

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

*God Has Revealed His Will
For All People Alike*

MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE that the Bible is most difficult book to understand. Yet the truth is, the Bible is the book of God's message to man everywhere. Through the pages of the Bible God, man's creator, has revealed and communicated His will for all humans. God desires all people to know and follow His will, as He wants all to be saved and none perish in ignorance (2 Peter 3:9). He is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). He has revealed His will for man in such manner and words that all should understand and follow. On the other hand, if He is unable to do this, then how can we say that He is the Almighty God? Being God, the creator of man, He knows man better than man himself. He knows exactly what and how much man is able to understand. Just as we humans know how to communicate with our children, so does God know how to communicate with His children. He is capable to so reveal His will to man that we can all understand it alike. What it reads to you reads to me also, and this is true globally. It doesn't tell people to do different things in different places. What it says to an individual in China, Britain or America, it says the same to me here in India, in whatever language I want to read it. Christ taught, God's word is the seed of the kingdom. (Luke 8:11). Seed produces after its own kind. It produces the same thing wherever it is sown. There is no confusion about it. Sow carrot seed here and you will reap only



carrot, not potato or tomato. The same if sown in another country would produce the same result.

The question is often raised, while all claim to follow the Bible then why are there different kinds of churches, and Christians, and doctrines and worships, etc. among the followers of Christ on earth? The simple answer is, they do not exist by the will of God, as the Bible does not teach about them. Through the centuries, after Christ had built His church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4), and had authorized His apostles to teach and write every doctrine His church should follow (Matthew 18:18; John 14:25-26; 16:12-13), men in different ages began to change and add into God's word. (Acts 20:28-30; 1 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Timothy 4:1-4). So much so that today people believe many things supposedly taught in the Bible, yet the Bible is completely silent about them. And since such man-made teachings and doctrines have been repeatedly taught and observed over and over again worldwide, people everywhere have accepted them as the Bible truth. Yet from time to time when the clear teaching and doctrines from the Bible itself are brought to their attention, they do not want to believe them, because they have never heard about them. They are so much rooted and grounded in the lies of man-made teachings and doctrines that the Bible's truth sounds to them a lie while man-made teachings and doctrines have been accepted by most people as Bible truth. For example, Christ Himself taught, he who believes and is baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16). It is so simple to understand. But most people today want to believe one is saved by believing alone and baptism is not necessary for salvation, because this is what they have heard all their lives. Christ said, "I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18) and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church according to Acts 2:47. But people today believe that one church is as good as another, because there are many different kind of churches that men have built through the years after Christ had built His church in Jerusalem in AD 33. Man has invented for himself different kinds of churches and doctrines and ways of worship. Teachings and commandments of men and creed books of denominational churches have made the Bible difficult to understand. If all people everywhere leave them alone, quit believing in them and teaching from them and turn to the Bible alone, read it and do only what it says, then there will be no confusion and no division, all will be Christians only, as they were in the beginning (Acts 11:26), and members of the church that Christ had established and purchased with His own blood (Acts

20:28) and will worship alike as Christ had taught (John 4:24). Friends, it takes more than the Bible to misunderstand it. If people today do not understand the Bible alike then it is not God's fault, but it is the fault of man himself. God has spoken and it is our duty to hear Him and do His will.

THE POWER OF AN EXAMPLE

J.C. Choate



AS THE LORD'S PEOPLE SOMETIMES we may wonder what we can do to help to further the cause of Christ. We may think in terms of doing something big. We want to preach, be a teacher, write Christian literature, or do any number of other things. But we may not have the ability or the opportunity to do these things. In that case, what can we do? Does that mean that we are worthless to the Lord? Does it mean that we are not important and that there is nothing we can do? Certainly not. Every Christian can do something, often times much more than he might realize. Many can serve in areas that they never imagined, if they would but try. But regardless of one's background, his training, his ability, or many other things, every Christian can set a good example. We can be Christ-like. We can be stable, steadfast, obedient and faithful workers in the Lord's vineyard. This perhaps is needed today more than anything else. There is power, great power, in a good example.

Example is defined as a representative sample, something forming a model to be followed or avoided. Example or ensample are used in the New Testament several times. In the King James English Version these words are used separately but they both mean the same thing. To further illustrate what we are talking about when we speak of an example, there is an old saying that states, "Actions speak louder than words." Another such saying that is very similar is, "I had rather see a sermon any day than to hear one." In other words, it is easy to preach and teach and tell someone what to do, but what is said is often forgotten. The thing that impresses people more than anything else is *how* you live. That is the example that you set.

