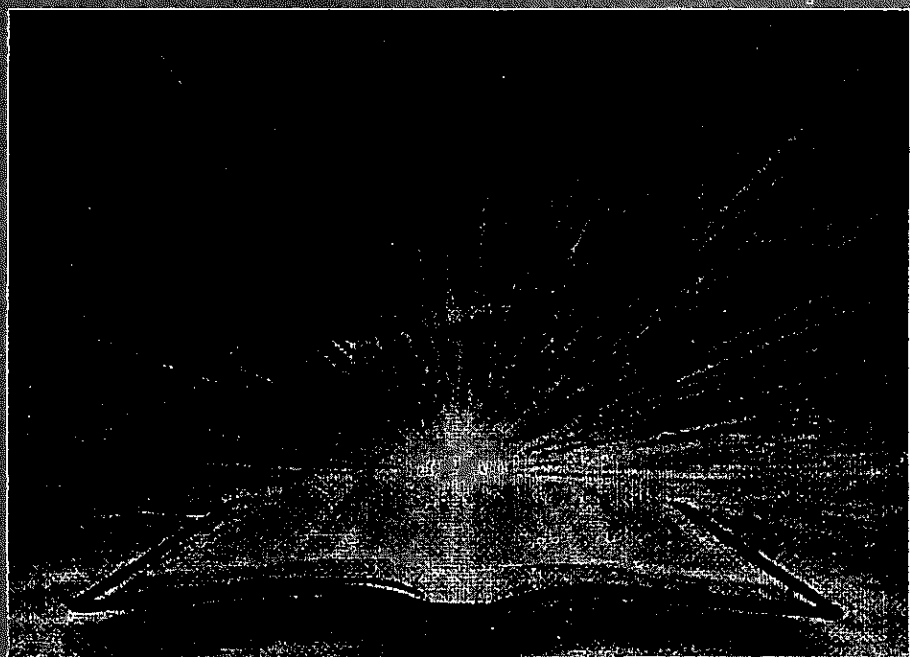


Monthly

August 2021

Price: Rs. 2/-

# THE BIBLE TEACHER



## ***Our Plea***

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

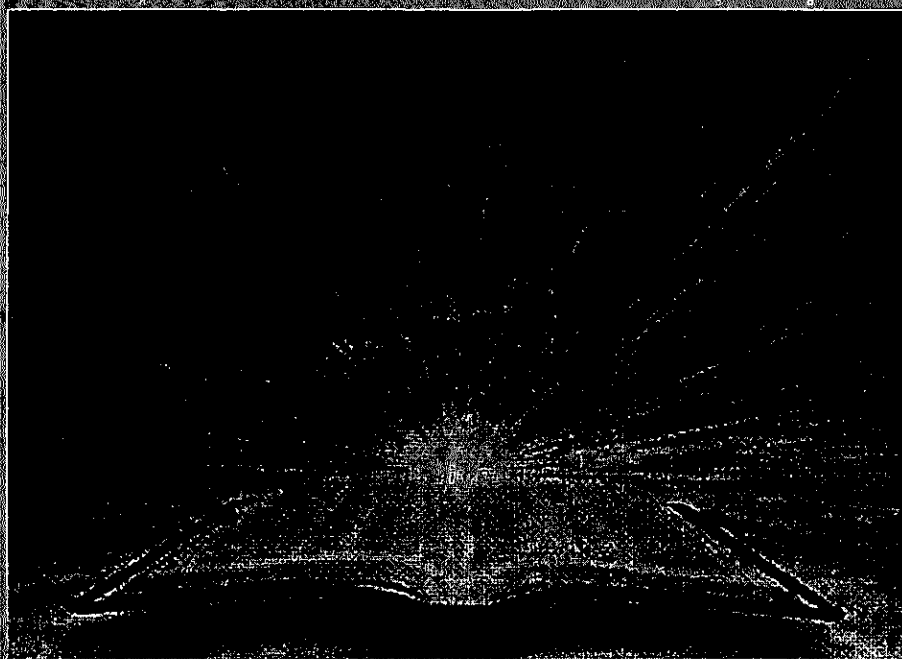
1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18; Col. 1:18). That congregations of the one church of the Bible everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at 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).

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# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

Vol. 52

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## Editorial

### What Does the Bible Teach?

#### *No Condemnation To Those Who Are in Christ Jesus*



THIS WORLD IS FULL of problems, personal, financial, family, emotional, relationship, etc. But there is no problem greater than the sin problem, which is the problem of every individual universally. Wherever there is man sin is there. From the beginning, from the time of Adam and Eve, our first parents, all have sinned against God. (Romans 3:23). Sin is defined as not living according to God's will, man's Creator. (1 John 3:4). Although no one is born with sin. When a baby is born he/she is born without sin. Just as Adam and Eve were created by God in the beginning without sin, with a sinless soul. But all have sinned, and everyone sins by his or her own choice. In the book of James, the writer explains how one becomes a sinner, it says, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full grown, brings forth death." (James 1:14-15). This is how Adam and Eve became sinners in the beginning, and this is how every individual sins today.

The Bible also says, that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), that is to say that sin is not without its wages, because sin separates man from God. That separation is called death, which, in fact is spiritual alienation of man from God. (Isaiah 59:1, 2).

Sin resides in the heart or mind of an individual, where it has its beginning. Proverbs 4:23 therefore says, "Keep your heart with all

diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." Jesus taught, "For out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man....." (Matthew 15:19-20). He also taught, "You have heard, that it was said to those of old, you shall not commit adultery, but I say to you" said Jesus, "that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27-28). And the same would be true in the case of a woman. Thus, Christ made the lustful thought as sinful as the overt act. In the light of this, who is innocent?

