

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 53

September 2022

No. 5

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM

THE APOSTLE JOHN, in his first epistle to his fellow Christians, wrote: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” (1 John 3: 1,2). What a glorious thought it is that when Christ comes back, He will raise our mortal bodies in the likeness of His glorious body; as the apostle Paul also said, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body. According to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” (Philippians 3:20, 21). But if we want to be like Him in heaven, we should first try to become like Him on earth. As the apostle Peter taught, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” (1 Peter 2:21). What do we learn from Christ?



The first thing we learn from Christ is, that He was obedient to the Father in heaven in all things. The Bible says, “Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.” (Hebrews 5:8, 9). Before He began

His ministry, the record says, "Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him." (Matthew 3: 13-15). Jesus knew that Psalm 119:172 says, "For all your commandments are righteousness." When He was to die on the cross as the propitiation for the sins of the world, He went into the Garden of Gethsemane, and prayed saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39).

Secondly, Jesus was very humble man. Speaking of Him, the Bible says, "Who, being in the form of God did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2: 6-8). Most times He referred to Himself as "the Son of Man." On one occasion when a man called Him, "Good Teacher." Jesus told him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is God." (Mark 10: 17, 18). Was Jesus good? Of course, He was. On earth He was God in the flesh. (John 1:1, 14). He was not denying that He was Divine. But it teaches us how humble our Lord was on earth, and it helps us to understand the passage in Philippians 2:6-8 which says, "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself." He refused to accept a title that so rightfully belonged to Him. How sad it is that many today who claim to be His servants call themselves by such titles as "Reverend", "Pastor", "Doctor" etc. (Matthew 23:9-12).

Thirdly, Jesus was always ready to forgive those who had wronged Him. He was praying from the cross for those who had mercilessly beaten Him and were crucifying Him, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34). When the scribes and the Pharisees had brought a woman before Christ, saying that they had caught her in a sinful act, about which Moses had commanded that such a person should be stoned to death, and they were ready to put her to death; Jesus said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." (John 8:7). Of course, none did, and all left the woman. Jesus asked the woman, "Where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said "no one Lord," and He said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." (John 8:7-10).

The point is: sinful men were condemning a sinful woman; but Jesus who never sinned (Hebrews 4:15; 1Peter 2:21), forgave the sinful woman! To His followers He taught, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15; also read Mark 11:25,26). If we want to be like Jesus we should learn to forgive others. (Colossians 3:13).

Fourthly, we observe that Jesus was a man of prayer. Prayer had a special place in the life of Christ. Right after His baptism we find Him praying. (Luke 3:21). Before choosing His apostles He prayed. (Luke 6:12,13). When He multiplied the food to feed more than five thousand, He prayed. (John 6:11). At the tomb of Lazarus, before raising him, He prayed. (John 11:41, 42). Before He was betrayed and crucified, He was praying. (Matthew 26:36-44). And, again, when He was dying on the cross, He was praying. (Luke 23:46). Like Christ we ought to learn to pray often.

Fifthly, as a man, Jesus was tempted, as we all are, to do wrong, but He never sinned. (Hebrews 4:15). He faced every temptation with the word of God, saying "It is written." Right after His baptism He was taken by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil, as we read in Mathew 4 and Luke 4. There He was without food for forty days, and when He became hungry, the Devil tempted Him by saying, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But Jesus said to him, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:3,4). These words, "It is written", Jesus used again and again each time Satan tried to tempt Him. This should be the template or the standard for every follower of Christ when temptation comes.

Sixthly, Jesus was uncompromising. He stood for the truth, and never changed His stance. An example of this is found in John chapter six. There He was teaching those who had become His disciples. But many of them were offended at His teaching, they did not like what He was teaching, and said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" and the Bible says, "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more." (John 6:60, 66). Jesus did not stop them from going; He let them go. He did not change His words. It is true even today. Jesus taught, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16). But many who believe in Him and claim to be His followers, even preachers of His gospel, do not want to accept this teaching of

Christ. Jesus is not going to change His words; but has warned, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." (John 12:48).

Seventhly, Jesus was the man of courage. He never hesitated to speak the truth. Wherever He found people not walking according to God's truth, He told them plainly that they were wrong. When He observed people were not worshipping according to God's teaching, He told them straightly, "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: These people draw near to Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:8, 9). In John chapter 2 we read, Jesus had to make a whip of cords to drive away all those who were making God's temple in Jerusalem a house of merchandise, by putting up all kinds of businesses around the house of God. Evidently, Jesus was upset, He was angry by observing that people were changing the nature of God's house. He told them, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" (John 2:16). To be like Jesus, we must have the same attitude today for His church, which is the house of God. (1 Timothy 3:15; Philippians 2:5). We should be courageous enough to speak out boldly against any introduction of unscriptural doctrines or practices in the church.



