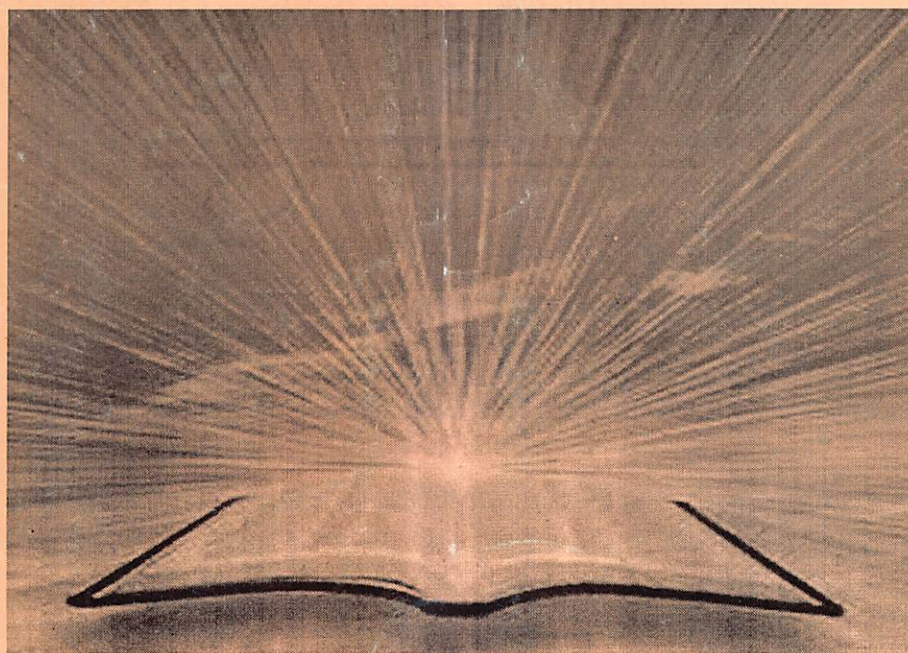


Monthly

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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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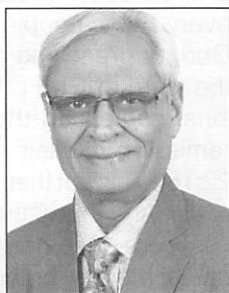
**No. 8**

## Editorial

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

#### *Unless One Is Born Of Water And The Spirit He Cannot Enter The Kingdom Of God*

IN SPEAKING TO NICODEMUS Christ told him, "Most assuredly, I say unto you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:3-8).



The new spiritual birth, without which no one can enter God's kingdom, is not accomplished by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus said, "unless one is born again," He put the responsibility on the individual person, every person, man and woman, to be born again. If man was wholly passive in the new birth, it would be incorrect to tell him, he must be born again. In giving the illustration of the wind, Jesus shows the comparison between hearing the wind and hearing the Spirit. Jesus did not use this illustration of the wind to give an example of the mystery of the new birth, or to show that the new birth is brought about in some

incomprehensible manner, but to point out that man is "born of the Spirit" by hearing and obeying the Spirit's message. The wind cannot be seen, yet we hear its sound and we see the effects of it. This is also true of the Holy Spirit.

When we turn to the second chapter of the book of Acts, we observe the apostles spoke, "as the Spirit gave them utterance." The people heard the Spirit speak through the apostles, and the message of the Spirit when believed and obeyed produced the new birth. Man is born again by hearing and obeying the Spirit, as He works through the word. There is nothing mysterious or miraculous about it. It is not a mystical or miraculous experience, "better felt than told," as some believe and teach.

In all cases of conversion, as listed in the book of Acts, which is also called "the book of conversion," we do not read that it took a direct operation of the Holy Spirit to convert one individual. In every case, people were converted by the power of the word of God, or preaching of the gospel. (Mark 16:15,16). They all heard the word of God preached to them, believed it, repented of their sins, confessed their faith in Christ, and were baptized for the remission of their sins. (Acts 2:37-41; 8:12; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 22:16). This put them into the kingdom of God (Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13). And this is the way people enter the kingdom of God today.

There are other passages which clearly teach that baptism is a part of the new birth. Titus 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." This shows that baptism is included in the process of regeneration. However, the renewal of the Holy Spirit is an essential part in the process of regeneration, but it is not all of it, to complete the process the individual must be baptized in water, or born of water. After one is renewed, or begotten, by the Holy Spirit, through the word of God, he is by birth of water introduced into a new state of being. This is called the "New Birth" of the water and the Spirit.

From Romans 6: 3-4, we learn that one is buried with Christ in baptism, and not only this, but he is raised from the grave of water of baptism to "walk in newness of life." If one is saved before baptism, why is it that he does not walk in "newness of life" until after he is baptized? The apostle Peter, therefore, rightly said, that baptism "saves us." (1 Peter 3:21). This verse also teaches that baptism is not a work of man's righteousness. Baptism is a work of God's righteousness. (Matthew 3:13-15).

Some have tried to interpret water as referring to the physical

birth and the Holy Spirit to the spiritual birth, as though there are two separate births are talked about. This is done to get rid of any connection of baptism with the new birth. But Christ is not teaching that one has to be born physically. Rather He is teaching that the new birth involves not only the outward birth of water (baptism), but the inward change that is affected when the Holy Spirit creates faith through the word in Jesus Christ in the heart of the individual leading him to that full change of life and allegiance that is accomplished when one is baptized into Christ.

