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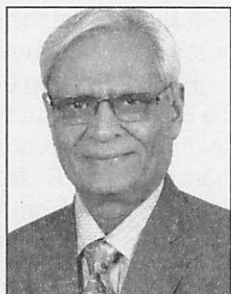
No. 3

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

*Let God Be True But Every
Man A Liar*

TODAY MANY BIBLE-LOVING, religious, honest and sincere people find it very strange when it is called to their attention that according to the Bible one cannot be saved from sin by only believing in Christ, or by faith alone, as they have heard from different religious teachers or preachers most of their lives. But the Bible very clearly teaches that to be saved, not only must one believe in Christ, but one must also repent of sins, and confess Christ to be the Son of God and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Christ is the Savior. Not man. And Christ taught, "He who rejects Me and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." (John 12:48). Now, what did Christ say man must do to be saved from sin? Christ said, "He who believes *and is baptized will be saved.*" (Mark 16:16). Further we read, in Acts 2:38, the apostle Peter exhorted his listeners, who had already believed in Christ after listening His gospel, to "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ *for the forgiveness of sins...*" Can one be saved and become a Christian without receiving the forgiveness of sins? But when did Peter say one receives the forgiveness of sins? After repentance and baptism into Christ, not before, or by faith only. Again, please note, when the eunuch, as we read in Acts chapter 8, after hearing the Gospel, wanted to be



baptized, Phillip told him, "if you believe with all your heart, you may." Baptism alone does not save. But one must believe in Christ as the Son of God with whole heart. In Galatians 3:27 it says, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." The apostle didn't say, "as many of you as have believed in Christ have put on Christ." Did he? In other words, those who have never been scripturally baptized remain out of Christ. If they don't believe it now, they will surely find out this bitter truth on the day of judgment (Matthew 7:21-23). Now, reading these facts from the Bible, why should these things sound strange to any sincere Bible-loving and God-fearing person? Why should people continue to believe and preach that to be saved all one has to do is to believe in Christ and accept Him a personal Savior? Or just say a sinners' prayer and ask Jesus to come into one's heart to save! Many preachers are deceiving people by teaching such lies. People ought to check in their Bible, what the Bible teaches, and not believe every preacher or teacher, whosoever they may be. (1 John 4:1).

For years people have heard many things supposedly taught in the Bible. Since such teachings and doctrines have been repeatedly taught and observed over and over again worldwide, people perceive them to be the "Bible truth." On the other hand, when clear teachings and doctrines from the Bible itself are brought to their attention, they sound strange to their ears. Because they have never heard about them. Sound and Biblical truths have been called by men today "a lie", while man-made doctrines and teachings have been accepted as Bible truth" so often that "the truth has become a lie, while the lie has become the truth" in the hearts of most people.

Likewise, to most Bible believing people, it sounds strange today when they are told that according to the Bible there is only one true church. Yet in Matthew 16:18 we read, Christ promised to build His church. And in Acts chapter 2 we read about the establishment of Christ's church. Acts 2:47 says that Christ Himself adds the saved ones to His church daily. Furthermore, the Bible teaches that He Himself is the head of His church, which is His spiritual body. (Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 1:22,23). The Bible does not condone but definitely condemns division and denominationalism. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). **The church Christ built is neither Catholic nor Protestant.** "God", says 1 Corinthians 14:33, "is not the author of confusion but of peace and unity." Not a single denominational church, except Roman Catholic church which began many centuries after Christ had established His Church, existed on earth prior to the Protestant reformation movement of 1517 AD. All

protestant denominations began during or after the reformation led by Martin Luther beginning about 1517. Yet Christ established His church, according to His promise, in the city of Jerusalem, in 33 AD. Scripturally speaking, God recognizes but only one church that His Son has established. (Matthew 15:13). **Let God be true but every man a liar** (Romans 3:4).

Does the fact, dear reader, sounds strange to you that the Bible is completely silent about the month and the date on which Christ was born? That neither the church of Christ nor Christians from the beginning celebrated any religious festivals such as "Christmas", "Good Friday" and "Easter", etc.? That babies were never baptized, but always those who were penitent believers were told to be baptized or immersed in water, as Christ had instructed (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16)? That the church in her worship always sang spiritual songs to praise God and to edify one another without the accompaniment of any musical instrument (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 13:15)? That women in the church were not permitted to speak or teach, usurping authority over men (1 Corinthians 14:34,35; 1 Timothy 2:11, 12)?

These and many other truths of God's word from the New Testament of the Bible sound strange to many people today because they have never heard them taught by their religious preachers or leaders. But genuine truth does not change. (1 Peter 1:24-25). God's word remain unchanged. And on the day of judgment, as Christ said at John 12:48, we shall all be judged by His word and not by what men have taught through the years. Churches of Christ have a unique plea in the religious world. Our plea is to lay aside all human creeds, sectarian names, and denominational doctrines and divisions and to be one in Christ. (Ephesians 4:1-6). Let us go back to the Bible. Speaking where the Bible speaks, and to be silent where the Bible is silent.

