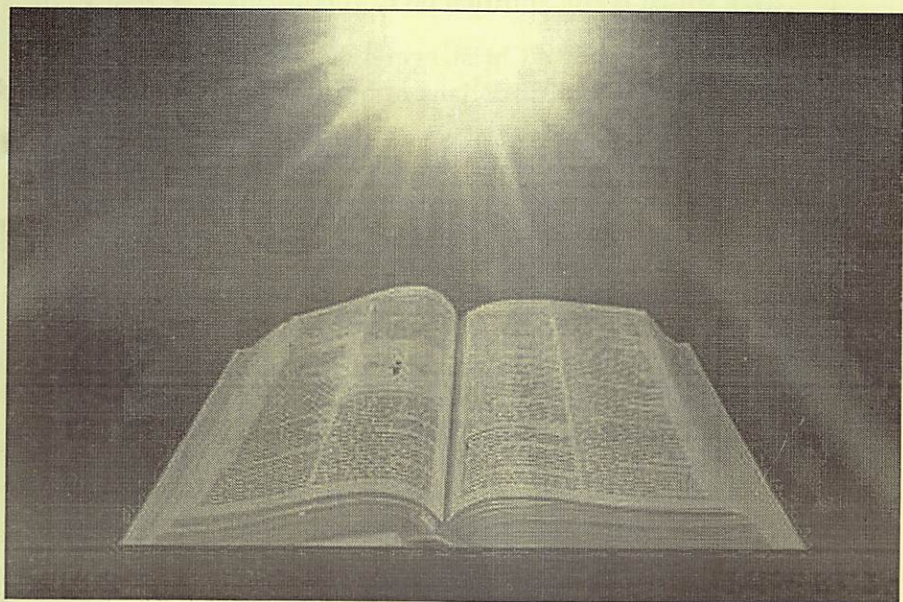


Monthly

April 2021

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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*

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## Editorial

### What Does the Bible Teach?

#### *There Will Be No Second Chance For The Disobedient*

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION, as revealed in the Bible, is for the living and not for the dead. Some believe that those who do not have the light of the gospel or neglected to obey the gospel of Christ in their life on earth will be saved either by a second chance or by purgatorial fires because God is too good to punish sinners. This false belief arose from a misinterpretation of the passage where the apostle Peter wrote, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." (1 Peter 3:18-20).

The passage holds out no hope for the impenitent. It is not teaching that those who during their earthly life refused the gospel of God's grace may have a second chance in the world beyond and may be ultimately saved. It is not teaching that Jesus, after His death, during the interval, before His resurrection, went without the body in a spirit form to those spirits in prison, that is, Hades, and preached to them. The point is, if He had done such a thing, why should Noah's generation alone, of all who ever lived on earth, have been singled out as the beneficiaries?



The Spirit by which the preaching in view here was done was the Holy Spirit, by whom and through whom all the preaching has been done throughout the ages. Even today God speaks to us through His word in the Bible which were written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. (2 Timothy 3:16). The Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, was also present in the Old Testament prophets, indicating when He testified beforehand the suffering of Christ and the glories that would follow. (1 Peter 1:10-11). Speaking of the preaching of the apostles themselves, Paul said that Christ "came and preached to you that were afar off" (Ephesians 2:17); but Christ preached to them through human instruments, that is, the apostles, nevertheless, it is said that "He came and preached to them."

Moreover, the preaching mentioned here was directed to living men and women on earth at the time the preaching was done, but who at the time Peter mentioning this were "in prison", meaning Hades, that is, in a deceased state, under the sentence of God, like the angels who were cast down and "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4), they, like the fallen angels, were then "spirits in prison." But the same were living men and women when Noah lived and preached to them, they rejected the preaching of Christ through Noah. It was during the generation of Noah, a time when the "spirits" here mentioned were not "spirits" merely, but living people. Therefore "spirits in prison" is a reference to their status at the time Peter wrote. But when the preaching was done to them they were living men and women on earth "who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." (1 Peter 3:20). Those people were disobedient in the time of Noah, when the preaching was done to them by Noah. It is said that Noah was "a preacher of righteousness." (2 Peter 2:5).

Some other hold the view or belief that there is an intermediate state or place called Purgatory where the dead go to suffer punishment until they can be purified and become worthy to live in heaven. According to the teaching of Purgatory, those who have not fully made amends for their failings while on earth go to Purgatory to suffer for their sins before being admitted into heaven. Also, according to this belief, those sufferings could be lessened by prayers and masses on earth by their loved ones who are living on earth.

But all such ideas, such as Christ preaching to the spirits in Hades or the dead going to Purgatory to suffer for their sins, are false teaching. The selfishness of men enters into such interpretations. Men would like to have a second chance, having rejected Christ and the salvation that He offers to the living (Hebrews 5:8-9), they dream of getting preached to as spirits in Hades. But according to the Bible, there will be no second chance. (Hebrews 9:27)

## A CHRISTIAN ONLY

**J.C. Choate**



YES, MY FRIEND, YOU can be a Christian and a Christian only. Such is no exaggeration. Of course, you may find it hard to believe since all the people around you are members of one denomination or another, and you yourself may belong to such a human organization, but nevertheless, it is true, you can be a Christian only.

By now you probably want to know: "How could I be just a Christian?" Well, that question is easy to answer. You may be a Christian by simply obeying the gospel of Christ, or in other words, by obeying the truth of God's will. Now you may reason: "I have obeyed the gospel, or the truth". My friend, have you? Now be honest with yourself, and be honest with God. No doubt about it; you are honest and sincere but sometimes even honest and sincere people are mistaken.