The persistence and ingenious efforts of men to take baptism out of this teaching of Christ are in vain, for there is no way it can be made to disappear. "Born of water" refers to baptism, and there is absolutely nothing else connected with Christianity to which it could refer. In Christianity water is never used in any ordinance or ceremony except in the act of baptism. It is the only religious act pertaining to salvation in which water is used. For centuries, from the beginning of the gospel, "born of water" was never otherwise construed than as reference to baptism. It is only quite recently, since the Lutheran's Protestant Reformation that the interpretation of this verse have been devised to exclude its obvious reference to baptism by those who have sought to conform this text to Luther's erroneous theory of justification by faith alone.

## THE DEAD

**J.C. Choate**



TO BE DEAD IS to be lifeless; this term defined not only describes the masses of people who have crossed the great divide, but also thousands and even millions of people who are still on this side of eternity. On this basis it is suggested that there are at least three classes of dead people, and they are:

1. Those who are dead to sin. Upon reaching the age of accountability one automatically becomes a sinner. (Rom. 3:23). It is necessary then for the soul to obey the gospel of Christ to be saved. To do this he must die to his sins, be buried with the Lord through baptism, and then be resurrected from the watery grave to walk in newness of life. This is in harmony with what Paul wrote the Romans: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried

with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:3-11). For one to die to his sins in this case, simply means that he must repent or turn away from all that is of the Devil. Truly then when one dies with Christ it assures him that he will live with the Lord. Also involved in this is the new birth. (John 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:17).

2. Those who are dead spiritually. Multitudes of people have spurned the Lord's invitation, and because of this, remain spiritually dead. Then too, crores and crores of souls have accepted the first principles of the gospel, but because of one thing or another, have drifted back into the world. Such people are thought of as being those who are spiritually dead. But get this: Whether one is dead as a result of having not obeyed the gospel or dead due to being led back to the Devil's path, it all amounts to the same as far as those individuals who are involved are concerned; that is, if one is dead he is dead, and unless drastic steps are taken it will spell eternal condemnation.

However, those who obey God and then fall from grace do more damage than those who never obey the truth, in that they will not only be lost but will drag others down to torment with them. (2 Pet. 2:20-22). But Paul had this to say to such people: "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. 5:14)

3. Those who are dead physically. Regardless of whether one is dead or alive spiritually, one day he will have to depart from this old world, going the way of all the flesh. Ever since Adam, man has had to say goodbye to life by passing through death's door. Such is the rule then, and man need not look for the exception. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement." (Heb. 9:27). We know that death is coming. In a way it is a sad thing to think about, but on the other hand it has its advantages. For



instance, one can prepare to meet God, and in so doing, he no longer thinks of death from the standpoint of what it can do, but rather, what it will bring to pass—heaven and all of its joys. (John 14:1-3).

Good friend, where do you stand on these matters? Are you dead or are you alive in Christ? Remember those who live for Christ in this world will live with him in the world to come.

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## ***Israelites in Egypt***

**Rex Banks**

FROM GENESIS, CHAPTER 37, the land of Egypt becomes the backdrop to many of the events of the patriarchal age, as the Lord's plan for the nation of Israel unfolds in history. Because widespread idolatry among the Canaanites would have been a constant threat to Abraham's descendants, the Lord providentially resettled Jacob, his sons and their families in "the land of Goshen" (Genesis 47:4ff), a rich pastoral district located east of the Nile River. Genesis, chapters 37-50, chronicle the life of Joseph, one of Jacob's sons who was sold into slavery by his brothers and who rose to power in Egypt. Enjoying Pharaoh's trust and support, Joseph was able to provide haven for Jacob's family in Goshen when the land of Canaan was caught in the grip of a famine. In Genesis 46:6 we read:

*"And they took their livestock and their property, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and came to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him."*

Settling in the "land of Goshen" (Genesis 47:1-11), this group of about 70 descendants of Abraham *"were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them"* (Exodus 1:7). Although Jacob and his family were initially welcomed by the Pharaoh of Joseph's time (Genesis 47:5,6) several generations later *"a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph"* (Exodus 1:8) and this king *"appointed taskmasters [over the Israelites] to afflict them with hard labour"* (Exodus 1:11). To further retard the growth of the Israelite population, the king ordered the destruction of all male children born to Hebrew women (Exodus 1:15ff). Abraham had earlier been warned by God that his descendants would be *"strangers in a land that is not theirs"* where they would be *"enslaved and oppressed four hundred years"* (Genesis 15:13) before possessing the land of Canaan as an inheritance (15:16).

There may now be extra-biblical evidence for the presence of Semites in Egypt at the appropriate time. According to Exodus 1:11, the Hebrew slaves were used to build "storage cities, Pithom and Rameses", and under the heading Avaris we have the following in Britannica: "[Also] called Pi Ramesse, biblical Raamses, modern Qantr, Khafha, or Tall Ad-daba'a... Situated in the northeastern delta about 62 miles (100 km) northeast of Cairo, the city lay in ancient times on the Bubastite branch of the Nile."

