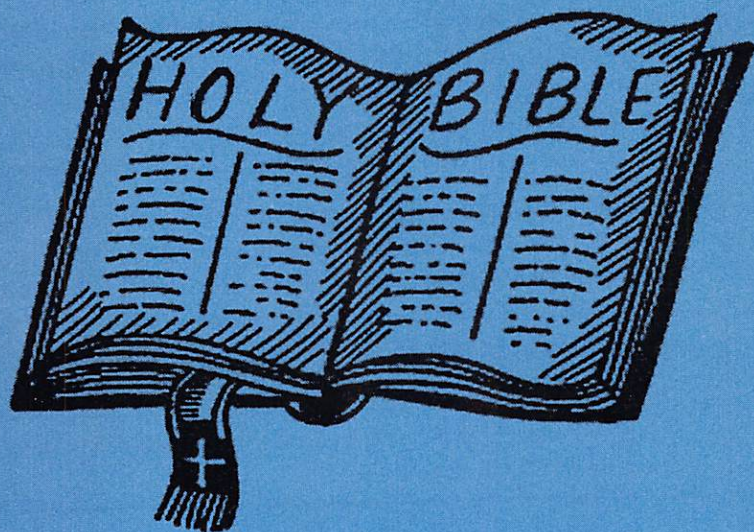


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# THE BIBLE TEACHER



## ***Our Plea***

### ***Let the Truth Prevail***

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18; Col. 1:18). That congregations of the one church of the Bible everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the Church. (1 Corinthians 1:10; John 20:20, 21).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands to be saved are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His Spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, and Christians only, after His name alone, with no Prefixes or Suffixes, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men which contain doctrines and commandments of men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

**Vol. 50**

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## *Editorial*

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

#### *God Is The Source Of True Happiness*

THIS IS THE TIME of the year when the word "Happy" is used by almost all people everywhere. All wish to be happy. No one likes pain and sorrow. Yet the fact of life is that the world is full of pain and sorrows and suffering everywhere. Not only there are all kinds of diseases which affects humanity everywhere or natural calamities which suddenly happen and destroy and kill millions, but there is so much hatred and violence prevailing in every place. People, whom God, in the beginning made in His own likeness (Genesis 1:26, 27), are killing and destroying one another. The cause of all human suffering is sin. Whether it is our own sin that causes us to suffer or sins of others that bring suffering upon us, because we are a part of this great human family. (Genesis 3:17-19). The fact of the matter is that while we all wish to be happy, the reality is that we all live in the shadow of pain and sorrow, suffering and death. Anything can happen any time to any one of us. Like the Patriarch Job in the long ago wrote, "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue." (Job 14:1-2).

While sin is the source of all unhappiness on earth. God of heaven is the source of true happiness. He did not create man in the beginning to suffer but to be happy and to live forever with Him.



Man's suffering and death originates with his sin. (Genesis 2:16-17). Yet, to make man happy, God came down on earth from heaven in the form of Jesus Christ His only begotten Son. Who said, "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:31). Man's sin is the cause of all human suffering, death and hell. Jesus Christ through His death on the cross for the sinners, by the will and foreknowledge of God, became the propitiation for the sins of the world. So we read, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10). "For the wages of sin is death," we read in Romans 6:23, "but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." The good news, for the suffering and dying humanity is: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). After His death for the sinners and resurrection from the dead on the third day, when He was returning back to the Father in heaven, He told His disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16). To be saved means to be free from sin and the wages of sin. In Christ one becomes a new person. (2 Corinthians 5:17). To such, Christ promised, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:1-3). What a joy it will be to live with God in heaven forever! "Thanks be to God", therefore, "for His indescribable gift." (2 Corinthians 9:15). Let this cause us to be happy today and always.



## *Do We All Receive The Baptism Of The Holy Spirit?*

**J.C. Choate**

MANY BELIEVE THAT all who obey the Lord receive, or *should receive*, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Believing this, they conclude that this gives them the

power to do miraculous things as the apostles did in their day. To convince themselves and others of this, they attempt to prove that the 120 believers of Acts 1:15 received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, even as the apostles did, in Acts 2:1-4.

***Please consider these questions and answers:***

**1. Who was promised the Comforter or the Holy Spirit before the Lord's departure from this world?**

ANSWER: Speaking to the *apostles*, Christ said, "*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send **unto you** from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, **because ye have been with me from the beginning***" [not every person of the 120 had been with Christ from the beginning] (John 15: 26,27). Again, speaking to the eleven apostles who were gathered with Him (Acts 1:2,4) on the Mount of Olives just before His ascension to heaven, Jesus said, "*And, behold, I will send the promise of my Father **upon you**; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until you be endued with power from on high*" (Luke 24:49). Also read Acts 1:8.

**2. Did the 120 disciples of Acts 1 receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?**

ANSWER: Reading through the first and second chapters of Acts, one can readily see that the apostles were the focal point. The original text of the Scriptures was not divided into chapters and verses. It read, from Acts 1:26 concerning Matthias, the man chosen to replace Judas, that "*he was numbered with the **eleven apostles**. Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, **they** [the apostles] were all with one accord in one place...and they were **all** [the apostles] filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave **them** utterance...*" (Acts 2:1,4).

