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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

GREATER WORKS ARE THE SPIRITUAL WORKS

TO UNDERSTAND ANY PASSAGE of the Bible correctly, one must keep in mind four basic things: First, who said that, that is, who made that particular statement. Second, to whom was it spoken. Third, when or under what age it was said; before the law of Moses was given or after the law of Moses was given, or under the New Testament age was it spoken. Four, in what context was it said.



Too many subjects of the Bible have been misunderstood because people have failed to apply these four most important basic rules to understand a particular passage of the Bible.

For instance, there are some who claim today that they can miraculously heal people in the name of Jesus Christ, and to justify their belief or claim, they quote from John 14:12 words of Christ which He had spoken to His apostles. They clearly overlook the fact that in this setting Christ was speaking specifically to His apostles before His death on the cross and His ascension to the Father in heaven. Christ, in that passage, had told the apostles, "Most assuredly, I say, to you he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, **because I go to My Father.**"

Here Christ was speaking to the apostles, before His death and ascension, and before the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit to receive power as the Lord had promise to them (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8). What was the context of Jesus' statement? He had just

mentioned to them that He would be going back. They wanted to know where He was intending to go? Christ told them that He was going back to the Father in heaven.

Philip, one of them, said to Him, “Lord show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us. Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (John 14: 8-12).

It is evident from the context of the discussion that Christ wanted His apostles, who were going to be His witnesses, to believe in HIM that He was God. (Mark 16:14). Therefore, He told them He who believes in Me the works that I do he will do also, and greater works than these he will do, **BECAUSE I GO TO MY FATHER.**” The greater works done by the apostles did not take place in spite of Jesus’ going to the Father, **but because He did go to the Father.** Thus, the greater works the apostles were to do were the spiritual works, which Christ Himself wouldn’t be able to do unless He died to be the propitiation for the sins of the world and returned to the Father in heaven.

In Acts chapter 2 we read about the apostles being baptized with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and thus they received the power as the Lord had promised to them. (Acts 2:1-4). Mark 16:20 says, “and they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.” The book of Acts is filled with accounts of the mighty works of the apostles they were able to do by the power of the Holy Spirit. At one place we read, “and through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among people ... so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. (Acts 5: 12-16).

Thus, after fully believing in Christ as God, (John 20:28), the apostles did signs and miracles as Christ had done before them. But they were also to do greater works than His as He had told them. What does this mean? The greater works were the spiritual works.

The mission of Christ on earth was spiritual, not physical. Thus, about three thousand souls were saved on the very first day when the apostles had declared the gospel of Christ for the first time in the city of Jerusalem. (Luke 24:47). There in Acts chapter two we read, after hearing the Good News of Christ those who had believed asked the apostles “What shall we do?” They were told to “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Which they did gladly. And the record says, the Lord added them to the number of His saved ones, His church. (Acts 2: 37, 38, 41, 47), a feat far surpassing anything that was possible before Jesus returned to the Father.

THE NAME

J.C. Choate



THE NAME THAT ONE wears is very important. It identifies him. It tells who he is. Companies recognize the value of their name and therefore they advertise it in order that they may do even more business. Just about everything is classed “good” or “bad” on the basis of its name. The same principle applies in the spiritual world. And so there is something in a name. The Bible teaches, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

Realizing the importance of the name, the question that faces us is, what name should we wear if we belong to Christ? The Bible may speak of us as being children of God, holy, sanctified, saints, as belonging to the Lord, but what name or title should we wear to express all of this and even more? Well, lets return to the word of God and see what such people were called in the first century. We read, “And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” (Acts 11:26). What they were called now? Christians. Just Christians. Well, weren’t they a certain kind of Christians? No, they were Christians, and Christians only. Now what do you suppose the Lord’s people should be today? That’s right. Christians, and Christians only. If we belong to Christ then what else can we be? If we are walking in the steps of Christ then naturally we will be Christians, which means “Christ-like.”

Peter said, “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” (1 Pet 4:16). Who

was Peter talking about? He was speaking of those who had taken upon themselves the name of Christ, those who had become Christians. Furthermore, he was simply pointing out to them that they should not be ashamed of that name but rather that they should glorify God through wearing it. The only way we can glorify the Lord is through doing all that we do through the name Christian.

Paul said upon one occasion, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Col. 3:17). But let me ask you this question: how can one do all through the name of the Lord unless he is wearing his name? Why, he can’t! And so many people are wasting their time because they are trying to serve the Lord through denominational names and titles, through man-made names, and it can’t be done. It is strange that man is always wanting to tuck something on to the name Christian. He wants to be distinguished as being a certain kind of Christian. He calls himself a Catholic Christian, a Methodist Christian, a Presbyterian Christian, etc, when all the Lord wants one to be is just a Christian. Yes, it is possible to be just a Christian. How? By obeying the gospel and becoming a member of the Lord’s church. If you are anything more than a Christian then you are not a true Christian. If you are anything less than a Christian then you are not a Christian. The Lord wants us to belong to him, not to some man. Let us be Christian only.