Let's think about the power of the example for a few minutes as

we turn through the scriptures. Some of the stories told are used to illustrate a bad example and others to set forth a good example. Peter shows how God dealt with the wicked of the old world in sending the flood to destroy them. He continues by saying, "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." (2 Peter 2:6). The lesson for us, then, would be that if we live as they lived God will destroy us as he destroyed them. He might have simply said that if we live ungodly lives we will have to suffer the consequences, but that is not nearly as convincing as when he goes back and mentions one case after another of God actually destroying the wicked. These are powerful examples to encourage us to live for God. Similar lessons are taught in 1 Corinthians 10:6-12 as Paul relates some stories pertaining to the behaviour of the Israelites. After revealing how God had delivered them from bondage, he shows that many of them were overthrown in the wilderness because God was not pleased with them. Then he says, "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Again, the evil deeds of God's people are listed along with a description of how He dealt with them, and this serves as a powerful example to us that we should not go and do likewise. Notice, he says don't be idolaters, fornicaters, or murmurers lest we should be punished as they were. He says they are our examples that we should not do such things.

While we could dwell on many other stories that would serve to teach us that we should not follow those examples, we will now turn our attention to the good examples of others and the good examples that we ourselves should set. James shows how the prophets serve to teach us valuable lessons on the qualities we should have in our daily lives. He says, "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of

the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." (James 5:9-11). Of course as indicated in James 2:11 Christ is the greatest example of all for us. Luke tells us that he "began both to do and teach." (Acts 1:1). In John 13 Christ taught his disciples a great lesson by humbling himself to wash their feet. Then he said, "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than the Lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (John 13:13-17). The Lord did not wash the disciples feet to leave an example that should be followed and practised as worship in the church, as some would conclude, but rather he desired to teach them a lesson on humility. No doubt they had too much pride. They felt too important to bow down to wash anyone's feet. In that part of the world where it was very arid and dry, the countryside was very dusty. With the practice of wearing sandals, when people came in off of a hot dusty journey the host would offer water for the visitor to wash his feet. One's feet usually represent the lowly part of man, that which is dirty and unclean. Surely a person would wash his own feet but it would be difficult to wash another's feet. Jesus then humbled himself, as their Lord and Master to wash their feet. What a great example for them and for all. Surely if the Lord could wash their feet then the lesson was that they could do any needed service for one another.

But that is not all that Christ did in the way of setting an example. We could perhaps dwell at great length on the many other things that would serve to teach us valuable lessons. At the very pinnacle of all of that would be the great suffering that he experienced on our behalf, and leaving us an example. As a matter of fact, Peter wrote, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were

healed." (1 Peter 2:21-24). In this instance Peter is stressing that Christ left us an example in suffering, that even though he was without sin, he was willing to suffer for our sins, that in spite of the fact that he was reviled, he reviled not, although he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Since he is our example in all of these ways, and in so many others, then Peter exhorts that we should walk in his steps, or we should follow his example and strive to be like him. We could do nothing greater than that.

Speaking of the Thessalonians, Paul writes, "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything." (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8). So Paul pays a great tribute to these brethren by saying that they had been ensamples or examples to all who had believed. He says that they had followed them in the Lord, had suffered much through receiving the word, and that they had sounded forth the word of the Lord to all in Macedonia and Achaia. Because of this, their faith had been spread abroad. So they had become examples to all in the whole area. That is, they had shown others what it really meant to follow Christ and to spread his teaching. Others would do well to follow the pattern that they had set.

Paul, in discussing the conduct that he and others had demonstrated among the Thessalonians, said that they had done what they had done "to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us." (2 Thessalonians 3:9). To the Philippians, he said, "Brethren, be ye followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things)." (Philippians 3:17-19). In 1 Corinthians 4:16, Paul wrote, "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me." Similarly, he said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1). How was it that Paul could be their example and even encourage them to follow him? Because he was following Christ and he knew that if they followed him they would not be following him as a man but in reality they would be following Christ.

How wonderful it would be if we could so live that the same would be true when people follow us.

To the young preacher, Timothy, Paul wrote, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (1 Timothy 4:12). Older people often look down on young people. They are suspicious of them. They find it hard to believe that they could be serious about the more important things of life. They imagine them to be unstable, not dependable weak, and worldly. Paul is therefore encouraging this young man to so live that no one can despise him because of his youth, but rather that he should be an example of the believers in his Christian behaviour and duties.