David Rohl (**A Test of Time**) tells us that the city of Avaris (biblical Rameses) was located by Manfred Bietak of the Austrian Institute of Egyptology in the 1960's and that Bietak made the "startling discovery" that most of the tombs which were excavated were of Asiatic origin. It turns out that the "people who had populated the sprawling city of Avaris originated from Palestine and Syria!" Rohl tells us that "Bietak has identified eleven main levels of occupation (during this period of Asiatic occupation) ...indicating a considerable time interval between the arrival and departure of the foreigners." He also tells us that an anthropological analysis of the skeletal remains showed that "more adult women were buried in the settlement than adult men" and that "there was a higher percentage of infant burials... than is normally found at archaeological sites of the ancient world." Clearly this is consistent with the biblical account, where we read of the Egyptian king's edict that male children born to the Israelites be put to death (Exodus 1:15 ft).

Also consistent with the biblical account is information gleaned from a papyrus roll (Brooklyn 35.1446) which contains the names of ninety-five slaves/ servants. Rohl tells us that "over fifty per cent of the ninety-five names are Semitic in origin" and that a number are biblical names. He adds: "The great American philologist William Foxwell Albright long ago recognised that the names of these Asiatic people belong to the North West Semitic language group which includes biblical Hebrew." Rohl tells us that Bietak discovered shallow burial pits all over the city of Avaris, containing the remains of victims of some terrible disaster. Interestingly "analysis of the site...suggests that the remaining population of the town abandoned their homes and departed from Avaris en masse."

This harmonizes with the Biblical account (Exodus chapters 2-12), which tells of how the Lord raised up an extraordinary Hebrew leader named Moses who became the instrument of Israel's deliverance at the appropriate time. Empowered and directed by the Lord, Moses called down upon Egypt a series of ten plagues, after which Pharaoh permitted the entire nation to depart, en masse,



from Egypt. (This is often referred to as "The Exodus".) Clearly, we need to be cautious about handling this material, but many find a correspondence between Bietak's discoveries at Avaris and the Biblical record.

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## ***The Encouragement Connection***

**Tom Kelton**

RIVET YOUR ATTENTION ON the following excerpts from Proverbs. In your own words, to what positive purpose of speech do they refer?

*"Anxiety in the heart of a man weighs it down, but a good word makes it glad" (Proverbs 12:25). "A soothing tongue is a tree of life" (Proverbs 15:4). "Pleasant words are a honey comb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones" (Proverbs 16:24).*

Those verses zero in on the capacity of words to encourage or lift the spirits of others. New Testament references piggyback on this point from Proverbs. As far as the apostle Paul was concerned, vocal encouragement is a command, not an option, among Christians: *"Encourage one another, and build up one another"* (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

The New Testament Greek word for encouragement contains the idea of being called alongside another. On the coldest winter days we do this to some of our cars. When one battery is so weak that it cannot spark its engine, we bring another car alongside and connect the working battery with heavy cables to the weaker battery. Nothing is changed in the car that won't start. But with the direct infusion of power from the other vehicle, the weakness is overcome, and the stranded car is able to function on its own.

We Christians often need to connect with the battery in others in order to get started or to keep going in difficult circumstances. We need someone to come alongside and give us a "jump".

When the energy oozes out of the batteries of folks around you, how can you infuse them with power to keep going? You can give others a "jump" when you:

- Compliment a character trait or course of action you've observed in them.
- Tell them how something they said or did spurred you on spiritually.
- Say taken-for-granted things, such as, "I'm your friend", "I'm willing to listen", or "I care about you".

- Defend them against unfair criticism.
- Call to find out why they missed worship.
- Pray with them over a need they've expressed.
- Describe the vacancy they'd leave in your life if they were no longer around.

## ZECHARIAH, THE RIGHT KIND OF FATHER

**John Gipson**

NOT ALL FATHERS ARE created equal. Some relish the role and delight in their children, while others could not care less. But blessed is the child who has a loving, caring father.

John the baptizer had the right kind of father. His father, Zechariah, was a priest before God. Sadly, not all fathers are religious. Some are concerned only about wealth or pleasure. God has no place in their lives. Consequently, no thought is ever given to training their children in the paths of righteousness. Timothy, of New Testament fame, was blessed, in that from a child he was taught the Holy Scriptures which were able to instruct him for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Zechariah made a wise choice in selecting a companion who would be the right kind of wife and mother. She, too, was a godly person. Her name was Elizabeth, and she was one of the daughters of Aaron, a descendent of the High Priest. The right kind of father picks the right kind of woman to be his wife.

The right kind of father establishes a God-fearing home. Here is Luke's inspired testimony about this couple, "*And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*" (Luke 1:6). Just look at their devout example. Their lives were pleasing to God. They were not pretending. They were righteous "before God," and not just making a show before others.

Zechariah was a prayerful father. One of the heartaches of this family was the fact that they didn't have any children — and both were advanced in years. But God can do the impossible. While Zechariah was serving before God at the altar of incense, an angel appeared with a startling message, "*Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John*" (Luke 1:13).

Jesus gives us the ultimate assessment of John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, *"Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist..."* It pays to have the right kind of father and mother!