GOD AND HIS CREATION

J.C. Choate

THE BIBLE BEGINS, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1: 1) Neither here, nor anywhere in the Bible, is there an attempt made to prove that God exists or that he created all thing. This is assumed to already be an accepted thing. And should this be so strange since man is supposed to be an intelligent being with the knowledge that for each thing that exists there had to be some higher power behind it? That is God.

Genesis gives a full account of how things came into existence and the order in which they were created. We do not need to know how long it was after the creation of the earth before animal life and human life came into being to know that there was a God. As far

as that is concerned, there are many things that we do not have to know about the creation to be convinced that it was all the Lord's doing. But read Genesis 1 and 2 for the full story. This is the only true record that we have that tells what really happened.

But note that in all of God's creation he placed man above everything else. Man was to be over the fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea and the beasts of the field. And so it has always been. There are many animals, etc. much larger than man but all may be tamed and taught to obey him. All fear man.

There are many reasons why one should believe in God. In the first place nature itself is a testimony to the effect that there is a God just look around you. You see that which God brought into existence and that which perpetuated by the law of nature that God set in order. Perhaps you will reason that since you cannot see God with the naked eye then you do not believe he exists. You can see his work though. I cannot see your brain but I believe you have a brain by that which you do. When I look at my watch I cannot see its maker but I believe that it had one. As surely as things are, then it is that sure that someone had to create them. Just because you can't see them that doesn't prove they do not exist. God is the brain and the life behind the entire world's existence.

Look at the beautiful flowers, the heavens, a new born baby. How can you help but believe in an eternal, all powerful being? David said, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." (Psalm 19:1).

There is a God because the Bible teaches that he is. The Bible is full of God. It tells us that he is a Spirit, that he is powerful, that he is all-seeing, all knowing, and that he is from everlasting to everlasting.

God is because that is the only logical conclusion that one can reach. To say there is no God is but to say truthfully there is a God, For if I could say that then I would be saying there is a God—myself. To say that there is no God is but to say that an impossible thing happened—all came into existence without a creator. That would be about as sensible as pointing to a house and saying that it was not built but suddenly one day it just appeared; it just happened.

How can one point to evolution as being the answer when all living things have been the same for hundreds and thousands of years? Not long ago I visited the Cairo Museum and saw on display some mummified monkeys, dogs, etc. When they lived 5000 years ago they were just monkeys and dogs, even as there are monkeys and dogs now. According to the theory espoused by many, monkeys

should all along be evolving into man or there should be no such thing today as monkeys since all should have already evolved to a higher plane. Then what about man? Has he reached the most perfected state or is he to eventually evolve to something greater and better. But this is foolishness.

As you can see, the wise thing is to accept the facts of the case and quit relying on theories. David said that only a fool would say there is no God. (Psalm 14:1).

The God of heaven is the same one that James speaks of as being the giver of all blessings. (James 1:17). John said that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. (John 3:16). So every way you turn there is the Lord, his work, his blessing, and his mercy being bestowed upon men. Truly, he lives.

What Were You Thinking?

Robert L. Moss

The inspired writer Luke stated that *“upon the first day of the week”* was the day the church assembled for worship (Acts 20:7). We are told by John that worship to God must be *“in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). The words *“in truth”* entail the meaning of doing something according to truth, as Scripture prescribes. The words *“in spirit”* involve the proper framework of mind necessary for acceptable worship.

This article is being written on Monday, the day following Sunday (the first day of the week, when Christians worship God). As you worshiped God yesterday, what were you thinking? What was it that occupied your mind as you were assembled together with the saints? In **the study of God’s word**, were you concentrating on learning the truths under discussion? Was your attitude one of a sincere desire to learn and to obey whatever God’s word says? Did you worship “in spirit”?

What were you thinking as **the beautiful songs of praise** were being lifted before the Father (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)? Acceptable worship would not only involve songs that are scriptural, but also proper concern for what was being said in the words.

What were you thinking as **prayer was being offered** (Acts 2:42; 12:5)? There must be proper concern and thought as to the wording and intent of prayer. Even though another man may be leading the prayer, our part is not acceptable if our thinking is on things unrelated to the worship act at hand.

What were you thinking when **the contribution was being collected** (1 Corinthians 16:1,2)? Giving is to be done as God has prospered the individual, and with a cheerful heart. When you gave, were you thinking of the joy involved in being able to give back to God?

