

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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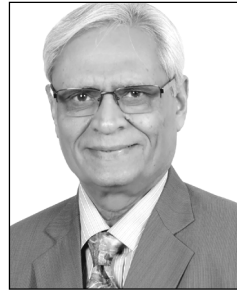
## *Editorial*

### **What Does the Bible Teach?**

#### *Jesus Christ Is The Author Of Salvation To All Those Who Obey Him*

IT IS SAID THAT, "The doctrine of faith, and faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." Many in the world believe that one is saved by faith alone, without any act of obedience. Most preachers teach that all one has to do to be saved by the blood of Christ is to accept Jesus as one's personal savior. Whereas the Bible teaches, Jesus

Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. To obey means, "to do what you are told or expected to do." Listen to the Bible, speaking about Christ, it says, "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." (Hebrews 5:8-9). Notice, He was a Son, the only begotten of the Father (John 1:18). One would have thought this might have exempted Him from obedience, but it did not. By His suffering He was made perfect, and became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. The salvation Christ accomplished for humanity by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8), is actually bestowed on none but on those who obey Christ, and not on those who merely believe in Christ and accept Him as their personal savior. It is not sufficient that one has some doctrinal knowledge of Christ, or that one make a profession of faith in Him, but to be saved one must hear what



He says and obey Him. Hasn't Christ said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved...." (Mark 16:16). Did Christ say, he who believes in Me and accepts Me as personal savior will be saved? No. Neither Christ nor His apostles taught such a thing anywhere in the Bible. Those who teach and believe and accept the doctrine of salvation by faith only will find themselves on the day of judgment in the company of those to whom Christ will say, "Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." (Matthew 7:23). "But why do you call Me Lord, Lord," asked Jesus, at Luke 6:46, "and not do the things which I say?" To whom should one listen, to a preacher or to Christ, the savior? Salvation, remission or forgiveness of sin comes after, and not before, one is baptized into Christ, according to Acts 2:38 and Romans 6:3-4.

There are those who believe that the apostle Paul in Romans 4:1-3 teaches that justification is by faith alone, without works of any kind. Yet, James says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered Isaac, his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness," and he was called the friend of God." (James 2:21-23). James was not contradicting Paul. Paul, in Romans 4:3, was simply stating the fact, quoting from Genesis 15:6, which says, Abraham "believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." Whereas James shows when Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness. It was when he offered Isaac his son on the altar. It is vitally important to observe that though Abraham was acknowledged as a believer and his faith was reckoned for righteousness, it was not until Abraham had obeyed God that his faith was consummated or made perfect in the act of his obedience to God's testing command involving his only son Isaac of whom God had asked Abraham to offer him as a burnt offering. (Genesis 22:1-13). When Abraham obeyed God's command, we read, God said to him: "...Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." (Genesis 22:12).

The inference is, if God had already justified Abraham on the basis of his faith or "faith only" then there could have been no reason whatever for God testing his faith. And what a test! In fact, never did any individual went through a sterner test of faith than did Abraham. And if Abraham was not justified till he passed the test, how could it be supposed that any person could be saved merely

upon alleged faith or trust only without meeting any test whatever? And the test is: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." (Mark 16:16). Also, why should it be considered a strange thing that Abraham's faith should have been "made perfect" by his works of obedience to God's command, when the Bible clearly declares that even the Son of God Himself was "made perfect through obedience." (Hebrews 5:8, 9; Philippians 2:8-9). God by His grace allowed Him to taste death on the cross for everyone. (Hebrews 2:9). He is the propitiation for sins for the whole world. (1 John 2:2; 4:10). Jesus Christ is the source of salvation to all. But this salvation is given only to those who obey Him.

## BACK TO THE BIBLE

J. C. CHOATE

MAN HAS LONG since departed from the Bible. This is very evident from what we see in the religious world itself. There is division and confusion everywhere. As a result, many have given up and quit altogether. But what is wrong with the Bible? There is nothing wrong with the Bible. Man's present condition does not come from following the Bible, but as a consequence of having left it. Therefore the solution is to be found in returning to the Bible.



The Bible is God's word revealed to man. God has spoken through his Son, Jesus Christ. (Matthew 17:5; Hebrews 1:1, 2) and that word has been recorded in written form that we might read it and believe it. (John 20:30, 31). It is all given by the inspiration of God. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). It is perfect. (James 1:25). It is the truth. (John 17:17). It is to be preached to all. (2 Timothy 4:2; Matthew 28:19, 20). It makes one free. (John 8:32). It will judge one and all. (John 12:48). It will live and abide forever. (1 Peter 1:23).

This book, God's word, will not deceive us, divide us, and lead us in the wrong direction. Rather, if believed and obeyed, it will save us and lead us as one to eternal life. No wonder the Psalmist David wrote, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105). He also wrote, "Blessed 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 is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." (Psalm 1:1,2).

We of the churches of Christ are what we are because we have obeyed the word of God as revealed in the Bible and we plead with one and all everywhere to return to the Bible for all that they do and say in the name of religion. We plead with you to do the same. Join with us as we speak where the Bible speaks and we are silent where it is silent. Take your stand with us as we do Bible things in Bible ways and wear Bible names only. This will not make you a member of your church but it will make you a member of Christ's church. It will mean then that we are united as Christians only.

