadows, the hills, the lakes, we love the birds, our friends. There are places we like to go and things we like to do and the Bible does not teach that we have to give up all these in order to serve our God.

When John says, "Love not the world," (I John 2:15) he does not mean the world I have just described. He means the sinful world. Of course there are places and things to which I cannot go or do, but the psalmist exclaimed once, "No good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly." I believe this with all of my heart. God will not take the good things of this life from us. He made them for us. He wants us to enjoy them. But, there are things that people claim they enjoy that God forbids. Really, they do not enjoy them. They think they do, but when the later years come they find out that they ate the husk which the swine refused when they could have been feasting all the while on the good grain supplied by the Father.

There are too many who want the sinful things of this life while they live, then they want the divine approbation of the loving Father when they die. It just cannot be. Heaven is a place that we will enjoy only if we prepare for it.

There is poem entitled: "Homesick in Heaven." People who are not prepared for that wonderful land would be homesick if they were to go there. They would not be prepared for it. They would not enjoy it. A person cannot live for the devil all his life, and then suddenly accept everything of the opposite nature and be happy and content with it. No, if we enjoy the Glory Land, it will be because we are prepared for it. Can you sing, "I'll be no stranger there?" Unless you can, I fear you will not be there. We will not be strangers if we are prepared to stand before God. Are you?

We cannot live like the rich man in this life and enjoy the fellowship which Lazarus enjoyed when he died. You can read of these characters in Luke 16. Check the story before you forget it. One had everything in life but nothing in death. The other had nothing in life but everything in death. The rich man had his friends, his banquets, his parties, and his power in this life. He had nothing when he died. The beggar had not a friend, save the dogs that licked his sores, and no food sufficient for his satisfaction, for he cried for the crumbs from the rich man's table. But, in death which was a blessed relief, he had the joys that are unspeakable. Which of the two do you prefer to be?

The rich can be saved only if they trust in God and not in their riches. Then they are rich in the true riches, not in perishable ones. We must live here just like we expect to live in heaven. This is the proving ground. How many of us will prove our worth?

The ornaments of this world cannot warm us when we are cold. The answer to our soul's needs is found in the things of God. Have you tried them?

It is wonderful to live for the Lord. It is more wonderful to die in Him!

A Root Out of a Dry Ground

RONNIE MCABEE

SEVEN CENTURIES BEFORE JESUS ever began to crawl as a tiny baby upon this earth, the Messianic Prophet foretold of Him as

a “tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground” (Isaiah 53:2). A tender plant is not welcomed and accepted into harsh environments. A root is not supposed to survive in a dry ground.

As a newborn, the Tender Plant was laid down into a dirty feed trough just outside of an inn because all of the rooms were full (Luke 2:7)—and He lived. The Root out of a dry ground later found Himself in the arms of His parents, who were fleeing to Egypt to avoid His being killed by Herod (Matthew 2:13-15)—and He lived. As He traveled down a dusty road one day, He turned to someone and mentioned that He had no place to lay His head (Luke 9:58)—and He lived. His own brothers rejected Him and did not believe in Him (John 7:5)—and He lived. After returning to His hometown of Nazareth, the people that He grew up with led Him to the brow of a hill to throw Him down over the cliff (Luke 4:28-30)—and the Root out of a dry ground lived. Many of His disciples, after murmuring at His teachings, went back and walked with Him no more (John 6:60-66)—and He lived. A harsh environment of Jews took up stones to kill the Tender Plant (John 10:31)—and He lived.

Day after day and night after night the rejections, assaults, and conflicts continued. While He opened the ears of those who could not hear, many continued to close their ears to His teachings—and He lived. After the Root out of a dry ground opened the eyes of those who could not see, many continued to close their eyes to see His truth—and He lived.

Jesus was not the king that they had envisioned and desired. He did not meet their standards and did not fit the appearance of a king in their minds. We are reminded that He had “no form nor comeliness” and when the people saw Him, there was “no beauty” that they “should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2)—and He lived.

He approached the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives with the remaining eleven apostles standing next to Him; but after His arrest, all the disciples forsook Him and fled (Matthew 26:56)—and He lived.

The Tender Plant was accused of speaking blasphemy and told that He was deserving of death. His enemies spit in His face, beat Him, and struck Him with the palms of their hands (Matthew 26:65-67)—and He lived. “The soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and

mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him” (Matthew 27:27-31).

Jesus was “despised and rejected of men” (Isaiah 53:3). “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). After thirty-three years, the Tender Plant died in that harsh environment. The Root out of a dry ground was “cut off out of the land of the living” (Isaiah 53:8). But after three days and three nights in the tomb, we can all say with gratitude in our hearts that He was raised from the dead and He lives.