ALL OF THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WORD

J. C. Choate

THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARGUE that only what Jesus said is of importance and that the words of the Apostles amount to little more than the teachings of men. Such people need to read



what Christ said on this subject when he spoke to the disciples: "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also." (John 15:20). Here the Lord emphatically says that if one will accept his word, he will also accept the word of the apostles, or vice versa. This also suggests that if an individual rejects the word of one then it amounts to rejecting the word of the other.

Again, the Lord said to the Apostles, "Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come." (John 16:13). Listen once more: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Later on, Paul declared the origin of his teaching when he explained, "But I certify you brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Galatians 1:11,12). This should be sufficient proof that the Apostles spoke and wrote only the word of God. Therefore, when you read what they said, you are reading His word.

While reading through the Bible, whether it be in the Old Testament, the statements made by Jesus, or the epistles of the various New Testament writers, one may be assured that all of it is the word of God. This means that one must accept all of it without addition, subtraction, or substitution. As a law, the New Testament is binding on all people of our day. All of it is God's word, regardless of the one who spoke it or wrote it. Even Christ said, "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." (John 14:24).

Do you believe the whole Bible or just parts of it? If you reject part of it, you might as well reject all of it. If you believe the Lord you will also believe His messengers.

What About Your Children?

Max Patterson

HOPHNI AND PHINEHAS, sons of Eli, knew not the Lord (1 Samuel 2:12), did not respect the worship of God (1 Samuel 2:17), and

were immoral (1 Samuel 2:22). Because of this disobedience God rejected the house of Eli and brought it to an end. In addition, this corruption of the priesthood was one of the primary causes for the people turning against God and requesting a king like the nations about them.

As the children of Israel fought the Philistines, Hophni and Phinehas were slain. When 98 year old Eli was told this, he fell out of his chair backwards and broke his neck and died. His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was thrown into labor, and she bore Ichabod and died (1 Samuel 4:11,21).

One of the main reasons for the Lord's rejection was that Eli's sons were vile, "*and he [Eli] restrained them not*" (1 Samuel 3:13). Would Eli have restrained his sons had he fully realized what was going to happen?

Today we know from experience, and from the Scriptures, what will happen if we do not restrain our children. Therefore, as Christian parents, we must do our best to bring them up in the discipline of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4).

THE VIRTUE OF GODLINESS

W. A. Holley

"BUT REFUSE PROFANE AND OLD WIVES' fables. And exercise thyself unto godliness: for bodily exercise is profitable for a little: but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:7-8).

The word godliness means: "Respect, reverence... piety toward God; godliness" (Thayer, p. 262). It is used fifteen times in the New Testament. The word ungodliness is also found in the Bible and its definition is: "Want of reverence toward God; impiety; godliness" (Ibid. p. 79). It includes all evil thoughts and deeds, all ungodly works and desires (Matthew 15:18-20). Involved in "ungodliness" is dancing, including all the evils which go with it. Men and women wrapped in each other arms, dancing together, never had the approbation of God. Cicero (an ancient Roman writer) said, "No man who is sober dances, unless he is out of his mind, either when alone or in decent society; for dancing is the companion of wanton conviviality, dissoluteness, and luxury." In Old Testament times, the Jewish dance was performed by the sexes separately. It is

impossible for men and women to keep their minds on sacred and holy things while dancing together (Romans 13:13-14). The prominent idea in the word "wanton" is "shameless conduct." Dancing, with the fruits which go with it, is deemed indecent in men and women of character and wisdom.

Manifestly, the lives of the great men and women of the scriptures were characterized by godliness, rather than ungodliness. For example, Joseph was so concerned about his relationship with the Almighty that he, while in Egypt, resisted the overtures of Potiphar's designing wife, asking, "... How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). To him, such a sin as adultery would be a sin against God Almighty. Here is a man who had too much respect and reverence for God to run roughshod over the will of the Lord.

Godliness caused Samuel to wish to obey God completely (I Samuel 12: 1-5). It was reverence and respect for God that enabled Job to courageously bear the torments of his affliction and the sickening taunts of his friends. Dear Reader, take time to read the entire book of Job. The wonderful lessons taught in the book of Job, though centuries old, are just as applicable now as they were then. The Psalmist recognized that, wherever he might go, whether asleep or awake, at home or abroad, living or dead, he was always in the presence of God (Psalm 139:1-24). It was that deep feeling of piety toward God that supplied Paul power to tolerate the sufferings and toils and persecutions which befell him (II Corinthians 11:23ff). The virtue of godliness gave both Stephen and James the strength to become martyrs for Jesus (see Acts 7 and 12).

Throughout the ages, countless millions have been characterized by "want of reverence toward God, impiety, ungodliness." For instance, Nadab and Abihu lacked that respect for God's commandments which demanded strict obedience. Hence, they "offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them" (Leviticus 10:1-2; Cf. 6:12-13; 16:12). Another example is that of Dathan, Korah, and Abiram, who, because of their irreverence for God's divine appointments regarding Moses and his position as leader of the Lord's people led 250 princes to rebel against divine authority (Numbers 16:1-35). Judas' ungodliness was instrumental in his betrayal of Jesus Christ (Matthew 27:3-10; Acts 1:18-19). Diotrephes' impiety regarding things sacred caused him to prate

against John the apostle with wicked words, and thus to resist the right ways of the Lord (III John 9-11).