The listeners marveled at hearing these varied languages, and they asked, "*Look, are not **all these who speak Galileans?***" (v. 7) Not all the 120 would have been Galileans, but *the apostles* were from Galilee. They were the ones who had been promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and they were the ones who received Him in this miraculous way.

**3. Was "*the gift of the Holy Spirit*", as promised to the multitude in Acts 2:38, the same as the *miraculous baptism of the Holy Spirit*?**

ANSWER: No, it was simply the giving of the Holy Spirit Himself, *the renewal of spiritual life within the obedient*, given to all who are scripturally baptized (Acts 5:32).



**4. Some people think that on the day of Pentecost all believers received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the accompanying power to do miracles. If so, why was it necessary for *the apostles* to lay their hands on the seven disciples chosen for special service in Acts 6:3-6, in order for them to have miraculous power?**

ANSWER: Actually, only the apostles had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, while all others had been baptized only in water, receiving the forgiveness of their sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, only the apostles had the power to do miracles. Neither the 120 of Acts 1:15 nor the 3000 of Acts 2:41 *had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the apostles had.*

Yet in Acts 6:1-8, when the apostles asked that seven good men be chosen to serve the people, they designated that they be "*men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom....*" It is clear that these men had already received the Holy Spirit—the *gift of the Holy Spirit as promised in Acts 2:38*—the non-miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit; but they had not received any *miraculous power*. It was only after these men were chosen, and the apostles laid their hands on them, that they were able to perform miracles! (Acts 6:8; 8:5,6).

**5. Today, do believers in Christ receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?**

ANSWER: No. Because that special baptism was promised and given only to the apostles (representing the Jewish people) and to Cornelius and his household (representative of Gentiles, Acts 10). Other than these, there are no instances of Holy Spirit baptism recorded in the Scriptures. The apostles could select **certain worthy ones** and **lay their hands on them**, giving them **individual miraculous gifts**, but **those people could not give the gifts to others** (Acts 6:6; 8:14-17). We see this truth in Acts 5:12 "*And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people....*" and in Acts 8:15: "*when they [the apostles] were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:*" This limited the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit to the first century, in the infancy of the church, while the Scriptures were in the process of being written and confirmed by the miraculous power of the writers (Mark 16:20).

**6. What do people receive today when they are baptized?**

ANSWER: When we obey the Lord, we receive the promised *gift of the Holy Spirit—God's Spirit, dwelling within us and giving us*

*spiritual life*—as recorded in Acts 2:38 and Romans 8:9-11, which involves no miraculous power.

Why do we not receive miraculous power today? Because we have the confirmed Word of God to guide us (Mark 16:20; John 20:30, 31), and faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), not through seeing a miracle. Historically, all pagan religions have claimed the power of miracles. We cannot go everywhere to prove or disprove claims. Truly, the “more excellent” way, as promised in 1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:8-10—is God’s perfect written Word—the New Testament.

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## *Jesus Was Born Of A Virgin*

**Max Patterson**

IN MATTHEW 1:23, the New Testament tells us, “*Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son...*” It is just the simple fact that is stated. Mary had never been with a man, not even Joseph. She was pure and chaste, exactly what we would expect from one who was to be the mother of the Son of God.

The virgin birth is a wonderful miracle, a miracle that is incomprehensible to those who do not understand the power of God. After all, it is impossible for a woman to be with child without the aid of a man. This is simply the way it was designed by the Lord from the beginning. There has never been another virgin birth.

There are other statements in the Scripture that support the virgin birth. In Matthew 2:20, Matthew quotes the instructions of the angel to Joseph, after the death of Herod: “*Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Egypt.*” This carefully worded instruction acknowledges the fact that Mary was the mother of Jesus, but Joseph was not the father.

There are occasions in Scripture when Jesus is referred to as the son of Joseph (and Mary), but these were quotes of statements made by those who would naturally think He was the son of Joseph, or cases where Joseph and Mary were thought to be Jesus’ parents in the normal, natural sense.

To say in Matthew 2:20 that Mary is the mother of Jesus (but not mention Joseph as the father) is completely consistent with the prophecies of the Old Testament (Isaiah 7:14), as well as those

statements made in the New Testament concerning Jesus, that He would be born of a virgin (Matthew 1; Luke 1).

The complete harmony and integrated support of Scripture for Scripture, even in the smallest details, is an evidence of inspiration. In these bold and uncompromising statements we have Heaven's revelation about how the most remarkable man in all the Bible came to be upon the earth.

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## ***SPIRITUAL SECURITY Of The Faithful Christian***

***(Romans 8:1,14; 1 John 5:12,13)***

**Don L. Norwood**

IN THE GOSPEL of John, chapter 17, Jesus prayed for His disciples. First He prayed for the Apostles and then He included **all** who would believe on Him through **their word**, through the teaching they would do by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. (See John 14:26 and John 16:13). Jesus said in verses 1 through 3 of John 17 that to have eternal life *one must know the Father and Jesus Christ whom the Father did send*. Then John wrote in 1 John 2:3 that one can *know God* only by *obeying His commandments*.