So when we look at sin from this standpoint, we know that it is definitely true that all accountable beings, who know the difference between right and wrong, except little children (Matthew 18:3; 19:14), are sinners, because all have entertained evil thoughts in their heart or mind, and have fallen to the temptation to do the wrong.

Therefore, from God's standard all are under condemnation, because all have sinned. Sin has separated and alienated every man and woman from God. Sin is like a wall between man and God, as the prophet Isaiah said, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." (Isaiah 59:1-2).

God, who in the beginning had created humans, "in His own image and in His own likeness" (Genesis 1:26-27), was therefore greatly concerned about the eternal consequences of man's soul when man sinned. Humans, says Acts 17:29, are "the offspring of God." Having been created in the likeness and in the image of God, all humans are eternal beings. This means, we are and we shall always be. Like God, we will exist forever in the eternity. But where?

Christ taught that in eternity there are only two places, one is the place of eternal punishment and the other is where there is eternal life. (Matthew 25:46). God wants all people to enter into eternal life in heaven. And to make it possible God sent His living Word from heaven to earth to save man and to redeem man from sin, because sin cannot enter heaven. The Bible says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, according to the will of God, through His death on the cross became the propitiation or the atoning payment for the sins of the world. (1 John 4:10). According to the Bible, when Christ was dying on the cross God was in Christ reconciling the

world to Himself; not imputing their trespasses to them. In fact, 2 Corinthians 5:21 reads, "For He made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Man cannot make Himself worthy of heaven by his own efforts, nothing he can do or give to atone for his sins. Only in Christ one can become righteousness of God. Because He is the one who has paid the penalty of man's sins. So Christ rightly proclaimed before returning back to heaven, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6).

Because the loving heavenly Father, our Creator God, has done this great and most wonderful thing for the whole world (John 3:16), the Bible declares, at Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...." There is nothing, therefore, in this world more important for a man or woman to do than to make sure that he/she is in Christ Jesus before leaving this earth to live in eternity. According to the Bible: when one believes in Christ; repents of all sins and wrong, and is baptized into Christ; one gets into Christ to live in Him. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4).

## DAILY RELIGION

**J.C. Choate**

THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF different kinds of religions, but sets forth one as being a pure religion, the religion of Christ. (James 1:27). Not only does God's word refer to a number of kinds of religion but such is seen on every hand in the form of Catholicism, denominationalism, etc. But speaking only of the body of Christ, it can be truthfully said that there are those of our number who practice one type of religion or another. For instance, there are certain members of the church who practice a "seasonal" religion; others who believe in "big meeting" religion; and still others who have only a "Sunday" religion.

It is wonderful to see people attending the various assemblies, as well as expressing their religion in other ways, but it is not enough just to be religious during a particular time of the year. Also, it is thrilling to see people attending a gospel meeting; backing up every service with their presence, as well as encouraging others to attend, and so on. But again, it is not enough just to be religious during a series of gospel meetings. And in connection with these thoughts,



it is indeed heart warming to see members of the church getting out on Sunday morning and evening to the worship services, but as before, it is not enough just to worship God on the Lord's day, thus practicing a Sunday religion only. The Bible says that if one is going to practice the religion of Christ it must be a daily affair. Christ himself says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Lk. 9:23). Now consider carefully what the Lord had to say. In the first place, he invites all to follow him. In the second place, he says that if we would follow him we must deny ourselves, or give up the things of the world. And finally, in the third place, he says that if we are going to follow him we must take up our cross, daily. So you can see, the religion of Christ is a daily religion.

Now for a person to practice the religion of Christ he must understand that it will be a full time job, a daily routine. He must understand further that a daily religion demands certain things. For instance, daily religion demands daily faith. It takes faith to practice the religion of Christ. Paul informs us: "The just shall live by faith." (Rom 1:17). To add to that, he says: "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14:23). Then don't forget that the Hebrew writer says without faith it is impossible to please God. (Heb. 11:6). It takes daily faith to accomplish that which the Lord would have us do.

Daily religion demands daily love. We must love God above everything else. And the Lord adds that the next command to that is to, "Love thy neighbours as thyself." (Matt. 22:37-39). We must also love one another according to the apostle John: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God." (1 John 4:7). Christians cannot serve God apart from love. Such is an impossibility. But keep this in mind: It is not enough to talk about love, one must prove it, in his actions.

Daily religion demands daily prayer. Paul says: "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5:17). The Christian must pray at every opportunity. He should pray for himself, for his friends, for the church, etc. One can't drift off from God if he communes with him as he should.

Daily religion demands daily Bible study. Paul says that we are to study to show ourselves approved to God. (2 Tim 2:15). It takes spiritual food for spiritual living. This is where Bible study enters the picture. So many fall down on the job here, and such is evident by their actions.

Daily religion demands daily work, daily giving, daily exhortations, a daily example, and so on. And here is something that all should



remember: Daily religion brings daily results. This will always be the case. Every soul who practices this kind of religion will be helped, and consequently, will help others, either directly or indirectly. Never underestimate the power that is to be found in this type of religion.

What about your religion? Are you just playing at the job, or is it a serious matter with you? Do you work at it seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day? If not, then try it and look at the results.

## *Paul's Last Days*

**Harvey Porter**

PAUL IS THE BEST-KNOWN person in the New Testament, besides our Lord Jesus Christ. He occupies the most prominent place in the Acts of the Apostles, the history book of the New Testament. He wrote more letters to the churches than any other writer. He is a favorite with all of us as students of the Bible. He was so very Christ-like in his living and in what he wrote by inspiration.