Do you think that men and women should manifest godliness? Would not the virtue of godliness beautify and sweeten our relationships with one another, and with God? Man's heart should be filled with that fear and love which constitutes respect for God's authority (Matthew 28:18-20). For example, Zacharias and Elizabeth "were righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). The Hebrew writer exhorts: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28-29, K.J.V.).

Why should adults and youth alike be interested in promoting godliness in our world? (1) Because godliness is one of the "Christian graces" that must be added to our faith if we wish to be saved eternally (II Peter 1:5-11). (2) "The mystery of godliness," as embodied in Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection supplies those motives necessary to godly living (I Timothy 3:16). (3) Because godliness magnifies and enhances the power of the truth of God (Titus 1:1). (4) Godliness (not alcohol, nor drugs, nor promiscuous sex) contributes toward "a tranquil and quiet life" for mankind (I Timothy 2:1-2) (5) Because godliness is the most profitable form of spiritual exercise known to mankind (I Timothy 4:7-8). (6) Because godliness exemplified by friends of truth has a salutary and an ennobling effect upon others (I Timothy 4:12; Cf. Romans 2:24; Titus 2:7; Philippians 1:27).

And, what does godliness mean to the individual and to the world? It means: More love and less hate; more respect and reverence for things sacred and less disrespect; more dependence upon God and less dependence upon ourselves; more humility and less haughtiness; more concern for the moral and spiritual welfare of others and less concern for the immoral and fleshly; more of the good, and pure, and the true enshrined in our hearts and less garbage and filth of the world; more sharing and bearing and less complaining; more working at duties and less shirking them.

Hence, to the extent that GODLINESS grows and thrives in the lives of men, ungodliness and its withering influence is diminished. We urge all to work and pray that the virtue of GODLINESS may

so increase that it may cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

*"In reverence and in godly fear
Man finds the gate to wisdom's ways;
The wise his holy name revere;
Through endless ages sound his praise."*

The Year Of Jubilee And The Gospel Era

W. Gaddys Roy

EVERY FIFTIETH YEAR WITH ISRAEL was called the year of jubilee. The year of jubilee was a period of mercy. Slaves were set free, and land outside walled cities was returned to the original owners (Leviticus 25).

When Jesus "came to Nazareth ... he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord'" (Luke 4:16-19). If this does not mean that the year of jubilee is typical of the gospel era, there are certainly some striking similarities.

The year of jubilee was a fixed period appointed by God (Leviticus 25:9, 10). It was a period of mercy to the poor and afflicted of Israel. Slaves were freed, and the land outside the walled cities was restored to the original owners. When one sold his land, he would sell only the number of crops until the year of jubilee (Leviticus 25). Likewise, the gospel era is a fixed period by God for the salvation of sinners and the reign of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; II Corinthians 6:2; Galatians 3:22-29). In this period God's love and mercy are extended to all men (Acts 10:34, 35; Romans 2:11). Sinners are released from the slavery of sin and are set free through the blood of Christ. Through this freedom we are restored again to the tree of life which was lost through the sin of Adam (Romans 6:16-18; Galatians 5:1; Revelation 22:14).

The year of jubilee was ushered in on the great day of atonement, and it was announced by the joyful sound of trumpets (Leviticus 25:9; Psalm 89:15). This was the most sacred day of the Jewish

calendar. On this day a bullock was slain for a sin offering, a ram was slain for a burnt offering, and the scape-goat was released into the wilderness, symbolically bearing away the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:9-16). On this day blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat. The high priest would intercede for the people in the Most Holy Place and then come forth and bless them in the name of the Lord. The whole service had a distinct reference symbolically to the sacrificial death of Christ.

The atonement of Christ is the basis of the gospel dispensation. The gospel era was ushered in by the sacrifice of Christ and His atoning blood (Luke 24:46, 47; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 5:11). The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was indeed a joyous occasion. Angels sang with joy at His birth (Luke 2:8-14). The gospel of Christ whereby the atoning blood of Christ is applied to the heart has been, and must continue to be, sounded to the whole world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:46, 48; Colossians 1:23).

The year of jubilee was associated with abundance, and the people could dwell in safety (Leviticus 25:18-22). This was a year in which liberty was proclaimed to the captive. The bond servants were freed remission of debts was extended to those who could not pay, and forfeited possessions were restored (Leviticus 25:23-41). Likewise, the gospel is an era overflowing with spiritual blessings. It is compared to a royal feast (Matthew 22:1-4). The gospel sets free those who are bond servants of sin and enables them to inherit eternal salvation (Romans 2:7-11; 6:16-23; Hebrews 5:9; Revelation 22:14). Man cannot pay his sin debt, but the gospel of Christ offers forgiveness of this sin debt through Christ (Luke 24:46, 47; Acts 2:38; 13:38). The gospel restores all that was lost through the introduction of sin into the world by Adam (Genesis 3; Revelation 22:14).

The year of jubilee was a period of festivity and rest (Leviticus 25:11, 12). This period with all its ceremonies belonged to the Mosaic dispensation and, of course, ended with the law of Moses (John 1:17; Colossians 2:14-16). The gospel of Christ overflows with God's great love and His abundant grace, with no heavy yokes or expensive sacrifices to be observed. All the institutions of the gospel are easy, simple, and gracious (Matthew 11:28-30). The grace and truth of the gospel with all its blessings came as the result of the vicarious suffering and the atoning blood of Christ.