The Apostle Peter was an elder in a local congregation of the Lord's church and as such he encouraged his fellow elders to be an example before the flock instead of acting as lords. He encouraged them to lead instead of driving, to be humble instead of proud, to teach by doing rather than by commanding. He says, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (1 Peter 5:1-9).

In another passage Peter explains that a Christian wife can perhaps have more influence on her unbelieving husband by living a godly life before him than she can by constantly trying to teach him with the word. Hear him: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose

adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter 3:1-4). A wife can nag and nag at her husband to obey the Lord but she may never reach him. She can go along with her husband to please him but this will not bring him around. She can try to reach him through outward dress and beauty but neither will this touch him. Peter says that a quiet godly life, where the wife shows the purity and devotion of the hidden man, or the heart, will do more to move her husband and to bring him to the truth than anything else. This is the power of a good example. Although the wife is mentioned here, likewise a Christian man may win his unbelieving wife through his faithfulness to the Lord. There is nothing quite like a person being able to see Christianity come to life in another person. This can have an influence on people when nothing else can.

We are all familiar with the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, when he said, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16). How simple these words are and yet what a great lesson is in them. Christ says that as Christians we are the light of the world. That is, we reflect the light of Christ. Through Christ we are the good influence in the world. We are the only light that the world knows. We are like a city that is set on a hill that cannot be hid. Everyone can see us. They know we are there. We are like a light on candlestick that gives light to all that are in the house, yea, even the world. Just as one would not light a candle and then cover it up or hide it, neither should we allow sin or bad conduct to destroy our light or image as a Christian. Rather, we are to live in such a way that all may see our good works and glorify the Father in heaven. Isn't that a beautiful thought? We say again, there is no greater power than that of setting a good example.

What kind of example are you? Are you living for Christ? What about your speech? Are you honest? Do you live a good moral life? Are you able to control your temper? Are you a good neighbour? Do you show love in your life for others? What kind of attitude do you have? Do you attend the assemblies of the church? Are you

giving of your material means as you have been prospered? Are you ready to do whatever you can to help further the cause of Christ? Can Christ be seen in your daily life? Paul wrote, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20).

My brothers and sisters in Christ, let your life speak for Christ. You may quietly preach Christ through your example and have a great influence on those around you. Listen—worlds of people will never read the Bible. They will never attend the various meetings of the church. They may never listen to a radio program or read a piece of literature. But they may watch and observe you in your daily life. They will read the gospel according to *you*. What will they read? How will your life read? Will it be a good record of Christianity? What a great responsibility we have, then, to use our example as a means of reaching people for Christ and through this to spread his cause. Thank God that from the least to the greatest, however we may be classified in the Lord's eyes, we can in this way render a noble service to Him.

Discerning The Difference

Frank Chesser

THE CHURCH IS DIVINE IN ORIGIN, spiritual in nature, and eternal in duration. It is a monument to divine wisdom. It is a portrait of beauty and simplicity.

Sin drove a wedge between man and God. The church is the sphere of reconciliation. It was God's will from eternity to unite all men "*in one body by the cross*" (Ephesians 2:16). That one body is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). Jesus saves only the church (Ephesians 5:23) because it is composed of those who have obeyed the Gospel (Acts 2), God's only power to save (Romans 1:16). There are as many saved people outside the church as there were outside the ark in Noah's day.

If ancient Israel was the "*apple of God's eye*" (Deuteronomy 32:10), what must the church be but the joy of His heart! Even now, God awaits the moment when time shall give way to eternity, and the church, His Son's bride, robed in the beauty of holiness by virtue of His Son's blood, shall make its entrance into that heavenly realm

to the enjoyment of eternal bliss and happiness.

Denominationalism is human in origin, physical in nature, and temporal in duration. It is a monument to human self-will, man's determination to do what he pleases instead of what God says. It is a portrait of chaos and confusion, a tool in the hands of the Devil to blind the *"minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them"* (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Jesus did not plant denominationalism and it *"shall be rooted up"* (Matthew 15:13). Its worship is ostentatious and mechanical, its kingdom hope is material, and its laws are ritualistic and traditional. David said, *"I hate every false way"* (Psalm 119:128). Let us love the people, but loathe the system. Israel was to discern between things holy and profane (Ezekiel 22:26). Christians need to perceive the grave distinction between the church set forth in the New Testament and denominationalism. There is a great difference.