## **Ask What Ye Will**

**T. Pierce Brown**

ONE OF THE MOST astounding passages in John 15 is found in verse seven. Jesus says, *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you"*. Albert Barnes says, "This promise had particular reference to the apostles. It is applicable to other Christians only so far as they are in circumstances similar to the apostles, and only so far as they possess their spirit."

It has been our practice to apply John 15 to all Christians, although as Barnes says, "It has particular reference to the apostles". However, we need to know even in the case of the apostles what the promise meant. Were they given a sort of "blank check" so that whatever they asked they would get? When Trophimus was left in Miletum (or Miletus) sick (2 Timothy 4:20), can we logically suppose that Paul did not pray for him? Do we find that all the apostles or early Christians were granted everything for which they prayed? The answer surely is apparent. They were not. Then what does the promise mean, and of what value is it to us? Even if Barnes is right, what would it mean to be "in circumstances similar to the apostles"? Are any of us in similar circumstances?

It seems evident that the key is to be found in another direction. It is to be discovered by understanding what Jesus meant by *"If we abide in Christ and his words abide in us"*. If we can conceive of a person whose *"every thought is brought into captivity to Christ"* (2 Corinthians 2:5), and we so live that *"the life of Christ might be made manifest in our mortal flesh"* (2 Corinthians 4:11), and our will is to always do the will of the Father (Luke 22:42), then we can conceive of one to whom this promise is sure.

It may not be clear to us why we need to pray if all we pray for is what God already wants to be done. Further study might help us to see that whatever God wants to be done will not always be done unless we do it in accordance with His rules. This is one of the points where Calvinists have so grievously erred. They have assumed that since God is omnipotent, whatever God wills must

happen. It is not so, as the Bible abundantly shows, both by express statements and examples. The clearest proof of it is perhaps in 2 Peter 3:9 where we find, *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"*. It should be clear that God wills that all men be penitent and saved, but it will not happen, because God allows men to do contrary to His will.

There are at least three things that need to be noted about this promise. First, we must have the proper union with Christ and abide in that union. At this time we are not dwelling on the fact that this passage alone spells the death knell to the false doctrine that a person who is once saved from his past sins can never be lost. Some theologians have tried to make it sound as if he is talking about those who seem to have union with Christ but do not. The passage does not remotely suggest that.

Second, in order for this promise to be appropriate, our lives must be regulated by His words — *"my words abide in you"*. A person can be in Christ, yet at any given moment his actions not be determined and regulated by what Christ wants.

Third, when those two things are in evidence, we still must pray and ask for that which we want. We may often hear the question, "Since God loves us and already knows what we want and need, why must we ask for it?" There may be several reasons for this, but one is that in asking for it, we clarify in our own minds whether or not we really want it, how much we want it, and what we will do with it if and when we get it. A father may know that his little son needs a bicycle in order to accomplish what he wants to accomplish, but until the son realizes he needs it and wants it enough to ask for it, the father may know that he would not use it properly if he had it. So he refuses to give it to him until and unless he asks.

One may still not understand the fantastic scope of this promise if he does not realize that there are two Greek words that are translated "will". The verbs are "thelo" and "boulomai". Without going into an exhaustive study of the difference, the implications of it, let us realize that every Christian must have his "boulema" — his fixed and deliberate basic purpose — to do the will of the Father. However, at times his "thelema" — his temporary wish — may not coincide with that. But when his life so conforms to God's will that even his wish (thelema) is the same as God's will (boulema), then that wish will be granted if he asks for it. This is why James could say in James 5:16, *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth*

*much". This is why we need to "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).*

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## *That Good May Come*

**W.T. Hamilton**

IF THERE WERE ONLY some way that during the dark days of trial and suffering one could see that good may come from it! But how difficult that is. While Joseph was confined to an Egyptian dungeon, he had years to ponder the question "why?" Surely there was no answer then evident. Just as these experiences worked out for his good and the saving of his people, blessings often come in disguise today. Consider the testimony of these who learned by experience:

**David:** *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn thy statutes"* (Psalm 119:71).

**Job:** *"He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold"* (Job 23:10).

**Paul:** *"If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Romans 8:17,18).

**James:** *"The trying of our faith worketh patience"* (James 1:2).

**Peter:** *"But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's suffering: that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy"* (1 Peter 4:13).

**Hebrews writer:** *"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby"* (Hebrews 12:11).

While the clouds are the darkest and the storms the heaviest, remember these golden words from God. Think of the good that might come as a result of today's sufferings. *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us as a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal"* (2 Corinthians 4:17,18).

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# *We Are Not The Authors Of Our Life*

**Glover Shipp**

THE PRIZE WINNING BRAZILIAN author Antonio Lopes de Sa wrote a surprising article for *The Brazilians*, January 2010, a publication for Brazilians in the United States. Quoting Cicero, he noted that “our souls are nothing less than emanations from the universal divine mind.”

He went on to conclude that there are two obvious consequences to this assertion:

- That a superior intelligence which gave birth to our existence is present in us.
- Such a presence demands that we fulfill our mission or objective for our life.

His points were well taken. We are the result of a superior act of intelligence, which means that we are here for a purpose far beyond just serving ourselves. Paul reminded us, “*For me to live is Christ...*” (Philippians 1:21). Our purpose for living is engraved on our souls from our conception. It is to glorify God and serve Christ in our own unique way. Each person is unique, with gifts and talents that no one else possesses to the same degree. Inertia, accommodation to this world, failing to fulfill or overlooking our gifts—these are grave illnesses of soul and heart.