But as a group of Christians, that is, as the church, someone might want to know what name the church should wear. Well, who promised it? Who established it? Who is its head? Who is the Saviour of it? Who shed his blood to purchase it? Who is coming back for it? According to Matthew 16:18; Acts 2; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23; Acts 20:28; and Ephesians 5:27, Christ is the answer to all these questions. Therefore, the church should wear the name of Christ. So what do we have? We have Christians who are members of the church of Christ. It is just that simple.

Paul says in Romans 16:16, “The churches of Christ salute you.” Somebody is ready to say that this suggests a number of denominational churches. But if you will read the context you will find that the apostle was speaking of the church of Christ at Corinth, the church of Christ at Thessalonica, etc., and so, in writing to the church in Rome, he said, “all of these churches of Christ or congregations of the church of Christ send greetings to you brethren in Rome,” But someone immediately mentions the seven churches of Asia of Revelation 1-3, with question: “Weren’t they seven denominations?” There again you simply have several congregations of the church of

Christ. Surely the Lord did not establish many churches but he established only one church, and only one way, and his church was to wear his name. Mark it down then that any church today that does not wear the name of Christ is a fake, an imposter, and does not belong to him. For how can it belong to the Lord if it does not even wear his name?

Christ wants individuals to be Christians and as a whole, members of the church of Christ. Could you blame him? Are you, therefore, a Christian? Are you a member of the church of Christ? If not, then how can you be pleasing to God and abiding by his word? And if you can't prove this, then what hope do you have? Investigate these truths for yourself.

IT WAS IN HIS HEART

Bill McFarland

The magnificent temple had been completed and Solomon was leading the people in dedicating it. As he prayed, he thought of the way the whole project had begun. He said, *"Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel"* (2 Chronicles 6:7).

Great things accomplished for the Lord always start with a purpose in someone's heart. A servant of God sees something that could be done to his Lord's glory and sets his heart on doing it.

In David's case the dream grew out of his respect for God's holiness and his appreciation for the way he had been blessed. He did not believe it was right for him to tend to his own needs without glorifying God (2 Samuel 7:1, 2).

And the purpose of his heart was not small. Not just any house would be acceptable for his great God. He said, *"The house that is to be built for Jehovah must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries"* (1 Chronicles 22:5).

Unfortunately, though, it became clear that David was not going to accomplish what was in his heart. God would not allow it, for David was a man of war (1 Chronicles 28:3). But when a man has God's glory in his heart, he does not care who gets the credit. So David set out with all that he owned to make preparation so that Solomon could accomplish the task (1 Chronicles 29:2). No sacrifice was too much for him.

God said that David did well to have such a thing in his heart

(2 Chronicles 6:8). He became an encouragement to the people in seeking after the Lord and in serving Him.

What do you and I have in our hearts to do for our Lord? What are our purposes and dreams? The answer to this will tell the story of what we accomplish in a lifetime of devotion to our God.

Dangers of Drifting from God

Dillard Thurman

“TAKE HEED, BRETHREN, LEST there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:12-13). The inspired writer of Hebrews knew full well that it was possible to depart from God, and here he warns of its probability. The “impossibility of apostasy” idea had not then gained circulation. He not only warned against it, but cited instances where it had happened. These words were written to Hebrew Christians who then faced great trials for their faith in Jesus, and many were tempted to turn back to the law of Moses, which had been done away in Christ.

The Hebrew writer shows that Jesus Christ is our high priest, *“after the order of Melchizedek”* (Heb. 5:6). Knowing that this was a different priesthood than that of Aaron’s, under the law given through Moses, he adds: *“The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law”* (Heb. 7:12). He goes on to show that the old law was *“disannulled”* (Heb. 7:18) because of its weaknesses, and we today are living under a *“better covenant, which was established upon better promises”* (Heb. 8:6). Christ, by His death on the cross, became *“the mediator of the new testament”* (Heb. 9:15) and said, *“Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”* (Heb. 10:9-10). There was great danger for those who tried to go back to the old law, for: *“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace”* (Gal. 5:4).

THE DECEPTIVENESS OF DRIFTING

Though many people do not deliberately turn against God, there are many who *“drift away.”* And even though the process of drifting is very slow, and hard to detect, still the end result is just as complete and fatal as rebelliously turning away. Since stationary relationship

with God cannot be sustained, we must either draw closer to God each day, or we slip further away. We are better or worse, higher or lower, at the close of each day. If we are not progressing in righteousness, then retrogression eats as a cancer within. *“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them.... How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?”* (Heb. 2:1-3). One does not have to openly rebel against God, or rise in denial of Him, to be lost. This end is more easily attained merely by neglecting Him and His will for our lives.

