

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

God Has Not Revealed Any Plan Of Salvation For Little Children

THE PLAN OF SALVATION as revealed in the Bible is for penitent, those who can believe in Christ, repent of their sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of their sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). No one will be saved without personally obeying the commands of the Lord. Jesus taught, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," and "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:3, 5). The Lord has left little children outside of His plan of salvation, because little children have no sin in them to be saved from. On one occasion, when little children were brought to Christ by their parents that He might bless them and His disciples forbade them, Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the Kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:14). Since little children, as Christ taught, would enter God's kingdom, it follows then that they are without sin. Only the saved are promised the entrance into the kingdom of God. (Luke 13:23, 24; 2 Peter 1:10,11).

Some have wrongly imagined that babies are born with sin inherited from Adam, and since the Bible says, one must be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), they began to teach that infants should be baptized, because if any of them died in infancy



or childhood they would not enter heaven, since they have the inherited sin of Adam in them. But do you know what the Bible teaches? The God of the Bible says, "Behold all souls are Mine; the soul of the father, as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die." Further He said, "The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." (Ezekiel 18: 4, 20). Sin is not something that one inherits, but one commits sin personally by personal choice, as the Bible teaches, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed .Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin , when it is full grown, brings forth death. (James 1: 14, 15). Sin is committed by personal choice and not inherited from another.

It is sad to observe that millions of people today are blindly following a perverted way of the Lord, as they eagerly and religiously take their little children, so that these little babies should be sprinkled (baptized) in a religious ceremony. On the basis of what Christ said in Matthew 19:14 some have thought it teaches infant baptism and their membership in the church. They have imagined that there is an allusion there to infant baptism. The great danger in this teaching is that not only it is unscriptural, but those who have been sprinkled (baptized) in their infancy or childhood at the instance of their parents refuse to be baptize scripturally when they become penitent because they believe they had been baptized already and thus remain in a lost state. To baptize infants denies adults the right of baptism, which is necessary for every penitent individual to be saved, as Christ said. (Mark 16:16). If an infant is saved by baptism, such an individual is saved without believing in Christ, without repenting of sins, without confession of Christ. Because an infant can do none of these things. This would also be contrary to the statement of Christ that unless one is born again; born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:3,5). Speaking of little children in Matthew 19:14, Jesus was emphasizing upon the child-like innocent behavior. Neither the kingdom (church) as it now is, nor the kingdom as it will be, is composed of little children, but in both states of its existence it is composed of individuals with characters like theirs. As children here are made the models of those in the kingdom , it is quite clear that on account of their freedom from personal transgression, as they have no sin in them, they will be admitted unconditionally in the eternal kingdom of God.

FIRST PRINCIPLES

(No. 1)

J.C. CHOATE



THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE gospel need to be preached, and must be preached, but it is not necessary to preach them to the exclusion of all other Bible truths. Yet, this is done in congregation after the congregation and perhaps this is doing more harm than any other one thing in the church today.

How many times have you complained, or heard others complain, about the local preacher's sermons? Nine times out of ten such criticisms are based on fact that the same lessons have been given over and over so many times that everyone already knows them by memory.

In most cases the preacher is to be blamed for this. Perhaps he is young and hasn't had the opportunity to study, grow, and to have the experience to know what is most needed. He may be one who is so busy with other things, or too lazy to study, that he relies on old sermons that have often been preached. Even these may be partially identical except for the titles. Sometime a congregation changes preachers so often that the members end up hearing virtually the same line of sermons every year or so.

As long as a congregation is getting nothing but diet of first principles, it is going to be difficult for much growth of any kind to take place. A person who has been a member of the church for several years eventually gets tired of hearing sermons on baptism on Sunday morning, or constantly hearing the preacher condemn denominational error. Especially is this true when all of the adult audience are already Christians.

New borns need the milk of the word to begin with (1 Peter 2:2), but they shouldn't *need* milk all of their lives and neither should they be *fed* milk all of their lives. Rather, they need to be fed in such a way as to encourage spiritual growth. For this to take place they must gradually be transferred from a diet to a meat diet. With this kind of feeding or teaching, growth will follow, resulting in strong hard working Christians.

It is so sad that so many Christians have been literally starved to death spiritually because they were never given anything but first

principles. Also, worlds of congregations have been stunted and rendered worthless because of the same problem. Many unnecessary doctrinal problems have developed in the church because of a lack of adequate teaching beyond first principles. Why has this been allowed? Why haven't the preachers used better judgement than this? Why haven't the Elders guided their preachers in the kind of sermons they presented? With just a little more wisdom in the kind of lessons taught and a little more guidance from the Elders the story might be entirely different.