- He suffered for us, and we need to praise Him.
- He endured the thorns on His head, and we need to be thankful for Him.
- He overcame the nails in His hands and the nail through His feet, and we need to honor Him.
- They beat Him and spit in His face, but we need to reverence Him.
- They struck Him on the head and mocked Him, but we need to respect Him.

Our sins have been washed away by His blood! “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

We need to love the Tender Plant, and cherish the Root out of a dry ground with all of our heart, soul, and mind.

THE MOST VALUABLE DISCOVERY

ALLAN ELDRIDGE

IN 1847, SIR JAMES SIMPSON of Edinburgh discovered the use of chloroform as an anesthetic in surgery. Some claim this to be the most significant discovery of modern medicine.

In his later years, Sir James was lecturing at Edinburgh University and a student asked, “What do you consider to be the most valuable discovery of your lifetime?”

He answered quickly, “My most valuable discovery was when I discovered myself a sinner and that Jesus Christ was my Savior.”

The book of Romans makes clear these two significant truths that Simpson articulated. The problem is sin. “For all have sinned,

and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). And the penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23).

Paul declares that the power of God unto salvation is the gospel of Jesus (Romans 1:16). In Christ we have the divine provision: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). The price that was paid? "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Romans 5:9).

Now what's the process by which we contact that blood? By placing our faith and trust in Jesus (Romans 5:1), confessing Christ (Romans 10:9-10), turning from our sins in repentance (Romans 2:4), and being buried with Christ in baptism (Romans 6:1-4). Then we are to dedicate the rest of our lives in service to Him (Romans 6:12-18; 12:1).

The most valuable discovery you and I can make is that we are sinners and that Christ desires to be our Savior.

THE FIFTH SPARROW

HOWELL FERGUSON

A YOUNG SPANISH BOY is Vigo who became a devout Christian was asked by an Englishman what had been the influence under which he acted. "It was all because of the odd sparrow," the boy replied.

"I do not understand," said the Englishman in surprise. "What odd sparrow?" "Well, Senor, it is this way," the boy said, "A gentleman gave me a Testament, and I read in one Gospel that two sparrows were sold for a farthing. And again in Luke, I saw, 'Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings...?' And I said to myself that Nuestro Senor Jesus Christ knew well our custom of selling birds. As you know, sir, we trap birds, and get one chico for two but for two chicos we throw in an extra sparrow. That extra sparrow is only a make-weight, and of no account at all.

"Now, I think to myself that I am so insignificant, so poor, and so small that no one would think of counting me. I'm like the fifth sparrow. And yet, oh marvelous, Nuestro Senor says, 'Not one of them is forgotten before God.' I have never heard anything like it, sir. No one but He could ever have thought of not forgetting me."

Everybody matters to God. The psalmist said concerning himself, "I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top" (Psalm

102:7). When a sparrow has lost its mate—an everyday occurrence—he will sit on the housetop alone, and lament over his bereavement. In addition, these birds are also snared and caught in great numbers, but since they are small and not much use for food, five sparrows may still be sold for two farthings (Luke 12:6), which was a better deal than two sparrows for one farthing (Matthew 10:29). And when you see their countless numbers, and how eager people are to destroy them as worthless nuisances, we can better appreciate Jesus' statement.

Surely, God will take care of us even if we are the fifth sparrow.

WHAT IS MAN?

BOB PRICHARD

AN ASTRONOMER ONCE REMARKED to Fulton J. Sheen, "To an astronomer, man is nothing but an infinitesimal dot in an infinite universe."

"An interesting point of view," Sheen responded, "but you seem to forget that your infinitesimal dot of a man is still the astronomer."

David reminds us of what man the astronomer sees when he looks into the skies. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Psalm 19:1-4).

In view of God's majesty, David marveled that the Creator of the universe would have so much concern for man. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet" (Psalm 8:3-6).

Isn't it mind-boggling to realize that God has not only entrusted man with a world to care for, but also sacrificed His Son for the sins of mankind? "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare

to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:6-10).

Are We "Redeeming the Time"

DILLARD THURMAN

TIME IS THE STUFF of which Life is made! The use of Time determines destiny for Eternity! Our eternal welfare hinges on our appreciation of Time. The Psalmist said, *"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."* (Psa. 118:24). Thus it was fitting for Paul to write: *"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil"* (Eph. 5:14-16). To "redeem the time" means "to buy back the opportunities!" Christians must constantly seek activities which promote the Cause of Christ. *"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"* (Gal. 6:9-10).