Dr. Luke was a traveling companion with him on his second and third missionary journeys. In the last letter Paul wrote, 2 Timothy, he stated, *"only Luke is with me."* That means that Luke was with him while he was in prison in Rome for the last years of his life.

History seems to indicate that both Peter and Paul were put to death by the wicked emperor, Nero, in Rome. Many Bible students have wondered why Luke did not record the circumstances of Paul's death. Instead of telling of the death of Paul, Luke ends Acts on a joyful note. He wrote, *"For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Acts 28:30,31).

The Roman government allowed Paul to stay in *"his own rented house."* The Romans no doubt knew that he was a political prisoner because of the unfounded charges the Jews had made against him. Christianity was no threat to the Roman empire, just as it is no threat to any government today. Luke leads us to believe that many Christians whom Paul had taught visited him while he was in prison. Paul was much loved, even though some in the church were against him.

Luke said that he preached the kingdom of God boldly and without hindrance. This was characteristic of his whole life. Wherever he was, he preached. Preaching was his life, his dedication, his compulsion. He wrote, *"Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel"*

(1 Corinthians 9:16). Faithful gospel preachers love to preach. Faithful Christians love to hear preaching. Jesus loved preaching. Paul said, *"I shunned not to declare unto you the whole counsel of God"* (Acts 20:27), and *"I kept back nothing that was profitable to you"* (Acts 20:20). When he wrote to the Roman Christians, he said, *"I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are in Rome also"* (Romans 1:15). Paul loved preaching and showing the unsearchable riches of Christ. Only the worldly make fun of preaching and look down on it.

Luke's last words of the great book of Acts were *"and (Paul) taught about the Lord Jesus Christ."* All of our preaching and teaching should center on our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul said, *"... Christ in you the hope of glory"* (Colossians 1:27). He further wrote to the Colossian Christians, *"so then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught...."* (Colossians 2:6,7). He also said, *"For me to live is Christ...."* (Philippians 1:21). He could have said, *"For me to preach and teach is Christ."*

I think Luke wanted to conclude his history of the early church and Paul on a very encouraging note. Paul ended his life doing what he loved best—preaching and teaching the Lord Jesus Christ.

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day..."* (2 Timothy 4:7,8).

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## ***The Bible Invites Your Investigation***

**Charles Pugh III**

THE FOLLOWING NOTEWORTHY COMMENDATION was given the people of Berea by the historian, Luke: *"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so"* (Acts 17:11). The religion of Jesus Christ has always invited honest examination and commended such when it occurs. And, when the fair-minded investigate thoroughly the claims of Christianity, the truth of the Christian faith becomes evident to them.

History records many examples of those who were either skeptical or indifferent to the claims of Jesus Christ, but who, upon honest investigation of the New Testament, became believers. In

an old work entitled, **The Young Man's Guide Against Infidelity**, and dated 1848, the author tells about one, Count Struenese, prime minister of Denmark in the latter eighteenth century, who endeavored to spread his philosophy of atheism and infidelity.

However, he studied Burnet's examination of the arguments for Christianity, and ultimately the doubts were removed which had formerly occupied his mind. He stated, "I never imagined that Christianity was founded upon such strong evidences.... After a calm examination, I have found them to be unexceptionable, and none, if they only take proper time ... can ever examine them without being convinced of the truth ... The more I read, the more I grow convinced how unjust those objections are with which Christianity is charged."

The invitation to investigate is still open. "Present your case," says the Lord. *"Bring forth your strong reasons ..."* (Isaiah 41:21). *"Come now and let us reason together," says the Lord* (Isaiah 1:18).

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## **You And The Bible**

**Bobby Key**

MANY PEOPLE CLAIM TO believe at least a part of the Bible. However, the majority of even religious people do not believe that God's Word alone is sufficient to guide us religiously. Some say the Bible is not true, while others say that it does not contain *all the truth* we need to serve God. As the result of these attitudes, men have written creeds to supply that which they believe to be deficient in God's Word.

Of course, the Bible will not help us unless we believe it. The Hebrews writer said, *"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it"* (Hebrews 4:2). *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.... It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"* (1 Corinthians 1:18,21).

The Bible itself claims to be the truth. It contains all that we need to know, all that we need to believe, and all that we need to do to make us complete in Christ (2 Timothy 3:15-17). The Bible, unread, will not profit anyone. To hear the Word and not do it will not save your soul. Study carefully the following:

The Word of God is *pure*; however, it will purify only those who

*obey it* (1 Peter 1:22). The Word of God is *perfect*; however, it perfects only those who *do it* (James 1:22-25). The Word of God is *powerful to save*; however, it saves only those who *believe and obey it* (Romans 1:16). The Word of God *endures forever*; however, it will cause only those who do God's will to *abide forever* (1 John 2:17; Matthew 7:21). The Word of God is *life-giving*; however, it gives life only to those who *live it* (John 3:3-8; Luke 8). The Word of God is *complete*; but our beliefs and practices must conform to its teaching in order for us to be *complete* (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Dear reader, you have an obligation to the Bible. Follow Paul's exhortation and "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom*" (Colossians 3:16). Remember, the Word of God treated so lightly now will judge us in the great day of all days (John 12:48).

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## IMMERSED IN CHRIST

**Byron Nichols**

THE BIBLE STIPULATES THAT baptism is only by immersion. The New Testament was written in Greek, and the Greek word for baptism allow only for immersion, or burial.