Let's be sure that every non-Christian is taught the gospel. Let's also be certain that every Christian is well grounded in the faith. But then Let's lead them on to higher ground. Let's help them to grow up in the Lord and to develop themselves so that they can be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. (2 Peter 3:18). Finally, let's remember that first principles are altogether necessary to salvation but at the time there is a lot more involved in knowing the scriptures than having a knowledge of the first principles of God's word. As Paul said: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not strong meat. For every one useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. *Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*" (Hebrews 5:12-14; 6:1,2).

THE "CANON" OF SACRED SCRIPTURE

WAYNE JACKSON

BIBLE SCHOLARS REFER TO THE "Canon" of the Scriptures. What is meant by that expression ? The term "canon" is an anglicized form of the Greek kanon. Originally, the word had to do with a straight rod or rule, to which a builder would compare his work for trueness.

Gradually, the term came to be employed figuratively of a “norm or standard.” in his letter to the Galatians, Paul referred to the “rule” (kanon) by which Christians are expected to live (6:16). Eventually, the expression came to signify that which has “passed the test.” Therefore, the word is applied to the books of the Bible, it denotes those documents which, over a period of time, have passed the test of critical examination, hence, warrant the designation “sacred scripture.” In his commentary on Matthew, Origen (c.A.D. 185-254), one of the Greek church fathers, alluded to the “canonized Scriptures” (sec.28). Today, the “Canon” refers to those 66 books which constitute the common Bible.

But this introduces several questions. Who determined which books were to go into the Bible? Exactly when did that occur? And what are the Apocryphal books

THE STANDARD OF DETERMINATION

The question? “Which books belong in the Bible?” was determined gradually and on the basis of evidence. By “gradually” we mean that there was not a definite historical date when a synod or council made determination “these are the true Biblical books!” Rather, over a period of years, by the application of reasonable tests, the documents truly inspired were separated from those works that are spurious, the evidence leading to this decision is classified as external and internal.

External evidence has to do with the testimony of those who had access to the documents originally. How did they view them, and why? Internal evidence relates to the nature of the material itself. Does it claim to be from God? Is it internally consistent? Does it harmonize with other documents that are perceived to be inspired? Is it characterized by a lofty tone, i.e., that “essence” which one would expect in a narrative that claims inspiration? Does it bear the marks of factual accuracy? These sorts of things, supplied by reasonable minds, ultimately separated the genuinely sacred books from those unworthy of that recognition.

OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

Jewish tradition traces the collection of the Old Testament books to the time of Ezra (mid-5th century B.C.). It may have been a while later before the entire “canon” was actually recognized. By the time Christ was born, there were two versions of the OT.

The Hebrew canon consisted of the 39 books that currently make up our Old Testament though in the Palestine version they

numbered only 24 (due to a different arrangement—some books being combined).

The Septuagint version (a Greek translation from the 3rd / 2nd centuries B.C.) contained various other documents which were “bound up with the regular 39 books of the Hebrew Bible (the number of these extra books varying in different editions.) While these additional books, called the Apocrypha, reflected some historical matters, they were not perceived as “inspired” by God, and, significantly, were never sanctioned by Christ or any New Testament writer. Some of them, though, are incorporated into Roman Catholic editions of the Bible. For a review of this, see our Web Site—www.christiancourier.com (Archives, September 21, 1999);

One of the most significant evidences for the sacred nature of the Old Testament books is the manner in which they are quoted, or alluded to, in the New Testaments, having the sanction of Christ and his sacred penmen.

According to one computation, the New Testament contains 433 direct quotations from the Old Testament. No less than 30 of the 39 books are definitely quoted, with numerous additional allusions. Moreover, it is not just the fact that the OT is quoted, it is the way in which it is quoted that is significant. The technical phrase, “it is written” (used of an inspired word cf. Thayer, 121) is employed in 73 NT passages. In some 21 NT passages, the OT Documents are referred to as “scripture” Quotations from at least 11 of the OT books are attributed to God or the Holy Spirit. For example, Peter, quoting from Psalm 69, says that “it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David” (Acts 1:16 ff). In some 46 NT passages, the names of 10 OT books (or authors) are mentioned. Again, let us emphasize that no Apocryphal book from the LXX is given endorsement, even though the NT writers were familiar with these books.

NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

The New Testament authors considered their writings to be as authoritative as those of the OT scriptures. For example, Paul quotes from the book of Deuteronomy (25:4), and the Gospel of Luke (10:7), and classifies both of these as “scripture” (I Tim. 5: 17). Peter places “all” of Paul’s “epistles” in the same category as “the other scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:16). The word “other” translates the Greek *loiapos* which denotes “the *rest of any number*” or *class* under consideration”; (Thayer, 382). Too, note how Peter puts the “apostles” in the same

category as the “holy prophets” of OT time (2 Pet. 3:2).

The ancient church was unanimous in its acceptance of most of the NT books. For a while there was some dispute over James, 2nd & 3rd John, Jude, Hebrews and Revelation. Too, during this time period (2nd/3rd centuries), other books, which had generated some interest (e.g.. the “Epistle of Barnabas: the “Shepherd of Hernias”) were being eliminated. By the 4th century, it was a decided issue that the currently accepted 27 books of our NT; and only these, are canonical.