IS ONE CHURCH AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?

Dalton Key

WHILE LIVING UPON THIS EARTH, Jesus promised, *"... I will build my church...."* (Matthew 16:18). What did He intend to build?

Did the Lord plan to establish a denomination? No. A denomination, by definition, is a named part of a larger whole. The scores of denominational bodies around us, which claim at least some allegiance to Christ, purport to exist as but parts or units of the larger, universal body of Christians. They are distinguished one from another by peculiar doctrines and practices. Christ could not have had a denomination in mind when He promised to build His church, for that which He built was to be, not a part of a larger whole of redeemed people, but the whole itself. After the church was established on Pentecost Day, as recorded by Luke in the second chapter of Acts, the saved were being added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:47). If the saved were in the church, and the church was meant to

be made up of those saved, the church could not possibly have been designed as a part or unit of a larger whole.

No, the church which Jesus promised to build is simply the body of people saved by the blood of Christ and who submit to Him as the body's head. Because all those who obey the Gospel and are saved are added to the church, "*There is one body....*" (Ephesians 4:4). Wherever and whenever faithful saints are found, who have received salvation from sin by the grace of God at the time of their Gospel obedience, the church may be found. As the body of Christ, operating under His headship (Ephesians 1:22,23), the church of Christ must submit itself to His divine will in all matters pertaining to work and worship (Ephesians 5:24; Colossians 3:17). The church which Jesus built is both singular and exclusively His.

In light of these facts, who can honestly say, "One church is just as good as another"?

The Vine and the Branches

O.P. Baird

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (John 15:1-8).

The symbolism used by Jesus, as recorded in this passage, is similar to the symbolism in several Old Testament passages. God's people are referred to as His vine which He brought out of Egypt

and planted in the land after driving the nations out (Psalm 80:8-11). In Isaiah 5:7 we read, *"For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant..."* The same symbolism is found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. God looked for fruit from His vine, but the people were disobedient.

God said, *"...I had planted a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?"* (Jeremiah 2:21). The only purpose of a vine is to bear fruit. If it doesn't bear fruit, it is fit only to be thrown on the fire and burned. That is the thought in Ezekiel 15:1-8.

Under the old covenant the people of God were the vine of God. Christ was the Word who was with God and was God in the beginning (John 1:1). Being divine, He was possessor of the vine. After He *"became flesh"* (John 1:14) He said, *"I am the true vine and My Father is the vine dresser"* (John 15:1). He also said, *"I am the vine, you are the branches"* (John 15:5). Christians are in the vine because they are in Christ (Galatians 3:26, 27; Romans 6:3,4).

The life of the branches comes from the vine. If the branch is to bear fruit it must remain in the vine. If we are to bear fruit to the glory of God we must be in Christ and must remain in Him. That is why Jesus said, *"He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire and they are burned"* (John 15:5,6).

The purpose of a vine is to bear fruit, and it is as natural for that to happen as it is for the sun to shine. Those in Christ have experienced a new birth and are new and different in their nature from what they were before they were in Christ. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Christian is a *"partaker of the divine nature"* (2 Peter 1:3,4).

The fruit that God wants to see in us is obedience to all that He teaches us to be and do. This is described in many Scriptures. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"* (Galatians 5:22,23). Paul told the Christians at Colossae, *"We do not cease to pray...that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God"* (Colossians 1:9,10).

Of course, a very important fruit is the salvation of souls through preaching of the Gospel. To the Christians at Rome, Paul wrote,

"...I often planned to come to you...that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles" (Romans 1:13). Paul was a very fruitful branch, giving his life to the preaching of the Gospel, but every branch—every Christian—must keep increasing in the knowledge of God's Word and then putting that knowledge into practice to produce fruit to the glory of God.

FOLLOWING JESUS

Wayne Barrier

MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE THEMSELVES to be followers of Jesus. A person could make no better choice in living from day to day than to follow the example and teachings of Jesus. The way to eternal life is through following Jesus (John 3:15,16; 14:6). Although the way that Jesus leads the Christian is the best possible life, it is not described as easy. Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 16:24,25, *"If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."* Jesus demands a degree of commitment and dedication from His followers that goes beyond most of our normal experiences with "following" a particular person's guidance, advice, teaching, or counseling. Consider again the words of Jesus recorded in Luke 9:57-62:

"Now as it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to him, 'Lord I will follow you wherever you go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' Then he said to another, 'Follow me.' But he said, 'Lord let me first go and bury my father.' Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.' And another also said, 'Lord I will follow you, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.' But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.'"