Just now it should be observed that in New Testament times the truth made Christians only. No, the truth did not make one kind of a Christian and then another kind of a Christian, etc., If you know anything at all about the New Testament you will have to admit that such is fact.

The scriptures mention the name Christian only three times, but please note, each time it is spoken of it is specifically Christian, and furthermore, no other name is mentioned or specified in regard to the name or title of a follower of Christ. But now to the verses of scripture which give us the name Christian. First, please observe Luke's statement: "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Acts 11:26). They were first called Christians there, and

followers of Christ have been called Christians ever since. Second, Paul pleads with King Agrippa to obey the gospel and his reply is: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:28). Why didn't King Agrippa specify the kind of Christian he was almost persuaded to become? Simply because he could not have become anything but a Christian.

Why Paul didn't preach to that man that he could be this kind of a Christian or that kind of a Christian, but he preached the truth only, and therefore, it would make nothing more than a Christian, and evidently King Agrippa understood this. And third, Peter speaks of the Christian in this manner: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Pet. 4:16). Hence, if one must suffer as a Christian, or for wearing the name Christian, then he should not be ashamed of it, but rather, he should thank God that he is counted worthy of the name of Christ and that he has the privilege of suffering for the name of Christ. As a result, God should be glorified through the same. But look again, the writer speaks of the name Christian and the name Christian only. He did not tack a man-made name before or on the end of it, and neither should we.

And now please observe these simple facts: (1) To be a Christian then one must accept the truth without addition, subtraction or substitutions to it in any way. (Rev. 22: 18, 19). (2) To be a Christian one must obey the gospel, believing in Christ, repenting of his sins, confessing the name of Christ, and being baptized to be saved. (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38). (3) To be a Christian then one must be a member of the church which Christ established. (Matt. 16: 18; Rom. 16:16). (4) To be a Christian one must wear the name of Christ. (1 Pet. 4:1). (5) To be a Christian one must worship God in spirit and in truth on each first day of the week. (John 4:24; Acts 20:7). (6) To be a Christian one must live faithful to God. (Rev. 2:10; James 1:12). Please review these points over and over again and each time ask yourself: "Am I a Christian in view of what the Bible teaches?"

Dear one, life is slipping away; you will soon be gone. Hence, prepare today for the judgement and the beyond. Obey the truth - be just a Christian, a member of the Lord's church; live faithful to God unto death and heaven will be yours.



# ***The Question of Christian Marriage***

**Mark Hall**

WHEN A CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATES marriage, it must be from the point of view of wanting to please God. The first question to be answered is whether God sees that it is best for a given individual to be married or to remain single. His established plan is for *marriage and a home* (Matthew 19:4-6), but both Jesus and Paul said that there are exceptions: *there are those who remain single for the sake of their lives or their work in the kingdom* (Matthew 19:11,12; 1 Corinthians 7:7,8, 32-35).

But if it seems to be God's will for one to marry, several other things need to be considered:

**What is the purpose of marriage?** If we look at God's design, we see that from the beginning He meant for two people to become one flesh and to serve as helpers to each other (Genesis 2:20-24).

But even above the purpose of marriage, **what is our main priority as Christians?** The answer is obvious: first and foremost we need to be imitators of Christ, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. *If these are our highest goals, should they not dictate concerning whom we should or should not marry?* Is there any justifiable reason for a Christian to marry someone who is not a follower of Christ? How can we be *one* with someone and have them be a *helper* to us, if their entire basis for motivation, and their world view, are so different from our own? This is not to say that a Christian is too "good" to marry a non-Christian, but merely that if Christ-likeness is our *first priority*, *everything* in our lives must exist *only* to serve that *first priority*.

In the law of Moses, God forbade the Israelites to marry people from the surrounding nations (Deuteronomy 7:3,4). He clearly stated that the reason for this was that **marriage outside of their faith brought with it the danger of being led away from God to worship idols**. This danger exists for Christians as well. By the very nature of our mission on this earth — teaching people about Christ — we must not separate ourselves from unbelievers; but to *become one with an unbeliever in marriage is a different matter*.

In 2 Corinthians 6:14,15, Paul commanded that we not be yoked together with unbelievers, and as part of his reasoning he asked, **"What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?"**

How many times do the Scriptures speak of unity and its

**paramount importance in the body of Christ?** In John 17 we read of Christ's prayer for the disciples, that they should be one even as Jesus and the Father are one. He asked that they be brought to *complete unity* in order that the world might know that God sent Him, and that God loved the disciples even as He loved Jesus.

**What does this plea tell us?** It says that *unity is a natural expression of our lives in Christ* and a testimony to the world of God's love for us. If we cannot be one with our spouse. — *the most important earthly relationship we have* — we forfeit the opportunity to be nurtured spiritually by that person, to be encouraged to strive to be more Christ-like with each passing day, and to allow God to manifest His love for us through that relationship.

How can the Christian choose such losses for himself?

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## **What Does It Mean To Be Faithful To Christ?**

**Don L. Norwood**

**FAITHFULNESS TO THE LORD** means that a person will completely trust the Lord and show this trust by doing one's best to obey the Lord's Word. Christ Himself is the prime example of this kind of faithfulness (Hebrews 3:1-6; Hebrews 5:7-9). A person must be convinced that he or she is lost in sin (all responsible people are lost in sin until they are reconciled unto God in Christ, Romans 3:23; John 3:16-18; Ephesians 2:1-3; John 3:36). He or she must learn the Gospel facts, that Christ came and gave His life to save everyone. That person then must choose to become obedient to Christ and be saved, or ignore the Gospel and continue to be lost. In deciding to obey Christ, one must come to realize that it requires complete obedience with the whole heart (Luke 14:25-33; Matthew 16:24,25). One must realize that repentance requires that the person turn to God with a desire to learn and obey His will (Matthew 7:21; Romans 12:1,2).