It was not a matter of any official council “deciding” which books would be acknowledged as “inspired;” it was a matter of critically examining, sorting, sifting, and identifying what had become perfectly obvious.

The writings of the New Testament were so profusely quoted by the antenicene “fathers” (A.D. 325 and back), that it is said that if the whole NT were destroyed, it could be reproduced entirely from their citations-with the exception of about a dozen verses.

CONCLUSION

We may have every confidence, therefore, that the sixty-six books which compose our present Bible are the true embodiment of the Word of God.

IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES

DOYLE KEE

WHEN WE ARE IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES, we cannot at the same time be outside the Temple of God. When we are “in Christ” we cannot walk in the world. Either we are in the Kingdom of God or we are in the kingdom of darkness. We are either a child of God or a child of the devil. Holy Scripture does not speak of an intermediate relationship. Though the Lord does speak of one who is not far from the Kingdom, he cannot yet be declared “in” the Kingdom.

If one does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not, and cannot, belong to Him (Romans 8:9). We are either among the forgiven or among those who still carry the unmanageable burden of the guilt of their sins.

This sharp distinction of only two categories of spiritual location or relationship is not popular. Tolerance is the acceptable word. To

have such a black and white perception suggests a lack of love. It is considered a sectarian spirit. The “narrow” way of which Jesus spoke continues to elude many people in conception and reality. The debate of whom God will accept into the eternal holy sanctuary will continue. It is possible, though, to have peace and joy because we have personally terminated the discussion. Assurance comes from the historical fact that we have entered the presence of God through the blood of Jesus. Obedience to the gospel guarantees that we will never be separated from God’s presence. Scripture declares, though, that this will not be the case for many, for “those who do not know God, and [on] those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:7,8).

We will either be “in” or “out” of the Holy of Holies. Thanks be to God that we can be “in” through the door of His Son. Let us work to point those who are “out” toward the only sanctuary in which it is possible to share the eternal presence of our Beloved.

PREACHING THE WAY

E. CLAUDE GARDNER

AT LEAST SIX TIMES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS, Luke refers to Christianity as “*the way*.” When Paul described his religion he declared, “*But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers...*” (Acts 24:14). Luke also uses this expressive word “way” in Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 24:22.

A reading of these passages shows that four actions were expressed toward the way as follows: (1) membership in the way; (2) persecution of the way; (3) worship according to the way; (4) taught or preached the way. It is the purpose of this lesson to stress the necessity and importance of preaching the way.

WHAT IS *THE WAY*?

The way is the Christian system; it is *the way* of true worship; and it is *the way* of living. Adam Clarke comments on Acts 9:2 as follows, “... this religion ... *the way* of the Lord, implies the *whole* of worship due to him, and prescribed by himself: the *way* or path in which he wills men to walk, that they may get safely through life, and finally attain everlasting felicity. The Jewish writers designate the whole doctrine and practice of Christianity....”

Christianity is the way of life, the way of salvation, the way of service, and the way of hope. It is through the way we enjoy life here and eternal life in the world to come (see 1 Peter 3:10-12; John 10:10; Luke 19:10; 1 John 2:25).

Communism, socialism, and other ideologies are accepted by millions as ways of living, but the way of Christ is the way all men ought to go. Christianity should be viewed as that which governs and influences us in every facet of our existence. Christian principles should govern us in the home, in recreation, at work, in the church, and in society. Christianity must not be a form or ritual divorced from our everyday living.

WHAT IS PREACHING THE WAY?

When one preaches the way, he preaches Christ and the Gospel. Several expressions found in the Bible mean the same and indicate what we are bound to preach. When we preach the way:

1. We preach Christ. Philip preached Christ to the Samaritans and to the eunuch (Acts 8:5,12,35). Christ our salvation should be our theme, for He is the way (Acts 2:22; John 14:6). We must not preach ourselves, our opinions, doubts, personal desires, or hobbies (see 1 Corinthians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:5).

2. We preach the church. In Samaria Philip, who preached Jesus, is said to have preached the church or *"the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ"* (Acts 8:12). We cannot preach the way without declaring the nature and value of the New Testament church. Christ and the church are inseparables (see Ephesians 5:32; Acts 28:23,31).

3. We preach the Gospel. Jesus has commissioned us to *"preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15, see also 1 Corinthians 9:16). Paul was an educated man, yet he preached the Gospel (Galatians 1:11,12). It is our privilege to bless the world with *"the good news"* (2 Corinthians 4:7).

4. We preach the truth. "Truth," like "way," is a comprehensive word that conveys the whole of Christianity. We are to speak *"the truth in love"* (Ephesians 4:15). The truth makes us free (John 8:32; 1 Peter 1:22).