To be more specific, let us urge you to return to the Bible for the Lord's church. Strange as it may seem, but when we turn to the scriptures we do not read of the denominations that we are so familiar with today, but rather we read of but one church and that one belongs to Christ. Christ promised to build it (Matthew 16:18), and it was built as promised. (Acts 2). Christ died for it (Ephesians 5:25), shed his blood to purchase it (Acts 20:28), he is the saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23), he is the head of it (Colossians 1:18), and he adds the saved to it. (Acts 2:47). There is but one (Ephesians 4:4), and it wears the Lord's name. (Romans 16:16).

We plead with you to return to the Bible for the plan of salvation. According to the scriptures one must hear the truth (Romans 10:17), believe in God (Hebrews 11:6), repent of sins (Acts 17:30), confess Christ (Matthew 10:32), and be baptized for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38). Then one is saved and the Lord adds the individual to his church. (Acts 2:47).

We encourage you to return to the Bible for the Lord's name. Man-made names and titles are generally used today, but in the scriptures we read where those who obeyed God were Christians and Christians only. (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). And as a body, they were the body of Christ or the church of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 16:16).

We beg of you to return to the Bible for the Lord's way of worship. There is but one way. (John 4:24). We are to assemble each first day of the week (Acts 20:7), to pray (Acts 2:42), to study (2 Timothy 2:15), to sing (Ephesians 5:19), to partake of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:28), and to give. (1 Corinthians 16:2). The Lord's way cannot be improved on or changed for the better.

In these things, and in all things, we encourage you to go back to the Bible for a thus saith the Lord. Only then can you be right in religion. Only then will we be united. Surely the Lord's way is the one and only way.

# AN “ALSO” RELIGION

WINFRED CLARK

ONE WILL FIND THE WORD, “also”, many times in the Bible. It means, “in addition” or “even as”, depending upon the context in which it is found. It is interesting and enlightening to trace this word through the New Testament. You will find it provides some very interesting things concerning the religion of Christ.

## **1. There is the “also” of worldwide concern**

When Mark recorded some of the words and works of Jesus he had occasion to record a statement of our Lord that gives due emphasis to this: “Let us go into the next town that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth” (Mark 1:38). Did you notice the word “also”? In this case it means “in addition to”. He had already preached in the town of Capernaum (Mark 1:21). But there is more to the world than Capernaum. Jesus would include other towns and villages also.

Paul said, “So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also” (Romans 1:15). He had just spoken of the fact that he was “debtor both to the Greeks and the Barbarians; both to the wise and the unwise” (Romans 1:14). But he bore a concern for those who were in Rome “also”. The concern that he expressed was the kind of concern that is found in the commission of our Lord. Remember that he said, “Go into all the world” (Mark 16:15). Paul and others worked under the compulsion of that commission. There was of necessity, a worldwide concern.

## **2. There is the “also” of brotherly love**

As you trace the word “also” in your search for new insights you will find it attached to the subject of brotherly love. Listen to our Lord. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34). You will see that the word “also” means “even as”. Jesus had just a commandment concerning their love for one another. Then he moved on to speak of the kind of love that is to be true of his disciples (John 13:35). This kind of love is to become the badge for his disciples. Jesus insisted that the kind of love he showed to his disciples should “also” be the same kind that they are to show to one another.

John the apostle surely learned this lesson about brotherly love.

He had so much to say about this subject in his later writings. Over and over he emphasized the love that brethren are to have for one another. He remembered what Jesus had said and such is evidenced by "And this is the commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (I John 3:23). John had not forgotten the thing that his Lord had commanded. Again he said, "Beloved, let us love one another" (I John 4:7). Again he said, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (I John 4:11).

John was a believer in the premise that the love of God for us ought to beget love in us for one another. If we really appreciate that love which God had for us then we will not have much problem loving our brethren. When we think that some of our brethren are difficult to love we need to remember that God still loves them and us. In fact, he loves us when others may not see very much in us that is lovable.

### **3. There is the "also" of stewardship**

This is seen in Paul's language to the church at Corinth: "Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also" (II Corinthians 8:7). This is Paul's appeal for them to be faithful in their promise to give as they have been prospered (I Corinthians 16:1-2). They had made a promise a year before to have a part in the effort to help those who were in need (2 Corinthians. 9:2). Yes, they possessed a number of good qualities such as faith and love. They needed to also show the same kind of spiritual concern in the matter of stewardship. Paul wanted those at Corinth to practice "also" religion.

### **4. There is the "also" of unity**

Jesus set forth this idea in his attempt to teach a group of Pharisees. He said, "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John 10:16). This verse ought to be read as one thinks of the effort on the part of denominational people to justify division by what is said later in this book of the vine and the branches (John 15:1-6). In so many cases these verses are used as if the Bible would justify religious division. This is surely not the case with our Lord. His strong emphasis was upon the idea of unity. This is plainly taught in his saying, "and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John 10:16). In fact he is showing the Jews

that they will be in the same fold with Gentiles. There would not be one fold for the Jew and another for the Gentile. There would be one fold. There would only be one Shepherd.

### **5. There is the “also” of Consistent Teaching**

This is surely a vital thing in the religion of Christ. You can be sure that you will not find duplicity in the gospel of Jesus Christ. That which was taught, by Jesus and the apostles was always the truth. In fact, Jesus is the very embodiment of truth (John 14:6). The apostles were guided by the “Spirit of truth” (John 16:13).