When an alien sinner comes to believe the gospel and truly repents, confesses Christ as Lord and is baptized in the name of Christ (meaning by His authority) then that person is saved (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:8-10; Acts 8:35-39; Gal. 3:26-29). In Christ and walking by the Spirit (which means to continue to learn and then do what the Bible, the Lord's *word*, teaches) that person is *above condemnation*. We read in Romans 8:1, "*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*"

John wanted Christians to know and understand how they could always *maintain* fellowship with God and stay in a saved condition (1 John 1:1-10; 2:1-5). In this context he pointed out that if the Christian would, "*...walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*" Remember Jesus had said, "*I am the light of the world and he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life*" (John 8:12). To walk in the light as He is in the



light simply means to *learn* and *do* what His word teaches us. If one will honestly do this to the best of his ability all the time he can be safe and indeed have eternal life.

Now as long as one lives in the flesh he will sin from time to time (Romans 7:14-25; 8:1) and when he does and realizes it, if he will repent, confess his sin and pray for God's forgiveness, God will forgive and Jesus' blood will wash him to pureness again. This is what he said in 1 John 1:7-9; Romans 7:24,25; 8:1. Also see James 5:16 and Acts 8:22.

If a Christian willfully sins and abandons his faith in the Lord, he will not be forgiven unless he truly repents and returns with the attitude and action expressed in Jesus' story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. To willfully sin and not repent cuts one off from the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:26). One can practice disobedience to God until he hardens himself and will never repent (Hebrews 6:1-6; Hebrews 3:12-14; 2 Peter 2:20ff).

All Christians need to remember that God does not want any of us to be lost (2 Peter 3:9). This verse says that He is "*longsuffering, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance...*" This means that God will give us ample time to see our error and repent, if only we will repent. But He also warns that Jesus will come like a thief in the night when none are expecting him (Matthew 24:42ff). Should this happen, or if death came to one suddenly, with the person knowing that he has not repented and has neglected his soul, he will be lost (Matthew 24:42ff; Hebrews 2:1-4). He will be lost, *not because God did not give him ample time to repent*, but because the Christian himself neglected his own salvation.

Remember also that one's conscience will always approve of what one *thinks* is right. This is why a person must be directed by the word of the Lord in order to be right. So a Christian should do as Paul said he did, "*In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men*" (Acts 24:16).

The prevailing attitude of our hearts should be as King David's was: "*...because David did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life...*" (1 Kings 15:5 and 1 Kings 14:8 also Acts 13:22).

# *The Main Issue In The Church Is* **AUTHORITY**

**Maxie B. Boren**

IT SEEMS TO me there is one *vitaly important* matter that has become obscured in the midst of brotherhood differences and controversies: **Have we perhaps lost sight of whose church it is?**

Surely we would all agree that the Bible is the revealed will of Almighty God to mankind (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and that in the Bible God plainly tells us to heed His Son (Matthew 17:5), to whom He has given **all authority** (Matthew 28:18)!

During His personal ministry, Jesus said, *"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). The rock upon which Christ said He would build His church was the truth of His divinity—that indeed He was (yes, is!) the Son of God (see verse 16)! Jesus affirmed that not even death would be able to prevail against His church! In fact, Jesus prevailed over death, and by His resurrection undeniable proof of His deity was clearly declared (Romans 1:4). Ascending back to the Father, He was given all power and dominion, and God *"put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all"* (Ephesians 1:21-23; see also 1 Peter 3:22). This was in direct fulfillment of the vision Daniel saw, recorded in Daniel 7:13-14:

*"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.*

*Then to Him was given **dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.** His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed."*

He did establish on earth the church of which He spoke, having its beginning in the city of Jerusalem on the first Pentecost day (i.e., a Jewish feast day—Leviticus 23:15-16, also called "feast of weeks," or "feast of harvest"—Exodus 34:22) following His resurrection (Acts 2). This "setting up of the kingdom" took place even as the prophets of old had foretold it would (see such passages as Isaiah 2:1-2 and

Daniel 2:44, etc.).

Christ is the head of His church, and He is to have all the preeminence in it (Colossians 1:18). Thus, whatever we do, in word or in deed, it is to be done by His authority (Colossians 3:17).

Therefore, whatever the subject might we argue over, we had all better keep in mind whose **church** it is! On the matter of **worship**, let us listen to Christ and His inspired apostles (John 4:23-24; 1 Corinthians 14:40). On the matter of **doctrine**, let us listen to Christ (John 8:31-32; Mark 7:6-9; 2 John 9-11). On the matter of the **undenominational nature of the church**, read the book of Ephesians—there is but **one true church!** And that **one church** belongs to Christ! Let us not forget this truth !

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## ***It's A Miracle!***

**Stan Mitchell**

*Father: "What did you learn in Sunday School this morning?"*

*Son: "We learned about how Moses, went behind enemy lines to rescue the Jews from the Egyptians. Moses ordered the engineers to build a pontoon bridge. After the Israelites had crossed, he sent bombers back to blow up the bridge and the Egyptian tanks that were following them. And then..."*

**Father:** "Did your teacher really tell it like that?"

**Son:** "No, but if I told you what he did say, you would never believe it!"

THE STORY OF Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea certainly is amazing. And there are of course many stories like it in the Bible. Little "Johnny" will learn very soon of the day when the sun and the moon stood still at Joshua's command, and when an axe head floated for Elisha's benefit. There will be the matter of 5,000 people who were fed with 5 loaves and 2 fish.