5. We preach the Word. We are commanded by Paul to preach the Word, and by Peter to speak as the oracles of God (2 Timothy 4:2; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 4:11). A command is not a request or a suggestion. Inspiration puts a limit on what we shall preach.

6. We preach the preaching of God. When Jehovah

commissioned the prophet Jonah to cry against wicked Nineveh, He charged him to *“preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee”* (Jonah 3:2). Whatever has come from God we must be careful to proclaim without addition or subtraction, and without fear or favor (Acts 20:26,27; Galatians 1:8,9; 2 John 9).

WHY SHOULD WE PREACH THE WAY?

We go forth under the banner of Jesus, the “captain” of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10), preaching to the world. We do this because we have already been saved through preaching (1 Corinthians 1:21). The Gospel believed and obeyed results in salvation (Mark 16:15,16). Paul wrote that the Gospel is *“the power of God unto salvation”* (Romans 1:16). It is powerful enough to reform lives, destroy sin, insure peace, save a city, and change the world.

The world is lost, and we should feel the weight of evangelizing the world (Romans 3:23; John 4:35).

“The Gospel to the whole world in our generation” is not an idle dream. Motivated by love, faith, and hope, we can accomplish what the Savior asked us to do. When Moses hesitated to lead Israel, God promised, *“Certainly I will be with thee”* (Exodus 3:12). Likewise, we feel our insufficiency and limitation of resources, but if we do our utmost to preach the Gospel to every creature, the Lord will be with us *“always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:20).

ADMONISH THOSE WHO ACCEPT THE WAY

In our efforts to induce sinful man to accept the way we should admonish him to continue his *“walk circumspectly”* (Ephesians 5:15). One should enter the way and remain in the way that *“leadeth unto life”* (Matthew 7:14). In our conduct we should be reminded that to be a Christian is to walk in the *“way of holiness”* (Isaiah 35:8). Also, in our walk we should constantly seek the *“old paths”* (Jeremiah 6:16).

When I follow the path of the Lord, where will I go? What way will I follow? It will be in the path of righteousness (Psalm 23:3); in the path of love (1 John 4:19); in the path of faith (Hebrews 11:6); and in the path of service (Matthew 23:11,12).

May we preach the way so effectively, fervently, and faithfully that the lost of the earth can be the redeemed of heaven. *“...Lead me in the way everlasting”* (Psalm 139:24).

Characteristics Of The Inspired Word

WILLIAM WOODSON

THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE VERSES concerning the nature and characteristics of the Word of God are: *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). As one considers his/her reading, understanding, appreciation, and submission to God's Word, a noting of these characteristics may be helpful. These are listed briefly.

1. Scripture is the **written** will of God. The very term Scripture derives from the idea of writing: hence, the written Word. Thus it is fixed, allows transmission from one time to another, and enables continued study for understanding and insight.

2. Scripture is **inspired of God**. What was written was the product of God's superintendence by the Holy Spirit, and it was/is His Word, not the word of man. We learn from and appreciate the greatness of Moses, David, Paul, Peter, etc., but, in fact, the words are the words of God by the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

3. Scripture is profitable for **doctrine**. The teaching one does in the spread of God's will, to convert the lost and edify the church, seeks to guide the reader and hearer in better understanding the meaning of God's will. This is the centre of the teaching and preaching God's people are to do.

4. Scripture is profitable for **reproof**. When mistakes are made concerning God's will, in doctrine and/or conduct, there is a need for firmness in admonition that correction is to be made. Concern and love are to be present; but genuine regard for God's truth and righteousness, when spurned by anyone, is to be made clear as well.

5. Scripture is profitable for **correction**. The guidance of Scripture shows how one is to return to and serve God. The prodigal is guided not only concerning how to return home, but also how to conduct his/her life upon that return.

6. Scripture is profitable for **instruction in righteousness**. A growing and maturing of life and love should characterize the child of God. This growth process is nurtured and guided by the truth of Scripture.

7. Scripture produces, when truly followed, the man of God **thoroughly furnished to every good work**. Scripture, while intended for intellectual grasp and appreciation in teaching and maturing, is not confined to intellectualism alone. There is the application of the Word in personal development, loyalty, service, and reverence for God and others. The equipping means for such a life of service is the Scripture truly understood and followed.

These verses provide a remarkable insight into the characteristics of the Word of God. It is well to consider such qualities of the Bible as we love, study, and follow it.

God's Forgiveness Is Wonderful!

BASIL OVERTON

GOD HAS GIVEN US ONE BOOK which we call the Bible. The word "Bible" is from the Greek word that means "book."

There is a sense in which we can say that the main theme of God's Book is human sin. Some may respond and say the main theme of the Bible is Christ our Redeemer. Then the proper question is: Redeemer from what? And the obvious answer is: our Redeemer from our sins!