What were you thinking when **partaking of the Lord’s Supper** (Acts 20:7)? This act of worship is a memorial to the Lord (Luke 22:19). We are to partake of it with proper remembrance of Him, else we condemn ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

True worship involves more than just going through the motions!

Into The Heart Of Jesus

Michael L. King

SO MANY OF THE devotional songs written over the past centuries express the beautiful thought that good things are to be found “Near to the Heart of God.” So it is “Into the heart of Jesus, deeper and deeper I go, seeking to know the reason why He should love me so.”

We often express the same sentiment when we say, “Those children sure know how to get close to their mother’s heart.” What does it mean to enter the heart of Jesus or be near to the heart of God?

The heart (mind) of man is the seat of reasoning and affection. The heart of man is the “control center” for thinking and behavior. Before a person can draw near to God’s heart or enter the heart of Jesus, there must be a “meeting of the minds.” Before one can enter the home of another, there must be an approach and a response. This truth is depicted in James’ writing, *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded”* (James 4:7,8).

There is no possibility of being close to God in mind if our affections have been set *“on things of the earth”* and not *“on things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God”* (Colossians 3:1-3). If we desire to be near to God’s heart, a realignment may be required in order for our desires and values to be compatible with His. This undoubtedly is why Isaiah made the declaration, *“Your iniquities have separated between you and your*

God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that He will not

hear” (Isaiah 59:2). Enmity was placed between God and man when a third party, Satan, was allowed admission into the hearts of men (Genesis 3:15). This same enmity manifests itself today through a carnal mind (Romans 8:7).

Numerous passages appear in Holy Writ expressing God’s abhorrence for sin, which results in man being “cast out,” where “God gave them up,” or they were told to “Depart from me ye that work iniquity,” etc. Godliness and ungodliness are separates. Righteousness and unrighteousness can never be expected to blend. The Corinthians found themselves being pulled and drawn in their affections, and Paul gave the injunction to “come ye out from among them and be ye separate” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Being near to the heart of God must demand an estrangement from the devil and his evils. The presence of a right relationship with God presupposes the absence of affection for the world, sin, and the devil. Our Lord taught that a “man can not serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24). Those who enter into the heart of Jesus must make His love their love, His values their values.

God’s entire scheme of salvation was for reconciliation purposes. Man became alienated and separated by sin, with damage beyond his means to mend. While man was yet struggling in failure and futility, “Christ died for us,” redeeming us from the wrath and destruction that should have been ours (Romans 5:6-11).

The challenge of every man is to “let this mind (heart) be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Jesus described the procedure when He taught, “// ye love me you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

If we want to access the heart of Jesus and be near to the heart of God, it is obtainable through the avenue of obedience. The more loyal one’s obedience, the closer he gets to the very heart of God. The heart of Christ is made tender and warm toward those who obey Him to the extent of being their Savior (Hebrews 5:9).

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...” (Hebrews 12:1,2). Jesus authored a better testament (covenant) by which a better hope was wrought and “by the which we draw nigh unto God” (Hebrews 7:19-22). The entire burden of proof was not left to rest on the shoulders of sinful man. Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” The process by which He would accomplish this would be the “death he should die” (John 12:32-33).

Jesus expressed a strong desire for man to be drawn to Him, and thus voiced His invitation, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). He grieved over Jerusalem and would have often treated them like a mother hen drawing her chicks beneath her wings, but He sadly reported, “...ye would not” (Matthew 23:37).

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:20). This wonderful experience comes by our becoming God’s “holy nation, a peculiar people for God’s own possession; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” so that we can be “the people of God” (1 Peter 2:9,10)!

Our prayer should be, “Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord, to thy precious bleeding side”!

LET US FORGET

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

Memory is a wonderful asset for anyone. Some can remember by name nearly every person they meet. Some can remember nearly all they read.

The Bible teaches us to remember. The Jews were commanded to remember the Sabbath (Exodus 20). Youth were to remember God (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Peter wrote to stir memory (2 Peter 1:13). The Lord’s Supper is an exercise in memory.

But, the Bible also teaches us to forget. The happiest people have learned to forget. Much of Paul’s success was due to his ability to forget. What should we forget?

1. Christians should forget past sins. Christ has saved us and God has pardoned every sin of which we have repented. His blood has cleansed and removed the sin! When God forgives, He forgets—and so should we. Let’s not doubt His precious promises.