Of course intelligent readers on the verge of the 21st Century are far too sophisticated to believe in actual miracles. With half an eye on skeptical friends and colleagues, they try to rationally explain away the miracles. Jesus was walking on a sandbank hidden from the sight of the Apostles, you see, and in the dim light of evening they jumped to the conclusion that He was walking on water. And Scriptures are not literally inspired by the Spirit of God; they are, instead, the embellished accounts of an adoring church about their teacher and master, Jesus of Nazareth.

I remember listening to a professor in graduate school on this subject once. The specific incident we were studying was the story of Elisha's axe, rising like a cork to the surface of the water (2 Kings 6:1-6).

One bright student raised his hand, and asked, "Professor, wouldn't you say that this story is better understood as a metaphor, for whatever spiritual lesson the writer wanted to draw for his readers, rather than taking it literally, as if the axe head floated by magic?"

I'll never forget what the professor said: "Jim," (or whatever his name was), "I start with the resurrection of Jesus. If I can accept that God raised Jesus from the dead, then I may as well accept all the claims of miraculous power the Bible makes."

I don't believe in magic, or Santa Claus, or your friendly neighborhood psychic. But I do believe in an incomparable God, the creator of heaven and earth, and the Father of our savior, Jesus Christ. Not the least of His miracles is the mercy, outrageous and absolute, which He offers each of us. It was secured on a cross one afternoon almost two thousand years ago, and that is definitely a story **you wouldn't believe, unless you were told** about it by God Himself! "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16).

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## ANYONE FOR TRUTH?

**David Deffenbaugh**

OUR WORLD HAS little regard for truth. Sad, but true. Actually much more than sad, it is *a tragedy* of immense proportions. Truth is very much the cornerstone of God's interaction with mankind, so as to affect their salvation. Speaking of Jesus, John wrote, "*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14). If Jesus is the very embodiment of truth, truth cannot be minimized without minimizing Jesus.

Still, popular efforts at religion very often provide *truth* little more than lip service. Of higher priority are *emotional experience* and *personal fulfillment*. The approach en vogue in modern religious circles is a "market driven" mentality. The way to attract people to "church" is to give them what they want. The "model" church most often emulated in this regard in America was started by surveying

neighborhoods to find out what people wanted, and a church was devised to fit those criteria.

Yet, **it is to truth** that we are called. *“Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart”* (Proverbs 3:3). So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, *“If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and **you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free**”* (John 8:31,32).

One is compelled at some point to ask, “Why?” Why is truth so devalued? Why is truth of such little concern? One reason must certainly be the fact that truth is not easy. As Simon Weil has expressed, “Work is needed to express what is true; also to receive what is true. We can express and receive what is false, or at least what is superficial without any work” (quoted by A. J. Conyers, “Rescuing Tolerance” First Things, August/September 2001, p. 45). Unquestionably, ours is a world that wants the easy, the convenient, and the effortless. Such is not the nature of truth. Were it so, Pilate would not have had to ask regarding its identity (John 18:38). He would have already known. And if truth were easy, all men would be free (John 8:32).

One final admonition from the wise man, *“Buy truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom and instruction and understanding”* (Proverbs 23:23). But be ready: not only is truth not easy; it’s not cheap.

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## HOW DOES ONE BECOME A “SAINT”?

**Hoyt Hathcock**

**IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, we read of “saints”:** *“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossee...”* (Colossians 1:2).

For the most prolific writer of the New Testament, the usage of “saint” relative to Christians was a common thing. He used the word not only in addressing the church at Colossee, but also regarding believers in Christ Jesus in the books of Philippians, Thessalonians and Philemon.

In Revelation the word “saint” is used 13 times, more than in any other book of the Bible, and it also takes on a deeper meaning. In this book, the word “saint” not only is applied to those who acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord of their lives but also they are described as the faithful and true witnesses for Jesus.

**A “saint”, then, is simply a Christian, a person who has a deep belief in Jesus Christ, who has been born into the Family through baptism, who lives in obedience to God’s commands and in conformity to His will.**

A true saint exhibits in his lifestyle and speech that He is a faithful and dedicated follower of Jesus Christ. This means that the word **“holy”** is applicable to the saint of God. To be “holy” requires that one separate himself from evil and dedicate himself to God.

To be God’s **“elect”** (1 Peter 1:2) there is the requirement to *“Be ye holy in all manner of conversation.... be ye holy; for I am holy”* (1 Peter 1:15,16). The implication is that the Christian is separated from the world.

Hear Paul again when he wrote: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God”* (Romans 1:1,2).

For the Christian ever to use the hackneyed statement, *“Well I ain’t no saint”* is the classic misnomer.

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## **Consequences Of Going Back To The Law**

**Albert Gardner**

THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW was divine because it came from God through Moses, but even during that period the people were told to look for a new law. *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah”* (Jeremiah 31:31). The first testament was not meant to be permanent.

The purpose of the law was to *“bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith”* (Galatians 3:24,25). It did its work well and ended at the cross (Colossians 2:14). The law separated Jews and Gentiles, so Jesus *“broke down this middle wall”* (Ephesians 2:14) and made it possible for us to be one in Christ.