*Doing the Lord's will requires some suffering along life's journey* (1 Peter 1:3-9; 5:5-11; 4:16-18). In these "times of suffering one must be faithful to the Lord and be patient about it (James 1:12). Being faithful to the Lord requires that a person put away certain attitudes of mind and replace these with an attitude that the Lord teaches (Colossians 3:5-17; Ephesians 4:17-32). Being faithful



requires that one put away the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:13-21) and do the works that are taught by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24; Titus 3:3-8).

*Being faithful to the Lord requires that we learn to love everyone, even our enemies* (Matthew 5:43-48). This love (Greek: Agape) causes us always to act in others' best interest and seek to do them good, even when they behave in an undeserving manner.

*To be obedient to Christ, one must assemble with the local church of Christ regularly and worship with the spirit and the understanding* (John 4:23,24; Hebrews 10:23-30; 1 Corinthians 14:14,15). To be faithful one **must** take advantage of every opportunity to study and learn the Lord's will (Ephesians 5:15-17; 2 Timothy 2:15). To be faithful to the Lord, we must all do our best to learn to teach others the Lord's Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 24-26). We must also do our own part in building up (edifying) our brethren (Ephesians 4:15,16; Galatians 6:2-5).

If a member of the Lord's body misses the assemblies of the church unless he is too ill or otherwise unable to attend, that person is NOT faithful to the Lord. Christ's Word (the whole New Testament) is the law of liberty (James 1:25; 2:12). Transgression of His teaching is sin (1 John 3:4). If we willfully sin, then we separate ourselves from His blood that cleanses us of sin (Hebrews 10:26). When a person neglects to worship regularly and neglects to study the Word of the Lord, that person fails to "...eat the flesh of the son of man and drink His blood" (John 6:48-58). This means to learn and assimilate His Word in our minds and to remember His great sacrifice for us when He died upon the cross (see John 6:52-58). When we fail to assemble to break bread (commune with the Lord and His people, 1 Corinthians 10:16,17) and feed on the Lord's Word, we tread under foot the Son of God and count the blood of His covenant of none effect (read Hebrews 10:23-30).

Yes, we must be faithful until the time of our death (Hebrews 3:12-14). If we will be, we will inherit the crown of eternal life (James 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:6-8). We must not neglect so great a salvation (Hebrews 2:3).

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## ***IT'S GREAT TO SERVE***

**Tom Kelton**

THE ROLE OF A servant is not one most people seek. Serving

seems automatically to put one in a lower position than those being served. But being a servant is the ideal for the Christian. In Philippians 2:3,4 Paul wrote, *"Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."*

Often we do what we do to advance ourselves. Sometimes our service is performed for purely selfish reasons. Our desire for personal prestige is sometimes an even stronger motivation than our desire for wealth. It means a great deal to us to be admired, respected, and esteemed. We want others to **know how important** we are.

**When we** are determined to conquer or defeat others, we put ourselves in competition with everyone else. Even the disciples were not free from this temptation. There was intense competition among them. When they argued who was the greatest, Jesus said, *"Whoever would be great among you must be your servant."* But what Jesus said seemed to them to be a mistake. Even after three years of close association with the Master, the disciples still found this strange teaching difficult to understand.

On the night in which He was betrayed, Jesus demonstrated what it means to be a servant. He took a towel and basin of water and washed the disciples' feet. He said, *"I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you ... A servant is not greater than his master"* (John 13:15,16). It seems contradictory that immediately after this incident, when Jesus performed a slave's duty and identified serving with true greatness, He said, *"Now is the Son of Man glorified and in him God is glorified."*

Maybe Jesus was able to be so humble because He never lost sight of who He was. He was able to humble Himself and become nothing because He knew with certainty that He was the Son of God. If we can remember who we are, follow the example of Jesus, and humble ourselves, we will achieve true greatness.

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## ***One Man's Devotion To Truth***

**Clarence DeLoach, Jr.**

ISAIAH SAID, *"No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth..."* (Isaiah 59:4). It is obvious that he had in mind a time when very little premium was placed upon truth. He might have been describing an occasion like that in 1 Kings 22. Ahab, king of Israel, and

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, conspired together to go up and take Ramoth-Gilead in Syria. When Jehoshaphat asked Ahab to *"inquire of the Lord whether they should go up,"* Ahab immediately called upon his 400 "yes men" to rubber-stamp what he wanted to do.

But the king of Judah asked if there was another prophet that they might call on. Ahab assured him that there was one other, but, he said, *"I hate him because he never prophesies good concerning me."* So, Micaiah was sent for. In effect, he was told to line up and encourage the king to go to battle.

But Micaiah said, *"As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak"* (1 Kings 22:14). Here is one man's devotion to truth! It mattered not what Ahab wanted to hear! It mattered not what 400 preachers said! Micaiah was devoted to the Word of God!

What was Micaiah's reward for telling the truth? He was slapped in the face, put in prison, and fed nothing but bread and water. So, one is not always rewarded for being honest.