The Bible also specifies that the purpose of baptism (immersion) is for the forgiveness (remission) of our past sins. This is borne out by such Scriptures as Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, 1 Peter 3:21, and others.

The Bible further indicates that when one is baptized for the forgiveness of his sins he is immersed **into** Christ. Paul affirms this in Galatians 3:27, "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" He makes the same affirmation in Romans 6:3, where he says, "*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?*"

Thus, immersion is of deep significance and importance. However, there is a biblical immersion that is **not into Christ**, and it is this second immersion to which your attention is now invited.

Webster's unabridged dictionary defines the word "immerse" as follows: "to plunge, drop, or dip into or as if into a liquid, especially so as to cover completely. To plunge into a specified state; to involve or engage deeply; as he was immersed in thought." Please keep this information in mind as we proceed.

As was stated earlier, the Bible requires immersion into Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. But, believe it or not, that really is not enough! We must also be immersed **in** Christ if we are to be His true and faithful disciples. It's true that the Bible never

uses the specific expression “immersed in Christ,” but that idea is very plainly taught.

To be “immersed in Christ” means to be deeply involved or engaged in Christ. Yes, immersion **into** Christ is commanded by the Bible, but the Scriptures also require immersion **in** Christ. When Jesus said, *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”* (Matthew 6:33), He was talking about our being immersed **in** Him. In Matthew 22:36 the Lord was asked, *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”* Jesus responded, *“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.”* In this response Jesus was saying essentially, “Your commitment to God must include everything you have and are—you must immerse yourself in Me.”

In the familiar words of Romans 12:1, Paul advocated being immersed in Christ in this way, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”* Paul brought this subject of immersion **in** Christ before the church at Corinth, as evidenced by his words in 1 Corinthians 15:58, *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”*

Is it possible for one to have been immersed **into** Christ, but never have really become immersed **in** Christ? Most definitely so. How serious a matter is this? Just these few verses (out of a whole host that could be used) should suffice in showing the seriousness of this matter. In James 5:19-20, the Lord’s brother wrote, *“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”* Paul very clearly warned the Corinthians (and us), *“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall”* (1 Corinthians 10:12). Perhaps even more noteworthy and impressive is the testimony of the faithful and unrelenting Paul regarding his own personal struggle to continue his immersion in Christ—*“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified”* (1 Corinthians 9:27). There can be no doubt, then, that it is possible to have been immersed **into** Christ, to have been immersed **in** Christ for a period of time, and then to somehow have become more and more slack in our commitment to the Lord, even to the ultimate point of falling away and turning

our back on Him who made possible our salvation.

Surely our study of God's Word will help us to clearly see and firmly believe that:

1. It is necessary for one to be immersed **into** Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins;
2. It is equally necessary that we also be immersed (deeply involved) **IN** Jesus Christ in order to have any reasonable expectation of an eternal home in heaven.

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## *If Eli Could Speak To Parents*

**Ferman Carpenter**

FIRST SAMUEL, CHAPTERS 2-4, tells us of the life of Eli. He was the high priest of Israel. He loved God and was very sensitive to His word. During the time of Eli, spiritual conditions were not good. People mocked God and lived immoral lives. Tragically, ungodliness also found its way into the lives of Eli's sons. They were not only disrespectful to God in their worship, but they were also immoral in their conduct (1 Samuel 2:12-25).

While we appreciate Eli's dedication to God, it is disturbing to see how he neglected his children. For whatever reason, he failed to restrain and discipline them (1 Samuel 2:12-17, 29). Because of Eli's lack of restraint, his children became careless and immoral even in the Lord's service, and they died as ungodly men.

Today we also live in a very busy world. For over two generations many parents have been so busy that they have failed to restrain and discipline their children. Thus, many children have grown up to disrespect God in their worship and in the way they live.

Let's look at what Eli might tell parents if he were here today:

- **"Dedicate yourself to God."** Our dedication must come from within and not just from a few "noticeable" acts. Whether we are at home, work, or play, we should live like children of God. Joshua knew that his family could tell if his life was a fake. Therefore his faith was seen in his worship and in his daily living: *"As for me and my house we will serve the Lord"* (Joshua 24:15).
- **"Give your family the attention it deserves and needs."** Helping our family see the joys of Christian living should be our supreme objective. Many good people fail to give their children the spiritual nourishment they need. God instructed parents to "bring" their children up, NOT "send" them up

(Ephesians 6:4).

- **“Restraint is necessary to please God.”** Eli knew his sons were wrong but he did not restrain them. Many homes today are facing the same problem. More parents are listening to “noted psychiatrists” than to God. God’s Word is truth and it has never changed (John 17:17; Malachi 3:6). Other ways may seem better, but what if “they” are wrong? *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 14:12). Therefore, parents, take heed when God says, *“He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him”*—*“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying”*—*“The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame”*—*“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Nevertheless afterward, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who were trained thereby”* (Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 15:17; Hebrews 12:11).
- **“You will pay the price if you fail!”** God tells us, *“The way of the transgressor is hard”*—*“The wages of sin is death”* (Proverbs 13:15; Romans 6:23). Eli’s sons lived and died in rebellion to God. Their lives brought them misery and heartache to Eli. The same destiny is true for everyone who fails to heed God’s way. The price we pay will be in this world as well as in eternity.

Eli cannot speak to us today, but through the Bible God tells us his story, and gives us warning (Psalm 119:160; 1 Timothy 4:16). We have only one opportunity to raise our children right. Let’s do it God’s way.