In God's Book there is no one definition of sin that completely shows us the enormity of, and the awful nature of our sins in the sight of God. The best definition of sin in God's Book is the picture of sin's consequences that emerges from its pages!

Some of these consequences are as follows.

1. The consequences of the sin of Adam and Eve. These devastating consequences were announced to them very clearly by the Lord and are recorded in Genesis chapter 3. They included their having to leave the garden of Eden and all its splendor and blessings.

2. The picture includes the universal flood and all the destruction, devastation, and death wrought by it. God brought this awful deluge upon the earth because He "saw that the wickedness of man was great in all the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5.)

3. Human sin is the reason for the death of Jesus Christ. God overruled the greatest tragedy of history and made it to be the greatest blessing, when by the grace of God, Jesus Christ tasted

death or every lost sinner. (Hebrews 2:9.) Our sins are so bad that the only sacrifice for them that is sufficient is the sacrifice of the only perfect and sinless person who ever lived, Jesus of Nazareth!

4. The eternal consequences of sins not forgiven is awesome evidence of how bad sin is. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23.) That place of eternal death or separation from God, “where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44,46) will be the eternal dwelling place of those who refuse God’s forgiveness of their sins. Meditation on the eternal piercings of the undying worm should cause a sinner to accept God’s forgiveness upon His terms, for there are no other terms!

GOD FORGIVES TWO CLASSES OF SINNERS

1. God forgives those who are not Christians when they become Christians. They can become Christians by obeying the gospel. They can obey the gospel by believing the good news that Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary, that He is the Son of God, that He lived a perfect and sinless life, that He died for us, that He was buried and raised from the dead. Obeying the gospel also includes repenting of all sins, confessing the faith that Jesus is God’s Son, and then being baptized into Christ. (Romans 6:3.) Those who thus obey the gospel are forgiven by God by His mercy and grace!

Peter told the people on Pentecost in Jerusalem that their sins included their killing God’s Son. When they asked how they could be forgiven, he told them to repent and be baptized! (Acts 2:38.)

As man views it, Peter could have said, “You are too mean to be forgiven; you are doomed to go to hell.” Beloved, Acts 2:38 contains an enormous demonstration of God’s grace! “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.” (Acts 2:41.) They did not argue about baptism. Instead they were baptized to be saved by God’s abundant grace!

2. God also forgives those in the church, those who are His children, when they repent of their sins and ask for His forgiveness. After a man named Simon was baptized, he sinned. Peter did not tell him to repent and be baptized to be forgiven, but he told him to repent and pray for forgiveness! (Acts 8:18-22.)

Please read some more on the forgiveness of Christians in 1 John 1:7-10; 2:1-4.) Beloved, let us be aware of, and also very thankful for our Father’s forgiveness!

GOD FORGIVES ALL SINS WHEN WE MEET HIS CONDITIONS OF PARDON!

One sin can be greater in God's sight than other sins, according to Jesus in John 19:11, so there is no need to argue about that! Apparently, some people wonder if some sins are so bad that God will not forgive them.

When sinners meet God's conditions of pardon, He will forgive them no matter how bad their sins are! Those on Pentecost who had murdered God's Son got God's forgiveness when they were baptized for remission of their sins! If they were faithful to Jesus when they died, they will be with Jesus in heaven eternally! The grace of God is abundant indeed!

The following are some very bad sins, but God will forgive them if those guilty of them meet His conditions of pardon.

1. Homosexual practices are very sinful according to what God says in His Book, but if those who are guilty of this sin meet God's conditions of pardon He will forgive them. It is false science that says God made some to be homosexuals. He would not make people so that they cannot keep from being gay, and condemn them for being gay!

Recently, I heard Dr. James Dobson say that he knew of identical twins, and one was gay and the other one was not. He said this refutes the false claim that being homosexual is genetic! Dr. Dobson is an international authority on family and home.

Paul said some of the Christians in the Corinthian church had been gay, but they were washed in the blood of Christ and forgiven when they became Christians. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11.) They were no longer gay! This means homosexuals can quit being homosexuals!

2. God will forgive those who have abortions if they meet His conditions of pardon. If they are faithful to the Lord when they die, they will be in heaven eternally with their children that were aborted.

3. God will forgive one who is drunk and drives a car and hits and kills someone. I know of a case where a young man was driving while intoxicated and he hit a young man who was a Christian. After some time the parents of the young Christian forgave the one who had killed their son. They taught him the gospel and he became a Christian. Then they adopted him to be their son! If he is faithful to the Lord when he dies he will be in heaven eternally with all the redeemed, including the one he killed.

The Bible teaches that under the covenant of Christ when God

forgives, He does not remember the sins He has forgiven through the blood of Christ. Concerning those forgiven under that Covenant, the Bible says that God said, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (Hebrews 8:12.)

Praise God and thank Him for such mercy and grace!