Also consider the teaching of the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:1-3 concerning our walk with Christ: *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep*

the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Jesus will lead us through this life to everlasting life in heaven. The way is narrow and difficult, (Matthew 7:13,14), but we are promised help along the way from Jesus (Matthew 28:20), and heaven is our reward for enduring until the end (Revelation 2:10).

SPECIAL MUSIC

Curtis Dowdy

YOU HEAR MUCH TALK TODAY concerning "special music". Tragically, most of the talk is only "talk". There is little study, less thought, little or no Bible. The very term "special music" alarms. Is other music normal, ordinary?

Dr. Gerald Bouma, a professor of music at Westmont College, arrested my attention. He strives to answer the question, "What is, 'Special Music'?" He notices that it is:

- * **when the congregation is reduced to an audience.**
- * **when church music is reduced to entertainment.** He recognizes entertainment **when the audience is moved to applaud, when the participants become performers.** He adds, **when the music is offered to the congregation, not by it.**
- * **when the pressure to have such music is from people, not God.** He observes, **"People like it."** He concludes that such music **amuses, impresses, satisfies the audience.**

Do not re-route the adoration from God to the performer.

You see, "Special Music" focuses upon *emotions*, not *ideas*. Emotions are limited. They cannot discern between causes, reason, differences. Emotions seldom grasp the big picture. "Special Music" reduces worship to a TV variety show wherein the members of the audience are receivers, not givers. A mass of people with mass impulses will always avoid pain, sacrifice, and dedication. The holiness of God and the redemption of man are lost in the attitude of spiritual immaturity among the worshipers. In other words, "Special Music" is a mode of escapism.

Real, true worship is hard work. Only true worshipers actually worship. True worship demands preparation and participation. Paradoxically, "Special Music" allows members to avoid worship while thinking all the while that they are worshipping.

MARY'S WORSHIP

Gary C. Hampton

WHILE WE SHOULD CERTAINLY involve ourselves in corporate worship, it is important to realize that God's acceptance of one's worship is ultimately dependent on the heart and practice of the individual. Each of us must prostrate himself/herself before the Almighty God who sent His Son to die that we might live. We must do so from the heart and in accord with His will (John 4:24). Hopefully, a review of the beautiful story of Mary's anointing of the Lord will highlight important facts about worship and help each of us to grow (John 12:1-8; Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9).

As W.T. Hamilton noted in his book, **Show Us the Father**, Mary's gift was *an expression of gratitude*. After all, she had been blessed with opportunities to sit at the feet of our Lord and hear His Word. Too, Jesus had raised her brother Lazarus from the dead just hours before. It was fitting that she would anoint His head and feet with the sweet smelling oil called spikenard. Similarly, each who has recognized his own sinfulness and the terrible consequences of those sins must surely be drawn to express his thanks to the One who gave His life to redeem us (Romans 3:10,23; 6:23; 1 Peter 1:18,19)! As Paul put it, *"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you"* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Mary's gift was also *sacrificial*. Judas Iscariot said the fragrant oil could have been sold for 300 denarii. In Matthew 20, Jesus told the parable of the workers in the vineyard. The men hired by the landowner in the morning were promised a denarius a day for their labors. It seems logical to conclude that Mary's gift was equal to 300 days' wages! Significantly, she did not just place a drop or two of the oil on her fingers and apply it to the head of Jesus, as would have been customary. Instead, she broke open the vial and used *all of its contents* on Jesus' head and feet. The flow was so abundant that she used her hair to wipe the excess off the Lord's feet. John reports *"the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil."* It would certainly be appropriate for today's worshipper to sacrificially give of himself to the Lord who gave His life to set him free from sin (Romans 12:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9:15)!

Sadly, Mary's service was also *criticized*. Judas appears to have been the first to say that the expensive oil should have been sold

and the money given to the poor. John lets his readers know that Judas was not really concerned about the poor, but selfishly sought a fattening of the money box which he used for his own purposes. Unfortunately, once the criticism had begun, others joined in, saying that Mary had wasted the oil (Mark 14:4,5). Critics and dissenters will often be joined, even by those who, like Barnabas, have formerly been great at encouraging others (Galatians 2:11-13). Yet, like Mary, the criticism should not keep us from offering our gift to the Savior!