There has always been the danger of people going back to the law, but there are serious consequences for those who do. Circumcision was the issue which Paul discussed, because some



were saying "except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). "For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:3,4).

There are three main consequences if one goes back to the Old Testament to bind a part of it on people today.

**First, we are debtors to do the whole law.** The whole law includes killing animals for sacrifices, going to Jerusalem for major feast days, and the penalties for breaking the law. The *whole law* is not just the Ten Commandments. We cannot pick and choose what we like, but we must take all of it, or none.

**Second, Christ is become of no effect to us.** The law was taken away at the cross, and was no longer binding after that time. If one can return to the law and be justified by it, of what value was the cross? Jesus suffered and died in vain if we can be saved by the law that was taken away then.

**Third, you are fallen from grace.** No one could be justified by the law, and through its removal, a way to be saved was opened up in the Gospel. We have the favor of God; we are saved by grace.

If one attempts to return to the law, he has fallen from grace. Gospel obedience brings salvation, which is another way of saying that one is saved by grace.

When the Gospel was first preached, the conditions of salvation were announced, and those who obeyed were saved by *grace*, not by the *law*. They had the favor of God, but would lose that favor if they chose to return to the law.

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## *The Heavens Are Speaking*

**John Gipson**

HAVE YOU LOOKED at the heavens lately—away from the city and the lights? Have you allowed looking to be transformed into considering? You might be shocked by the results.

According to Robert Strother, "On Christmas Day in 1642 a premature and woefully weak baby boy was born in a stone farmhouse in Lincolnshire, England. The two midwives at the delivery sadly predicted that the tiny infant would not live through the day. And so the baby lived 84 years, and the 'poor little weak head' that had to be supported by a special leather collar early in life proved to contain one of the finest scientific brains the world has ever

known...His name was Isaac Newton."

Newton was often at or near the bottom of his class in school, but by age 18 was proving himself a superior student, and an uncle obtained Isaac's admission to Trinity College, Cambridge. When the Great Plague of 1665-66 broke out, Newton returned to his mother's farm to "meditate". He considered the heavens, wondered about the force that kept the moon in her orbit, and he worked out the laws of both motion and universal gravitation by the time he was 24. He also invented a new mathematical system to prove his theories: calculus. In his book **Principia**, Newton spelled out the mechanics of our universe. He saw that every particle in the universe has a gravitational attraction for every other particle in proportion to the product of the masses of the particles and in inverse proportion to the square of their distances. Newton reasoned that this wonderful uniformity in the planetary system must "be allowed the effect of choice" by a Supreme Creator. Above the heavens he saw God.

Centuries before Newton, David proclaimed, "*The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world*" (Psalm 19:1-4).

Look up and see the glory of God!

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## ***Scientist Denies Evolution***

**Greg Tidwell**

MICHAEL J. BEHE, associate professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University, challenges the basic assumption of Darwinism in his recent work, *Darwin's Black Box*.

Behe's argument carries special weight in the academic community because his discussion avoids philosophy and theology. Empirically, he asserts that Darwin's theories on the origins of life are not adequate to explain the hard facts uncovered in the findings of modern biochemistry.

The book highlights the profound biochemical complexity of life, pointing to its original creation by an intelligent designer.

Behe presents as evidence a careful explanation of the intricate molecular processes which make vision, blood clotting, cellular transport, and disease fighting possible.

His point, made in each of these four areas, is that the underlying processes of biology are so complex that they could not have evolved. For the interplay of life to exist at all, each of the constituent parts has to exist simultaneously.

In Darwin's book, **The Origin of Species**, he made the statement, "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down."

Behe illustrates his conviction that the complicated systems in the human body do demolish Darwin's theory by comparing "irreducibly complex" systems to a mouse trap. The mouse trap is an effective tool, but it cannot work if even one part is removed or altered.

In like manner, "the 'simplest' self-sufficient, replicating cell has the capacity to produce thousands of different proteins and other molecules, at different times and under variable conditions...and each function requires the **interaction of numerous parts**". No part of the cell is dispensable, and no part can work half-way: it is "irreducibly complex". These cells, which are like miniscule universes in their activity and complexity, answer Darwin's statement: **Evolution does not provide an adequate explanation for the origins of life.**

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## THE BIBLE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

**Eddie Cooper**

IF YOU WERE MEETING someone for the first time and he asked you to tell him how the Bible has made a difference in your life, what would you say? If your children wanted some advice for making those difficult decisions of life, which book would you urge as a guide? I believe that the Bible can make a tremendous difference in one's life, if we will use it.

Think about our world for a moment. There is bitterness, animosity, tension, and war between men and nations. All of this comes from discontent and restlessness in the human heart (James 4:1,2). What guide can man use to alleviate these problems? Where can he go to find the principles by which to live that he might have the abundant life (John 10:10)? I believe that God wants us to be happy by making the right decisions. We need the best guide

available.

In my life I have been surrounded by those who deeply believed in the Bible as a guide for their lives. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles. Bible class teacher and the older preachers have been an inspiration to challenge me to put into practice what the Bible teaches, and I have been richly blessed for having done so.