"Describe The Bible"

Neal Pollard

IF GIVEN THE TASK OF DOING the above, how would you respond? Would you mention size, kind of paper, name of translators, or condition of your copy? Would you describe it as a book of facts, the preacher's and elders' book, the guide of your life, the guide of mom's life, or a combination of those answers? How would you relate the Bible to God? Or to your world? your country? your family? yourself?

Have you ever had the occasion to describe the Bible to a friend or family member? I am not particularly thinking of descriptions like those just mentioned. Rather, have you discussed the contents of The Book of books with them? One brother correctly stated that only by "translating its truths into life" can the full penetrable power of the Bible be known. Sometimes, men and women who were baptized twenty or more years ago attend the services monthly, drink, dress, and live like the world, know the name of an apostle, and can find Romans with the aid of an index. Such individuals virtually scream their irreligious descriptions of the scriptures to those around them. However, so many other Christians tell the world wonderful things about the Bible.

Somewhat akin to the hypocrite is a seemingly different breed of Christian. What of those who seem to be very religious and have good, clean reputations, but who are seemingly oblivious to the needs of the lost of the world? These typically are unafraid to approach a denominational or atheistic friend to discuss "religion," but do so in an acidulous and obnoxious way. Or, perhaps these, in a dangerous sense of their own importance, rest comfortably in the knowledge that they and their children attend every service and know a lot about the Bible and so they refuse to inconvenience themselves with compassion or sacrifice. These tell the world that religion is artificial, repugnant, and haughty. By their example, these tell the lost to "save themselves." The world will virtually shove these aside to get to anyone who seems to genuinely care. Many times that has been brothers and sisters in Christ who really wish to imitate Christ, love His church, understand their mission, and grasp the greater importance of the eternal over the temporal. These truly converted Christians can aptly describe the Bible. As those famous words suggest, truly "people do not care how much you know until

they know how much you care.”

Some Christians turn the world away from the Bible by apologizing for it. Incredibly, this brand of believer attempts to make excuses for God’s purity, justice, and expectations. Whether they are afraid of ridicule or unwilling to stand firm on the solid foundation of the scriptures, they present an irrelevant standard to a people already bent on following self’s desires. The world will shoo the wavering one aside to listen to the convicted Christian tell the whole gospel to them, from the grace of God to the destructive nature of sin to the responsibility of sinful man to gracious God. At the judgment, numberless lost of the world will stand beside apologizing Christians on the King’s left hand.

The faithful disciple of Jesus can effectively describe the Bible, though. As stated, he or she lives a consistent, compassionate, and courageous life for all the world to see. When such a Christian tells the world that the Bible is reasonable, they too will be willing to count the cost and sacrifice in view of the cross. When such a Christian tells the world that the Bible is logical, they will steadfastly follow the instructions therein contained. When such a Christian tells the world that the Bible is eternal, they will let go of the entices that the Adversary uses to keep them where they are. Do not just define the Bible with words, describe the Bible with your life. God has chosen you to point others to Him (cf. 1 Peter 2:5, 9)! You may be the only Bible your neighbor will ever read. What does he see?

The Best Commentary

Glenn Colley

IS IT IMPROPER TO SAY, “The Bible is it’s own best commentary?” *Would* one be using weak reasoning to put an explanation of a verse to the test by comparing other verses from the Bible? Of course not. In fact, when you use this method of coming to truth, you put yourself in good company! Jesus Himself used just such reasoning to resist the temptation of the devil.

After Satan had heard Jesus quote scripture from Deuteronomy to resist the dark prince, Satan himself plucked from the sacred page to “**prove**” that Jesus should bend under temptation’s strong arm. “Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels

charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone" (Matthew 4:5,6).

Satan is quoting from Psalm 91, which COULD be applied to Jesus without doing injustice to the text. However, Jesus demonstrates that in this case, the text is being perverted. It doesn't apply in this situation. We might ask why?

Notice the words of our Lord: "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Jesus demonstrates the old adage, "The Bible is it's own best commentary." He implies that Satan's usage of Psalm 91 was incorrect because in this setting, it would contradict another passage, Deuteronomy 6:16.

We need to appreciate, as Jesus taught, "Every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4) Think of the many passages which would likely be misunderstood if taken by themselves, without sufficient consideration to other passages on the same subject.

"Get Lost!"

Allen Webster

"THAT WASN'T VERY NICE," the young man thought as he walked back down the sidewalk. "I tried to help save him and he told me to 'get lost'."

How does one "get lost?" We never intend to lose our way on a trip or in the woods, but sometimes it does happen. Spiritually, people usually do not intend to "get lost," but all responsible people have (Romans 3:23), and most never find their way back (Matthew 7:13-14).

Luke 15 pictures different ways folks get lost. It records four parables by the master "Story-teller." Their common denominator is that something gets lost. If you find yourself here, you need to do something about it!