2. Christians should forget their mistakes. All make mistakes, even Christians. If there were no mistakes, there would be no need for erasers on pencils. We can learn and profit from mistakes. Some dwell on a mistake until it destroys them. Mistakes can be stepping stones to great victories. Men of history experienced numerous failures. Henry Ford and Thomas Edison succeeded because of

determination and perseverance.

3. Christians should forget the petty quarrels and misunderstandings of life. You have misunderstood others, and you have been misunderstood. Misunderstandings occur in business, personal, and church life. We may be offended by the words or deeds of another. Sometimes the hurt is deeply felt. But, don't harbor hurt feelings, lest they sour and bitter the spirit.

4. Christians should forget their good deeds. The good done yesterday will not suffice for tomorrow. We must not hold our good deeds against God as though He were under contract to save us. Salvation is of grace, not debt. Our giving for good works is a joy, not a reason to boast.

There are things to be remembered and other things to be forgotten. Let us do both wisely.

The Problem Of Suffering And Evil

George Akpabli

SOME OF THE MOST pressing questions of our time are, "Why do innocent people suffer? Why are babies born deformed? Why is a promising life snuffed out as it is on the rise? Why are there wars during which innocent people are killed, millions forced to flee their homes and become refugees? Why are there natural catastrophes like earthquakes and fires during which people are burned beyond recovery? Why are there accidents during which people are maimed for life?"

DEFINING THE ISSUE

The problem for many Christians is this: "How can an all-powerful and loving God permit evil and suffering to exist? Why would God allow His own children to suffer from terrible diseases? Some Christians also ask, "Why do the wicked seem to prosper while the righteous suffer? Why would God allow His faithful servant to beg for food?" Some question God, "Where were You when I was suffering?"

SOME BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO SUFFERING

The prophet Elijah in the house of the widow of Zarephath is one example of a Biblical reference to suffering. In 1 Kings 17:20 Elijah cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?" This heart-wrenching cry was made after the poor widow,

who was his benefactor, had lost her only son. The prophet could not understand why.

In Judges 6:13 we have Gideon saying to the angel of God, "O my Lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. "

In Job 10:1-3, Job in bitterness of soul asked God, "Does it seem good to You that You should oppress, that You should despise the work of Your hands, and smile on the counsel of the wicked?" In effect, God's answer to Job was, "Trust me, I know what I am doing." As the story continued, in each of these cases, God used the problems that had come by natural means or because of sinful choices to teach important lessons and to bring the sufferer into a stronger relationship with Him.

THREE TYPES OF EVIL EXISTS

To help us understand the problem of evil, we can classify evil in three ways. The first is physical pain or suffering as a consequence of floods, earthquakes, deformed babies, land slides, accidents, etc. The second, is moral evil, murder, greed, strife, lying, etc. The third, is eternal hell, a place of punishment for the wicked.

WHY DOES GOD PERMIT PAIN AND SUFFERING?

Before we try to answer this question, some important concepts must be understood.

First of all we must realize that man's knowledge of events is limited. Job 1:6-12 is an example. Often it is difficult for us to grasp eternal purposes and design. Joseph was mistreated by his own brothers and suffered severely for this. The time came when he understood God's purpose and said in Genesis 45:7, "God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. "

Secondly, the Bible also tells us in Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Some things are hidden from us. There is no way we can understand them at the time they are happening. There may be no answers even in this entire lifetime. In such cases, our only recourse is to continue to walk by faith, trusting in God to keep His promises to be with us.

The third concept that we must understand is that God has not said that He will take suffering and pain out of our lives, simply because we are Christians. Sometimes we make the mistake of mentally promising ourselves protection and security, in God's name, even though He has never made such commitments. Then when problems come, we may blame God and we may feel that He has failed us. However, He never forsakes us. Pain and suffering are a part of the existence of every living being. And, paradoxically, some of our greatest lessons of faith come through adversity. We can grow in many ways through enduring such trials. When we complain because we misunderstand some of God's promises or the seemingly negative things that happen to us, we are limiting our thinking to only this physical life. We become so earthly-minded that we cannot see anything beyond this world in which we live. See James 1:2,3.

Fourthly, we often err in deciding what is good and what is evil. We associate pleasure with what is good and pain with evil. The real evil is sin, not pain or suffering.

Fifthly, our reaction to suffering may be wrong. Our evaluation of suffering and pain may not always be objective. This makes things more difficult. A proper perspective is given in Romans 8:28. *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* This tells us to look at the whole picture.

UNDERSTANDING GOD IS THE SOLUTION TO THE QUESTION

To properly deal with the problem, another thing we have to understand is the nature of evil (sin) and the concept of a good God and how He works in our lives.