I can remember the enthusiasm of the older preachers who came and preached in meetings where we lived and who delivered powerful lessons that would stir to action, motivate us to do right, and call for a response in our lives. *They dealt with the importance of the Bible and sin and its consequences.* They discussed in a forthright manner what one needed to do to be saved. There was no doubt at all as to what was taught. They were not afraid to preach the truth on any matter.

Yes, the Bible has the power to change lives (Romans 1:16; 12:1,2). I'm sure that many of you have seen the life of someone re-shaped so drastically that you felt that the "new" person was not the one you had known before. That is the way it is supposed to be (2 Corinthians 5:17). These changes were not brought about by demands and threats but by **the transforming power of the Word of God.**

Many will claim their allegiance to the Bible until the Bible states the need for change in the practice of their lives; then their true view is known. With scarcely the wink of an eye they reject its commands.

Someone has written: "The Bible is: Supernatural in origin; Divine in authorship; Human in penmanship; Infallible in authority;

Infinite in scope; Universal in interest; Eternal in duration; And personal in application."

Why not give the Bible its rightful place in your life? Take the time to get to know this Book of books, and you will be surprised at the dramatic and eternal changes that can result in your life.

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## ***To Drink Or Not To Drink***

**Louis Rushmore**

WHAT HAS GOD revealed in His Word, the Bible, about the consumption of alcoholic beverages'? What English words in our Bible translations identify alcoholic drinks? The word "wine" is represented in the Bible by 10 Hebrew and 3 Greek words.

Sometimes “*wine*” means first fruits that are ripe first (Numbers 18:12-13). It can mean the cluster of grapes (Isaiah 65:8). Wine can refer to raisins (Hosea 3:1 ASV). Sometimes it equals the winepress (Nehemiah 13:15). Wine can be grape juice (Isaiah 16:10; Proverbs 3:10), or it can refer to alcoholic wine (Genesis 9:21).

**The context is the overriding factor determining the definition of both the Hebrew and Greek words for wine.** Since the words for “*wine*” do not indicate either an alcoholic or a non-alcoholic state by definition, only by examining the context can one determine which is meant.

There are two categories of “*wine*” as far as God is concerned - what He **approves** and what He **disapproves**. The simplest and most reasonable conclusion is that non-alcoholic references go in the “*approves*” column. Therefore, the references that are alcoholic belong in the “*disapproves*” column. Closer examination of the respective passages shows this to be the case. In addition to some occasions of the word “*wine*,” every occurrence of “*strong drink*” is condemned in Scripture.

Due to limited space, we concentrate herein on biblical references in the New Testament. That is appropriate since the New Testament alone is the covenant of God by which everyone now living is bound (Romans 7:6-7; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14) and will be judged (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The New Testament teaches sobriety in a number of passages (1 Thessalonians 5:6-8; 1 Peter 1:13; 4:7; 5:8). The word translated “*sober*” in each case here means to refrain from alcoholic wine. So, in addition to the negative, ***prohibitive teachings*** against the use of alcohol as a beverage, these passages result in teaching the same truth from ***positive instruction***.

Clearly, “*drunkenness*” is sinful (1 Corinthians 6:10; Galatians 5:21), but when is one drunk? So-called social drinkers often split hairs on this subject. Both definitions of original language words and definitions for the English words “*drunk*” or “*drunkenness*” mean “*intoxication*.”

Drunkenness involves various stages of drunkenness or intoxication, but intoxication (drunkenness) begins with the first introduction of alcohol into one’s body; one drink drunk is true physiologically and more importantly biblically, too. Therefore, Ephesians 5:18 definitively teaches against consuming alcohol. “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit*” (KJV). The Greek verb tense in this verse teaches not to

engage in the process of drunkenness, which means to refrain from the first drink.

Defenders of alcoholic drinks characteristically resort first to Jesus making "*wine*" at a marriage feast, and they attempt to make it a proof text in defense of social drinking. Besides the condemnation of alcoholic wine in the Bible, noted already, consider the grave ramifications of supposing that our Savior made and provided alcoholic drink to the parties (John 2:1-10).

Jesus Christ was born under, lived during and died while the Old Testament was still in force. Under Judaism, it was sinful to give an alcoholic beverage to someone (Habakkuk 2:15; Proverbs 20:1). If Jesus had given alcohol to the partygoers, He would have violated the Old Law and would have been guilty of sin. Consequently, as a sinner, Jesus Christ could not have successfully offered Himself as our perfect sacrifice to take away our sins (Hebrews 4:15; 9:28). Then, humanity would have no hope of redemption because we would lack a Savior (1 Corinthians 15:19). Since "*wine*" can refer either to alcoholic or to non-alcoholic drinks, we must conclude that our Lord did **not** make an alcoholic beverage in John 2.

It is historically inaccurate to claim, as some do, that an insufficient supply of potable water required people in antiquity to drink alcoholic beverages. Canaan abounded in water (Deuteronomy 8:7). Grape juice was available, and the ancients preserved the abundance of grape juice without fermentation for later use. Grape juice with its high sugar content and the elevated temperatures of Palestine meant that it did not ferment well naturally. Therefore, to preserve the grape juice, people used various methods to keep it from spoiling.