The following tale expresses well the idea of purpose in life:

An elderly farmer was digging holes on his property. Despite the heat of the day, he was singing. A passerby asked him, “Old man, what do you have to sing about. You are tired and sweaty. What do you hope to accomplish? Why not take it easy?” The farmer answered, “I’m planting fruit trees.” “But, at your age, why plant fruit trees? You will not live to eat their fruit.” The old man paused, wiped the sweat from his face and said, “Certainly I won’t eat of their fruit, but I am doing for the next generation what my parents did for me. I am leaving my farm a better place than it was when I inherited it.”

Such an attitude reveals a sound model of ethics, human dignity and understanding of what we owe previous and future generations. We repay our parents and teachers by using wisely what they transmitted to us. Just today I was conversing with a Christian nurse. She commented that the younger generation of nurses has a weak work ethic. They appear to be blind to the needs around them, unless these needs are repeatedly pointed out to them.

Being motivated to do good to others brings us huge benefits.

Being useful to others, we become useful also to ourselves. We do not serve to be served. We serve because that is the nature that God instilled in us. Yet, as we serve, we find ourselves blessed beyond measure. *"Give and you shall receive,"* says Jesus in Luke 6:38.

During the opening ceremonies for the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, B.C., the director applauded the thousands of volunteers who went beyond what was expected of them, to make the Olympics a reality. As Olympics organizers were all interdependent, so we are all interdependent. John Donne wrote, "No man is an island, entire of itself. Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less...."

We are here because God wills for us to be here. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 that we are not our own; we were bought with a price (the blood of Jesus). Writer Allen Webster notes that Jesus made a blood donation to us. Since the cost was so high of rescuing us from sin and giving us the opportunity to live in Heaven with our Savior, we must realize that we have a purpose for living.

What is our purpose? What is our mission in life? How we understand and answer these questions has a significant influence on how we travel through life and into eternity.

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## ARE YOU RELIGIOUS?

**Leon Barnes**

"RELIGION" ISN'T A BAD word. It can refer to the outward actions of one who believes. It also can be used of the worship of an individual. Perhaps the most positive meaning is the piety or devotion of a believer.

Two verses in the book of James stand out in giving us a clear concept of religion. In James 1:26, 27 we read, *"If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."*

**A religion which does not change our speech is worthless.** The tongue always needs a bridle on it. The hardest member of our bodies to control is the tongue. It is all too easy to use our speech for saying good and godly things one moment, then to use it for evil the next. Since it is *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth*



*speaks," our use of the tongue is an open book to our hearts. Filthy language comes from a filthy mind. Lying lips have a direct link to deception in the heart. A mouth set on gossip has a pipe running straight from a slanderous heart. To stop the tongue from using the wrong language will require changing the thinking behind it.*

**A religion which doesn't change our actions isn't from God.**

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God causes us to do something more than just come to worship and sing the right songs. Too often religion is something we put on Sunday morning and take off as soon as we leave the church building. One of the easiest things in the world to do is talk religious. We can pray good prayers, say nice words, and even give our money on Sunday morning without being one who cares about those around us. But the religion God wants us to have is one that acts. It causes us to *"Visit the orphans and the widows in their trouble"* (James 1:27).

To visit means to care for the needs of the other. This isn't about social calls. It is about seeing the needs and setting out to meet them. Notice the fact that James said the person with a pure and undefiled religion visits the orphans and widows **in their trouble**, or in their affliction.

People's needs seldom come in neat packages. If we could just get every needy person to fit a profile sheet and a pre-packaged bundle of benefits, help would be easy. But every person's needs and hurts are his very own. I know we often say, as another describes the troubles he is dealing with, "I know just what you mean. The same thing happened to me three years ago." But the other person is saying to himself, "They must not be listening. What they dealt with is nothing like the problems and hardships I'm going through."

We would become many times more helpful to the hurting if we stopped trying to tell how much worse our problems are than theirs and really listened to what is going on in their lives. It would also help if we took time to pray to God about the hurts of others before we offered quick, easy-to-follow, three-step guides to them on how to solve their problems. I've never been very impressed with the doctors who started writing a prescription for me before I told them what was wrong. Have you?

**The other thing, which is necessary for our religion to be pure and undefiled, is for us to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.** Nothing shouts to the watchful world that our religion is all a matter of convenience more than our own moral and ethical failures. The cause of Christ has suffered untold harm by those who tell others how to live the right kind of life, while being involved

in immoral or dishonest activity themselves. As preachers and teachers of the Word of God, it is imperative that we read the Bible and apply it to our own lives before we make it into another lesson or sermon to preach to others.

When we practice a pure and undefiled religion, the value is tremendous both for this life and the world to come. Let's all make certain our religion is the real thing before God.

## ***SPEAK A GOOD WORD FOR JESUS***

**Demar Elam**

SPEAK A GOOD WORD for Jesus is the title of a book written by Joe D. Gray. Those words have made a profound impression in my mind. Just think! What if every Christian would "speak a good word for Jesus," at every opportunity?