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

JOHN R. VAUGHAN

RAYMOND HULL STATED, "I have noticed, with few exceptions, men bungle their affairs." He cited a three-quarter mile long highway bridge, which collapsed and fell into the sea because someone had botched the design of a supporting pier. He noted some town planners who developed a city on the flood plane of a great river, where it is certain to be periodically inundated.

We all remember the tragic rocket explosion that took the lives of Christy McAuliffe and several others because of a faulty O-Ring.

The best and wisest among us mess up. However, when God created man He did so flawlessly. No other machine can absorb the abuse pounded on the human body and continue to function without fail. But, if you are an adult, weighing 175 pounds, in 24 hours:

- Your heart beats 103,689 times.
- Your blood travels 168,000,000 miles.
- You breathe 23,040 times.
- You inhale 438 cubic feet of air.
- You eat 3.25 pounds of food.
- You drink 2.9 pounds of liquids.
- You lose in weight 7.8 pounds of waste.
- You perspire 1.43 pints.
- You give off 2.6 degrees Fahrenheit.
- You speak 4,800 words.
- You move 750 major muscles.
- Your nails grow .00046 of an inch.
- Your hair grows .017414 of an inch.
- You exercise 7,000 brain cells.

No wonder the Psalmist exclaimed, "*I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well*" (Psalm 139:14).

Of Judgment And Wisdom

JOE C. MAGEE

"SO IT WAS, WHEN THEY CAME, that he looked at Eliab and said, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him.' But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart'" (1 Samuel 16:6,7).

Here we see a milestone in the history of God's people. Against God's knowledge of what was best for them, they had insisted that they have a king, that they might be like the nations around them. Saul, whose stature and appearance fit the peoples' idea of kingliness, had proved to be a poor choice. Now, in the choosing of David, the judgment of the people was not considered. Divine intervention was to make its impression upon Israel.

It is good that our powers of discernment are not limited to first impressions. When our knowledge of a person is enriched by time and association, we often find that those first impressions were faulty. We should recognize that life is a series of judgments; and the ongoing exercise of such tends, by the very nature of experience, to develop within us wisdom which grows with age. Yet we will never reach the depth of discernment which God knows.

God's judgment does not graduate from the lesser to the greater, from the unseen to the seen. He sees all of man from the very start. He knows his character, his ambitions, his weaknesses, and his strengths. He does, however, allow the instrumentality of man's devices to bring about His purposes. The drastic contrast between King Saul, who *looked* like a king outwardly, and David, who had the *heart* of a true and godly king, is a case in point.

This very principle of God's superior judgment is paramount in Christ's coming to earth. Who among men would have ushered in the King of kings and the Lord of lords in such fashion? Who would have chosen the Majestic Monarch from among the lowly craftsmen of Nazareth? Surely we can see the parallel between the shepherd boy David and the Good Shepherd; and, seeing, submit to the wisdom of God.

Perhaps we can learn from this that God does not exalt men for their social station, but for their spiritual dependency. May we be reminded that the Lord's words, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit,"*

were not the moral platitudes of mere man. They were wisdom from above.

Paul and the “Unknown God”

DILLARD THURMAN

“AND PAUL STOOD IN THE MIDST of the Areopagus, and said, Ye men of Athens, in all things, I perceive that ye are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you. The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is he served by men’s hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man. The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:22-31).

When Paul entered into the idolatrous city of Athens, he was moved by the religious concepts of a people devoid of understanding as to the true nature of the God of the universe. In their city they had erected images of their gods in all the buildings, on pedestals and niches, on street corners and market places, and winged figures adorned every house on the street of Hermes. Then, lest they should have overlooked and thus offended some “god” unintentionally, they built another altar “to the Unknown God.” This gave Paul the introduction to his sermon on Mar’s Hill. He first accepted their altar of worship in order to declare unto them the true God, which to

them was “*unknown*.” In his sermon, you will find clear logic in developing a knowledge of God. From their “*Unknown God*,” Paul introduces to them God the Maker, Lord, Giver, Father, Man and Judge. Let us study his treatise.

THE UNKNOWN GOD

Here is presented the remotest concept of God. Every race and tongue entertains ideas of something greater than man behind the vast universe. But to man, God is unknown. Idolatry reigns supreme where the knowledge of the true God is not found. Man will find some object to whom he will give homage, whether it be the god of the Nile in Egypt, the god of the sun in southern Europe or the “great spirit” in American Indian lore. *“Howbeit at that time, not knowing God, ye were in bondage to them that by nature are no gods”* (Gal. 4:8). Ignorance of God leads only to idolatry.

But the Lord God can be known by all who seek Him (Acts 17:27). Paul also stated, *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, (even) his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things”* (Rom. 1:18-23). Here was a clear picture of Paul’s introduction to Athens: a city devoted to idols.

GOD, THE MAKER

Darkened minds often fail to see the works of God in the material universe. This was true with Athens. They had developed a pride in philosophy, but had failed to see the works of the one true God, rather than the abstractions of their mythology. Yet, as Paul said, they were without excuse. *“The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, And night unto night sheweth knowledge”* (Psa. 19:1-2).