Solomon said, *"Buy the truth and sell it not"* (Proverbs 23:23). Micaiah would not "sell out" the truth. It would have been so convenient just to go along with the majority.

Let Micaiah's example inspire us to be so devoted to truth that whatever the Lord says, that will we believe, speak, and live. Only the truth can make us free (John 8:32).

Micaiah said that Ahab's military campaign was doomed to disaster and that if he went up against Ramoth, he would lose his life. Ahab paid no attention, but disguised himself and went into battle. God's arrow found Ahab and struck him between the joints of his armor. The Word of God prevailed. It always does!

Let us as Christians seek to "set truth back on her feet" by knowing, believing, telling, and living the truth.

## ***Whose Church Is It, Anyway?***

**Clem Thurman**

IT IS COMMON TO hear people speak of "my church" or "your church" as they speak of a particular religious group. Such terminology suggests to many that the church is just an organization which man devised for his own recognized needs. Thus, if society and custom change, man can alter the church to fit those new needs—or so the thinking goes. From this kind of thinking comes a "justification" for "many churches" so that the needs of various

peoples will be met. Then we are urged to "join the church of your choice," with the implication that all churches are equal in the sight of God and only personal preference should govern your decision about choosing a church.

But whose church is it, anyway? Did God say nothing in His word about the church? Did Jesus never address the subject? Did the apostles refuse to teach on the subject? Anyone who has even casually read the Scriptures knows that the Bible has much to say about the church. If we are to learn the value (or lack of it) of the church, we must go to the Bible to find it.

### **Christ is the Builder of the Church**

When Peter confessed to Jesus, *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,"* the Lord replied, *"Upon this rock I will build my church"* (Matt. 16:16-18). Founders of the U.S.A. made America a great nation, a founder of a business often determines the value of the business. So it is with the church of which we read in the Bible. Jesus Christ is the builder of it, He founded the church. Man has since built many churches, and we can easily agree that these are not really important. But that church which Jesus built is important, simply because it is built by God's *"only begotten Son."*

The word *"church"* literally means, *"called out."* Peter writes, *"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"* (1 Pet. 2:9). Christ has called us *"by the gospel"* (Jno. 6:44-45; 2 Thes. 2:13-14), out of sin and into righteousness (Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Cor. 5:21). Those who respond to His call through the gospel (Mk. 16:15-16) are *"the called out"* or *"the church."* That means the value of the church is determined by the value of the call, and the One who calls is Lord of those who are called.

Whose church is it? Notice some terms by which the church is called. The church is the body of Christ: *"He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence"* (Col. 1:18). The church is the kingdom of God: *"I will build my church... and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 16:18-19; see also Col. 1:13,18 and Heb. 12:23,28). The church is the bride of Christ: *"The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church... This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of*

*Christ and the church*" (Eph. 5:23-32). There is no church that is "my body" or "my kingdom" or "my bride." Thus, there is no church that is "my church." The church belongs to Christ.

### **Christ is the Head of the Church**

The churches which have been begun by men are usually governed by synods, councils, conventions or some other such organization in which men determine the course of that church. But when He gave the "great commission" to the apostles, Christ said, *"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth"* (Matt. 28:18). Jesus doesn't share His headship over the church with man. Notice again, *"He is the head of the body, the church... that in all things he might have the pre-eminence"* (Col. 1:18). Paul wrote that God has *"put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body"* (Eph. 1:22-23). Man might govern his own church, if he had the right to have one. But it is not up to a man, nor to a group of men, to govern the church of Christ, for only Christ is head of it and only Christ has authority in it.

The prophet Jeremiah promised that God would give a *"new covenant"* to Israel, and that it would be for all mankind (Jer. 31:31-34). This prophecy is quoted in Heb. 8:8-13, and the writer shows it is now fulfilled. He then says of Christ, *"He is the mediator of a new covenant... He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"* (Heb. 9:15; 10:9-10). That is the reason Paul wrote of the gospel, *"It is the power of God unto salvation... For therein is revealed a righteousness of God, from faith to faith"* (Rom. 1:16-17). Christ governs His church by the new covenant, the gospel. The old covenant, which God gave as the governing law for Israel, is not the governing law for the church of Christ. His gospel, the new covenant, is the law by which Christ governs His church.

### **Christ is the Savior of the Church**

It was not just a whim on the part of God that caused the church to be built. The church was built *"according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Eph. 3:10-11). And it was designed for a purpose which is clearly stated: *"As many as received his word were baptized, and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls... The Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved"* (Acts 2:41,47). The church

does not save people, the church IS saved people! The Lord saves people and adds them to His church when they are saved. It is readily agreed that the churches of men have nothing at all to do with salvation. But the Savior shows that His church has everything to do with salvation.

The apostle Paul declared that Christ has *"purchased the church with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). This is the same blood of which he writes in Eph. 1:7, *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins according to the riches of his grace."* Peter wrote that the saved have been redeemed *"with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ"* (1 Pet. 1:18-19). That is the same blood that purchased the church. When one is cleansed by the blood of Christ, He is added by Christ to the church of Christ. That is not true with any man-made church, but the Scriptures clearly show it is true with the church which Jesus built. He is the Savior of that church.

Whose church is it, anyway? Men have built many churches — with different laws, different governing bodies that result in different worship and even different plans of salvation. We need to get back to basics: Whose church is it? If we are talking about the church of the Bible, there can be no question. That church belongs to Christ: He built it, He adds the saved to it, He purchased it with His own blood, He is the Savior of it, He is the head of it. No one on earth has the right to change it in any way. The church revealed in the Bible does not belong to any man nor group of men, for it is not the church of men. It is the church of Christ.