DRIFTING IS A GRADUAL PROCESS

Notice that the Bible says, *“Lest haply we drift away.”* Deterioration is seldom noted as a sudden process. A dilapidated farm house often changes so gradually that the tenant is unaware of change until the building is beyond the point of justifiable repair. Soil erosion may be so gradual that the farmer is unconscious of any threat to his field until the worth of his land has been permanently destroyed. In like manner, spiritual erosion and deterioration within may be so gradual that we neglect a remedy until disaster confronts us.

The surface of a placid lake betrays no sign of movement or current. Yet the next morning may find a floating log on a distant shore. Drifting will not attract attention as will a sudden lurch, but the end result may be even greater. And in our spiritual affairs, no current may be detected on the surface, but an undertow can cause a drift that will take us away from God. Subtle influences and the pressure of temporal affairs may cause us to depart from the course of sound gospel preaching and practice.

SOME EXAMPLES OF DRIFTING

The antediluvian people did not suddenly renounce their allegiance to Jehovah. Rather, it was by small departures that they drifted away, until finally a breach was widened that brought on a flood to destroy them (Gen. 6—9). Israel allowed small influences and social pressures to separate them gradually from God, until He allowed them to be taken away into captivity because of their departure. When King Jereboam turned the people of Israel from God, he did so by the use of cunningly devised innovations which at first appeared to be small and harmless. Yet twenty-three times, Jereboam is branded as the one *“who made Israel to sin”* (1 Kgs. 12).

If “eternal vigilance is the price of freedom” in political affairs, then spiritual freedom is no less exacting. Thus, it is no wonder that God often warns us to *“take heed”* (Psa. 119:9; Eccle. 12:9; Acts 8:6; Heb. 2:1;

etc.). Similar warnings are penned in God's word by the apostle Paul, *"Let a man examine himself... Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves"* (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5).

LOVE OF THE WORLD CAUSES DRIFTING

Possibly one of the most potent factors that promotes drifting from God is a desire to conform to this present world. Our innate desire to be accepted by our fellows easily leads us to the brink of compromise. We would like to be accepted by our religious neighbors, and therefore are tempted to "soft pedal" when straightforward Bible teaching would offend. We desire to appear honorable in the sight of the world, and are tempted to lay aside the simple story of the cross and man's need for salvation, in order to present a social gospel that will win friends but may fall far short of the pungent words of inspired men. We want the favor of neighbors and friends, and find it better to dodge an issue than to be faced with a situation as John faced, when he told Herod, *"It is not lawful for you to have her"* (Matt. 14:4). That cost him his head! It is convenient to salve our conscience with the idea that "times have changed," and make no outcry against the lewd pictures depicted in daily papers and magazines, semi-nudity on the streets, pornography, sexual immorality and filthy language in movies and on television.

But friends, God still challenges us with, *"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins"* (Isa. 58:1). He still demands of us, *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you"* (2 Cor. 6:17). God's people must forever remain *"a peculiar people, zealous of good works"* (Titus 2:14). Saints must still be taught, *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"* (Rom. 12:2). It is easy to drift with the world, but many times more difficult to brave the cruel chidings to take a stand for principles of truth and right! So, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"* (1 John 2:15). If you have a high regard for what the world thinks and says, then there is a grave possibility that you are even now drifting away from God.

SPIRITUAL IRRITABILITY IS A SIGN OF DRIFTING

A symptom of drifting from God is found in spiritual irritability. When one becomes peevish and persists in bickering and strife to attain selfish whims and desires, it is likely he is drifting away from God.

When plans and programs are championed to the hurt and neglect of others, or the whole work of the church is ridiculed or denounced, it is likely that the critic is growing more and more distant from God. This religious irritability becomes apparent in gossiping and in fault-finding. Such a one not only drifts away from God, but is constantly nudging others along the same road to destruction. If you find that Christians “rub you the wrong way,” you are drifting in the wrong direction!

LACK OF SPIRITUAL APPETITE DENOTES DRIFTING

When one displays a lack of spiritual appetite, in that there is no longer a hungering and thirsting for righteousness, it means another person is drifting away from God. Such a diseased person may go for days without spiritual food, and will absent himself from divine appointments with little remorse. If he attends, one hour of service a week seems sufficient. The rest of the time his Bible lies unopened on the shelf. He becomes one of a number (whose name is legion), who do not allow spiritual things to interfere with “living a Christian life.” Such folk have become insensible to the danger of “*departing from the living God.*”

RELIGIOUS IDLENESS PORTRAYS DRIFTING

Religious idleness is probably the most common and noticeable of all the symptoms of drifting away from God. Anything lifeless will drift with the tide, and the restless tide of life will surely not move one closer to God! It takes vitality and activity to stand against this influence. As a dead fish drifts with the current and the live fish swims against it, so the dying Christian drifts with the world in idleness, and the live saint will fight against the pressures. Those afflicted by religious idleness will never display zeal and energy, but will be lulled to sleep by impersonally criticizing any who strive to do the work of the Lord.