That which was taught as truth in one place to one group was also taught in another place and to another group as truth. This is underscored time and again in the new testament in passages like (Acts 15:27): “We have sent therefore Judas and Silas who shall also tell you the same things by mouth”. This assurance has to do with the letter that had been written in Jerusalem concerning the place of the Gentiles in God’s scheme of things (Acts 15:23-29). These men who came with the letter were Prophets. They said “also” the same thing that the letter said. They would not have the right to say anything else. If they are going to be faithful to their mission such would be required.

We need not think that the change of time has changed the content of truth. It is the same in every generation and in every nation. This is a lesson that many of our day would surely need to learn. With all the clamor about “baby boomers” and what they want, many are trying to fashion the church and the truth to suit their desires. There is talk of our “connecting”. This is simply fashioning religion so that it will fit what this modern generation will accept. But that is not the way it is with the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ. The change that must be made is on are part of men to meet the requirements of the gospel. The teaching of the gospel is to remain the same. In fact, Jesus announced: “...the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

Yes, Christianity is an “also” religion.

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## *THE SIN OF SODOM*

LOUIS RUSHMORE

FOR US, A PUBLIC DISCUSSION of the sin of Sodom is a delicate matter. However, it is a subject that is paraded openly before our

families, in schools, on television, by famous people, in politics, by religious leaders, and even in children's books. Therefore, the sin of Sodom (homosexuality) must be addressed openly.

Homosexuality is something about which God speaks in the Bible—in both testaments. God considers this conduct not only sinful, but further belonging to a sub-category of sin called “an abomination”. Therefore, it is important for us to examine what God says about this topic.

Homosexuality cannot be ignored! It adversely affects our world and often results in death. It also leads to spiritual death for impenitent souls. Homosexuality affects men, women and children. Sometimes, even Christians are involved in the sin of Sodom.

Genesis 19:1-29 introduces the sin of Sodom and the subsequent destruction of this and surrounding cities by God. Genesis 13:13 identifies the men of Sodom as exceedingly wicked sinners. Genesis 18:20 says that the sin of Sodom is “very grievous”. Genesis 18:23 adds emphasis to the portrayal of the inhabitants of Sodom as “wicked”. Genesis 18:24-33 shows that God could not find even 10 righteous souls in Sodom.

Genesis 19:5 (especially in the NKJV) identifies the specific sin by which the city of Sodom defiled itself. This sin is commonly known to us as homosexuality or sodomy. So, under Patriarchy, God's first system of religion given to man, God condemned homosexuality.

Next, under Judaism, God also condemned homosexuality. Leviticus 18:22 reads, *“Thou shall not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.”* The seriousness of this sin to God is apparent from Leviticus 20:13. *“If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death: their blood shall be upon them.”*

God mandated capital punishment under Patriarchy and Judaism for homosexuality. Though God especially warned men and women in Israel against this sin (Deuteronomy 23:17), the sin of Sodom is one of the sins that Israel learned from the nations around them (1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7).

The New Testament likewise condemns homosexuality. Three passages refer to the biblical record of the sin of Sodom found in Genesis 19. *“And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly”* (2 Peter 2:6). Jude, in Jude 7, adds that the sin of Sodom also results in the



punishment of “eternal fire”. *“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”* See also Luke 17:29.

Additionally, homosexuality is elsewhere condemned in the New Testament. Romans 1:26-32 addresses this sin: *“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature, likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet”* (Romans 1:26-27).

Also, two lists of sins further warn against the sin of homosexuality. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 the words “homosexuals” and “sodomites” appear among other sins cited. The apostle Paul by inspiration named “sodomites” again as sinners, among others, in 1 Timothy 1:9-11.

The sins of homosexuality and adultery are forms of “fornication”. Several passages condemn “fornication” irrespective of the form in which it appears (Jude 7; Matthew 5:32; 19:9; 1 Corinthians 5:9; Galatians 5:19-21).

The world says that genetics may be responsible for “sexual orientation”. We are told that God made homosexuals. Many religious people, therefore, claim to practice homosexuality with God’s approval. These people are unaware of or ignore the preceding Old and New Testament passages that clearly condemn homosexuality.

According to God, sins in general, including “fornication”, are only acted out after they are conceived in the heart or mind (Matthew 15:19). One’s uncontrolled “lust” leads to sin and spiritual death (James 1:14,15). Though certainly outside influences may contribute to temptation, sin can be resisted (James 4:7). Further, God will not allow anyone to be tempted beyond his ability to resist (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Happily, even homosexuals can repent or change. The apostle Paul acknowledged that some of the Corinthians were formerly homosexuals (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). God will forgive any sin for which a sinner will repent (1 John 1:5-10). God also forgets the sins that he forgives (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).

Though it is distasteful to the child of God, Christians must learn what God says about homosexuality and sodomy. Godly parents

must guide their children in God's Word in this matter as well as in other areas of biblical instruction. Every citizen must give special attention to politics, school boards, libraries and television programming since each of these is a vehicle through which the homosexual message is promoted. Christians ought to voice their objections to the homosexual movement.

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## WHO IS THE ANTI-CHRIST?