First, boiling of grape juice for four to five hours reduces it to a condition where it will not spoil. Later, it can be reconstituted with water. Secondly, submerging grape juice in a cool water source (e.g., pond, cistern) of 45 degrees or lower for at least 40 days causes yeast to settle to the bottom of the container. Removing the grape juice from the top and transferring it to another container preserves it since there is no yeast to ferment or sour it.

Third, grape juice can be passed through filters several times to remove yeast. Fourth, if sulfur is added to grape juice, it neutralizes yeast so grape juice neither sours nor ferments. Fifth, if grape juice is placed in an airtight container, it neither sours nor ferments. After grape juice is removed from a container, the unused balance needs



to be placed into a smaller, airtight container.

All the arguments in favor of social drinking are flawed, whether trying to appeal generally to history or attempting to make Scripture allow the practice. The author's book, *Beverage Alcohol*, goes into much more detail regarding social drinking. It also covers the often ill-employed Scripture proof texts, anecdotal claims and supposed support from the medical world. You are invited to view it online free at [www.gospelgazette.com/library/pdf%20books/beverage alcohol.pdf](http://www.gospelgazette.com/library/pdf%20books/beverage%20alcohol.pdf).

If you are interested in following the Scriptures and pleasing God, you will not engage in social drinking. If you want to spare yourself medical illnesses related to alcohol as well as employment, money, social, legal and family problems, you will not be a drinker. Social drinking is a self-inflicted misery that afflicts individuals, families, employers and nations.

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## The Tragedy Of False Preaching

**Clem Thurman**

THE STERN WARNING of God was clear, "*The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully?*" (Jer. 23:28). The nation of Judah was doomed. During the day of Jeremiah, the wickedness of the people could not be blamed on any shortage of preachers: they had plenty. The problems existed because they had too many of the wrong kind of preachers, who were preaching the wrong message. Both prophet and priest had failed, and the spiritual strength of the nation was dissipated, because the people relied on the prophets who told them lies.

Jesus, the Son of God, was a preacher. He chose twelve men to serve as apostles, and their job description was this: "*Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mk. 16:15). Paul wrote later, "*The word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God*" (1 Cor. 1:18). He exhorted Timothy, "*Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season*" (2 Tim. 4:2). God has ordained that "*through the foolishness of preaching*" (1 Cor. 1:21) salvation would come to sinful mankind. Preaching is necessary. But the wrong kind of preaching is tragic for those that hear and believe it. And the prophets of whom God speaks in Jer. 23 are good examples of that truth.

For what was true with their false teaching is characteristic of false teaching in our own, or any other, generation.

God, through Jeremiah's writing, tells us plainly what the manner of false teaching was, and its effect upon the hearers. *"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you; they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come you. For who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? ... How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams, which they tell every man to his neighbor"* (Jer. 23:16-18,26-27).

### **False Assurance Resulted in Vain Hope**

There is no substitute for truth. All the eloquence in the world, all the emotion, all the pleasant platitudes can never do what truth will. Jesus said, *"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (Jno. 8:32). Nothing else can make us free. False teachers always say, "It really doesn't make any difference, as long as you are sincere." But it does. The sincere person who drives on the wrong side of the highway will be killed just as dead as if he were a hypocrite. The sincere child who plays with the live electric cord will die just as surely as if he acted with knowledge. Sincerity will not prevent the person who takes poison instead of medicine from dying. In matters of physical, or spiritual life, only the truth can save.

The prophets of Jeremiah's day said to the people, *"Ye shall have peace... no evil shall come upon you"* (Jer. 23:17). But God never said it. The hope that was instilled was vain hope. God makes many promises to us, and *"he is faithful that promised"* (Heb. 10:23). But we need to make sure that we are trusting in what God promised, and not in what man has told us that God promised. He gave us His word to guide us and to give us hope: *"That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us: which we have as an anchor of the soul"* (Heb. 6:18-19). Some today promise salvation on the basis of *"faith only,"* but God doesn't promise that (Jas. 2:24; Heb. 5:8-9), Some promise people that, once they are saved, they can never fall from God's

grace; but God never promised it (1 Cor. 10:12; Gal. 5:4; Heb. 6:4-6; etc.). We need the hope that will truly anchor the soul (Heb. 6:19). And that hope is rooted in the word of God, not in what men say.

### **They Preached Their Own Ideas and Opinions**

The false prophets spoke "*a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord*" (Jer. 23:16). That is the reason for the later warning, "*The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream*" (v. 28). They felt what they told was right, but that is subjective faith: from within one's own heart and mind. Ours must be an objective faith, from outside ourselves, delivered from God: "*Faith cometh by hearing the word of God.. . The faith once for all delivered to the saints*" (Rom. 10:17; Jude 3). Far too many people are guided by their feelings without realizing that what they feel is the result of what they have been taught; if the teaching is wrong, the feelings will also be in error. The only way to be sure that your feeling about spiritual matters is reliable is if it is based on what God said in His inspired word.

True faith is delivered from heaven (Jude 3) by the word of God: "*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). The apostle Paul writes of God's word, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith*" (Rom. 1:16-17). God's word "*is able to save your souls*" (Jas. 1:21), but man's teaching will make our worship vain (Matt. 15:8-9). No one can have a right faith as a result of wrong teaching, for faith results from teaching: "*Established in your faith, even as ye were taught*" (Col. 2:7). If the teaching is wrong, the faith is wrong.