I fear that our concept of soul winning may be too narrow. Some think that in order to be a soul winner one must be able to lead an individual from Genesis to Revelation. Granted, every Christian should study (2 Timothy 2:15) to the extent that he or she could properly instruct the sinner in the way of truth and righteousness. However, soul winning often begins simply with a word fitly spoken in behalf of Jesus Christ.

Just pause and think what could be done in every place where the Lord's church exists if every member went about daily speaking a good word for Jesus! Our great God desires that all men be saved. This great desire of God is echoed in 1 Timothy 2:3,4, *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."*

Think how much our lives and the lives of those with whom we come in contact will be enriched when we learn to speak a good word for Jesus. Daily we are afforded the privilege of speaking out in behalf of Christ and daily we either use or lose those opportunities. If we aren't using our opportunities to the fullest extent, we need to take the time to change our thought processes to be on continual lookout for an opportunity to simply speak a good word for Jesus.

Jesus came into the world and lived a sinless life (1 Peter 2:22) setting an example for us to follow (1 Peter 2:21). Jesus' very mission on earth was *"...to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). He entrusted us with the ongoing thrust of the redemptive

work He had begun when He said, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15,16; Matthew 28:19,20). Yes, the redemptive work was initiated by the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross of Calvary (1 Peter 2:24). However, we are responsible to proclaim the message that redemption has been provided and that it is available to all of humanity (John 3:15-17).

All the organized programs in the church will not replace the impact of every Christian in the body of Christ learning to speak a good word for Jesus. Our buildings would already be running over if every saint had been daily practicing what we have spoken of in this article. Improvement should be the goal of every Christian. Let each member of the Lord's church learn to capitalize on every opportunity that comes our way to "Speak a Good Word for Jesus." The results will be simply phenomenal! Our love for Christ will increase; the love amongst brethren will increase; the love for others will increase and the building will fill up as the average man on the street becomes impressed with the name we wear.

*"Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20).*

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## ***"I Am Not Interested In Excuses But In Action"***

**P.R. Swamy**

I WAS AT MY friend's office the other day. He was pointing out some guidelines to his Junior Officer. Then the officer explained that he had not been able to perform the given task because of rain, traffic jam, etc.

My friend heard the explanations patiently. They sounded like the truth, but even though the excuses were justifiable, my friend was not happy. He said "I am not interested in excuses, but only action. I want the work to be done, even if it requires sacrificing something." To my mind, he was right.

God is also not interested in excuses however reasonable they may seem. He wants action. He is interested in work being done. His commands must be obeyed, regardless (Matthew 8:21, Luke 14:17-20). To serve God faithfully requires sacrifice on our part (Matthew 16:24). That is to say, we must give first preference to God and to obedience to His will, under any circumstance or in any

situation. Only then is He pleased. God will never compromise with this principle. Throughout the history of the Old Testament and the New -Testament, we can see this rule.

If we look around us, millions of souls are perishing day by day without Christ. We who are enlightened should feel our duty to preach the gospel to those who are still groping in darkness. Many think that it is all right to be a good Christian and attend the worship regularly. That's not enough. In our lives we must think and act like Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5).

Christ came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). When He saw the crowd, He was moved with compassion on them because they were sheep without shepherds (Matthew 9:36).

Dear reader, do you have the mind of Christ? Do you have the same compassion as Jesus towards sinners? If so, you will not live on excuses. You must do something to preach the gospel and save souls before it is too late. What a tragedy to go and meet the Lord in judgment with empty hands!

Must I go, and empty handed?  
Must I meet my Savior so?  
Not one soul with which to greet  
Him, Must I empty handed go?

Think it over brother, sister. Let's be *doers*, not *excuse makers*.

## ***The Case For INTOLERANCE***

**Maxie B. Boren**

*"Ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (Psalm 97:10).*

IT IS QUITE FASHIONABLE these days to be tolerant of evil. Multitudes pride themselves in being broad-minded toward every perverted and depraved manner of conduct imaginable. We are inundated constantly by the entertainment world (movies and TV) with filth, and though some few of us protest, the majority seems to be brainwashed into accepting whatever comes along. The "in thing" is to be "tolerant" of adultery, fornication, homosexuality, drunkenness, reveling, etc. Except, of course, toward those of us who speak out against the moral degradation taking place. There is "ZERO" tolerance toward us. The "big guns" of the media that have such influence on public opinion fire hateful salvos at every opportunity toward those they call "the religious right."

But regardless of the “tolerant climate” toward evil today in our society and the insults thrown our way, Christians must continue to stand up for what is right and against what is wrong. The Bible still declares, “*Ye that love the Lord, hate evil*” (Psalm 97:10). The Sacred Word instructs us to “*abhor that which is evil*” (Romans 12:9). And again, “*abstain from every form of evil*” (1 Thessalonians 5:22). And too, “*...resist the devil...*” (James 4:7).

While Christians are taught to be tolerant of some things, evil is not one of them! Concerning it, we are to be most intolerant! Iniquity is of the kingdom of Satan, the realm of spiritual darkness. It is in stark contrast to the kingdom of our Lord, which is the realm of light, goodness, truth, righteousness. One is the antithesis of the other. Allegiance to Christ demands an attitude of hostility toward evil! To love the Lord is to hate evil. There is no room for tolerance on the part of the Christian toward evil and wickedness!