WAYNE JACKSON

DISPENSATIONALISM, WHICH IS CURRENTLY the most popular form of premillennialism, has much to say these days about antichrist. According to dispensational theologians, the "*antichrist*" is a man, now living, who will soon rise to the position of a worldwide dictator. In his book, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Zondervan, 1970), Hal Lindsey asserts that the antichrist, whom he styles "***The Future Fueher,***" will "*come to power just before the return of Christ*" (p.140), and, as Lindsey further says, "*we believe that according to all the signs, we are in the general time of his coming*" (p. 133). A number of other books as well as cultic movies, have similarly suggested that a fierce individual, identified in the Bible as "*the antichrist*" is soon to make his dreadful presence universally felt by launching a program of terror and suffering.

Such a view finds absolutely no support in the Bible. The term *antikristos* is found five times in four New Testament passages—all in John's epistles (1 John 2:18,22;4:3;2 John 7). It is quite significant that Lindsey, in his chapter on the *antichrist*, never once alludes to these verses (Ibid, pp.87-102) ! And the reason is clear; the biblical information simply does not affirm his theory: (1). There is not one specific person denominated "*the antichrist*"; rather, John plainly says that "*many antichrists*" have arisen (1 John2:18;2John7). (2) The Bible does not affirm that the antichrist is some sinister, prophetic individual who is to appear in a particular year. There were antichrists in the first century— "*...even now,*" says the apostle, "*have there arisen many antichrists...*" (1 John 2:18; 4:3).

A careful analysis of John's usage of this term reveals that "*antichrist*" is a general word employed to suggest a spirit of unbelief and rebellion that manifests itself in a variety of ways, both in the past and in the present.

- (1) Atheism is antichrist, for it denies the existence of the Father and the deity of his Son (1 John 2:22;cf. Luke 10:16)
- (2.) The Docetists, of the late first century, were antichrists in that they denied that Jesus actually became flesh (cf. 1 John 4:2,3). If Christ did not become flesh, he did not die for our sins (cf. Heb. 2:14), and we of all men are most pitiable.
- (3) The ancient Gnostics were antichrists ( as are their modern counterparts, the Watchtower Witnesses) in rejecting the deity of the Lord Jesus (cf. John 1: 1; 20:28).
- (4) The old Sabellian sects, together with the so-called “*oneness*” groups of today, are antichrist, for they refuse to distinguish between “*the Father and the Son*” (1 John 2:22) as separate persons within the divine Godhead.
- (5) Those who have usurped the prerogatives of deity by claiming to be divine, or Heaven’s personal representative, are likewise antichrists. Such characters as “*Father Divine*,” Jim Jones of the People’s Temple, and the Roman papacy, fall into this category.
- (6) In the final analysis, any person who deliberately rejects the authority of the Son of God, thus suggesting, as in the parable of the pounds, “...*We will not that this man (Christ) reign over us,*” (Luke 19:14), is of the spirit of antichrist.

An intelligent, systematic approach to the sacred text of the Bible would demolish the sensational, near-hysterical theories of many modern-day sects.

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## How To Be A Christian Only

FOY L. SMITH

THERE IS NO GREATER PLEA in the world today than that one which invites people to be “*Christians only*” The name “*Christian*” includes all that is needed, or should be desired, for spiritual appellation. Indeed, a real, genuine “*follower of Christ*” should be content in worshipping God as a “*Christian only*.” Anything less than a Christian is far too short, and anything that goes beyond, transgresses heaven’s testimony for humankind. But the important question is: *How may one be a Christian and nothing else?*

## **Obey The Doctrine of Christ And No More**

To obey the gospel as revealed in the New Testament means:

1. Believe in Jesus Christ as the crucified, buried, and risen Lord [John 8:24; Romans 10:10].
2. Repent of past or alien sins [Acts 2:38; 17:30].
3. Confess your faith in Christ [Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10; Acts 8:37].
4. Be baptized [immersed] for the remission of sins [Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16; I Peter 3:21].

Upon such obedience, we have the assurance that God will add us to “the church” [Acts 2:47]. And we further know that such disciples were called “*Christians first in Antioch*” [Acts 11:26].

## **Wear The Name of Christ And No Other**

The fact that God promised a “*new name*” [Isaiah 62:2] and that He gave it “*first in Antioch*” should be ample evidence of the all-sufficiency of the name. To add to it, to put a handle on it, to weaken it by adding some human name, is but to mar its beauty, dishonor the head of the church, discredit Him who died for us and whose name we are to wear [Acts 4:12].

It is, then, possible to wear the name of Christ and no other. The Holy Spirit even condemned the wearing of names of inspired men in New Testament times. How could it benefit us to wear names of men, or names given by men who are without heaven’s authority to give them [I Corinthians 1:10-13]?

## **Accept And Abide By The Creed of The New Testament And No Other**

This must necessitate a repudiation of all man-made creeds that have become binding upon so many people. It must do away with human doctrines for governing worship. It takes the New Testament to make a Christian; it takes something more than the New Testament to make a person more than a Christian. It is possible to make the claim “*let us follow the Bible only*” yet in actual practice, preaching and worship, accept along with it the “*doctrines and commandments of men*” [Matthew 15:9]. Creeds must be revised each year, but the Word of God never has to be revised. Accept it and nothing else.