God operates by natural laws: Without natural laws, life on this earth would be impossible (Genesis 8:2), yet a lot of suffering is the result of natural laws in a world feeling the curse of sin (Romans 8:22): earthquakes, floods, etc. If we violate some of God's natural laws, we suffer the consequences. Fire is necessary for life, but abuse it and it causes pain. Water has the qualities needed to sustain life, but it also has the qualities to drown people. When we enjoy *the benefits* of these laws, no one complains. In Bible times, God used natural disasters to wake up Israel from their sin-slumber. Calamities should sometimes awaken us to the reality that this physical world is a very small part of God's creation, and that it is nothing in comparison to the new heaven and the new earth for which we wait.

God gave us free choice. In our modern world the word "choice" is a loaded one. The ability of man to make free choices often results in consequences of evil and suffering. So why did God not make us so that we cannot choose to sin? Of course, He could have done so, and then there would be no suffering. But without the power of choice we would not be complete human beings, made in His image. How would you like to be married to a talking rubber doll or a big robot (James 1:13-15)?

Much of the world's suffering cannot be blamed on God but on the bad choices of multitudes of humans. Read Proverbs 14:12 and James 1:13.

THE BENEFITS OF SUFFERING AND PAIN

The answer to the problem is that God never intended for this world to be man's eternal dwelling place. In order to prepare men for heaven we need an environment such as ours.

The presence of suffering produces better sons of God. How could Paul have known the power and the sufficiency of God's grace if there had been no suffering in his life (2 Corinthians 12:9)? Man would never have known ultimate good if he had not experienced suffering.

Pain and suffering here should motivate us to avoid eternal hell. THE ONLY REAL EVIL IS TO GO TO HELL. Our present world is just a place of trials and transition to help us learn our need for God, and to enable us to experience the love and compassion of a Father for His children (James 1:2-4). Let us live, despite the pain and the suffering, so as to go to Heaven where there will be no curse of sin, no sorrow, and no helplessness in the face of calamity.

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.... And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face..." (Revelation 21:4; 22:3,4).

Signs On The Road Of Life

Owen Cosgrove

CAN WE IMAGINE WHAT traveling would be like without road signs to help us along the way? The way to life as described in the Bible has many road signs that we need to understand and heed.

Obey All Traffic Signs—State Law. God does not make laws

for us to pick and choose and obey selectively. To break one is to be guilty of all of them. Obey the Lord's commandments. This is *Heaven's law*.

Stop. Those who run the spiritual stop signs of life risk hurting themselves and others. When the Lord says stop, we'd better not run the stop signs. Even when we are tempted to do wrong, **stop!** "Stop" does not mean slow down. It means •**stop**.

Slow. We get too impatient in life. Watch your speed. You will make wiser decisions and improve your chance of survival if you just slow down when time and circumstances call for it.

Do Not Enter. There are some areas of life where Christians must not be. Do not even start into these areas. Leave them alone.

Wrong Way. This sign means that you are headed toward a deadly encounter if you do not make some changes quickly.

Turn Back. If you are going the wrong way, turn back before it is too late.

Keep Right. The twenty-one epistles of the New Testament were written to Christians, urging them to be faithful to Christ. *Get right* by obeying the Gospel, and *keep right* by being faithful in Christ's service.

One Way. There is one way that leads to life eternal, and it is not a two-way street. Wise travelers get in that way and go with the flow that leads to Heaven. As the song says, "No turning back, no turning back."

Yield. The Christian learns to yield. First, he yields to God because God has the right of way. Then he learns to yield to others in matters of judgment so that the church can work together as a mighty team. We can all have our say, but we cannot all have our way. People who do not learn to yield cause many fender benders and smash-ups in life. We will still arrive at our destination in plenty of time, and our trip will be much more pleasant for us and others, when we learn to yield.

Yes, life has many traffic signs. Good Christians, like good drivers, respect and obey the rules.

A PERFECT WORLD

Wayne Barrier

THE PRESENT WORLD IS far from perfect. We sometimes dream of a perfect world, a place free from the troubles we face every day. Great effort is made to make this world a better place. Many people

are overcome by the never-ending failure of life in this world to reach a state of perfection.

We are created by God, who is perfect (Matthew 5:48), and are promised that we can be made perfect (Colossians 1:28), and can go to a new and perfect world (Revelation 21:1) when our short time in this present world is over. Our life here is simply a time to prepare for eternal life.