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## *We Preach Christ Crucified*

**Ron Bryant**

THE CROSS OF CHRIST is central in the Gospel. The whole scheme of redemption hangs on the fact of the death of Christ for the sins of man. Yet, the preaching of the cross was offensive to the hearers of the first century. A crucified Messiah was a contradiction to the mind-set of both Jew and Gentile in that period of time.

To preach a crucified Messiah was to stir the prejudice of the Jews and to move into an arena of argument (see Acts 26:23). The Jews demanded a victorious Messiah, heralded by signs, who would

restore the glories of the kingdom of David and Solomon. To the Jew the cross was the sufficient and decisive refutation of the claim that Jesus was the Messiah. On this point a Jew had to unlearn before he could learn. The Jews wanted signs but they needed to get their eyes opened to "the sign" (Romans 1:3,4).

The Gentiles also had to unlearn in order to learn, but in a different way. They were ready to weigh the "pros" and "cons" of almost any new system, but lacked the presuppositions that would have led them to simple faith in Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles had presuppositions that served as barriers to their receiving a "crucified Savior."

But the preaching of Christ was not accommodative; Jesus was not preached as a conqueror to please the Jews, nor as a philosopher to please the Gentiles. He was preached as the crucified Nazarene.

To preach "Christ crucified" is not of man! It is of God! It is in the Cross that God's greater vision comes into operation in the salvation of mankind. God's power and wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Romans 1:16,17) show themselves in a way which is not in keeping with the preconceived standards of men, and in every point God's way transcends such standards. To those who are being saved, the preaching of the Cross is both the wisdom and the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18-31).

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## PETER'S FAITH

**O.P. Baird**

### **Who is Jesus?**

BEFORE JESUS BEGAN HIS public ministry, God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Him. John preached, *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"* and he baptized many people (Matthew 3:1-6). *"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass ' that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased'"* (Luke 3:21,22).

Before Jesus was baptized, John knew Him as a righteous man, but he did not know Him as the Christ or Messiah. *"And John bore witness, saying I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit*



*descending and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God'" (John 1:32-34).*

### **Peter Meets The Savior**

*"Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus .... One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, 'You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas' (which is translated, a Stone)" (John 1:35-37,40-42). The names "Peter" and "Cephas" both mean "rock", as a stone or detached boulder, not a ledge of rock.*

### **Peter's Confession of Faith**

The teaching of Jesus and His miraculous signs convinced His disciples that He was the Christ, but it did not convince all who heard Him.

*"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' And Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven'" (Matthew 16:13-17). That same faith brings the blessing of God today, but, just as in Peter's time, people of the world have different opinions about who Jesus was.*

Later Jesus was teaching in Capernaum to a large gathering of people. The multitude of people turned and went away because they did not understand His teaching. His disciples didn't understand either but, when Jesus asked them, *"Do you also want to go away?"* Peter answered, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (John 6:67-69). The disciples were limited in understanding, but their faith in Christ caused them to trust Him and accept as truth all that He taught. Faith in Christ has the same effect now.

We have the words of eternal life today. When Jesus left His disciples He sent the Holy Spirit to give His Word to them. They

have given His Word to us in the New Testament Scriptures. Our faith comes through that Word (Romans 10:17). On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus said to His disciples, "*I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you*" (John 16:12-15).

Do we have the faith expressed by Peter at Caesarea Philippi and Capernaum? If we do, we will believe in Christ and trust Him completely, and keep our hearts open to all that He teaches, because He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

## *Is It Too Far To Jerusalem?*

**W. Douglas Harris**

*"IT IS TOO MUCH for you to go up to Jerusalem"* (1 Kings 12:28; read the entire chapter for the background).

This chapter records the division of the kingdom of Israel after Rehoboam's accession to the throne. Rehoboam had followed the advice of the younger men in his realm rather than that of the older men in redressing the grievances of the people. As a result, ten tribes revolted and summoned Jereboam from exile in Egypt to be their king. Jereboam established his government based on idolatry. Fearing that the people might desert him if they returned to Jerusalem (the place authorized by God) to worship, he set up golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Then he soothed their consciences by proclaiming that it was too inconvenient for them to go back to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. This appeal to the flesh and the love of ease was deadening and dangerous, both then and now.

### **Ancient Appeal of Jerusalem**

Jerusalem was always important to the Jews—it held a special charm and appeal to them. It was their capital city, seat of government, place of worship, and was called "*the city of the great king*" (Matthew 5:35). In captivity Daniel prayed toward Jerusalem, and when Nehemiah in captivity heard of the city's state of disrepair, he wept (Daniel 6:10; Nehemiah 2:3). The Jews' general love and attitude toward Jerusalem is expressed poignantly in Psalm 137:5,6.

In a figurative sense, Jerusalem is just as important today to the restorers of the New Testament church as it was to the ancient Israelites. Peter referred to Jerusalem by inspiration as **“the beginning”** (Acts 11:15). The events of Acts 2 mark the beginning of many things: the preaching of the Gospel as established facts as well as commands to be obeyed, the new covenant ratified by the blood of Christ, the Gospel plan of salvation, baptism in the name of Christ for the remission of sins, obedience to Christ’s commands concerning the Great Commission, the birth of the church of Christ, worship as authorized by Christ, the binding and loosing authority of the apostles of Christ, and the reign of Christ on David’s throne.

The word “Jerusalem” is used in a metaphorical sense to picture the true will of God today. Since the Gospel was first preached in Jerusalem, when the same Gospel is preached today unchanged, it is described as “the-old-Jerusalem” Gospel.