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## SET IN CONCRETE

**Hollis Miller**

According to the promise Jesus made to His apostles, when the last of them laid aside his armor there remained no more spiritual truth to be revealed (John 16:12-15). Thus, the Lord's people are to forever believe and practice what divine inspiration led the apostles to write and teach. Truth for the church had been "set in concrete", and no alterations were (are) to be made.

Setting something in concrete is a strange idea in our modern world where all things are viewed as changeable. Nothing, claim many modern thinkers, is so fixed that it cannot be moved. If necessary, everything about Christian faith is subject to

rearrangement in order to meet the demands of the times. Jesus can be redefined, the resurrection can be reinterpreted, morals can be reviewed and moved about to suit pressing demand, and Scripture can be placed on the back seat when councils, synods, and conventions meet.

How surprised would the apostle Paul be were he to visit the world today and find things as they are! Actually, it is doubtful that he would be surprised at all. He wrote the following before he departed to be with the Lord: *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons"* (1 Timothy 4:1). Also, *"The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables"* (2 Timothy 4:3f). Even during His personal ministry Jesus thought it necessary to warn His disciples to *"Beware of false prophets, who will come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves"* (Matthew 7:15).

All who believe the teaching of the New Testament are greatly saddened, but not overwhelmed, by the changes occurring in the general Christian world. Little by little, false teaching has inched its way into the thinking of leaders who are controlling the direction of multitudes who profess faith in Jesus Christ. *"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ"* (Colossians 2:8).

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## ***When Will The Rooster Crow For Me?***

**Bowen Rose**

THIS AFTERNOON I TURNED my back on my Savior. I denied knowing Him just as profoundly as if I were Peter when He was on trial before the Sanhedrin. It wasn't the first time I have done this hideous act and I am heartbroken because I am certain it will not be the last.

It was while enjoying a peaceful lunch at a local Souper Salad restaurant that I began wondering how many of the twenty or thirty patrons, all marvelous creations of the Father, had been washed in the blood. You know, I was curious to know how many had repented of their sins, confessed Jesus as God's Son and been baptized.



It's a thought that frequents my mind these days for no apparent reason other than curiosity. We all have similar thoughts from time to time. Sometimes we wonder if the person across the way wearing a tee shirt with "Darwin" superimposed across a "Christian fish" knows that we find it offensive. Sometimes we just wonder if the people in the restaurant are there for the first time or if they are return customers because they like the food. Our minds are always active about something; today mine wondered how many had been saved.

Unfortunately, my thoughts did not stop there. Instead of it being a passing question, it tore at my soul until I began to devise a method of satisfying my curiosity. I could simply rise, tap my glass with my spoon and say in a normal tone of voice, "May I see a show of hands of everyone here who has been washed in the blood of the Lamb?"

After all, how different would that be than my taking a survey of how many had driven to the restaurant in a Ford? Had I asked this second question I would likely have received some chuckles, raised eye-brows and then a show of hands. Few would have been concerned that I might follow up by visiting their table to ask how they like their Ford? If I did, they would likely have graciously answered with tales of satisfaction or complaints about their recent visit to a service department, or they would have said that they didn't care to talk to a stranger about their automobile.

As I considered what sort of a reaction I might receive to the real question I wanted to ask, I thought about how I would have reacted to the question myself. I might have given some consideration to the personality who raised the question in the first place. I would immediately attempt to judge whether it was some zealous kook possessing ideas about the imminent coming of the apocalypse, or if it was an outspoken brother of the Way. In either case, I would have likely responded with a knowing look, perhaps a wink of the eye and most likely a subtle thumbs down from the table-top. And then I realized that my own reaction would have fallen considerably short of raising my hand. For the same reason that I never rose to ask the question, I knew that I would have publicly denied my Savior. I would have suffered temporary embarrassment in front of a handful of strangers.

Why is it then that when reading the Word in solitude, I genuinely long for an opportunity to be dragged to a dark dungeon and placed in chains because I claim to be a Christian? I believe beyond a doubt that, if imprisoned like Paul, I would console myself with my

personal relationship with God. Somehow, if caused to suffer for Christ, I would be confident of sanctification.

Unfortunately, today the realization came that I am too much of a coward to ever be embarrassed, let alone imprisoned. The opportunity stared me in the face today, not to be imprisoned, but to be mildly embarrassed only for a matter of minutes, and I shrank with fear.

Satan will comfort me now, assuring me that such a public display of faith is not what my Father expects of me. Too many of the patrons at the restaurant were "good" people. Whatever their walk with Christ, my outburst would have been viewed as unstable and could even have had a negative effect on them. I will be assured by the dark prince that sometime in the future, as my knowledge of His Word increases, I will be afforded more suitable audiences, experience less resistance and accomplish much more. But not now. Never now.

Peter was told he would deny Christ three times before the rooster crowed. *When it crowed Peter knew immediately what he had done and he began to live a righteous life beyond my imagination.*

**When will the rooster crow for me?**

## ***DON'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN!***

**Mark T. Tonkery**

TITANIC STRIKES AGAIN! The video of the movie "Titanic" has recently gone on sale. With the scenes of the movie being shown daily on our television sets it has made the sinking of Titanic very real to us. The images of death and destruction make one feel sorry for the 1,000 or more people who perished in this disaster. It is even more heartbreaking to hear the historians tell us that Titanic did not have enough lifeboats for the passengers aboard, and that the lifeboats they did have were not full of people. Those in the lifeboats should have helped rescue the people drowning in the icy sea but for one reason or another they did not.