SOME GET LOST BECAUSE THEY JUST WANDER OFF (15:4). In the first parable, a sheep wanders from the fold. It must have been grazing with its head down and made a wrong turn. This represents many Christians who have somehow wandered away from faithful service to the Good Shepherd. They do not become antichrist, but just get bogged down in the affairs of life—a job, sickness, family responsibilities, a hobby, friends—and let these choke out the fruit of the Spirit (Mark 13:22). They put their heads

down to "graze" and before they know it, they are no longer worshipping regularly or purely.

This sheep was separated from the ninety-nine and in great danger. That night when the flock was taken home and bedded down, it would be left in the cold to face the wolves. Likewise, erring Christians will be left in the cold (or, rather "heat") at Judgment Day. The devil, as a lion, will devour them (1 Peter 5:8). How sad! But do not despair, there is still time, if we can only convince them to come back.

The little fellow may not have even realized that he was lost! Likewise, some have just enough "religion" to comfort a conscience, but not enough "righteousness" to calm a Creator. He probably did not even care that he was lost, for he had found what he thought were "greener pastures." Many who have wandered from the fold have, too, hardened their hearts because they enjoy this world's pleasures (Hebrews 6:4-6).

In the parable, the sheep is found and there is rejoicing.

SOME GET LOST BECAUSE OF ANOTHER'S CARELESSNESS

(15:8). In the second parable, a woman loses her coin. She hunts furiously until it turns up. This represents one who is lost because another sets a bad example or is a hypocrite. Though another cannot make one fall, and each will be individually judged, nonetheless weak Christians often are hindered by poor examples (Matthew 18:6).

We should all be very careful what we say, where we go, what we do, and how we act for others are watching. "And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Corinthians 8:11-13).

This coin did not even know that it was lost, just like most people we contact. They may feel very secure in false religion or good morality and have no idea that they are in line to hear, "Depart from me" (Matthew 7:23).

SOME GET LOST BECAUSE THEY CHOOSE THIS WORLD'S PLEASURES

(15:11-24). The third story is about a selfish boy who took his father's money and spent it on "wine, women and song" in the far country of sin. Not a few today have chosen the "pleasure route" to Gehenna (Hebrews 11:25).

He deliberately chose the sinful path. He knew he was sinning, but did not care. It is a sad condition of heart which allows one to drink, commit fornication or adultery, lie, cheat, or steal while knowing

better. Paul said this happen to a co-worker: "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world..." (II Timothy 4:10). Some need this reminder: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (I Peter 2:11).

In another happy ending, the boy comes home!

SOME GET LOST BECAUSE THEY ARE SELF-RIGHTEOUS (15:25-32). The fourth story is the saddest. The elder brother is lost at home! He represents those who may attend every service and do every outward act, but their "insides" are rotten (Matthew 23:27). They are in the worst condition because beams have blinded their eyes to their faults (Matthew 7:3). They need eye-surgery, and heart repair, but do not accept the Great Physician's opinion.

"Get lost?"—Please don't. Let's go to heaven together!

Greater Things Of God

Winfred Clark

AS YOU READ YOUR BIBLE from time to time you will come in contact with certain words or phrases that will create some special interest. You will want to give special time and study to these. That is the case in this study. You will find three times in I John the word "greater". This is a comparative word of degree. Each time it has reference to something that is greater about God. This surely ought to cause the child of God to want to stop and study this word more closely as it relates to our Father. Such a study will help us appreciate our God even more.

Take a moment to look at those three references in I John where we learn of "The Greater Things of God". You will find these in I John 3:20, 4:4, 5:9. What can we learn by a study of these passages?

THERE IS GREATER ASSURANCE

Notice, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" (I John 3:20). Take a look at the verse and you will find that this passage speaks of something God knows that our hearts do not know. Our hearts know that there are times when we condemn ourselves. Every honest child of God will have to admit that there are times when he considers himself as one who falls far short of what he ought to be. There are times when he will surely feel condemned. How many of us would not

have some questions as to whether we could go as far as verse 16 demands? In raising such a question we would feel guilty. Here it is said, "...we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren". We may be sensitive to the will of God and would surely want to do what God tells us to do we would in no way diminish the importance of doing the will of God. But we are aware of our imperfections and shortcomings. We want, above all other things, to do the right thing.

I am convinced that this passage would surely find its background in many cases and instances in the Bible. Take for example the publican of Luke 18. There is no doubt about his wanting to do what was right in the sight of God. His repentance is evident as he would not even lift his eyes to heaven. He said, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). When he left that temple his feelings about himself probably had not changed that much. His heart would no doubt condemn him, but Jesus said, "...this man went down to his house justified..." (Luke 18:14). Wasn't Peter at a point where he saw himself in that same way when he said to the Lord, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man O Lord" (Luke 5:8)? When you review that scene and conversation Jesus had with Peter beside the sea you will find much the same thing. It is there that Peter was grieved and said, after being questioned about his love by the Lord, "...Lord thou knowest that I love thee..." (John 21:17). Yes, Peter knew that he had failed the Lord for he "went out, and wept bitterly" (Matt. 26:75). But he knew that the Lord knew that he really loved him and he would have to leave the matter there. Peter appealed to all that Jesus knew about him. There is great assurance that the child of God can draw from the fact that the knowledge of God about himself is far greater than that of his own heart.