What a wonderful way to live! We can live our life on earth and enjoy the greatest gifts possible, provided by God to His children (1 Corinthians 13:13) and look forward to heaven. We can put our faith in God, obey His word and enjoy the hope of eternal life.

Consider Romans 5:1-5 which states, "*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

"And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance, character and character hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

We enjoy the gift of love. God's love is incomparable (John 3:16) to any other. **His love is perfect** and is the rule of life for His children (Matthew 22:34-40). Christians succeed based on the principle and law of love. It is not necessary to have the things often associated with success in this world—power, wealth, intelligence, possessions, etc.

God's plan is perfect. His children enjoy all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3). These blessings are available, if one is in Christ. God has given Christ all authority (Matthew 28:20; Ephesians 1:22,23; Hebrews 1:1). As His followers, we enjoy the privilege to pray and receive help from God (Matthew 7:7-12). We can know that God will bless us with His hand of providence (Romans 8:28), care and keeping. We can have wisdom (James 1:5) and be strengthened within (Ephesians 3:10) as we live in this world. When our time is finished here, we are ready for heaven. Heaven is perfect—a place with no sin, fear, disappointment, evil, sickness, death or sorrow.

Are you preparing for life in heaven, the perfect world? Jesus went to prepare a home for all of us there (John 14:1-4). We can follow Him if we are prepared (Mark 8:34, John 12:26).

God's Attitude Toward Divorce

Frank Chesser

"FOR THE LORD, THE God of Israel saith that he hateth putting away" (Malachi 2:16). Thus, God hates divorce. In clear, succinct terms, God set forth His attitude toward the rupture of the marital state. Even in divorces involving an innocent party, barring penitence and celibacy on the part of the guilty, a precious soul is postured on the road to eternal ruin. "*The way of transgressors is hard*" (Proverbs 13:15). There is nothing trivial about the dissolution of a marriage.

Any doctrine that is inconsistent with God's attitude toward divorce is a false doctrine. Such is the case with regard to the limitation of God's marriage law to Christians: the idea currently being put forward, that the statement of Christ in Matthew 19:9 applies only to Christians, and that God does not legislate concerning marriages and divorces among non-Christians. This doctrine leaves the inconceivable masses of humanity, in the non-covenant world, void of any law to govern their sexual conduct or to promote fidelity in their marriages. This humanly-devised theory literally *encourages* the very thing God *hates*. It is a loathsome dogma that is wholly incompatible with the very nature of God and His attitude toward divorce.

But how do we know that God's law applies to all people? The text shows that Jesus did not limit His words to the "Christian era" that was about to begin. Rather, in verses 4 and 5 of Matthew 19, at the beginning of the discussion concerning marriage, He went all the way back to the creation of Adam and Eve, and to God's will concerning marriage from the beginning:

"Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.

They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries . her who is divorced commits adultery."

His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry."

But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."

Nowhere does Jesus limit this command to those who are Christians. Marriage is an institution for all of humanity.

The disciples reacted as many do today, thinking that the rule was too difficult for men to follow. Did Jesus back down and soften the command? No, He simply concluded that some would obey and some would not. He left the *choice of obedience* to humans.

But the right to legislate concerning the law, He reserved for Himself.

Equally troubling is the concept that "adultery" is limited to the *literal act* of disobedience in choosing to divorce and remarry, and does not include the union of the two people involved. This doctrine says that **one must only repent of the *disobedience*, to sanctify the subsequent sexual cohabitation.**

Humanly speaking, this approach is most desirable. If this were true, the awesome problem of divorce and remarriage would scarcely be a problem at all. One could receive divine sanction of multiple marriages by exhibiting a penitent spirit. If a man can repent of personal transgression seven times in one day (Luke 17:4), surely he can repent of the act of divorce and remarriage numerous times in the course of a lifetime and thus enjoy, by divine approval, a variety of sexual partners.

But humans have not been given the right to legislate in this matter. God is the authority, and He has spoken clearly: This erroneous doctrine encourages divorce, the object of God's hatred.

Conversely, the stringent nature of Matthew 19:9 is God's answer to the rampancy of divorce. It discourages the severing of the marital state, promotes faithfulness, and provides motivation for intense effort -in solving marital problems. In striking contrast to the theories of men, Matthew 19:9 is in perfect harmony with God's attitude toward divorce. He hates divorce, while He supports and sanctifies marriage. And He wants all humans to do the same, for the sake of the souls, the home, and children involved.

007 IN ANY TOWN

Mike Benson

A Frustrated Sovereign SCRIPTURE DESCRIBES IT as attempted guerilla warfare...