### **Too Far For Many Today**

Many in Christendom today find it too far to Jerusalem—they are not willing to go back before Catholicism and Protestantism, abandoning all human creeds and catechisms, to make the New Testament their exclusive guide and thus to restore the church that had its beginning in Jerusalem. Many are not willing to turn their backs religiously on relatives, forsake practices held dear for generations, and go all the way back to Jerusalem and follow the inspired pattern for the church.

Many find it too far to Jerusalem to attain religious unity on the seven-step plan of Ephesians 4:4-6—**one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** Spirit, **one** body, **one** hope, **one** baptism, **one** God. This is the Jerusalem Gospel. There is no other basis or plan that will work. It will never be attained in sectarian division. Some find it too far to Jerusalem to restore the scriptural action in baptism. Effusion—sprinkling or pouring—for baptism is the easy, convenient, and unauthorized action. The Jerusalem Gospel teaches that baptism is a burial in water (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3,4).

Many find it too far to Jerusalem to practice the kind of music authorized by Christ and His apostles—vocal music (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

The majority of the religious world find it too far to Jerusalem for the scriptural design of baptism, scriptural designations for the church, the scriptural creed of the church, and scriptural worship, including the weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper.

## Conclusion

Have you obeyed the Jerusalem Gospel? From Acts 2:37-47 we learn what was required in Jerusalem by the inspired apostles of Christ. Their audience heard the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ proclaimed. They were indicted for slaying Christ. Cut to the heart, they cried out, asking what they needed to do to be saved; and as believers in Christ, they were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. This was "the beginning."

**Is it too far for you to go to Jerusalem?**

## ***Fault-finding and Righteous Judgment Are Poles Apart***

**Tim Nichols**

FAULTFINDING IS EASY WORK. Those who set out to find fault with their fellowman will never be disappointed. These can easily establish their own arbitrary standards and then judge the actions of others according to them. Such rules can be established either before or after the other person acts. They are, by their nature, portable and easily exchanged for other arbitrary decrees. They can be completely inconsistent with each other and yet remain in the same carrying case. The arbitrary judge carries with him ammunition for any side of any battle. After he decides to either attack or defend, he can select the rules that work in his favor and apply them to his advantage. He can justify any evil and vilify any good by the skillful application of his homemade rules. At his own choosing he can paint matters that are morally neutral with the black brush of contempt or with the pure white brush of virtue. His arbitrary judgments, though, are condemned by God.

*"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck out of your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:1-5).*

*"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet,*

*and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight" (Isaiah 5:20,21).*

Both Jesus and John the Baptist were plagued with arbitrary judges who used their changeable rules to find fault with *opposite* behaviors! *"But to what shall I liken this generation ? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; We mourned to you, and you did not lament.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children"* (Matthew 11:16-19).

Learn to ignore such critics unless you are able to find something valuable in what they have to suggest. If such men are numbered among your "friends," you will want to keep an eye on the relationships and avoid having them take your "side" in any dispute. Their syllogisms are slippery, their logic is leaky, and their reasons are unreliable. Their "assistance" will sabotage the cause of truth every time, and your association with them will rob you of your influence for good.

God's standards are revealed, fixed, and unchanging. He has defined right and wrong. He has revealed what is good and evil, and He has placed His standards in an inspired volume for all to read. His children are those who have discarded their *own* notions about what they and others ought to believe and do—and they have replaced them with God's. When they apply what **God** has revealed to men's lives (first to their own, and then to others) they *"judge with righteous judgment"* (John 7:24). They apply God's wisdom and not their own.

Learn to listen to all that God's Word has to say concerning your life and conduct. Those who can and will show you your errors according to God's standards are your friends and ought to be treasured as such. Those who know God's standards and who will not show you your errors according to God's Word cannot reasonably be considered your friends or God's servants.

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## ***The Greatest Gift Of All***

**Glenn Colley**

HE'S CALLED THE KING of kings and Lord of lords. He is the Messiah, the Bright and Morning Star, the Mighty Counselor, the

Prince of Peace, and the Savior of the world. There are so many names and titles for the Anointed One, Jesus Christ. Isn't it profoundly amazing that He is also called "the Gift"?

This gift is needed. John 3:16, the "golden text of the Bible," offers to us a Creator full of love for the inhabitants of His world. Love has never been expressed this way before, nor will it be again. The God whose justice must be appeased knew we didn't have the ability to pay the needed price. He paid the price for us. He gave His sinless Son. Thank God for His unspeakable Gift!

**The gift is practical.** It fits perfectly. *"Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life"* (Romans 5:18). Through Jesus our daily needs are met (Matthew 6:33). Thank God for His unspeakable Gift!

**This gift will last.** It must feel odd to talk with someone while reading that person's mind. Jesus, knowing the heart and life of the woman at the well, said, *"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water"* (John 4:10). Because of sin and the burden borne with it, our spiritual thirst would forever go unquenched without this Gift. In Christ we drink from the fount of grace that will never run dry. *"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life"* (John 4:14). Thank God for His unspeakable Gift!

It is my prayer that from our appreciation of the greatest Gift will spring a refreshed urgency to share this precious gift with others (Matthew 28:18-20). Sadly, many Christians have subconsciously given up on personal evangelism. They never speak of their King except to other Christians. Don't let that happen to you! Let's work together to be "soul conscious"—ever conscious of the need in each individual life for the greatest Gift of all—Jesus the Christ.