Satan is the king of the abyss, the leader of all that is contrary to God's will. He is called by the Greek name “Apollyon,” which means “Destroyer!” (see Revelation 9:11). As the “Destroyer,” you can be assured that he seeks the spiritual ruination of us all. He is our avowed enemy, and no amount of “sugar coating” can change that fact! Therefore, **there can be no compromise with the devil!** He must be resisted at all cost, with the utmost resolve. It is a matter of eternal life or death!

This is the reason that it is so painful to realize that many Christians have unwittingly imbibed the philosophy of tolerating the evil that is rampant in this spiritually bereft society in which we live. A lenient attitude toward false ways and sin in general has permeated our ranks, and has lessened their distinctive stand for truth and right which once was the “number one” identifying characteristic of the church of the Lord. How urgent it is that we regain the strong stand we once took!

Brethren, with the Bible clearly informing us to hate evil, abhor evil, and abstain from evil, it seems to me that this is a strong case for the INTOLERANCE OF EVIL! Our stand must be an unequivocal stand for what is right, and against what is wrong! **Nothing less will do.** Let the world call us the “religious radicals” all they want to. The world is not going to judge us in the last day — the Lord will (read 1 Corinthians 4:4 and 2 Corinthians 5:10). Thus, we need only to be concerned with pleasing Him, and to do so, we must stand up and be counted as individuals and as a collective body of His people.

# "DO"

Cecil May, Jr.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A wise man and a fool is "doing". The foolish man *"hears these sayings of mine,"* Jesus says, *"and **does not do** them; the wise man hears...and does"* (Matthew 7:6,24)

Jesus tells His followers to listen to the scribes and Pharisees and to do what they say, but, *"Do not do as they **do**, because they say and **do not**"* (Matthew 23:3).

Jesus emphasizes the point to a lawyer (Luke 10:25-37). Jewish society was a theocracy, as far as Roman occupation allowed, so religious law and civil law commingled. Jewish law was made up of the Old Testament and a large body of oral tradition and case law. Lawyers, also called "scribes" and "teachers of the law", were experts in these matters. Like some preachers and theologians today, they enjoyed fine distinctions, arguing minute points, "splitting hairs".

The lawyer asked Jesus, *"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* Jesus turned the question, which involved the law, back to the lawyer, *"What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"* The lawyer responded correctly, *"Love God."* *"Love your neighbor."* His problem, therefore, was not in his understanding. His doctrine was correct. Jesus then went to the heart of the matter, *"You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."* The lawyer was not satisfied with how he came out that exchange. Those who tempt Jesus, as he intended to do, rarely are pleased. He tried to make himself look better by asking a follow-up question, *"And who is my neighbor?"* So Jesus told him the story of the good Samaritan and asked, *"Who do you think was neighbor to him who fell among thieves?"* The lawyer could not bring himself to say the words, "the Samaritan," but neither could he miss the point. He said, *"He who showed mercy to him."* Once more Jesus made His point: *"Go and **do** likewise."*

One of Jesus' highest compliments was, *"She has **done** what she could"* (Mark 14:8). He said, *"do good"* (Luke 6:27); *"do his (the Father's) will"* (John 9:31); *"do what I command you"* (John 15:14). If we are to hear Jesus say, *"Well done, good and faithful servant,"* we must do well.

# What About The Children?

## Carroll Sites

*"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).*

*"Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Colossians 3:21).*

*"... that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children" (Titus 2:4).*

HOW DO WE FEEL about our children? How interested are we in our children? Do we love our children? How concerned are we about them? Are we more interested in money—jobs—pleasure—self— than we are about our children? I recently read, **"Some families can trace their ancestry back 300 years, but can't tell you where their children were last night. It is said that the reason so many children are found on the streets at night is that they don't want to be left at home by themselves."**

How is your home life? How much quality time does your family spend together? How often are your children left at home by themselves?

We parents are the ones who bring children into this world. Is it not reasonable that we should be responsible for them? A farmer was asked how he got such beautiful *sheep*? He replied, "I take good care of the *lambs*!!"

I took a piece of plastic clay  
And idly molded it one day.  
And as my fingers pressed it still,  
It moved and yielded to my will.  
I came again when days were past.  
The piece of clay was hard at last.  
The shape I gave it still it bore,  
But I could change it nevermore.  
I took a piece of living clay,  
And gently formed it, day by day.  
I molded it with power and art—  
A young child's soft and yielding heart.  
I came again when years were gone—  
It was a man I looked upon;  
He still that early impress bore  
But I could change him nevermore.

Let's guard and guide children. They are the world—the society—the citizens—and the church—of the future.



# ***“As Did Their Fathers, So Do They***

**Charles Pugh III**

IN DESCRIBING A CERTAIN period in the history of the Israelites, the Bible says, *“So these nations feared the Lord, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children’s children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day”* (2 Kings 17:41).

It is a tremendous blessing to be a father. *“The glory of children are their fathers”* (Proverbs 17:6). Thus it is good to honor fathers and fatherhood.

With the privilege of being a father comes an awesome responsibility. This responsibility is reflected in the influence of a father. *“As did their fathers, so do they....”* The famous poet, Edgar Allen Poe, said, “I learned to love the flavor of good wine sitting at my father’s table.” Poe died an alcoholic. On the other hand, there is the infidel who said, “The one argument for Christianity which I cannot get around is my father’s life.” Billy Sunday said, “Every man is some boy’s hero.... If every man lived right today, no boy would go to hell tomorrow.”