Of course, Mary's worship was *unique*. According to Jesus, "*She has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.*" In other words, Mary had actually come to anoint Jesus' body for the burial while He was still alive (John 12:4,5; Mark 14:8)! Nicodemus brought about a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes to use in wrapping the body of the Lord after His death, but only Mary anointed the Master while He could still smell the beautiful fragrance! While our worship may not be unique, it can show our desire to be a spiritual fragrance, drawing people to the Savior.

Most importantly, Mary's act of service was *accepted by the Lord*. This is evident from the statements recorded by Mark. Jesus said, "*She has done a good work for Me.*" He also said, "*She has done what she could.*" Then, in what has to be one of the most powerful compliments ever extended by the Lord, He told the disciples, "*Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the whole world, what this woman did will also be spoken of as a memorial to her*" (Mark 14: 6,8,9). It is important to observe that this comment came from the One to whom her act of worship had been directed.

For us, the objective should be the same. Worship is an individual's way of honoring the Lord, and finally, it should be done in a way that is acceptable to Him!

DIFFERENT CROSSES

Vance Hutton

MATTHEW 27 PRESENTS THE DREADFUL scene of three crucifixions. Two were crucified for being thieves in their past. One, our Lord, had done no sin. He was a man of no faults at all. It was awful that Jesus had to suffer as He did for us [Galatians 2:20], but

we must truly ever be thankful for that scene. In trying to get to heaven, I find common ground with all three of these crucifixions. One reveals rebellion; one reveals repentance; one reveals redemption. Every person seeking heaven must come to terms with rebellion, repentance, and redemption. Let us notice these three crosses.

1. The Cross of Rebellion

We all offend in many things: *"For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body"* [James 3:2]. We often transgress the boundary of that which is lawful before God: *"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness"* [1 John 3:4]. There is not a righteous man on the face of the earth who does only good and does not sin. All have sinned. There is non-righteous, no not one, and all have fallen short [Romans 3:10,23]. If we say we have no sin, then we are deceived [1 John 1:8], and if we say we have not sinned, we make the Lord a liar, and His word is not in us. There are evil thoughts, unjustified words, wicked deeds and good thoughts left unthought and good words left unspoken and good deeds left undone. I find common ground with the men who had sinned. We too must come to grips with rebellion against God.

2. The Cross of Repentance

One of the thieves railed on our Lord in the closing moments of his life. The other thief accepted their punishment as reaping that which they had sown, and then from all we can gather from the holy word, he repented and asked the Lord for the favor of being remembered when the Lord came into His kingdom: *"Then he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into your kingdom"* [Luke 23:42]. The next verse recalls the words of Jesus, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." I hope we find common ground with this man. He that confesses his sins and forsakes them shall be blessed by the Lord. Repent and be baptized: *"Then peter said to them, repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38). Repent and be converted. Repent and pray. God commands all men everywhere to repent. Man must turn away from sin or perish. If we confess our faults. *"if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).

3. The Cross of Redemption

Again, we all are on common ground; we have need of redemption. We have redemption in Christ through his blood: *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"* (Ephesians 1:7). Man is offered redemption through that precious blood. Outside of Christ we are without God and without hope, but Christ brings us near by His blood. He is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:1,2). He tasted death for all. God gave Him that we might live. He gave Himself that He might redeem us (buy us from all sin and purify us as a people of His own possession) *"...who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works"* (Titus 2:14). This gift is held up and offered to all who will receive it. How sad that man will not come that they might have life.

Where are you, dear friend, in relationship to these three crosses? Are you living in rebellion, or are you a person of repentance? Do you know redemption?

The High Cost Of Sin

Dayton Keesee

THE PENDULUM SWING OF PERMISSIVENESS and the attorney's appeal pattern as a way of avoiding justice and punishment have deceived so many hearts that a mass of mankind is fully set on doing evil (see Ecclesiastes 8:11). This article relates to that caliber of creature.

We swim in a sea of uncertainties and unfairness. Every day some soul is gunned down, knocked down, or run around, subtly hooked on the harmful, peer-pressured into problems, or becomes disturbed in another domestic disaster. Irresponsibility reigns in the work place, where some people keep a better record of days off than of duties, want their rights to do wrong, and threaten to sue if anyone dares to question their lazy, loafing, or slovenly style of service (see Colossians 3:22-25).