HOW CAN WE PREVENT DRIFTING?

The remedy for this situation lies in awaking to the need to correct the situation. We must become aware of the disastrous plight of drifting away from God. “*Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil*” (Eph. 5:14-16). The remedy for drifting from God is found in our being alerted to the condition and apprised of its dangers. We must then take corrective steps. If we have drifted away from God, we must realize that we can never drift back to him! It will only be by diligent action that we may be able to return to the Lord. “*He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*” (Heb. 11:6).

WHO ARE WE?

Dan R. Owen

IN A TIME OF RAPID CHANGE, one of the things the church needs most desperately is a strong sense of identity. Many Christians have a weak concept of what the church is. We are often unsure of who we are and what clear right we have to exist. So, biblically speaking, who are we?

We are the church of **Christ**. He came into the world as the goal of all Old Testament prophecy. He was the Seed of Abraham in whom all nations would be blessed, the King of David's lineage who would rule the kingdom of God, and Daniel's Son of Man who would rule people of all nations.

Jesus Himself explained that to be under His rule would mean accepting the invitation to God's great banquet. It would mean going home to God, like the prodigal repented and went home to his father. It would mean being found by the Shepherd when we were lost. It would mean accepting God-given responsibility, and fulfilling it until the Master returns. It would mean going into God's vineyard to work, and accepting God's gracious reward. It would mean accepting the Word of heaven like fertile, soft ground accepts a seed. Jesus planned for those who did these things to be His church (Matthew 16:18). As the apostles proclaimed His Lordship to the world, those who submitted themselves to Jesus became the blood-bought church of **Christ**.

Who are we? **We** are the **church** of Christ. Jesus' aim was to establish *an identifiable group of people* who had been reconciled to God. The group is identified in terms of its submission to Jesus' Lordship, in terms of its entrance requirements set forth in the Great Commission and in Acts, in terms of its God-ordained organization and worship, and in terms of its godly life, of its mission of making disciples and obeying all that Jesus commanded.

We are the church of Jesus, the people of Christ, saved by His blood, and functioning in the world as He directs. Nothing is more important than being part of His spiritual body, the church.

THE PARADOX OF THE CHURCH

Hardeman Nichols

WHEN A CONGREGATION IS established according to the divine pattern of the New Testament, it is composed of elements of perfection

and imperfection. Since it is a divine institution, it deserves respect and appreciation. Everything that such a church is and does, as authorized of God, is divine. God's part is perfect. He has designed a perfect plan of salvation and a perfect system of worship (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). The Bible is its only guide, is *"the perfect law of liberty"* (James 1:25). The church has a perfect Savior who holds before us His perfect life for our goal, saying, *"Follow Me"* (Matthew 16:24).

But here is the paradox. Man is not perfect, nor does he perfectly follow the Lord. The human element in the church is as imperfect as its members. The church would have been an imperfect institution if it had been designed only for perfect people. It would have no members at all, *"For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not"* (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

Its perfection is retained by the way it deals with our imperfections. It does not overlook sin, but believes the grace of God is perfect in dealing with it. And it must distinguish between the penitent and rebellious, between the humble weak and willful reprobate. God now *"commandeth all men everywhere to repent"* (Acts 17:30). The church believes that Christ promises pardon for all imperfect beings who, in godly sorrow for their sins, penitently seek mercy and forgiveness. His invitation is to imperfect men. When one repents and is baptized, Jesus forgives his sins and adds him to His church (Acts 2:38, 47).

The church offers strength to help us in our weaknesses, courage when we are faint-hearted, comfort when we are sad, and *"joy unspeakable and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8), along the way. Its call is to all men to come and be saved. Its God-ordained teachings and services restore lost humanity back to God. Thanks be unto God for His perfect church and its wondrous benefits to imperfect men.

God's Glorious Church

Mack Lyon

THE CHURCH HAS COME in for a lot of bad publicity in the liberal media who are anxious to publicize and magnify the mistakes of some church leaders.

Many people, having been disillusioned by the bad press given the church, have come to believe a person's salvation is strictly between himself and God, apart from the church. They honestly believe they can be faithful Christians and never be a member of the church.

It is a matter of Scripture teaching that the Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47), all of them, every one of them. Nevertheless,

the saved are still human, and they are not sinless, except in the fact that they have been forgiven and continue to walk in the light of the Lord (1 John 1:7).

Behavior of some church members brings reproach upon the church, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, and the brother in Corinth who had taken his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5). But the glory of God's church is not in the **human** element.

The church has a **divine** side as well as the human, and herein lies the strength, the beauty, and the glory of the church of God.