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## LAMENTATIONS

**Todd O'Donnell**

IT IS COMMONLY BELIEVED that Lamentations was written by the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah had preached his heart out to the people of Judah (the Southern kingdom), calling for them to change their ways. He knew that God would not tolerate their wickedness much longer. But the people would not repent and turn back to God, so they were punished by the world power at that time, Babylon.

Lamentations was written after the destruction of Jerusalem. The author wrote as if he were an eye witness of the destruction that came upon the city. Although Jeremiah acknowledged that the punishment was fair and well deserved, it also pierced his heart to see the sad state of things. He longed for the time when God would restore the fortunes of the nation and things would get back to the way they used to be. This short book teaches us about the effects of sin upon a people. We are told in the Scriptures that righteousness exalts a nation, but that sin is a reproach to any people. Not only is it bad that people separate themselves from God when they sin, but also with sin come many bad attitudes and actions that tear down a family, a community, a city, and a country. The effects of sin (or the consequences of it) often don't just stop at the person who commits the sin. There is a domino effect that brings heartache, pain, and sorrow to more than just the individual who commits the transgression.

It may sound funny, but Lamentations shows us that sin is no laughing matter. We should cry over sin; it should hurt us; we should be sorrowful to the point of repentance. Too often sin is made out to be a big joke. The modern comedian will take a sinful situation and make it out to be nothing more 'than a bit of fun, something amusing, just a big joke. People may laugh now, they may scoff at sin, but there is a time coming when many will weep, cry, lament, and rue the day that they ever laughed and made a joke out of sin.

To one degree or another, we have all been bitten by sin and we know that it hurts. Most boys are told not to cry when they get hurt, but to "be a man." Those boys grow up to be men who can't cry because crying is supposedly a sign of weakness. Jesus was the greatest "man" of all, and He wept on a number of occasions. We should learn from Jesus and Jeremiah to cry over our sins. It is not a sign of weakness to admit you were wrong; it is an action of strength that earns respect and love from those who know you. Lamentations eventually had a happy ending when God returned the remnant to Jerusalem and the city was rebuilt.

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## **What Can We Learn From The PHARISEES?**

**Cecil May, Jr.**

THE PHARISEES WERE THE conservatives of their day. They believed the Bible. Their very name implied separation from sin

and uncleanness. They were scrupulous in keeping the law and conscientious about honoring their religious traditions.

Nevertheless, Jesus rebuked them for several things. Many talked a better religion than they practiced (Matthew 23:2,3), judged others harshly and excused themselves (Matthew 23:4), and were too wedded to their traditions, binding them on others as though they were God's laws and honoring them even when they contradicted God's law (Matthew 15:1-9).

Jesus also indicted some of them because:

**They trusted their own obedience instead of the One they were obeying.** Jesus addressed a parable to some who *"trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others"* (Luke 18:9). The Pharisee *"prayed with himself"* (Luke 18:11). He bragged to God about what he had done: *"I fasted, prayed, gave alms."* He received nothing from his prayer, because he asked for nothing. He felt he needed nothing.

**They pared down the law to what they could keep.** Fasting, praying, and giving were specific and measurable. Things that could be quantified they handled well. In tithing they included every tenth mint leaf and every tenth dill seed. They were not wrong to do those things. Jesus told them, *"These you ought to have done"* (Matthew 23:23).

**They left out the tough parts.** They omitted justice and mercy and faith (Matthew 23:23). They were absorbed with formalities and forgot people.

We need to be careful about that ourselves. We could do the same. Baptism is an essential part of our response to God's offer of grace. The Lord's supper every Sunday, singing without an instrument, and congregational church government are important if we are to be obedient to God. Jesus would still say, *"These you ought to have done."*

However, if we do these things and think we do not need grace, if we are confident these things alone set us apart from sinners, we need to remember *"the weightier matters."* Do we faithfully show mercy? Do we visit the fatherless and widows, feed the hungry, and clothe the poor? Do we do all the good we know to do? Do we treat every brother as a brother, regardless of the color of his skin? Do we love the unlovely? Do we readily forgive those who offend or mistreat us? Would we act as a loving neighbor even to those of a different race or religion?

If we consider those things too, perhaps we will be more merciful and faithful. At least we should be motivated to pray, *"Lord be merciful to me, a sinner."*



# ABSOLUTE TRUTH

Ancil Jenkins

*"WHAT IS TRUTH?"* Pilate asked (John 18:38). Pontius Pilate repeated a question people have asked for centuries. One aspect of the study of philosophy is to understand what is true and how man comprehends it. To the Christian this question should not be a great problem. The Bible says, *"As it is, you are determined to kill me, a Man who has told you the truth that I heard from God"* (John 8:40). Jesus answered, *"I am the way and the truth and the life"* (John 14:6). *"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth"* (John 17:17).

How basic to Christianity is the acceptance of absolute truth residing in God, His Son, and His Word!

This is the battleground upon which we confront His enemies—relativism, liberalism, and humanism. These concepts do not and cannot allow the thought that truth is knowable and unchangeable.

I was not much surprised to see a recent survey of how few people accept the possibility of absolute truth. Only about 19% of the general population strongly believe this. Of those who claim to be "born again," the numbers increase only to 25%. (**The Barna Report: What Americans Believe**, p.85.)

These figures show why reaching the secular world with the Gospel is difficult. Since eight out of ten do not strongly believe it is possible to know truth absolutely, they will probably reject the Bible since it claims to be truth. If the Bible is not accepted as truth, one cuts himself off from the only viable source of knowledge of God, Jesus Christ, or His Gospel. This should put our personal teaching into a new perspective. Preliminary to our teaching, we must establish a common acceptance of truth.