Today, it horrifies us to think that innocent lives could have been spared if it had not been for those selfish people in the lifeboats. If only they would have filled their boats, they could have given at least one more person a chance to live, to see their loved ones and fulfill their dreams.

Now many years have past since Titanic went down. Often times

we think of the past and think about what we could have done then, but we forget about the here and now. As you read this there are many more people in our world than there were in the Titanic. They are drowning in the sea of life and yet, just as those lifeboats were empty, so are our church buildings.

People board the worldly Titanic and somewhere along the way they crash into the icebergs of life, whether it is a divorce, bankruptcy, disease or a number of other tragedies. Their lives begin to sink and they cry for help, but the people in the lifeboats do not come to their rescue.

Christians, we are the ones in the lifeboats. We have already hit the icebergs of this world and we know what it is like to cry for help in the darkness. We are in a lifeboat with the power to reach out and save others with the message of Christ.

Sometimes we need to be reminded to rescue the perishing in this world. The Apostle Paul writes, *"Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this Gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures"* (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Don't let a Titanic disaster happen again. Paul thought it was of first importance to tell the world about the gospel of Christ and so must we. Today, go pull someone out of the darkness of life and rescue him or her with the message of Jesus Christ!

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## *Some Thoughts On Leadership*

### **Wayne Barrier**

ANY ORGANIZATION NEEDS LEADERSHIP if it is to succeed in achieving goals and fulfilling its purpose. We readily recognize the absence of leadership in many organizations that touch our daily lives—government, city councils, businesses, and even clubs. Functions such as planning, organizing, evaluating, and directing often lack leadership skills.

**First**, great leaders understand their mission and are fully committed to success. They realize, without question, that their superior must be obeyed. They have the ability to develop a clear vision of success and to maintain their focus on that goal.

Christ is the supreme leader of the church (Matthew 28:18). He plainly and simply states our mission of reaching the lost with the gospel. He never loses sight of His purpose and goal.

**Second**, great leaders of the Bible understood the first and greatest commandment as stated in Matthew 22:37-39, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* Church leaders must practice this commandment if they are to influence those who follow them in living the Christian life and in accomplishing the mission of the Church. God demonstrated for us how powerful love is. John 3:16 says, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

**Third**, great leaders lead because they desire to serve, rather than to be served or to have the "pre-eminence". Jesus discusses this in Matthew 20:20-28 when the mother of James and John asks that they sit on the right and left of Jesus on His throne. Jesus replies by saying, *"Whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant, and whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave."*

**Fourth**, great leaders are *first* in work and worship. Peter and the other apostles went first in teaching and preaching the Gospel of Christ throughout the world, just as Christ had been first in work before them.

**Fifth**, great leaders are effective communicators. Moses used his brother Aaron to help with communication with the children of Israel. Peter and the other apostles often were standing before the people speaking as God's Spirit guided them.

**Sixth**, great leaders keep their eyes on the goal and convey the positive message of the benefits of reaching that goal. Consider Paul's statement in Philippians 3:13,14 *"...one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

**Seventh**, leaders must earn and maintain the respect and trust of those who follow. They must also have the integrity to resign their position of leadership if they lose the confidence of followers. Leaders must be capable of delegating responsibility and authority, and of surrounding themselves with loyal, competent and hardworking subordinates who share their vision.

The Church needs great leaders today. The application of these

principles and development of leadership skills should be the goal of every elder, evangelist, and teacher.

## ***A Life-Changing Vision***

**W. T. Allison**

OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO Isaiah 6. The high water mark of Old Testament understanding of God is found in the writings of Isaiah. And the vision recorded here shaped his thinking and preaching. This same vision will change our lives. *"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting on his throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim...and one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory"* (Isaiah 6:1-3).

The king was dead and the prophet grieved. He had pinned his hopes on this earthly monarch. God decided to show Isaiah who really was King in Israel. He revealed Himself in all His holiness and power. The effect of that vision can be summed up in three little words: "WOE", "LO", and "GO."

The prophet said, "**WOE**," the word of **conviction**. *"Woe unto me, a man of unclean lips"* (verse 5). The dazzling holiness of God made the prophet ashamed of his own unholiness. He was struck dumb. He waited to be slain by that awesome power.

Mark it down, friend, the man who doesn't know himself as an unclean sinner never has seen the Lord's power. When you stack your life against that of Jesus, it will make you cry out as Isaiah did, and as Simon Peter did, *"Depart from me, I am a sinful man, O Lord"* (Luke 5:8).

The seraphim said, "LO," the word of cleansing. *"LO, this has touched your lips and your iniquity is taken away"* (verse 7). God does not want to destroy *sinners*, but *sin*. The live coal from the altar is a beautiful symbol of the cleansing of our heart through the blood of Jesus. Sin is deep-rooted and long-standing. The lips are unclean because the heart is impure. God provides through the altar of fire an inward holiness that means life instead of death. No man has to live with garbage in his heart and trash on his lips. The blood of Jesus can cleanse us from sin. You can be forgiven, renewed, and cleansed!

God said, "GO," the word of **commission**. As soon as his sin was purged, Isaiah heard the voice of God calling for a messenger to the people saying, *"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"*

(verse 8). He volunteered on the spot without considering the salary, fringe benefits, or retirement plan. The unclean heart thinks of itself just like the unclean lips speak of themselves. Sin is self-centeredness. Once the heart is cleansed, it thinks of others, and once the lips are purged, they speak for God.