As we consider Time and the opportunities it affords, we recall the words of Heb. 9:27: *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."* Certainty of that judgment should urge us to more good works! Further, we are admonished, *"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."* (Col. 4:5). Why toward them that are without? Because Christians are the light of the world which is lost in spiritual darkness (Matt. 5:14-16).

Christ's Example in the Use of Time!

After washing the disciples feet, Jesus said, *"I have given you an example,"* (John 13:15); and Peter said of Him that He left us an example, that we should follow in His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). So, let us look to the example He left us. When He was twelve years of age, He was taken to Jerusalem, and was found by His parents. He asked them: *"How is it that ye sought me? know ye not that I must*

be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). In that account, you have an example of turning to the Lord's work at an early age. In His ministry He declared, *"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."* (John 5:17).

Jesus showed an urgency about doing the work of God, saying: *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."* (John 9:4). He was conscious of the value of Time! To explain His mission in the world, Jesus said, *"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."* (John 4:34). Jesus, even when His disciples tired and fell asleep, tirelessly carried on this work. He fully realized the magnitude of the task assigned Him, and was willing to expend His all to accomplish it! We are reminded by Paul on two occasions: *"But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing"* (2 Thes. 3:13). And again, *"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"* (Gal. 6:9). Let us look for opportunities to serve the Lord in well doing in properly using our Time!

Christians Are Made Stewards of Time!

We must be fully aware that we will have to answer for how we have used Time!, and its opportunities!

*"I have only just a minute;
Only sixty seconds in it!
Forced upon me, can't refuse it;
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it.
Just one tiny little minute,
But Eternity is in it!"*

Time moves inexorably onward, and none can stay its course, or reclaim it once it is gone. Only God can "turn back the clock," as He did with Hezekiah's sun dial, and this He did as a sign (Isa. 38:8)! No, man is not able to stop the flight of Time. Dryden said, "I never knew the old gentleman with the scythe and hour-glass to bring anything but grey hairs, thin cheeks, and loss of teeth." Being an Octogenarian, I'll have to go along with that! But I like Colton's words even better: "Time: that bleak and narrow isthmus between two eternities." As stated by John Foster, Time is the greatest of tyrants. As we go on towards age, he taxes our health, our limits, our limbs, our faculties, our strength, and our features."

As we get older, those men speak directly to our weaknesses and vulnerable spots!

"If you can fill each unforgiving minute

*With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the earth, and everything that's in it;
And what is more, you'll be a man, my son!"*

"Act, Act in the Living Present!"

But this is not the time for moping or day-dreaming. *"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."* (Psa. 90:12). Job said, *"If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."* (Job 14:14). These questions flood the minds of millions, and they wait! But surely their Time will expire, and the final answer will be given: *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."* (Heb. 9:27). But no case is hopeless; this is the time for resolute action!

God will still care for those who serve Him! *"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 Cor. 10:13). Surely now God's people can act with resolute courage, *"So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."* (Heb; 13:6). With confidence we can say, *"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."* (Rom. 13:11) Each birthday is another milestone on our way home if we journey with the Lord!

We Must Treasure the Time God Allows Us!

The Preacher spoke of Time: *"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted"* (Eccle. 3:1-8). Why not turn back and carefully read all eight verses? And as you read these verses, ask what Time means to you! *"Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him.... There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it"* (Eccle. 8:6,8).

Job lamented on the futility of life: *"When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return"* (Job 16:22). The Psalmist saw something more joyous and cheerful in life, saying: *"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he*

flourisheth For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psa. 103:15-18). The GRACE of God circumvents Time to bless God's servants! But not so for the proud and boastful: *"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that"* (Jas. 4:14-15). Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth, *"But this I say brethren, the time is short, it remaineth... they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away"* (1 Cor. 7:29,31). Our challenge is to use Time properly; not abuse it!

RECIPE FOR A YEAR

Take twelve month, first seeing they are free from old memories of bitterness, hate and jealousy. Cleanse them completely from clinging spite. Pick off all specks of littleness. In short have these twelve months as clean as when they first came from the storehouse of time. Cut these months into 30 or 31 equal parts. This batch will keep just one year. Do not make up the whole batch at one time. You can spoil the entire lot this way. Prepare just one part at a time as follows: Into each day put equal parts of faith, patience, work, hope and kindness, with a sprinkling of prayer, tolerance, and rest, to this add a teaspoonful of good spirits, fun and laughter, cook thoroughly in fervent heat of good living, garnish with a few smiles and a sprig of joy and serve it to your friends with unselfishness.—Selected