Ben-hadad tried to carry out a series of assaults against the citizens of Israel (2 Kings 6:8 “Tried” is the operative word, because every time the king of Syria sent out a war party in ambush, he found enemy troops inexplicably guarding the camp he had intended to capture (vs. 8-10).

The inspired text says this happened “*not just once or twice*” (NKJV), but that Ben-hadad’s plans were foiled repeatedly. The monarch came to the conclusion that there was either (a) a spy, or at the very least, (b) an intelligence leak within his own war cabinet. Somebody was obviously “feeding” Jehoram—his Israelite counterpart—information. So Ben-hadad summoned his military counsel together in an effort to expose the traitor (vs. 11,12). He inquired of them, “*Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?*”

As it turned out, no one from Syria had disclosed the king’s plans. The informant was actually Elisha—the prophet from Israel—in HIS Majesty’s secret service! Like a character from a James Bond 007 movie, the man of God had a divine “surveillance camera” (cf. Proverbs 5:21; 15:3; Zechariah 4:10) in the king’s bedchamber and was therefore privy to his most secret conversations (v. 12). Every strategy concocted within Ben-hadad’s heart was revealed by God to Elisha who, in turn, conveyed the plans to the Israelite king in Samaria.

Armed with this new information, Ben-hadad turned his attention away from attacking a nation to capturing an individual (v. 13). Think of a deck of 52 playing cards, not with photographs of various high-ranking Iraqi officials, but with Elisha’s face on every single card! The Syrian ruler sent a large force to surround the city of Dothan under the cover of darkness (a village about 12 Roman miles north of Samaria—cf. Genesis 37:17) and apprehend Elisha (vs. 14,15).

A Fretful Servant

Early the next morning, Elisha’s servant awakened and discovered the Syrians entrenched about the city (v. 15). He seemed to have known that the soldiers had come for his lord and cried out in fear, “*Alas, my master! What shall we do?*” (cf. Exodus 14:10-14).

Like American forces searching for Saddam Hussein, the army had located the great prophet and was under orders to take him prisoner (v. 14). Elisha knew that a very great danger existed, but he also knew something of the militia arrayed in his defense. He calmly told his servant, “*Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them*” (v. 16).

That may have sounded reassuring, but at that particular moment, no allied troops could be seen in the vicinity. Elisha then prayed that his servant’s eyes might be opened (v. 17). The prophet’s prayer was immediately answered, and suddenly his aide beheld a massive, heavenly detachment of horses and chariots of fire (v. 17b; cf. Exodus 3:2; Numbers 22:22-31)! This was a vision of deliverance!!

A Faithful Saint

Consider for a moment the servant’s pitiful cry, “*Alas...what shall we do?*” You can almost hear the alarm in his voice, can’t you? He could only see an imminent attack; he could only see the problem. Brethren, we must strenuously guard against a similar mentality in the church today. Despondency sees only the multitude amassed against us, and fails to consider the Divine host that is marshaled on our behalf. The Bible says, “*...If God is for us, who can be against us?*” (Romans 8:31b). Do we really believe that?

Our problem is in the *perception* of the physical instead of the *sight* of the spiritual. It’s not that we *lack* sufficient *funds*, or *manpower*, or *space*, but **vision!** We need to stop thinking about what *we can’t do* and get a glimpse of what **God can do** through us (Philippians 4:13)! The New Testament teaches, “*While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen...*” (2 Corinthians 4:18a; emphasis mine, mb). “*For we walk by faith, not by sight*” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Years ago, a grade-school class was told to go home and count the stars in the sky as part of their science lesson. Students came back with wildly dissimilar answers. One child said, “A couple of hundred.” Another said, “Ten thousand.” Another offered, “One million.” Finally, the teacher asked one little boy who had not yet spoken up, “How many stars did you count?” The boy replied, “Three.” “Only three?!” the teacher exclaimed. “How did you see only three?” He said, “I guess we just have a small backyard.”

Beloved, let me humbly but forcefully suggest that we need a big backyard today; we need a great vision—one that is worthy of the “King of kings and Lord of lords”. I’m not thinking in terms of

some miraculous manifestation (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10; Ephesians 4:11-13); I'm talking about faith and focus. The eye of faith sees **Divine presence**, whereas the eye of fear sees **desperate problems**. God is on our side and He's never lost a single battle! Amen?! Once we come to terms with that truth, we'll stop wringing our hands in doubt and start using them in fervent and devoted service (Hebrews 12:2).

Speaking in Tongues, Healing and Miracles: What The BIBLE Says

William Kwesi Nsoh

TODAY MUCH NOISE IS being made about speaking in tongues, healing, and miracles. We need to put much effort into studying to know the truth about the above subjects.