God said, "GO," but warned Isaiah that few would listen. The results of his ministry would be like a charred stump of a fallen tree — not much to show for his efforts. No wonder the prophet cried, "*Lord, how long?*" God said, "*Until the cities be washed and without inhabitants*" (verse 11). As long as there are people who will hear, you go on speaking. We don't serve because we are wanted, but because we are needed. We don't take God's Word to others because we are assured success. We do it because He says, "GO AND TELL." The holy heart is obedient and durable. It must salute like an army sergeant and endure like an army mule.

*Isaiah saw God, saw himself, and saw a needy world. The visions hang together. Saving grace comes from God, touches our lives with power, and reaches out through us to embrace others. This same vision will change our hearts as it did the heart of Isaiah.*

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## THE DEVIL'S DYNAMIC PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH GROWTH

**Fenter D. Northern**

MUCH EMPHASIS HAS BEEN placed on growing large churches in the past few years. Some congregations have met with phenomenal success while others seem to have great difficulty in maintaining their present memberships. A typical stressful question posed by many congregations to a prospective preacher is: "What can we do to keep them coming?"

Facing the beginning of His personal ministry after His baptism, Jesus went into a wilderness seclusion for forty days. Satan came to Him there and offered three sure-fire principles for Jesus' own "success", which, ironically, Satan is still offering to Christians who are looking for answers on how to grow "successful" church in this secular world. These principles on "The Dynamics of Church Growth" are guaranteed to sweep in crowds, and to keep them coming and contributing sufficiently to meet big budgets based on Satan's success principles. These principles of church growth are so subtle, so simple, so alluring, and so effective for building large

churches that the Holy Spirit thought it necessary to warn us of their deceptiveness. What are these enticing proposals recorded in Matthew 4 that our Lord trashed as unworthy tools?

***The Devil's first dynamic principle of church growth*** offers people "bread first." Satan says that we should replace unpalatable aspects of the Scriptures, the church, worship, and the Christian life with things that will win approval. We must turn stones into bread by appealing to the physical and material desires of humans. Develop "diet teams for Jesus," "aerobics," "job counseling," "softball teams," "basketball gymnasiums," "social programs," and "clinics for self-image improvement". Billboard these on flashing marquees. Since many in today's world are "turned off by Scripture and the faithful preaching of God's word, we should attract people instead by turning the church into a friendly, social club.

We can increase the size of the congregation even further, drawing numbers from across denominational lines, by adopting generic names like Community Fellowship Church, etc. Appeal to the shallowness of people and their desire to "be given unto" rather than to give, their desire to "be served" rather than to serve, and their continual question, "What's in it for me?" When filling these "needs" is top priority for a church, the crowds will flock in response. Satan urges that we turn stones into bread for the masses, but they will evaporate when we try to feed them the true bread of life (See John 6).

***The Devil's second dynamic principle of church growth*** would replace true worship with sensationalism. The scriptures say, *"If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone"* (Matthew 4). Show business is just about the greatest crowd attraction on earth, so add fanfare and the "unexpected" to dry and mundane services. Give worshippers a show-time religion. Turn pulpits into set decorations that will make Hollywood envious. Send for highly recognized, talented speakers, and have choral groups to perform. Arrange special music—solos, quartets, and have elaborate presentations for Easter and Christmas celebrations. Present testimonies from famous athletic stars. Open your pulpit for all popular speakers, regardless of gender or doctrinal belief. Turn the Lord's Supper away from its simplicity into something more "graphic" and "impressive". Mold services into a constant diet of "praise worship", which will allow impenitent to "worship" without feeling "preached to".



Churches tend to grow more rapidly when they are considered up-to-date, therefore be quick to adopt cultural fads and trends. Make your worship professional by discouraging the use of old-time hymns. Instead, sing peppy songs with lots of physical movement. "Gospel Rock" singing and accompanying exercises are extremely appealing. Make "sermons" brief but highly motivational for the group. Encourage the light-hearted audience to show its pleasure with unrestrained applause. Tell everybody their feeling of pleasure is evidence that the "Holy Ghost" is present.

Avoid using the word sin except when applied to a possible "world situation". Never use it to point out *personal* faults. Speak of sin as being dysfunctional, maladjusted or as a behavioral problem. Offer counselling sessions with an abundance of psychology but direct no one to the Scriptures and to God's demands for repentance; that would be preaching. Then, when everyone is feeling good, uplifted and psyched up, pass the contribution plate. People will pay to be entertained.

***The Devil's third dynamic principle of church growth*** asks that we fall down and worship him. We would openly disregard any scriptural references of New Testament law or worship, having concluded that these are not actually laws but that they are only principles. Satan would have us to believe that the Scriptures must bend to accommodate every culture and every age. Therefore, worship should have an abundance of religious trappings, but be fleshly centered. Tell everyone what they want to hear: that God loves to be worshiped in the way that people want to worship Him. Send worshippers away feeling that their obligations to God have been fulfilled if they have "enjoyed" a lively worship service.

Many big churches build on the idea that worship is a commodity for human consumption; that it is not adoration and praise of God, done in the right spirit and according to the Scriptures. Their policy is to make worshippers feel they have spent their time meaningfully, by their standards of what worship is supposed to be. Feeling self-satisfied, they will return in droves. Such people forget what Jesus warned, *"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"* (Matthew 7:22,23).