THE GLORY OF GOD'S CHURCH IS IN ITS DIVINE ORIGIN

It is not a man-made arrangement, nor was it an afterthought of the Lord when His plan to establish the kingdom failed due to His rejection by the Jews; but it was a part of God's redemptive plan from the very beginning (Eph. 3:10).

THE GLORY OF GOD'S CHURCH IS IN ITS BUILDER

The church is not a human institution; it was not built by Luther, Wesley, Campbell, or any other human being. When Peter confessed, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16), Jesus pronounced a blessing on him, then replied, "... *Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.*" Does anyone doubt He fulfilled that promise?

THE GLORY OF GOD'S CHURCH IS IN ITS FOUNDATION

Every movement, whether social, political, religious, or otherwise, is founded on some basic tenet which adherents believe to be truth. The truth upon which Christ founded His church is not the preeminence of Peter, as some interpret the above-quoted conversation with Peter, but upon the truth Peter had confessed—**that Jesus Christ is the Son of God**. That makes it impregnable.

THE GLORY OF GOD'S CHURCH IS ITS HEAD

The Bible teaches that upon His resurrection God has highly exalted Christ "*far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all*" (Ephesians 1:21-23). The church is not subject to the dictates of any pope, or college of cardinals, or conference, or convention of mere men, but to Christ alone (Ephesians 5:23-27).

THE GLORY OF GOD'S CHURCH IS IN ITS DIVINELY-GIVEN MISSION

Some people became disillusioned with the church when it did not succeed in works in which, the church should not have been involved in the beginning. As noted before, God's original purpose for the church was "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:9-10).

The passage can be interpreted to mean that the very existence of the church declares the manifold wisdom of God. But it really means that it is the church's mission and work to declare the manifold wisdom of God, which is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30) to all the world. What a glorious purpose for existence!

THE GLORY OF GOD'S CHURCH IS IN ITS ETERNAL DESTINY

When Jesus comes He will take it to be with Him in eternal glory (Ephesians 5:27; 1 Corinthians 15:22-24).

The church should not be rejected because of the weaknesses of the human element, but accepted because of the beauty and glory of the divine element. Be saved, my friend (Mark 16:16), and the Lord will add you to His church. Then you can share in His glory.

JESUS MADE A PROMISE

Jerry Jenkins

MORE THAN 1900 YEARS AGO, some one hundred and twenty miles north of Jerusalem, near the foot of Mount Hermon, Jesus made a promise to His followers: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock **I will build my church**; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). In less than five years this church which He promised was a growing, blooming organism which would impact the world forever.

What did the Lord build? It was not a physical building, a political association, or a social club. It was and is His body, His family, His kingdom. The primary purpose of His progeny was to tell an old, old story of a Savior and His love for His followers.

Though membership in this church is open to men and women of every nationality, there are conditions which all adherents, must meet. These include: [1] Faith in Jesus Christ (John 8:24), [2] Repentance of all past sins (Acts 17:30), [3] Confession of the precious name of

Jesus (Matthew 10:32), [4] Baptism by the authority of Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

The worship of this family of the Lord consists of praying (1 Thessalonians 5:17), singing (Ephesians 5:19), communing (Acts 20:7), giving (1 Corinthians 16:1,2), and studying (2 Timothy 2:15). This worship is characterized by simplicity. It may be conducted in the most elaborate building ever constructed, or it may be conducted under the shade of a tree or in a home.

The commitment of this family is to bring glory and honor to the name of the Father by living in a manner pleasing to Him. Christ affirmed His desire to please the Father when He stated: "... *for I do always those things that please him*" (John 8:29). Christ was the model of early Christians (1 Corinthians 11:1), and He must serve as our example in every area of life. "*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps*" (1 Peter 2:21).

PERILOUS TIMES

Wayne Barrier

"BUT KNOW THIS, that in the last days perilous times will come"
(2 Timothy 3:1).

The apostle Paul was trying to prepare his preaching brother, Timothy, for coming days as he wrote this second letter. The Holy Spirit, with a longer view, was giving us information for help in times like today. He warns us in 2 Timothy 3:2-5, "*For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away.*"

The people described in these verses are familiar to us. We see them everywhere. Maybe they have always been around, but it seems that there are more of such ungodly people now than in the recent past. It is not only in the world that we find them but even in the church, and they are the basic reason for many of the problems both in the world and in the church today. They are further described in 2 Timothy 3:7 as "...*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*"

Paul gave advice regarding these people, and we need to follow his advice today: "... *from such people turn away.*"

In our own lives, **first**, we must be careful not to fall into the same trap as these men. We must use God's word to guide us through life and life's decisions. Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:10-17:

"But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Second, preachers have a responsibility regarding the perils of these times. Preachers who fail to properly accept and handle their work are the reason for many problems in the church today. Preachers don't *preach* in many congregations. They perform other duties: public relations, marketing, counseling, program management (education, involvement, etc.) cheerleader, and crowd control speaker. All of these duties may be necessary, good, and useful, but none can replace the primary work of a preacher. This work is defined in 2 Timothy 4:1-5:

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap-up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

Perilous times result in the loss of many souls and lots of heartache. These times are especially hurtful, considering where we came from, and where we could be going. We can survive and even overcome

the problems of today to win. Paul's words in 2 Timothy 4:7,8 remind us that all can end well:

"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, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

The Grace of God

Leon Barnes

ONE OF MY FAVORITE SONGS is, "His Grace Reaches Me." It is so easy to think God's grace is great enough to help other people around me who haven't done as many things wrong as I have, but not me! Our own failures often seem so great that we can't imagine God being willing to forgive sins like ours.

That is the major reason the message of grace must be held before us over and over again. We live in a world where so many feel absolutely hopeless. To them the idea of being saved and starting over again is just another fairy tale. Let us learn the message of grace God wanted us all to know.

GRACE IS FOR ALL

"The grace of God which brings salvation has appeared to all men." Not all will be saved. Jesus said, *"Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it"* (Matthew 7:13,14). Grace has appeared to all. It has even made salvation possible for all. But not all will take advantage of God's marvelous offer to be saved.

Grace appears to all, because Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every person (Hebrews 2:9). When Paul wrote to Timothy, he spoke of himself as the *"chief of sinners."* He said he had been a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious to the cause of Christ. But God, in order to show the abundance of His grace, saved Paul so that all could learn that their sins, too, could be forgiven by God's overwhelming grace.

GRACE TEACHES US TO CHANGE WHEN WE ARE SAVED

Don't mistake the idea of being saved *by grace* as a cheap grace which makes no demands on the one who is saved. All sinners can be forgiven, but they cannot remain saved if they do not change in their lives.

Grace teaches us to *“deny ungodliness and worldly lusts or desires.”* Being saved by grace demands that we stop living by senseless desires. We can change with God’s help, and He demands that we do it.

Grace teaches us to not only stop doing the wrong, but to begin living a different way. We are to live *“sensibly, righteously, and godly in this present age.”*

GRACE GIVES US SOMETHING TO ANTICIPATE

God wants the knowledge that Jesus is coming again to be a matter of joy and anticipation for Christians, instead of something to frighten them into submission. He speaks of Christ’s coming as the *“blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.”*

We have such a hard time looking at our own lives through the eyes of grace. We are too afraid that when He comes He will look at us through the eyes of judgment and say we aren’t good enough for heaven. If only we could grasp the point that we never will be good enough, even if we lived a million years and worked at improving every day. It will still be the grace of God with the cleansing blood of Jesus which makes the difference for us when He comes.

Wouldn’t it be marvelous if we could live so close to the Lord every day that we could think of His coming again and cry out with John, *“Even so, Come Lord Jesus”*? He wants us to anticipate His coming with joy.

GRACE MEANS WE ARE SPECIAL

Christ gave Himself to purchase us. He redeemed us in that He bought us back from the horrible slavery of sin. Now our choice is to live as free people for Him, or to pick up Satan’s chains all over again and live for him as voluntary slaves.

Christ bought us to purify us for Himself *“a people for His own possession.”* All the world belongs to God, but Christians belong to Him in a special way. We are His special possession. But note what sets us apart from the world: we are to be *“zealous for good deeds.”* What a marvelous thought to see ourselves as the special possession of God.

Nothing is a more beautiful message than the message of grace by which we can all be saved. But never mistake grace for a religion which makes no demands on those who are saved. Sometimes we have just misunderstood what grace really means about salvation.

SANCTIFICATION

Max Patterson

THERE ARE THOSE WHO claim that God chose us (Christians) through justification (the first work of grace) to sanctification (the second work of grace). In other words, one is justified and then he is sanctified. However, Paul says, *“God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth”* (2 Thessalonians 2:13). If sanctification copies after justification, then so would belief of the truth.

The man who is righteous is upright, just. He does what is right in the sight of God: *“For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified”* (Romans 2:13). John said, *“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous”* (1 John 3:7).

The man who is sanctified is made holy or just, consecrated. He is set aside for holy and dedicated purposes. God has forgiven this person and set him aside for His holy purposes. When we were baptized into Christ, God sanctified and justified us (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Actually, being justified or obtaining the forgiveness of sins, and being sanctified are involved in the same process, Acts 26:18. Just as when one becomes a member of the church he also becomes a child of God, so when one is forgiven or justified one is also set apart for God’s service, or sanctified.

How wonderful it is that our sins can be forgiven and that we can be considered a part of the great work of God on earth!

HOW CAN WE KNOW WE HAVE REPENTED?