After the puny voices of men have argued back to their fuzzy “first cause” in defense of their hypothesis as to how this vast universe appeared, God’s word says simply, *“In the beginning God*

created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). There can never be found a more reasonable nor logical explanation. Paul introduced God as "Maker." He was the Master Designer and Architect for limitless space and all its systems of stars and solar systems. Too, He made man in His own image, as Paul declares in Athens.

GOD, THE LORD

Since God was Maker of heaven and earth, and also made man, then man should accept Him as the Lord over all. Other deities exist as figments of imagination, and are the results of ignorant idolatry. The homage paid to Zeus, Athene, Mars, Jupiter, etc., should rightly be given to God the Lord! He declared, *"I am the Lord thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me"* (Ex. 20:2-3). Paul used Old Testament Scripture, declaring, *"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof"* (Psa. 24:1). King Nebuchadnezzar became puffed up with pride when God blessed him, but God deposed him and said, *"To the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men"* (Dan. 4:17). Paul did not want the Athenians to forget that there is one Lord!

GOD, THE GIVER

Paul revealed that the one true God was the giver of life, and breath and all things. This correlates well with James 1:17, where we are told that *"every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights."* God has given more to man than man has or will ever have. The whole creation is a gift from God. Paul wrote to Timothy to charge the rich that they put their trust in, *"The living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy"* (1 Tim. 6:17). Job had well learned this lesson, and with submission said, *"The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD"* (Job 1:21). Paul had labored much for the Lord, but then admitted, *"God giveth the increase"* (1 Cor. 3:7). Let us remember God is the Giver.

GOD, THE FATHER

The Fatherhood of God is an idea that is developed especially in the New Testament. Note: *"For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ"* (Gal. 3:26-27). Jesus taught the disciples to pray, *"Our Father, which art in heaven"* (Matt. 6:9). We read that Christ gave us *"power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name"* (John 1:12).

What an intimate relationship, that we can call upon God as our Father. Yet John wrote, *"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are"* (1 John 3:1-2). And to this Paul could add: *"And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father"* (Gal. 4:6). What an exalted relationship—children of God!

GOD, THE JUDGE

Paul also presented God as the final Judge over man. Although it is not a popular thought, all men must face His bar of judgment. The Wise Man declared, *"But know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment"* (Eccle. 11:9). Again, *"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil"* (Eccle. 12:14). The Israelites understood that God would judge His people.

It was, however, the New Testament that would reveal that God would judge through His Son, Jesus Christ. Paul showed this to the people in Athens (Acts 17:31). To the Romans he wrote of, *"the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ"* (Rom. 2:16). Still further he wrote them, *"For we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ... So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Rom. 14:10,12). Yet again, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (2 Cor. 5:10). God is Judge, but He will judge the world by His Son, Jesus Christ.

GOD, THE MAN

Another facet of God was introduced when Paul mentioned to the people of Athens that God had ordained a man as the Judge. Of course, he referred to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. But He was also the *"Son of man."* It was indeed revolutionary teaching in Athens, that God had sent His Son to be a propitiation for sins (Rom. 3:25). God became flesh in the birth of His Son: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made ... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth"* (John 1:1-3,14). That is why Jesus could say, *"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"* (John 14:9).

Paul presented Jesus in Athens as both God and man. But, above all, He presented him as the Christ, the Anointed One of God. In Hebrews, Jesus is presented as *“His Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”* (Heb. 1:2-3). In this book Christ, the Anointed, is presented as God’s ordained prophet, priest and king.

With a conclusion stating the resurrection, Paul ended his sermon in Athens. He had led them from *“the unknown God”* to God the Maker, the Father, the Lord, the Giver, the Judge and the Man. Thus, from the unknown God, Paul had preached Christ as the risen Lord. Even to now, we can well study this sermon to better understand both God and Christ.

Why Should We Study About Miraculous Spiritual Gifts?

MIKE BENSON

Question: “Why should we study 1 Corinthians 12-14 today? Since miraculous spiritual gifts are no longer available (1 Corinthians 13:10; Ephesians 4:11-13), how are these chapters applicable to the church in the 21st century?”

Answer: There is a number of reasons why we need to investigate these inspired chapters. **1.** To help us distinguish between the temporary and permanent. Many of our Pentecostal friends insist that miraculous gifts continue to be exercised today. While sincere in their convictions, they fail to recognize that the special “corroborating” measures (Hebrews 2:3,4) of the Spirit were intended to sustain the church only until such time as the written New Testament was completed. These gifts were never meant to be employed as an on-going or age-lasting means of producing faith.