***Let us now consider:*** *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit sayeth unto the Churches"* (Revelation 2:17). These three principle were suggested in their original form to Jesus by Satan

when our Lord first set out to build His group of disciples. He rejected each of them as a lie of Satan.

The Lord wanted His people to grow far more than any of us who are working with established congregations today. If these principles had been true, he would have used them himself. But he refused to build on the false premises of (1) bread first, (2) the use of sensationalism and entertainment and (3) a worship that is disassociated from the word of God. These principles may produce big numbers and enable members to meet the budget, but Jesus refused them as lies and unworthy tools for Himself and for His people.

Material bread has its place, but you cannot build a congregation of the church of Christ on bread—physical appeal—alone. It takes pulpits and Bible classes where every word proceeds out of the mouth of God and where the congregation is proclaiming, “amen” and “hallelujah, Thy will be done!” The church of Christ thrives when its members rely only on Christ’s principle of growth: *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, all these things will be added to you”* (Matthew 6:33) We must place the importance of spiritual bread first, and then trust God that the needed physical bread will follow.

Jesus refused to play to the grandstand. *“God is a Spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth”* (John 4:24). But worshipping in spirit is not lifting people emotionally with a religious show. Like Abel, excellent worship is an offering to God by faith: worship which is offered as it was divinely ordered. It is preaching the good news in its entirety, God’s “no” as well as His “yes”. It is observing the Lord’s Supper each First Day of the week in quiet and reverent simplicity. It is lifting our voices in singing, with self-examination of the heart. It is not Cain’s selfish style of “worship in your own way”. Singing “Amazing Grace” to gospel rock music may entertain applauding crowds, but for many it is out of order in true worship, lacking in reverence and the quiet spirit of meditation (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Many rapidly growing twentieth century churches graphically signify that they have rejected the muddy river of Jordan for the clear waters of Damascus (2 Kings 5; 1 Corinthians 1:21). To make such a choice is to choose Satan rather than Christ.

One thing we cannot afford to forget: Jesus loved the masses. They represented souls. He showed His concern when His large audiences began to dwindle away. He turned to the twelve and asked, *“Will ye also go away?”* Peter gave the only acceptable

answer for Jesus' followers in that day and for a congregation of the church of Christ today: *"To whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life"* (John 6:68,69). Let us first preach the Word, then leave it to God to give the increase — to "grow the church" (Acts 2:37-47). When we can say with Paul, *"I know whom I believed, and am persuaded...."*; When we can say, *"It is not I who live, but Christ liveth in me,"* and when we can say, *"...for me to live is Christ...."* then the evil forces of this age will have met their match, and the surge toward life in the church will be more powerful than the drift toward death.

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## ***Blessings of Worship in the Assembly of the Saints***

**W. Douglass Harris**

FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE THE benefits of worship in the assembly of the saints may explain the delinquency of many. Frequently, when delinquent members of the church are asked about their unfaithfulness, they will reply by saying, "The church was not doing anything for me." To those who recognize the benefit of worship in the assembly, this is faulty thinking. Echoing the words of a former president of the United States, they should be asking what they can do for the church, rather than what the church can do for them.

Worship in the assembly is not an arbitrary requirement of God, but it has spiritual benefits, which God knew, and that is the reason for the injunction in Hebrews 10:24,25. Worship in the assembly benefits the worshipper, not God. In fact, there is no other experience in life comparable to it. Let us note some of those benefits.

### **Fellowship**

The word from which fellowship is translated means "communion, fellowship, or sharing in common." The church and faithful worship provide a bond of fellowship not found anywhere else on earth (Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:7). This fellowship is a great blessing in time of great sorrow and calamity. A faithful member of the church knows that there are others in fellowship with him who will come to his aid when he needs it. As John Faucett wrote in one of our beautiful hymns, "We share our mutual woes, Our mutual burdens bear; And often for each other flows the sympathizing tear."

## Exhortation

To those who love the worship in the public assembly, it offers strength for edification (Acts 9:31). As we march toward the fadeless day, we need encouragement and edification to keep keeping on in the narrow way that leads to life that is life indeed. Much of this comes from mutual edification in the assembly. We are exhorted to follow after things wherewith we may edify each other (Romans 14:19). By being with other saints as they assemble, we do most of this. By regular attendance we acknowledge the need of encouragement from others. *"Exhort one another day by day...lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin"* (Hebrews 3:13).

## Joy of Worship

Another blessing enjoyed by those who assemble regularly with the saints is the joy of public worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7). If we are to be prepared for the joy of worshiping God in heaven, this is a **must**. Being in the assembly of the saints, viewed properly, is a little foretaste and anticipation of the joy we will experience with that celestial throng around the throne of God. This is the picture that is portrayed in the book of Revelation. As the Psalmist said: *"In thy presence is fullness of joy"* (Psalm 16:11).

## Encouragement

There are two words in the Greek New Testament which are translated by four different English words, and encouragement is one of them. We are admonished to do this for each other (Hebrews 10:24,25). By being absent regularly without valid reasons, we are discouraging others in running the Christian race. One of the devil's most effective weapons is *discouragement*—getting Christians to thinking they can't live the Christian life or that it is not worth the cost.

## Conclusion

The knowledgeable saint comes into the assembly (1) as a thirsty person goes to a spring of fresh water, seeking refreshment; (2) as a period of preparation for the joy he will experience when he crosses the great divide and joins those assembled around the heavenly throne; (3) because there we are taught the tragedy of sin and the reality of salvation therefrom; (4) as an oasis *in* a sinful world and a refuge *from* a sinful world. What greater prospects could we contemplate?

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