Yet, we must also earn the right to teach absolute truth. It is inconsistent to preach absolute truth if we do not believe it. How many more professing Christians believe in absolute truth than the average person? According to the survey, only 6%! If these figures are correct, it means that *three out of four who claim to be Christians do not believe strongly in absolute truth*. Thus, many religious people will affirm that it really doesn't matter what one believes. Serving God becomes simply a matter of individual choice and interpretation. Such individual faith does not foster any church loyalty.

Most tragic is the resulting lack of assurance. If nothing is absolutely true, **is forgiveness real? Does prayer have any**

**effect? Is there a heaven?** Unless one is able to believe and commit to these absolute truths, life has little comfort and meaning.

We need to believe in the absolutes: God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible. On the basis of this faith, we must commit our lives to them. Such a commitment will lead us to live and act in life-changing ways.

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## *God's Family* (Where Everyone Is Important)

**Roy D. Baker**

*"WHILE HE WAS TALKING to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.' But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother'" (Matthew 12:46-50).*

This section of Scripture teaches a marvelous lesson on spiritual relationships. Jesus had recently come forth filling the whole country around Galilee with excitement and wonder at His teaching and His mighty miracles. His fame spread over the land. Multitudes followed Him wherever He went.

Almost no one understood Jesus when He began His public ministry. John wrote that His own brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:5). Mark tells us that when He came back to Nazareth, His own people went out to take custody of Him, saying, *"He is out of His mind."* That's saying, "He's insane!" Our text states that His mother and brothers were standing outside, wanting to talk to Him, but they couldn't reach Him for the large crowd. The Bible doesn't say why they wanted to talk to Him. Not being able to reach Him, they relayed the word along until someone whispered in His ear, *"Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You, Jesus."*

His answer to the message was to let them know that He, in the deepest sense, was related not only to those who, humanly speaking, were the most closely related to Him, but also to those who believed and obeyed the Word of God brought to them by Jesus. He looked toward His disciples and shocked them with a question: *"Who is My*

*mother and who are My brothers?"* Jesus lifted His language from the physical/fleshly to the spiritual. *"Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."* In other words, He was saying that anyone who does the will of God is His family.

In no way was Jesus implying His ingratitude for His earthly family. To the contrary, He was expressing gratitude for them, and yet, as dear to Him as was His mother, He was also saying that there is a spiritual relation just as dear and just as strong. Let none think He lightly esteemed His mother who had borne Him and nursed Him and followed Him with anxious heart. If one should think so, go with Him to the cross; see Him there forgetting His suffering, the anguish, and the pain of that torture-stake so that in His anxiety He might provide for the comfort of His mother throughout her remaining days on earth.

As faithful and devoted as He had been to His mother and home relatives through all the years, His attitude toward His Father in heaven and His Messianic calling caused fleshly kinship to be relegated to a subordinate place. It furnished Jesus the opportunity to teach a lesson in spiritual relationships. He used this occasion to make a point—if we put ourselves at the disposal of God, we are part of His family.

What an honor, what a privilege it is to know that those who hear the Word of God and obey it are the nearest relatives to Jesus! This spiritual relationship outranks in tenderness the natural and fleshly relationship, and it is more vital than any blood relationship. Human ties are physical and temporary. The ties of Christ are spiritual and eternal. Jesus includes in the family of God all believers in Him; He binds them together with strong cords of love and sympathy. *"For whoseever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."*

Obedience to God's will is the spiritual test of our discipleship. Jesus calls those who obey the Father's will by the endearing names of brother, sister, mother. Why? Because those who obey Him do what the Father requires. One believes, which is the first step and the beginning of obedience; he repents of past sins, confesses Jesus as the Christ, and is baptized for remission of sins, putting him/her into Christ. Those who obey these commands are then added to the church, which is the family of God. They are members of His Body and members one of another.

We are part of God's great family, and in no way is one member more important than the other as far as God is concerned. Jesus

said, "My mother, my brothers? All of you are part of My family if you listen and do the will of God." We are part of this spiritual communion we call the community of saints, a community of believers, the family of God.

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## **REPROVING**

**Tom Kelton**

THE SCRIPTURES ARE PROFITABLE for reproof (2 Timothy 3:16). They confront and rebuke misconduct and false teaching. According to French, to reprove is "so to rebuke another, with such effectual wielding of the victorious arm of the truth, as to bring him if not always to a confession, yet at least to a conviction, of his sin."

Two aspects of reproof are evident in the Scriptures: reproof of sinful conduct and reproof of erroneous teaching. Paul instructed Timothy, who was trying to clean up the church at Ephesus, "*Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort*" (2 Timothy 4:2). Timothy was to preach and apply the Scriptures so that people would turn from sin—even though the time would come when most people would not tolerate such preaching (verse 3).

Hebrews 4:12,13 also speaks of reproofing sin. Verse 12 pictures God's Word as a two-edged sword that cuts deep into a person's being to expose and judge his innermost thoughts and motives. Verse 13 says, "*There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*" God penetrates our hearts with His Word and lays us open before His eyes.

When the Word is faithfully and accurately preached, Christians will be convicted of their sins and either repent or leave. Few people will allow themselves to be exposed to the reproof of God's Word if they have no desire to obey the Lord. Jesus said evil doers hate the light and don't come to it so their deeds won't be exposed (John 3:20).

Christians who have been taught by preachers about "reprove, rebuke, and exhort" will have a thorough grasp of biblical truth and not be like undiscerning infants, but will be like strong young men who can easily recognize false teachings, and avoid being "*children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming*" (Ephesians 4:14).

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