We can also draw great assurance from the fact that the love of God is greater than man can imagine (1 John 3:1). In fact, if you look at the phrase, "what manner of love", you will find that it means, "of what country". That means that such love beats anything you can find in this world. That becomes pretty obvious when we think of the fact that Christ did not die for people who loved him; rather he died for many who hated him. It was for that kind of a crowd that he prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). This prayer was prayed while he hung on the old rugged cross. This kind of love surpasses anything that man encounters on this earth. Man is prone to love those who love him. But the love of God overturns this concept. In fact the love of God runs ahead of all of man's comparisons. It tosses aside all of man's metaphors. Man doesn't have the ability to fully describe the kind

of love God has for fallen humanity. In view of this great love we can be assured that though we may find condemnation in our hearts, there is still the love of God.

Again we need to learn that the mercy of God is extended when Our heart would say it is not. Go back to the case of the publican. You will find that man standing "afar off" (Luke 18:13). He did not feel that he could approach God. He "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote himself upon his breast" (Luke 18:13). He said, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Here is one whose heart said "you do not deserve mercy". Even after the mercy was extended such a person would still have problems understanding how such could be extended to him. His heart would say, "you are so wrong and have fallen so far short". But Jesus said of this man something that he would not say of himself. Jesus said, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified..." (Luke 18:14). But don't you think his heart would condemn him? Surely it would. But thank God, God is greater in mercy than the heart of man.

When John said, "... God is greater than our hearts..." (I John 3:20), he was speaking of those who were seeking to walk in the light (I John 1:7). He is speaking to those who would not say, "we have no sin...", or, "we have not sinned". They were aware of the fact that they were not to live a life of sin. They knew that they were to "sin not" (I John 2:1). They were doing their best to live godly and righteous lives. They had sensitive hearts and wills. They Sought to meet the challenges set before them but they felt that they could always do more and always be better. There was the constant struggle to do what was right but they looked into their own hearts and felt condemned. It is to these kind of people that John said, "God is greater than our hearts". He knows our struggles and efforts to be what we ought to be. God knows us better than we know ourselves. So we are left with the apostle Peter to say, "Lord thou knowest all things, and that I love thee". That is true even when the heart says we are falling short.

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR GOD

Bobby Dockery

IN A THOUGHT-PROVOKING ARTICLE which appeared in *Reader's Digest* a number of years ago, David Raphael Klein noted

that the world has been looking for a substitute for God for a long time. He wrote: "Somewhere along the way, Western man began to lose his belief in God as a personal force, as the decider of his fate, as the ultimate judge of his actions. The idea that God created man became old-fashioned; we evolved. The notion of hell was picturesque, but no longer compelling. Life began to be seen as more or less accidental; sin became a relative sociological matter, and to many a pure fiction."

People today are trying all sorts of ineffectual and destructive substitutes for God: Astrology, philosophy, paganism, alcohol, drugs, science, money, pleasure, etc., etc. *But whenever people turn away from God, life turns to chaos. Families disintegrate, the social order collapses, and people make a mess of their lives!* There is no substitute for God!

1. Without God there is no basis for decency and morality. If God is not there, all things are permitted! If Hitler decides to murder 6 million Jews, or terrorists blow up a plane full of women and children, how can we say they are wrong, *if God has not spoken?* If we no longer believe God created man, then we are forced to say there is nothing sacred about human life. If life is not sacred, then there is no logical argument against murder, rape, assault, or any other crime!

2. Without God there is no meaning in life or reason for existence. Man becomes, as one eminent evolutionist expressed it, merely a biological accident created by nature, without purpose, to be obliterated without regret.

3. Without God we are left without an explanation for the universe. How can anyone contemplate the eye of a horsefly...the mechanics of human finger movement... the intricacy of the nucleus of a cell...or the complexity of the universe and say all of these things happened by sheer, blind chance?

4. Without God we are without hope and are of all men most miserable. David Klein noted, "In freeing himself of the terror of hell, (modern man) gave up the hope of heaven; you live, you die, that's the end of it...."

God is the God of all hope (Romans 15:13). Without Him there is no hope in the world (Ephesians 5:12). Belief in God is the only thing that can keep us from despairing about our world and our lives.

Nothing else can take the place of God. Nobody else can fill His shoes. For life to have meaning, God must be at the center (Matthew 6:33). There is no substitute for God!

Therefore—

T. Pierce Brown

AS I WAS MEDITATING ON THE Great Commission, I was struck anew by the word “therefore.” Without it, the Great Commission would have no power or purpose. Jesus had said, “All authority is given unto me—*therefore*, go, teach, baptize, disciple—” Do you get the implications of that? Without the authority of Christ any going we do is useless; any teaching we do is vain; any baptizing we do is but empty ritual; any discipline we perform is wasted.

Just the awareness of this fact alone and acting upon its principles would change the whole course of religious activity, both in the Lord’s church and in all denominations. In fact, if men acted upon this principle, all denominations would cease. None of them exist by the authority of Jesus, so all doctrines and practices which they perform—even if the outward act is the same as that which is by His authority—would automatically cease.