## **Be A Member Of The Church of Our Lord And nothing Else**

It is possible to obey the gospel, genuinely become a child of God, and then go off and “join something” unheard of in the Bible,

join an institution not founded by Christ, not wearing his name, nor worshipping according to His divine guidance. To do this is not to be a “Christian only.” God’s book, the Bible, is sufficient. The Lord’s church, the church of Christ, is enough. It is said: “*It makes no difference what church one is a member of.*” The Bible says that the church is the body of Christ [Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23]. Paul says there is only one body; the conclusion is, there is only ONE CHURCH.

### **Have A “Thus Saith The Lord” For All That We Do**

If followed, this sacred principle would make it impossible for us to have in the public worship anything that is not authorized by our heavenly Father. There is something wrong with the man who is not satisfied to take just what the Bible has said. Our worship is to be one of faith [II Corinthians 5:7]. Without faith it is impossible to please God [Hebrews 11:6]. Faith comes by hearing God’s Word [Romans 10:17]. If we practice anything that we did not get from hearing and studying God’s Word, it is not of faith. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin [Romans 14:23]. When sin is finished, it brings forth death [James 1:15].

### **A Final Thought...**

From these Scriptures we see that in order to be pleasing to our Father, we must have a “thus said the Lord” for all that we do. Let us have no doctrine but that which is of Christ, no name but the name Christian, no creed but the New Testament, be a member of no church but that which belongs to Christ, and have a “*thus saith the Lord*” for all that we do and say religiously. In this way, all men are privileged to be Christians only!

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## *THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS*

DAVID THURMAN

“FOR YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED FOR THIS PURPOSE, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). Jesus lived a perfect life without ever failing to please God. His life is our example, and we are encouraged “to follow in His steps”. What does Peter mean when he tells us to follow in the steps of Jesus? What does it mean for us today to follow in the Lord’s footsteps?

## **FOLLOWING HIM INTO BAPTISM**

Before Jesus began His public ministry He went to John the baptizer to be immersed by John. John was hesitant, telling Jesus that John was unworthy to do this for Jesus. But Jesus insisted, saying, *“Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness”* (Matt. 3:15). Jesus began His work for God by going to be immersed by John.

For us to follow Jesus today, we also must begin by coming to God for immersion in water. *“Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?... And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the Eunuch; and he baptized him”* (Acts 8:36-38). When Philip taught this Ethiopian about the Christ, the man of Ethiopia wanted to be immersed. Philip did just that. The Eunuch had understood the need to be saved from sin, had seen the need for baptism in water. As soon as he saw the water he asked to be immersed. He wanted to follow in the steps of Jesus. Philip taught him and he saw that those steps began with baptism in water. If you want to follow Jesus’ steps today, you too must begin with immersion in water.

## **FOLLOWING HIM THROUGH TEMPTATION**

*“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil”* (Matt. 4:1). It was no accident that the first thing that occurs after His baptism was that Jesus was tempted by Satan. Once Jesus had decided to fulfill all righteousness, Satan showed up to persuade Him away from God’s will. Jesus had just begun to do what God wanted, was barely dry from the water, yet the devil was after Him already. Once Jesus made the step into public ministry for God, Satan began to find ways to oppose and distract Him.

Satan will do that to us as well. Once you make the decision to be buried with Jesus in baptism (Rom. 6:3-4) Satan will come after you with all his weapons. When you make the public decision to follow the path of God as demonstrated by Jesus, you too will face opposition and temptation. Too often new believers think that their conversion will change their struggles. But, as with the footsteps of Jesus, Satan usually turns up the heat, making your choices even more challenging after you are saved. If you are going to walk in the steps of Jesus you must understand that Satan is not going to leave you alone. You will have many challenges and temptations to endure.

## **FOLLOWING HIM TO WORSHIP**

*“And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath,*

*and stood up to read*" (Luke 4:16). Luke is also describing the early stages of Jesus' ministry. He tells us that it was the custom of Jesus to go to the synagogue. From the start Jesus went to where the people of God assembled to worship. The custom among the Jews was to worship each Sabbath in a synagogue. Jesus went there, both to teach and to worship God. The footsteps of Jesus took Him into places of worship with other children of God. He used those occasions to teach, to shape others, and to honor God.

If you are going to walk in the steps of Jesus, you too must make it your custom to worship with God's children. Many people think they can serve God without assembling. But Jesus didn't live like that and if we are to follow in His steps we won't live like that either. Like Jesus we will assemble and worship with others of like faith. We will long to be with others as we study, as we teach, as we sing and pray to our God. Jesus went to worship and so should we.

Some would argue that "there are hypocrites in the church" and they might be right. The church is not filled with perfect people and in fact may have sinners within it. But so did the synagogues Jesus attended. There were some serious hypocrites there. There were some notorious sinners in those assemblies. But Jesus knew that His mission was to just such people. He also knew that His duty to God was not changed because some others were not living right. Jesus went to worship because of Who He was, not because of what others were. If you are going to walk in His steps, you must learn to assemble and worship, regardless of the worth of the crowd with whom you meet.

### **FOLLOW HIM TO SERVICE**

*'You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him'* (Acts 10:38). Jesus didn't reduce His service to God to simple church attendance. His habit was to assemble with the people of God for worship. But His walk with God took Him outside the church buildings to fields of service. He *"went about doing good"*, helping people in difficult circumstances. Sometimes this was healing, other times it was food and still other times it was forgiveness. But Jesus knew that His walk with God was not merely about worship assemblies: it was about serving people.