O.P. Baird

GOD WANTS EVERYONE TO repent, because all have sinned (Romans 3:23), and all who have sinned will perish if they do not repent. God’s Word tells us this in 2 Peter 3:9:

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, ... but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Therefore, it is very important to know what it means to repent.

Repentance is not sorrow for sin, but the right kind of sorrow causes a person to repent, *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation,*

not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Corinthians 7:10). If a man is sorry he has sinned just because he suffered for it, that is sorrow of the world. If he has godly sorrow, he is sorry because he hates sin and loves God.

Repentance is not the change in conduct, but repentance causes the change in conduct. Jesus said, "*But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went*" (Matthew 21:28-29). He repented first, and then went.

Thus we see that repentance is the change in the heart which is caused by godly sorrow. The heart controls the actions, so the change in heart results in a change in conduct or actions.

SOME TESTS OF REPENTANCE

Knowing the scriptural meaning of repentance, we can apply some tests to see if we have repented toward God.

- IF we have repented, we hate sin—all sin. We hate it because it is evil in the sight of God. We hate what God hates.
- IF we have repented, we love righteousness because it pleases God. We love what God loves.
- IF we have repented, we will be grieved instantly when we realize we have violated God's will in anything.
- IF we have repented, all that is necessary to cause us to refuse to do something is to know that it displeases God, who loves us.
- IF we have repented, all that is necessary to cause us to do a thing is to know that it is God's will that we do it.
- IF we have repented, we "*hunger and thirst after righteousness*" (Matthew 5:6). We will love God's truth. The Word of God is truth. Jesus prayed for His disciples, saying, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). That is the only place where we find God's truth—in His Word, and we have that in the Bible. Search there for His truth, and follow it.

“THE BIBLE SAYS”

Joe Goodspeed

THE NEW TESTAMENT repeatedly talks about being *in Christ*:

- ***“Now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13).***
- ***“Ye are all one in Christ” (Galatians 3:28).***

IN SIN

The Bible uses the little preposition **in** in an important way. It talks about some who were in sin (Romans 6:1). It speaks of those who lived in the lusts of their flesh (Ephesians 2:3). The meaning is that these people were practicing sin, and were under its control and dominion, so the Bible simply said that they were in that sin.

A similar use of the word “in” is seen in Acts 3:17, where Peter, in talking to some of those very people who were guilty of having crucified Christ, said, “*I know that **in** ignorance you did it.*” They were under the control of ignorance, dominated by it—that is what led to their behavior—so Peter said they were in ignorance.

IN CHRIST

So, it should be quite meaningful to us when we read the many passages in the New Testament about Christians being “in Christ,” and therefore, participating in the many blessings which this involves. Ephesians 1:7 says that “*in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.*” Ephesians 1:3 says that every spiritual blessing is in Christ. 2 Timothy 2:10 tells us that we have salvation in Christ. Paul even says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “*If any man is **in** Christ he is a new creature.*”

There are many other passages which point out the blessings and benefits of being in Christ, a very strong one being Romans 8:1, which says, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.*” Continuing, in verse 4 Paul makes it clear that he is talking about people who, as he says, are not living by the lower nature, which he calls the flesh, but by the godly nature, which he calls the spirit. But what a wonderful statement of forgiveness is found in Romans 8:1!

What does it mean for something to be in something else? Well, we know what it is for a person to be in a family. We know what it is for a person to be in a house. When we are in Christ, we have an obedient and faithful relationship to Him, as faithful members of a family have with each other. We are within His care and protection, just as a person in a house would not be inconvenienced by winds or rain, or threatened by a storm.

HOW DOES ONE COME TO BE IN CHRIST?

Paul mentioned to the Ephesians that at one time they had been, as he said, “*Separate from Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world*” (Ephesians 2:12). Then he said in the next verse that now in Christ, they who once had been far off were

made nigh in the blood of Christ.

HOW DO WE GET INTO CHRIST?

Romans 6:3 says that we are baptized into Christ. Galatians 3:27 uses the same term. This verse states, “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ,*”

Of course, scriptural baptism is preceded by believing in Jesus, by repenting of our sins, and by the willingness to confess Jesus before men. Baptism as an isolated act, without the conviction in the heart and the submission of the life, would be nothing. Yet, the baptism is important too, so much so that these two verses, Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27, speak of being baptized into Christ.

Yes, *in Christ* are all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3). *In Christ* we contact His blood (Ephesians 1:7). *In Christ* is salvation (2 Timothy 2:10). *In Christ* we are new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Moving out of the sinful world and into Christ is made possible by our humble submission to the Lord’s will for us to do the very same thing that God’s spokesman Ananias instructed Saul of Tarsus to do: “... *arise, and be baptized, washing away your sins...*” (Acts 22:16).

Let us make every effort to be sure that we are following God’s will for our lives.