The awareness of the implications of “therefore” would have both positive and negative effects in a fantastic way. That is, it would have negative effects in the sense that none of us would do that in a religious context which was not authorized by Jesus. No discussion would be necessary concerning the use of instrumental music in worship, for example. “All authority is given unto me—Go ye therefore and sing” would be easy to understand. But “Go ye therefore and play” would automatically be eliminated.

The positive effects would also be wonderful if this statement were fully comprehended. The question might be raised, “Why are you so concerned about going into all the world with the Gospel?” The answer would immediately be evident, “Because of ‘therefore’—My Lord, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, Who died for me, and thus demands and constrains my loving obedience, desires it.”

David Lipscomb and others who claim there is no higher motive for baptism than that the Lord commanded it are no doubt right in that. But to conclude from that the false notion that a person can “*obey from the heart that form of doctrine*” (Romans 6:17) without understanding in the heart what the form of doctrine involves does not follow.

To make it simpler: If the One who has all authority says, “*Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins,*” and a person replies, “I

do not think that is necessary," it is impossible for him to be baptized by the authority of Jesus, no matter what he may say his motive is.

A man may say, "I am going to take the Lord's Supper by the authority of Jesus, because I want to obey Him." We may admit that there is no higher authority, nor any higher motive. But if he then takes what he calls the Lord's Supper consisting of a cookie and coffee, only on "Easter Sunday" (or even once a quarter, and consisting of whatever he chooses) because "his church" so practices, whatever he may say about it has little value. *"In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Matthew 15:9) should not be too hard to apply if we kept "therefore" of Matthew 28:19 firmly in mind. It suggests, "Christ has all authority. Therefore do what you do by His authority."

Talking Back To God

Harvey Porter

THERE WAS CONTROVERSY IN THE EARLY church concerning the salvation of the Gentiles, the Old Law being set aside by God, and the Israelites basing their salvation on the fact that they were the seed of Abraham by birth and not by faith. Paul wrote on this great problem in the letter to the Romans. He said, *"But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, Why did you make me like this? Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?"* (Romans 9:20,21).

The human family has had a long history of "talking back to God." It is not uncommon today to hear some who are not well informed concerning God's Word say, "The God I serve is a God of love and could not have made anything like hell!" They are in effect telling God that He could not condemn sinners. They have not studied the many passages that speak of the justice of God. It is true that God is a loving and forgiving Father. It is also true that He hates sin and that His holy nature cannot abide sin; therefore, sinners cannot live in His holy presence.

Many have felt that baptism is not necessary for salvation, even though the New Testament clearly teaches that it is. Peter told those who believed in Jesus on the Day of Pentecost to, *"Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your*

sins may be forgiven" (Acts 2:38). Other translations often say, "for the remission of sins." Baptism "puts us into Christ," "unites us with Christ," "baptism does also now save us," "baptized into the body (the church)," and "washes away our sins." Sinful man should not tell God and Jesus, the Savior, how to save us. (Romans 6:3-5; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16).

It is not uncommon for man to tell God how and what he will give as worship to God. Some say that they do not have to worship at all, because God knows how they feel. Others declare, "Well, going to church never saved anybody!" The Bible says a lot about worship. Jesus specified that *"true worshippers must worship the Father in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24). What a dangerous thing to make up our own way and then have the audacity to tell God that He should like it after we have rejected what He directed us to do over almost two thousand years ago! The pot cannot tell the potter anything.

Paul closed the doctrinal section of Romans with these great words: *"Oh, the depth of the riches, the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."* Paul quoted from Isaiah 49 and Job 41. The heart of the quote is, *"Or who has been his counselor?"* God had never had nor needed a counselor.

God is filled with wisdom and knowledge. Puny man's wisdom does not even measure up to the foolishness of God (see 1 Corinthians 1:25). His judgments are unsearchable. He always makes the right decision, gives the right command. Truth is established by Him. Man can never call God into question.

Mankind's duty and response to God is to humbly obey His every wish and to walk in fellowship with Him by faith. *"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."* (Romans 10:17)

Please, never talk back to your Heavenly Father!

SIMON PETER

Ray Hawk

HE WAS A GALILEAN FISHERMAN with his brother Andrew, and his partners, James and John. Jesus called him Cephas, which

means "a stone." When the apostles are named, Simon is always the first to be mentioned.

Although John was the closest to Jesus, Peter was the forerunner in many areas. He was not bashful when it came to asking questions. *"Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?"* Nor was he hesitant in rebuking Jesus when he thought he was right. *"Never, Lord!"* he said. *"This shall never happen to you!"* Peter's loyalty was fierce, and no one had to ask him where he stood. He declared, *"Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."*

When others wanted information about Jesus, they usually went to Peter. When Jesus asked questions of the apostles, Peter was usually the first to reply. He was not afraid to ask questions or to demand answers. *"We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"* He wanted to honor Jesus and spoke of this on different occasions. *"Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."* Out of the Twelve, he was one of the inner three. Yet, Simon Peter was human.