If we are to follow in His steps, we too must get our religion outside the church building. Don't mistake faithfulness to the assembly with faithfulness to God. Jesus habitually worshipped with

God's people. But He also made it His lifestyle to serve God every day in every possible way. So too, we must learn to live each day with God and His will in mind. Our walk with God is not limited to what we do on a Sunday in an assembly, but includes how we treat others each day of the week. Even today *"look on the fields, that they are white for harvest"* (John 4:35). There is much opportunity in our cold world for loving disciples of the Christ to do good. Let us get out of our buildings and put our religion to work for the good of people. Let us see the opportunities God sets in front of us each day, and let us *"go about doing good"*.

### **FOLLOW HIM TO THE GARDEN**

*"And He said to them, My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch. And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground, and began praying that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, 'Abba! Father! All things are possible for Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt.'"* (Mark 14:34-36). Jesus' life was filled with power and success. Yet, at the end He found Himself alone, struggling with a burden so great that the disciples could not understand. While they dozed, He prayed to have the burden lifted. The steps of Jesus took Him into this garden and filled Him with grief. For Jesus this was a hard moment. This was a time of struggle over the direction God wanted Him to take. He was facing death on the cross and was troubled at the price He was being asked to pay.

Make no mistake. The footsteps of Jesus will lead us into some difficult circumstances. We too may face moments of trial in which we are tempted to do things our way, instead of God's. Don't think that loyal service to God, that regular attendance in worship services or even baptism will spare you from severe trials. Jesus went through this and so will anyone who wants to follow Him. Satan will manipulate life so that you too will face a moment that others cannot understand or help with. In that moment you too will be called on to submit to God or walk in your own will. Let each of us have the courage to accept the cup God gives us, even if difficult or painful.

### **FOLLOW HIM TO THE CROSS**

*"And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull... And they crucified Him"* (Mark 15:22,24). The steps of Jesus led up that hill and took Him to His death. This was no easy task, as the struggle in the Garden demonstrated. But to serve God Jesus had to walk to Golgotha and be crucified. As Paul



says, *“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”* (Phil. 2:8). Jesus’ death was not merely a challenge. It required humility to the point of humiliation. His death took accepting not just death, but the most horrible and degrading of deaths known in ancient times. Jesus had to submit to utter loss in order to fulfill the plan of God.

We too are called to walk that path of submission and humility. *“If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me”* (Luke 9:23). We too are challenged to accept humility and follow Jesus. This task is not just on one occasion, but is commanded to be daily. We are to die to self each day and allow God’s will to rule in our lives. Many want to be Christians, but they don’t want to walk in the steps of Jesus if those steps lead to humility or struggle. But the path of Jesus calls us to accept that course for our lives. We are called on to *“have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 2:5) in our daily lives. This requires each of us to surrender our wills to the will of God. This may ask us to pay a price to treat others right, to save the lost or edify the saved. We too may have to give up our rights in order to help people who may not appreciate or value our sacrifice. But that is the way of the cross.

### **FOLLOW HIM TO A RESURRECTION**

Once Jesus had completed His work on the cross, He was buried. But on the third day God raised Him from the dead and elevated Jesus to His side. The path of Jesus ultimately leads to victory over sin and death. For Jesus the path was hard, but the reward was to sit at God’s right hand as the Anointed of God. For us as well there is a victory awaiting once we have walked in the steps of Jesus throughout life. *“He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne”* (Rev. 3:21). The footsteps of Jesus challenge us in this life. But at the end of life we too will ascend to sit enthroned with the Lord. Our victory is assured because He came from the tomb (1 Cor. 15:55-57). The steps of Jesus may lead to submission and death. But those steps don’t end in a tomb. Instead there is another set of footprints that lead away from the grave into the presence of God Himself.

### **FOLLOW HIM TODAY**

Don’t just talk about being a Christian. Follow the Lord’s footsteps.

Be baptized. Attend worship services with other believers. Go into the world and do good. Accept the trials and submit to God's will as you try to do what is best for others. And finally, walk with the Lord even unto death knowing that your steps won't end in the grave. Follow in the Lord's footsteps—today!

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## ***“As The Days Of Noe Were”***

NEAL POLLARD

SADLY, OURS IS A DAY WHEN scripture-filled teaching and preaching has its share of detractors. Such instruction is caricatured as “three points and an illustration.” Meanwhile, some public teaching contains (maybe) a scripture reference, but is indistinctly pushed along by punchlines and tales of human interest. A plea for more “practical and less perceptual” lessons can be heard. Is there not a balance, wherein one draws practical lessons straight from the Bible? Are not the most relevant lessons the ones most heavily reliant upon God's revelation?

A clear example of scripture-based teaching comes from the Bible! It is the story of Noah, as expounded upon by such New Testament instructors as Christ, the Hebrews' writer, and Peter. With the life and times of the patriarch of old, great men brought their audiences practical lessons on one of the most important themes of all. These wonderful proclaimers used Noah to illustrate key points about the Judgment.