You Can Be Just A Christian

Woodrow Yates

HAS IT OCCURRED TO YOU that you can be **just a Christian**—nothing more nor less than a plain Christian? Yes, even in the midst of the religious confusion of our creed-bound, denomination-divided age, it is possible for you to be **just a Christian!**

Being just a Christian means trusting and obeying Jesus Christ, just as Paul and Philip and the early Christians did in the first century after Christ. It means going back beyond all the distinctive Catholic and Protestant teachings and doctrines of today to find Christ just as He is revealed in the inspired New Testament.

You see, there were no different denominations in the beginning of Christianity. The early disciples were all of one body. They were called simply “*Christians*” (Acts 11:26). They did not follow different creeds, but were guided by “*the faith once for all delivered to the saints*” (Jude 3). The New Testament, first as the spoken Word, and later as written down by “*holy men of God*” as they were guided by the Holy Spirit, was their only rule of faith and practice (2 Peter 1:21). We have this same New Testament today and can reproduce the same pure

Christianity which flourished in the first century after Christ.

Jesus built only one church, and God added everyone who obeyed the Gospel of Christ to this non-denominational church, the body of Christ (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47). The Bible teaches that you will be added to this same body today when you believe in Jesus Christ as God's Son, repent of your sins (John 8:24; Luke 13: 3), and confess Christ as the Son of God before men (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9-10), and are baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; Matthew 28:19; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-5).

Why not become a Christian, according to these simple guidelines of the New Testament, and worship and work in the non-denominational church of Christ in your community?

Choosing A Church

G.F. Raines

MANY SINCERE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN caused by false teaching to believe that a person should choose a church on the basis of convenience and preference, like a housewife selects a loaf of bread, or a bar of soap. Many members of denominational churches admit that they selected a church only because of its size, its popularity, or its nearness to their residence.

Many people who would eagerly go a long distance to see some entertainment would not travel one mile to scripturally worship God, although Jesus says, *"God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24).

Jesus did not build a multiplicity of churches so that people could find a church corresponding with their own preference. This is what the Lord Himself said: *"... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18).

The apostle Paul says:

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).

"But now are they many members, yet but one body" (1 Corinthians 12:20).

I earnestly urge you to diligently study your Bible, especially Acts of Apostles and the epistles of Paul, Peter, John, James, and Jude, and then adamantly refuse to embrace any church except the one Jesus Himself established and the nondenominational Christianity

which is plainly described in the Bible; because, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

The Book of God, by which all men will be judged in the last day (Revelation 20:11-15), clearly says: *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 14:12).

Let us never forget that our Lord Jesus Christ declared that *“... Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up”* (Matthew 15:13).

ENLIST NOW!

Gordon Hogan

GOD CALLS MEN AND WOMEN to enlist in a spiritual army, with His Son as commander-in-chief. This army, the church of Christ, does not kill or destroy, but rather brings to willing, faithful soldiers happiness, fulfilment, constructive service, and life everlasting.

Enlistment comes first! Because the enemy, Satan, is constantly seeking whom he may devour and destroy, enlistment is urgent! The terms of enlistment require that the recruit must believe that his commander-in-chief, Jesus, is the Son of God, and trust Him fully (John 5:24; 6:29; 8:24). He must make a declaration and acknowledgement of Jesus with his mouth (Romans 10:9-10). He must turn to God in repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3). He must be baptized (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Galatians 3:26-27).

Soldiers of Christ have a terrible, wicked enemy in Satan. Therefore, Christ's men and women must be trained and equipped for the defense of righteousness.

The formula is set forth by the Apostle Paul as follows:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation

of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication for all saints... (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Every member of the Lord's army is to be on active duty, always ready for service.

“IF YOU STAY WHERE YOU ARE

David Roper

THE STORY IS TOLD OF a man who fell into an empty well. Another man, passing by, heard him calling for help and located a rope and began to try to rescue him. But the man in the well was afraid and asked, “What if the rope breaks?” The rescuer earnestly replied, **“What happens if you stay where you are?”**

Spiritually speaking, this question needs to reach the hearts of those who have not obeyed the Gospel. Sure, there are uncertainties in living the Christian life, but **“What happens if you stay where you are?”**

At the present time, you are *“dead in sins and trespasses”* (Ephesians 2:11). In this state, you are *“without Christ, without God, and without hope”* (Ephesians 2:12). You are lost! What happens if you stay where you are? You will lose your soul forever (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

We urge you, with compassion in our hearts, to trust and obey!

They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ... Save yourselves from this untoward generation (Acts 2:37,38,40).

Those of us in Christ can also profit from the question, “What happens if you stay where you are?” Peter stated the truth that we must *“grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 3:18). **But what if we stay where we are?** What if we do not grow in Bible study and prayer? What if we are not becoming more faithful in our attendance in worship and in serving the Lord? We can become unfaithful and be lost (2 Peter 1:3, 9)!