In spite of his loyal statements, Jesus told Peter that his heart was in the wrong place, *"Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."* In the garden, Jesus had asked His disciples to watch while He prayed, but Simon, with others, went to sleep. However, it was to Simon that Jesus addressed His remarks, *"Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?"* Jesus told him that before the rooster crowed twice, he would deny Him three times. When Peter realized he had fulfilled that prophecy, he went out and *"wept bitterly."*

Jesus recognized the leadership abilities of Simon. He told him to *"Feed my sheep."* Here was a complicated man who at one time was not afraid to go against his culture and enter the house of a Gentile to preach to him, even if it meant criticism from some in the church. Yet, on another occasion, he feared what would be said and refused to associate with Gentile Christians.

Some may tend to think that Peter was more of a god than a man. We, like Cornelius, might bow before him. Yet, Peter would tell us what he told the centurion, *"Stand up, I myself also am a man."*

One cannot help but admire this fisherman who became an evangelist and an apostle. Although the Holy Spirit inspired his written and spoken messages, he was given no special speaking ability or

supernatural powers to be *bold*. He, like Paul, could say, *"And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God"* (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

One might classify Peter as a home-town boy who made good. But, when everything is said, if it had not been for Jesus, Peter would have remained a nameless fisherman. Jesus took an outspoken man and turned him into one who spoke out for Him. He took a man who fed people with fish and made him into a feeder of human sheep. All that he was and became was because Jesus walked into his life. Peter had the wisdom to recognize that Jesus could make a difference. Do you?

Who Commits the Sin?

Don W. Walker

IN EXODUS 32 WE READ OF THE incident of the golden calf. In Moses' absence the people demanded of Aaron to *"make us gods, which shall go on before us"* (Exodus 32:1). Aaron then called for their gold and *"fashioned"* it with a graving tool, and he made it a golden calf (Exodus 32:4). *"And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it... and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play"* (Exodus 32:5,6).

As we close chapter 32 we read in verse 35, *"And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made."* Johnny Ramsey, in Volume One of Practical Bible Studies writes, *"When we participate in an act of evil, whether we are the leader in such shameful conduct or not, we become partakers of the ungodly activity"*. Participation in or even aid to and condoning ungodliness provides guilt by association.

This very principle is brought out in both the negative and positive as we look at 2 John and 3 John. Let us notice these two instances and then make some practical application.

In 2 John 9-11 we read: *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth*

not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

Linking ourselves with a doctrine, even if it is by just bidding them that God be with them, associates us with the guilt of that false teaching. On the positive side, we read in 3 John 6-8:

"Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth."

The point is that association with God by doing His will naturally associates us with those who are also doing His will, though our services and abilities may differ. It tells us that though we may not even be doing the teaching, we can become associated with and linked to the teaching of a doctrine, and thus held accountable for what is taught. It is clear that association in any way with ungodliness also makes us partakers of those evil deeds.

Paul would simply state in 1 Thessalonians 5:22, *"Abstain from all appearance of evil."* *"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them"* (Ephesians 5:11).

Our responsibility to false doctrine and ungodliness is two-fold. First, we must not fellowship it; and second, we must reprove it. To compromise by association is to become guilty of the sin, whether we are the leaders or not. With this in mind, let's each study our Bible much, much more.

A MAN NAMED MATTHEW

Leon Cole

A MOST INTERESTING WAY TO study the Bible is to do a study of its characters. Often the characters that are not studied as frequently as others afford some of the most important lessons. Such is true of the man Jesus saw at the receipt of custom and said to him, *"follow me"* (Matthew 9:9). His name was Matthew.

Matthew is also called Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). He would not have been viewed by very many as a possible disciple of Jesus.

He was a “publican”—a collector of Roman taxes. His countrymen thought of him as a traitor. As a class, publicans were guilty of greed and corruption. Since they were employees of Rome, they exacted enough money to pay their masters and an extra amount for themselves. This man, then, was friendless and an outcast. His only associates were other tax gatherers. He was barred from worshipping at the synagogue. From reading Luke 18:13 one gets the impression that publicans were even afraid to go further into the temple than the entrance. When we read of that publican beating his breast and crying, “*God be merciful to me, a sinner*” we wonder if that is a picture of Matthew. It must reflect his attitude, knowing he was not accepted by his people, and perhaps wondering if God would accept him.

There have been others who have been called by the Gospel from the depths of sin. The Corinthians are examples (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Folks should never despair simply because they have been great sinners. That is who Jesus came to save.

When Jesus passed by the toll booth, the opportunity for Matthew came. This outcast was offered a better occupation and rewards greater than silver and gold. He could serve a better king than Caesar. Matthew was not seeking Christ; Christ was seeking him. There is a tremendous lesson here for us: if we would follow the Master, we too must be seeking the lost.

Matthew arose and followed Jesus immediately. If he had dismissed this opportunity, another might never have come. In following Jesus, emphasis must always be on the present. Matthew left all; nothing would stand between him and serving Jesus. He was also unashamed of his decision. He prepared a feast for the Lord and invited his associates (other tax gatherers). He was celebrating his new life, bidding farewell to the old, and giving his friends an opportunity to hear the Savior.

All this was done because Jesus “*saw a man named Matthew.*” Others saw a despised outcast. It is thrilling to read of the lost being found by a searching, seeking Savior. Truly we are reminded of the wonders of divine grace. Let us go with this grace, urging men to leave the old man of sin to become a new creation in Christ.