In introducing His teaching on the Judgment, Jesus says, “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:37). The disciples had asked our Lord to reveal more of the coming punishment of the Jews and the attending destruction of Jerusalem, then to address “the sign” of “the end of the world” (Matthew 24:3). Jesus answers the first question first (cf. Matthew 24:4-35), then answers the later question (Matthew 24:36-25:46). Jesus, with the other, proved the “Noah story” crucial in making their points about the Day of Reckoning;

**Things Will Be Happening As Usual (Matthew 24:38).** Until the day of accounting (the flood), “they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage...” They were going about their routine, daily events. The *status quo* was the state of things then. “So shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

**No “Signs” Will Precede His Coming (Matthew 24:39).** The

unrighteous neighbors of Noah “knew not until the flood came, and took them all away.” While Noah warned that a flood would take place (cf. 2 Peter 2:5), even Noah had no way of knowing when the *flood* was coming. Unlike some denominational evangelists, who often in search of either fame or fortune “predict” the exact moment of time of Christ’s second coming, Noah did not know. Neither did the world. There were no signal warnings then. “So shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

**All The Ungodly Will Be Destroyed (Luke 17:27; 2 Peter 2:5).** The flood “destroyed them all.” By it, God purged the earth of the wicked-hearted inhabitants thereof (see Genesis 6:5). After the floods subsided, God promised never to destroy the earth *as He had done* (cf. Genesis 8:21). But, the ungodly “shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). In Noah’s day, God brought “in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2 Peter 2:5). They were utterly punished and were not “spared.” “So shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (cf. 1 Peter 4:18).

**Judgment Will Have Been Preceded By Divine Long-Suffering (1 Peter 3:20).** There was not only justice on the part of the Divine in bringing the flood. “The longsuffering of God awaited in the days of Noah.” God strove with Noah’s contemporaries (cf. Genesis 6:3). In seeing the general, widespread state of man’s wickedness, God did not immediately annihilate the race, though He despised the evil (cf. Genesis 6:5). He was long-suffering with those in Noah’s day. “So shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (2 Peter 3:9).

**Some Will Be Prepared (Hebrews 11:7).** Who were the prepared in Noah’s day? Those who walked “by faith.” who heeded the warning “of God,” who “moved with godly fear.” Noah and his family were saved. He, along with them, “became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” One can be prepared at Christ’s coming. When the floods came down, some were prepared. “So shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (cf. Matthew 25:46; 2 Timothy 4:7,8).

Teaching the great lessons of the Judgment Day by referring back to the Old Testament, Christ and His disciples give great precedence to today’s teachers and preachers. We should be illustrative in our lessons, and such can be effectively accomplished *with* the occasional use of humor and human interest. However, the meat of our lessons must be the Bible, and the weight of them must depend on the wisdom of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18-21).

# *The Parable Of The Two Sons*

GLENN COLLEY

THIS WEIGHTY PARABLE IS ONLY recorded by Matthew. By inspiration he writes in Matthew 21:28-32,

“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, ‘Son, go work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not’; but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir’, and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, ‘The first.’ Jesus saith unto them, ‘Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward that ye might believe him.”

The identity of the two sons in the parable is obvious. One represents the Jewish leaders, the other the common people of the day. The Jewish leaders were proud, even binding laws on the common man which they themselves didn’t bother to obey: “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Matthew 23:4). Compared to them, they saw the common man as having little value or importance to God. And yet, when John the Baptist, who was sent by God, came to preach, who was first in line to show “fruit meet for repentance” and be baptized? Read Matthew 3:5, 6:

“Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharises and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, ‘O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance...”

These Jews, Pharisees and Sadducees, were the brother in the parable who said “I will go”, but later would not. They professed to be God’s people and to respect God’s will, yet their actions spoke much louder. In reality they were following their own preferences and traditions. When the Father called, they said in essence, “Sure, Father, we will obey willingly. Everyone knows that we always obey.” Then they disobeyed.

On the other hand, the common people were often excited about

the possibility of repentance. Mark 12:37 says, "... and the common people heard him gladly." These people, sometimes rejected by the society about them for their evil deeds, craved forgiveness. They wanted to feel valuable, and the Gospel offered that. They wanted to feel loved, and the Gospel offered that. They wanted to know Christ and possess salvation, and the Gospel offered that (Romans 1:16). Matthew 9:11 notes, "And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, 'Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?'" The answer to that is in Luke 19:10: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." From our lesson today, the question is also, "Why were the sinners eating with Christ?" Because He had what they desperately wanted and needed—release from the guilt of past sins. For that reason, "Then came also publicans to be baptized" (Luke 3:12).

Remember that Jesus began His earthly ministry with the reading of these words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18,19).

In commenting on this passage, McGarvey says, "These rulers had demanded that Jesus show his authority for his assumption of right as teacher, prophet, etc. The parable is an indirect response to this demand, as if Jesus said, 'It is in vain for me to tell you that I act under the authority of the Father, for despite all your great profession to the contrary, you really and actually, in your persistent rejection of another (John the Baptizer), who also acted under it, repudiate utterly his authority; though in so doing you see yourselves condemned by the conduct of even the publicans and harlots, who have felt the force of the Father's authority, and have repentantly obeyed it.'"