### **They Preached Themselves, not the Lord**

Jeremiah wrote, "*They say... For who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word?*" (Jer. 23:17-18). These false prophets were not listening to God, but they were telling the people, "*The Lord hath said. ..*" (v. 17). The apostle Paul wrote later of Satan "*blinding the minds of the unbelieving,*" then added of the apostles, "*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord*" (2 Cor. 4:4-6). It is not my idea, nor any other man's, that is important: it is God's plan, God's purpose, God's word. Paul wrote of the inspired apostles, "*We received...the Spirit which is from God;*

*that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which, man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth" (1 Cor. 2:12-13).* The message they preached was the message which God gave them, and which is written for us.

Peter wrote of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in delivering the Scriptures, *"No prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).* That the apostles were so guided is evident from the promises Jesus made (Lk. 12:12; Jno. 14:15-17; 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7-13). Paul wrote later, *"All Scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).* It is not Paul's word, or Peter's or John's; it is God's word: *"Ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thes. 2:13).*

Rather than preaching myself, or my ideas, I must preach as did Paul: *"For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God... I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:2).* Paul repeatedly warns about following men: *"Wherefore let no man glory in men. ... If I were still pleasing men, I would not be the servant of Christ" (1 Cor. 3:21; Gal. 1:10).* The tragedy of false prophets is that their following is based on their own charming and convincing personality. And, having captured the confidence of the people, they, *"Beguile you with enticing words, . . . And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you" (Col. 2:4; 2 Pet. 2:3).*

### **The False Prophets Turned People from God**

The lament of Jeremiah still rings around the world, for the condition still exists. The false prophets, *"Cause my people to forget my name by their dreams, which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal" (Jer. 23:27).* Whether the "dream" is of a gigantic Jesus telling a man to build a hospital, or a "dream" that tells him to raise so many millions of dollars, the end result is the same: he makes merchandise of the people, and they become disillusioned and turn from God. Those prophets were telling their dreams as though they were directives from God, and God said, *"The prophets prophesy lies" (Jer. 23:26).* People are still telling their "dreams" or "experiences" as though they were directives from God, and it is still wrong!

God warned us that there would be false teachers in every generation. Peter wrote, "*But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers*" (2 Pet. 2:1). Paul wrote, "*In later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies... For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will-heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables*" (1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:3-4). Paul warned the elders of the church in Ephesus, "*From among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them*" (Acts 20:30). Whether or not it was the intention of the false prophets to lead people away from God, that was the result. And even well-intentioned people today who teach false doctrine are having the same result.

The clarion call of Jeremiah went forth to all of Judah: "*Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein*" (Jer. 6:16). The call went unheeded because the people followed the false prophets. They should have listened to God, but they refused. So should we listen, for "*the old paths*" are still there, revealed in the word of God: "*The word of the Lord abideth forever. And this is the word of the gospel which was preached unto you*" (1 Pet. 1:25). As Jeremiah was pleading, so do we. Come back to God's plan, come back to God's Son, come back to God's grace, come back to God's salvation, come back to God's word. Come back to "*the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.*" That is God's promise. You can count on it.

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## ***SPIRITUAL DESTINATIONS***

**JOHNNY RAMSEY**

THERE ARE TEN powerful verses in Psa. 141 that emphasize the tragedy of spiritual poverty, and, conversely, God's ability to preserve us from evil. There is a vivid contrast drawn between salvation, purity and spirituality versus vanity and degradation. The component

parts of this marvelous psalm are these: [1] The power of prayer, [2] Carefully guard our speech, [3] Evil can be appealing, [4] Exhortation can be a blessing, [5] Keep your eyes upon the Lord, [6] Spiritual poverty can be avoided, [7] Wicked people reap what they sow. The pivotal verse in this passage is verse 8. Notice these powerful words: *"But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute."* Fearful that he might partake of *"the dainties of evil men"* (v. 4), the psalmist pleads, *"Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."*

There are hundreds of verses in the Bible concerning the danger of improper speech. The use of the tongue is a challenging and sobering point in the life of a Christian. Words can gender strife, start a war and break up marriages. On the other hand, the proper expressions from our lips can heal wounds, bless the world and cheer the heart. As the song declares:

*Angry words are lightly spoken,  
Bitterest thoughts are rashly stirred,  
Brightest links of life are broken  
By a single angry word.*

When error enters our earthly sojourn, we should welcome the correction righteous folk give us. In fact, Heb. 3:13 tells Christians to *"exhort one another every day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."* We should provoke one another *"unto love and good works"* (Heb. 10:24). Psa. 141:5 expresses this point beautifully: *"Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil."*

When a spiritual brother comes to us with words of admonition, we should listen carefully and rejoice mightily that someone cares for our soul. When we trust in the Lord we know He will never leave us destitute, but will come to our aid. In Psa. 91:15, we rejoice to read the promise of God: *"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him, and honor him."* What a wondrous, precious relationship the faithful sustain with the Savior. There will never be any spiritual loneliness for those who truly love the Lord!

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