His little arms crept ‘round my neck  
and I heard him say  
Four simple words I can’t forget —  
Four words that made me pray.  
They turned a mirror on my soul,  
On secrets no one knew.  
They startled me, I hear them yet;  
He said, “I’ll be like you.”

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## ***Gaining The Most From Worship***

**Fenter D. Northern**

*“GOD IS SPIRIT, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth”* (John 4:24).

Each Christian is commanded to grow spiritually (2 Peter 3:18). Worship is an essential part of the spiritual growth experience. With the right approach and attitude, worship can progressively elevate the child of God into ascending levels of knowledge and communion with the heavenly Father.

## A REFRESHING TIME FOR THE SOUL

Worship is a drawing near to God (Hebrews 10:22). It is an opportunity to come into the refreshing air of those things which are eternal. When entered into fully, it presents a climate away from the dry, suffocating environment of secularism and materialism. It lets one breathe deeply the refreshing spiritual atmosphere that invigorates the soul. There is no closer place to God on earth than in the worship assembly when it is entered into in spirit and truth.

## A CONFRONTATION WITH JESUS

While comfort is certainly forthcoming to the penitent worshipper, it is not the only aspect of worship. Worship is not a mere sentimentalism where one talks only of personal experiences with a sweet Jesus who responds through His word with what one wants to hear. Rather, the true Jesus can be very disturbing, for true worship forces one into a self-evaluation of his spiritual condition (2 Corinthians 13:5).

*"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.*

*"For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Corinthians 11:28,29).*

Jesus is always asking, "Do you love Me more than anything else?" One engaged in true worship cannot lie. True worship may make us admit at times, "No, Lord, I don't," and in good conscience, we may well add, *"Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief."*

## HOW WORSHIP HELPS

God knows every Christian needs to worship regularly. That is why He commands us to not forsake the assembly and reminds us what a terrible condition we can fall into if we do (Hebrews 10:15ff).

*"...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

*"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,*

*"but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:25-27).*

Worship provides an atmosphere which greatly assists us in keeping our conscience alive and well. The conscience, when in harmony with the Word, is our best ally in helping us to be faithful.

Close fellowship with others of the redeemed who love God also strengthens our faithfulness.

When a Christian decides to return to the world, the first thing he will do is to forsake worship. Those who willfully return to sin feel a great need to place much distance between themselves and anything that reminds them of God. This shields the conscience from being afflicted. To the erring Christian, the sermon is "hell fire and brimstone" preaching, and he wants none of it.

### **REWARDING WORSHIP NEEDS PREPARATION**

One realizes the greatest gains from worship when lost in wonder and praise during the assembly. It is a spiritual event which enables us to overcome the trials of the week.

We can experience a rewarding worship service by entering into it with great and careful preparation. One who is mentally occupied with the cares of the world and the latest sports scores right up to 10:00 o'clock on Sunday morning cannot soar to the level of worship achieved by the soul who disciplines himself/herself prior to the event.

Saturday evening is a good time to get things out of the way which could cause Sunday mornings to be a hectic time, spoiling our opportunity to arrive at worship in the best spiritual frame of mind.

### **EXPECTANCY IS IMPORTANT**

Coming to worship with the same old ho-hums, not expecting to receive anything important, is usually disastrous and helps dwarf the growth-process of a Christian. One must approach the worship period with an expectation of receiving something uplifting from the singing, praying, the sermon and even his/her giving. While it may help to have a talented song leader, one skillful in the choice of words in prayer as well as a wonderful orator in the pulpit, these are not the most essential things for receiving what one should from the worship experience. God is able to use quite an ordinary song leader and preacher to uplift a hungry soul, while -even the most talented leaders are unable to communicate much to the inattentive.

In any assembly, worship is individual. Each of us should be careful to provide an environment that is respectful of others — to be reverent, quiet, attentive and participating. Read the admonitions of Paul about worship in 1 Corinthians 14:40, *"Let all things be done decently and in order."*

# ***They Are All Numbered***

A person 20-30 years of age has about 615 hair follicles per square centimeter. A person 50 years of age has around 485 hair follicles per square centimeter. People aged 80-90 years have approximately 435 hair follicles per square centimeter. This shows an average of about five percent hair loss per year. The average hair loss for an individual is 50-100 hairs per day.<sup>1</sup>

If you are a Bible student, then you already know where this is going. Jesus said: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29-31). When I got older and started losing my hair, I knew that God must have to change His count at least hourly in the case of some of us.

People two thousand years ago had the same types of problems that we have today. Jesus warned, "Therefore take no thought saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" (Matthew 6:31). What was His response to those whose worldly concerns had overridden spiritual necessities? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

Jesus closes His discourse on worldly cares by saying, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:34). In other words, there are enough problems in one day to deal with, without compounding them by concerning ourselves with things that are out of our control.

Physical food fills our bodies temporarily, but in time we will hunger again. Jesus fills another kind of hunger. He said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). We should take comfort in the fact that we serve a God who knows us personally. He even knows things about us that we don't know about ourselves—like the number of hairs on our heads.

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