From this parable we learn these important lessons:

**1. External observances of righteousness are worth very little from a man whose heart is not humble and penitent before God. Paying lip service to doing right is not the same as doing right.**

It is foolish to think that in our generation we cannot make the same serious mistakes as did the Jews of Christ's day. As long as the world stands there will be worship which can be practiced in an empty and meaningless fashion, There will be good works which can be prompted not by love (I Corinthians 13), but by a desire to be seen of men and draw their applause (Matthew 6:1-18). There

will be hypocrites in all walks of life, and the potential for each of us to fall victim to the devil as he promotes the hard heart of hypocrisy. I must rise higher in the practice of my religion! I must love God with all my heart, soul, strength and mind (Luke 10:27). I must love my brothers and sisters in Christ with a pure heart fervently (I Peter 2:25). I must “Obey from the heart that form of doctrine delivered” by Christ and the apostles (Romans 6:17). Never allow yourself to settle for a “Christianity” which is little more than a mask to wear and impress others. It must spring from the heart. It must be genuine.

## **2. Obedience in works has always been a part of obtaining God’s approval.**

In the final analysis, and the Jews knew it, obedience was the critical question in the parable. Did the sons obey their father or not? That’s what really mattered here.

The religious world has shown again and again a misunderstanding of how faith and works can live in the same family. “Either,” some say, “our salvation is of faith and grace, or it is of works. It can’t be both. The two are mutually exclusive of each other. If someone believes his works are necessary to be saved, then he has negated, voided, and misplaced the possibility of being saved by grace through faith.” Yet the truth lies in a clear, Biblical understanding of the two terms with relation to our salvation—and the two—faith and works—live quite well together.

First, consider that there are two kinds of works. The kind of works described in Matthew 6 is one—the one in which these Jews were involved. Showy, pretentious, “done-to-be-seen-of-men” type works were their practice. They intended to be ushered respectfully into the Messiah’s kingdom and eventually past the pearly gates because they earned the right. Remember the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son? “All these years have I served thee... and thou never gavest me...” (Luke 15:29). Jesus summed them up by observing that whatever pleasure they derived here and now from those kinds of works was all they would get for their trouble! As Jesus put it, “They have their reward,” (Matthew 6:2). It was this kind of works Paul was considering when he said, “are we saved ... not of works, lest any man should boast,” (Ephesians 2:9).

Second, there are works which are God-approved, and for which we must be zealous (Titus 2:14). They are works which express our faith. Consider please that by obedient works a man expresses his faith in God. He simply does what God says, and in so doing, expresses to God that he has faith in God. James argues this point in the book bearing his name when he writes, “Even so faith, if it

hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:17-20). Jesus forever made this plain when he said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven." (Matthew 7:21).

As in the parable, people today must obey to be God-approved. II Thessalonians 1:7 warns, "To you who are troubled, rest with us. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

**3. Repentance is more than confessing and saying "I'm sorry." Repentance means changing my mind and my actions.**

In the parable before us, even the prideful Jews could see who was on the Lord's side and who was not. The man who repented and obeyed was the better of the two brothers. He was approved by the father.

The Greek word used twice in this parable for "repented", is *Metamelomia*. It is used of Judas in Matthew 27:3, "Then Judas which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, *repented* himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders." The writer of Hebrews 7:21 uses the word and writes, "... the Lord sware and will not repent..." The word suggests a change, a turning from one direction to another to follow a different course. It is a change of heart, a change of will, and a change of actions. The parable of the two sons demonstrates this well. It would be incredible to hear a man argue that in this parable the son could have first said, "I will not go", then repented in his heart, but failed then to go work. We would all observe that if his heart didn't move him to actually do the right thing, then true repentance had actually not taken place at all. Just what repentance demands has become more a topic of interest and controversy since the popularity of divorce and remarriage in our society. When a man accepts what Jesus taught in Matthew 19:9, and realizes that he is in a marriage not God-approved, one which is Biblically described as adultery, he may ask if he can't simply repent of getting married to his new spouse, and continue living with her afterwards as his wife. Asked another way, can a man repent, get forgiveness, and then continue living with the spouse with whom he married into adultery?

The answer is no. While we must and do sympathize with those who are in this sad situation, we must be committed to the truth that repentance from sin demands a change of heart towards that sin. If my heart will permit me to deliberately continue in that sin, then repentance has not taken place. Can a sincere prayer change unholy adultery into holy matrimony? No it can't, because repentance requires a ceasing of my sin. The Lord said, "he repented, and went".

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## How Do You Say "Thank You" to God?

TOM HOLLAND

MOST OF US WERE TAUGHT the importance of saying "thank you" when people did good things for us or said nice things to us. Remember the song for children about "two little magic words" that would "open any door with ease"? One of the words was "thanks" and the other little word was "please."

Some insensitive people or some ungrateful people may not think to say **thanks**. However, one attribute of a noble character is the awareness of responding to goodness with an expression of appreciation. But how does one say "thank you" to God? I can't call Him on the telephone and say, "thank you." I can't write Him a letter or send Him a thank-you card. So how do I get the message of my gratitude to a gracious God? There are basically two ways to thank God: **thanksgiving** and **thanksgiving**. These are complementary.

The Bible is very plain in instructing God's people to give thanks in prayer. In Philippians an inspired apostle said, *"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"* (Philippians 4:6).

God created meats *"to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth"* because *"every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving"* (1 Timothy 4:3,4).

The Lord Jesus gave a good example of saying "thank you" to God. Before Jesus ate food He first gave thanks (John 6:11). Jesus said, *"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth "* (Matthew 11:25).

So how do we say "thank you" to God? We **say** "thank you" in prayer and hymns of gratitude to Him. And we live a life pleasing to God, so that our very behavior shows our **thanksgiving** in response to all that He does for us, day-by-day.

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