2. To help reinforce the fact that miraculous gifts were actually present in the first-century. It is not uncommon to find those who deny the reality of the Holy Spirit’s work and power in Scripture. In his book *Deceptions and Myths of the Bible*, Lloyd Graham states: “It takes a lot of ignorance to believe this literally, yet, literally, millions

do. And then we wonder what's wrong with our world. What better world would you expect of such ignorance?" The Humanist Manifesto II [Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1973, p. 16] claims to "find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of the supernatural." Thomas Jefferson, onetime president of the United States, scissored from his Bible all references to the miraculous.

David Hume, the nineteenth-century English skeptic, categorically denied the possibility of all such wonders and signs. William Barclay, famous Church of Scotland scholar and author often attempted to "explain away" supernatural phenomena recorded in Scripture.

3. To help us differentiate between genuine miraculous gifts of the first-century and pseudo "miracles" of the present age. First-century supernatural endeavors were performed independent of any secondary causes. They were not the result of any natural phenomena. By contrast, modern-day "miracles" are fraudulent and devoid of any divine element. (Compare Matthew 24:24.) For instance, we need to study all the Scriptures, including those which deal with miraculous spiritual gifts. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17.)

As Christians, we must not only guard against all such forms of unbelief, but we must be ready to defend the integrity of the Word of God. (1 Peter 3:15; compare John 20:30-31.) To fail to study what the New Testament says about miraculous gifts is, in effect, to surrender one of the pillars of our faith to infidelity.

"...Peter Popoff, 'miracle-working' cleric of Upland, California. Popoff, who claimed the supernatural ability to give revealed information about people in his audiences (in conjunction with 'healing' them) was receiving such information through a tiny hearing aid, messages being transmitted by his wife from backstage. Prominent magician, James Randi, exposed the entire affair on nationwide T.V. Randi also demonstrated that Popoff was providing rented wheel-chairs for people who could actually walk, then, at his services, he was pronouncing them 'healed.'" [Wayne Jackson, "The Miracles of Christ vs. Modern Miracles," Reason & Revelation, February, 1990, Vol. X, No. 2, p. 11.] As people who wish to adhere to the Scriptures, we have an obligation to expose this kind of

duplicity and to show sincere seekers of truth the difference between the false pageantry of high-profile charlatans and that which was done by humble first-century devotees of Christ (1 John 4:1.)

“Charismatics try to identify ‘that which is perfect’ as Jesus, and draw an erroneous conclusion that miracles are to continue until the second advent of Christ. However, the language will not allow for such an interpretation. The word so translated is the Greek word ‘teleios’, meaning ‘complete, of full age, mature.’ It appears 19 times in 17 verses and never refers to Jesus Christ. In addition, the word is neuter in its gender; that is, it refers to neither male nor female, but to an object without gender, in this case the scriptures.”

[Todd Clippard, “Do Miracles Still Happen Today?”, Words of Truth, March 2001, p. 4.]

“In 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 nine spiritual gifts are mentioned, including prophecy, tongues, and knowledge (supernatural). In the next chapter, verse 8, the writer says, ‘...but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away.’ Paul maintains in this passage that miracles would be done away. In the statement to follow, verse 9 and 10, he tells us when this would happen: ‘For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.’ At the time Paul wrote the foregoing, the New Testament was in the process of being written. No one inspired man among the Christians to whom Paul is referring was endowed with all knowledge; but when the written New Testament (called by the apostle “that which is perfect” and designated in James 1:25 as ‘the perfect law of liberty’) was completed, then that which was in part (the various spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, including supernatural knowledge) was done away... In the concluding verse of 1 Corinthians 13 Paul says, ‘But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.’ After the nine spiritual gifts enumerated by the apostle were done away at the completion of the written New Testament, only faith, hope and love-were to abide, ‘These three.’ Were miracles to be perpetual during the New Testament dispensation, Paul would have said, ‘But now abideth...these twelve’ (the nine spiritual gifts plus faith, hope, and love.)” [James M. Tolle, “Spiritual Gifts,” Have Miracles Ceased?, p. 10.)

Have You Thought About Your Soul?

Have you ever stopped to wonder
What this life is all about?
Why you're here and where you're going,
When your lease on time runs out?
Maybe you've been far too busy
Trying hard to reach your goal;
Would you let me ask you kindly,
Have you thought about your soul?

You may reach the highest portals,
And your dreams may all come true;
Wealth and fame may be your portion,
And success may shine on you,
All your friends may sing your praises,
Not a care on you may roll;
What about the great tomorrow -
Have you thought about your soul?

Don't forget your days are numbered,
Though you may be ridin' high,
But like all of us poor mortals,
Someday you'll just up and die.
Your success and fame and glory
Won't be worth the bell they toll;
Let me ask you just one question,
Have you thought about your soul?

If you've never thought it over,
Spend a little time today,
There is nothing more important,
That will ever come your way
Than the joy of sins forgiven,
And to know you've been made whole,
In the name of Christ the Savior
Have you thought about your soul?

—Author unknown to the editor