Wake up world! Sin suffers and promiscuity has a price tag! Freeloaders on the road of life end up as captured creatures and hooked humans rather than being fun-filled folks! That assessment

rests not on speculation, but on revelation and reality! Listen to the law that will outlast heaven and earth (Matthew 24:35).

"You have sinned against Jehovah, and be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). ***"We commanded you, if any will not work, neither let him eat"*** (2 Thessalonians 3:10). ***"These also withstand the truth; men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be evident to all men"*** (2 Timothy 3:8,9). ***"Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption..."*** (Galatians 6:7ff).

May we be sobered by the sentence Scripture imposes on sin and sinners, selecting rather the grace and goodness of God that saves souls through His Son (read carefully 1 John 4:14; Hebrews 5:8ff; Mark 16:15ff; John 14:15; Matthew 28:18-20).

... And If He Repent ...

Tim Nichols

AS A SINFUL AND UNDESERVING man stands before the God of heaven and earth and solicits forgiveness for his sins, he must do so with a perfect willingness to forgive his fellowman of all trespasses of which he will repent (Matthew 11:25). If the offending brother has created great distress; if he has been negligent to repent after repeated warnings; even if he has been properly disfellowshipped by the Lord's people for his offense—he is to be forgiven when he tells us that he has repented.

"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:3,4).

After seven offenses in one day, one might come to suspect that the repeated expressions of repentance are not genuine. We might be tempted to assume, and to act upon the assumption, that the repetition of offenses implies a lack of intention to cease them. But, in keeping with the consistent Biblical principle that it is our duty to judge *observable actions* rather than *hearts*, it is our duty and need to forgive. God alone knows the hearts of men, and He will bar the gates of heaven against those whose declarations of

repentance are hypocritical. Our obligation is to forgive. Notice that our Lord instructs us, under such circumstances, to take heed to ourselves. There is need for the one who has been wronged to be careful that he does not become the one *doing* wrong by failing to receive the one who has confessed his sin and repented.

Who can say what positive and good effect our forgiveness might have upon those who have obtained it through deceit when they see that the children of God are serious about living according to His ways? Since it is true that the goodness of God leads men to repent (Romans 2:4), it follows that the goodness of His people, which is but one expression of the goodness of God, would potentially have the same effect upon those whose hard hearts can be softened by kindness. It may be that forgiveness could have the effect of drawing forth true repentance where none had been. We are, therefore, both obedient to our Lord and potentially helpful to one lost in sin when we refrain from judging the *motive* of one who tells us that he has repented. *"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"* (Ephesians 4:32).

The apostolic penman who rebuked the Corinthian brethren for their failure to withdraw from the openly sinful brother among them, and that guided them to jointly *"deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"* (1 Corinthians 5:4,5), is the same inspired penman who later—after the brother had repented—admonished them to forgive him, to comfort him, and to confirm their love toward him. The goal was redemption, not vengeance.

"Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:6-11).

Notice once again that the instructions given to the Corinthians to withdraw from the sinning brother and *then to forgive* him upon his repentance were given, not only for the benefit of the erring

brother (who needed to repent in order to go to heaven), but also in order to test the willingness of the *Corinthian saints* to obey God in all things. They would have disobeyed God if they had failed to discipline the brother, and they would have also disobeyed if they had failed to forgive him upon learning of his repentance. Satan has divisive “devices” that he is prepared to use at such a time (anger, malice, etc.), and we can only avoid being subject to them if we know of them and avoid them. The Corinthians apparently passed both tests and demonstrated that truth and love must always be joined together.

In our vigilant stand for the truth may we never forget that the truth directs us to love one another and to forgive. *“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye”* (Colossians 3:13).

Today Will Be Yesterday Tomorrow

Willard Collins

TIME IS SO FLEETING THAT today will be yesterday tomorrow, and this process of change does not take very long. Life is so short.

I recently noticed a large sign in front of a church building which read, “Today Will Be Yesterday Tomorrow.” This truth should make each of us determine to live well today. However, some people ruin the present because of worry over what may happen tomorrow.

During World War II an acquaintance of mine told me that his wife was about to drive him to distraction. The draft was rapidly calling men into the armed forces, and his wife thought he would receive his call any day. Every morning when he left for work she would cry and say, “I won’t get to tell you goodbye many more mornings because you will be gone to the Army.” The next morning another day would begin in the same way. When this man had about decided to volunteer for the Army because of this condition at home, the wife realized how miserable she was making his life. Then she said, “You may be called any day, but until that time comes, I am going to live well each day so we may enjoy our associations.” It so happened that this particular man was never drafted.

Jesus taught His disciples the value of living well one day at a time when He said, *“Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto*

the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:34). Paul continued this theme when he taught, *"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God"* (Philippians 4:6).

Life comes to each individual one day at a time. A. M. Burton, president-emeritus of the Life and Casualty Insurance Company of Nashville, described this plan of God in his book, **The Sunday Visitor**. Burton wrote: "Life does not come to us in lifetimes; it only comes a day at a time. Even tomorrow is never ours until it becomes today. Do today's duty, fight today's temptation; do not weaken or distract yourself by looking forward to things you cannot see."

John Ruskin wrote of filling each day to its brim when he penned, "Let every dawn of morning be to you as the beginning of life and each setting sun be to you as its close."

A GOOD LOOK AT SELF

Since today will be yesterday tomorrow, each of us needs to take a daily look at self. I once noticed a printed poem hanging on the wall of a home. This poem vividly teaches the need of daily inspection.

"I have to live with myself,
And so I want to be fit for myself to know.
I want to be able, as the days go by,
Always to look myself in the eye.
I don't want to stand with the setting sun
And hate myself for the things I have done.
I can never hide myself from me;
I see what others may never see;
I know what others may never know;
I can't hide myself,
And so whatever happens,
I want to be self-respecting and conscience free."

The will of God should be the standard by which we measure ourselves. Christ gave the pattern to His disciples when He said of God's will, *"And he that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him"* (John 8:29).

A Massive Mission

Lewis G. Hale

IT IS SO EASY TO casually read the Great Commission: *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15). Christ was speaking to men who had witnessed His death for the sins of the world. They were also witnesses of His resurrection. They are now charged with the mission of going throughout the world and telling this story to every creature. We cannot be sure they were totally aware of the magnitude of their mission. We have strong evidence that they did not realize it included the Gentile world. Peter learned that when he was sent to preach to Cornelius and his household. Even when the Jewish leaders agreed to receive Gentiles, they wanted it on their terms. They insisted that Gentiles first become "Jews" (by being circumcised), and then they could be received into the Christian faith.

Are we aware that the Great Commission is still in effect? It will be until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). It is just as necessary that we preach the Gospel to every creature as it was for the apostles. Men are still lost. The Gospel is still God's power to save. *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"* (Romans 10:14). What is the solution? *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17).

When churches are content to "keep house for God," meet to sing a few songs, pray a few prayers, hear a sermon on current events, take communion, give a token offering, go home and put religion on the shelf for another week, they unquestionably have no notion of the massive mission with which they are charged.

Our assemblies are an essential part of God's plan. Worship is vital. God is to be praised. But God is also to be honored by the proclamation of the Gospel to lost men. Men may refuse to hear. That is between *them* and God. They may hear and refuse

to heed. That is still between *them* and God. But the responsibility to *help* them hear is *ours*, between *us* and God.

Be aware of your mission and fulfil it.

OUR GREATEST NEED

Ron Bryant

JUSTICE IS GETTING WHAT WE DESERVE. Mercy is *not* getting what we deserve. Grace is getting what we could *never* deserve. The Hebrews writer speaks of the "*throne of God*" and calls it a "*throne of grace*." The child of God is urged to come to the throne of God in time of need, that he might find "*mercy and help*" (Hebrews 4:14-16). In fact, we are urged, "*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*"

Many fail to realize that mercy is the mode of God's actions toward each person. It is the mode of the Divine goodness even to the evil and the unworthy. Because we have sinned and have come short of the glory of God, we desperately need the mercy of God. When sin became a reality, mercy became a necessity. Mercy implies the suspending of censure or condemnation to people who justly deserve to receive the same. No sinner wants what he deserves. In time of need (testing, failing, etc.) no person wants what he deserves. And more wonderful still, the compassionate God desires that we in our weakness and desperate need receive His mercy and grace. He is a kind and compassionate God who desires to deal gently and forgivingly with each person. God's desire is the bestowing of His mercy and grace.

No one merits the blessing of God's mercy; in our transgressions we have forfeited our standing, and we deserve His wrath. We can lay no claim to *the right of God's mercy*, but we *can* receive it. Not only can we receive mercy, we *can live* in God's mercy. In and through Christ the child of God can even "*come boldly unto the throne of grace*." God's mercy stands to enable us to be confident in our walk with Him, even (especially) in our times of need.