The scripture called the Jews of Berea more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they did not only receive Apostle Paul's word with all readiness of mind but also searched the Scriptures daily to check if those things were so (Acts 17:11). In Gal. 1:8, Paul said, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

What will be the end results if we try to deceive ourselves by pretending to speak in tongues, claim healing and power to perform miracles whereas the Bible teaches otherwise? We need to examine every work that we have done and return to the way of the Lord (Lam. 3:40). Let the Bible speak, and be silent where the Bible is silent.

"BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT" EPH. 5:18

Some people believe that before someone can communicate with God, that person must be filled with the Spirit to work miracles. Let us examine use of the expression "filled with the Spirit" in, the New Testament. It occurs three times in the Gospel record six times in the Acts, and only once in the Epistles.

In Eph. 5:3-21 we are told how the children of the light are to walk in the midst of the sons of disobedience. Verse 18 says, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." Eph 5:18 does not connect being filled with the Holy Spirit with doing the work of signs, wonders and speaking with other languages.

Apostle Paul, speaking to the brethren in Colossians about "be filled with the Spirit," said it this way: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another" (Col. 3:16).

In my research in the Old and New Testament, nowhere is it stated that being filled with the Spirit means that you can now do many works or wonders—except the three chapters of Acts where we find speaking in other languages (Acts 2:4,8,11; 10:46; 19:6). Each time in these, apostles were involved or present.

What God wants us to be filled with is the word, which will enable us to stand firm in this sinful world and also have assurance that one day we shall enter into the presence of God in heavenly places.

Nowadays, all believers have indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who teaches and directs our way to live a Christian life (Rom 8:9, 1 Cor 3:16). Let the Bible speak—that settles the whole matter—and be silent to what the Bible hasn't said.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Much confusion arose in this generation concerning the topic of speaking in tongues. However, those so-called "tongues" are strange sounds rather than other languages that are impossible to speak without having studied or learned them.

In W.E. Vine's Greek dictionary, "Glossa" means language (noun), and "Heteroglosses" means strange tongue (adjective). For example, when the tongue is mentioned in the letter of James, the word "glossa" is used. It is also used for language as well.

In the Old Testament prophecy, the only reference is by the prophet Isaiah, in 28:11-13, and that is cited in I Cor. 14:21. This does not have reference or connection with their speaking in other tongues. God would speak to His people, Israel, through people with strange language. Their enemies who spoke would bring judgement upon them.

I can remember when I was a member of the Assemblies of God Church. I was told to be filled with the Spirit and speak with other languages. I could not do so, but I was forced to speak so that the words proceeding from my mouth were "KURE SABA TAYEA LURE YA MANATAWA SABA TANE, KURE YEA SABA TANA LURE." It was later interpreted in this way: "Our God, He is alive, and He is with us. We need to open all our heart to Him and He can work miraculously in us. Amen" It was interpreted by one of the leaders who claimed the Holy Spirit filled him to say it.

I could not really understand myself, but reading from James 1:26, it says "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." If you speak in tongues and can't help it, then your tongue is not bridled and your religion is vain.

We have the evidence from the book of Acts that those who were present on Pentecost heard in their own languages. They were 17

tribes in all, but they all could hear their mother language. In Acts 2:11 the foreign Jews said we hear them speaking in our own language the great things of God.

Apostle Paul said in I Corinthians 13, “If I speak with the tongue of men and of angels.” Also, Rev. 5:9 and 10:11 similarly—says “Out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation.”

The Holy Scripture tells me that it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18) nor is He the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). We can see that the tongues speakers are making other lies to deceive themselves. It is blasphemy to even believe that such languages are the Holy Spirit speaking.

We should bear in mind that Satan does not only change himself into an angel of light but also mixes his works together with good carried on by the true believers in Christ (Matt 16:21-24, 2 Cor. 11:13-15).

I have proved that those tongues and interpretations are of the devil, and we know that the tongues folks worship the giver of the tongues. Therefore, ignorantly or otherwise, they worship the devil.

The spiritualists have created many female and male mediums in their churches, where the female mediums seek to have authority over men in their assembly. The Bible says let the women learn to be silent in the assembly—only to be in submission (I Cor. 14:34-35, I Tim. 2:11-15). Now without the laid hands of the apostles, we nowadays cannot have the power to speak in tongues because Apostle Paul says tongues will be stilled (I Cor. 13:8).

MIRACLES

Before we can understand the word “miracles,” let’s look at the W.E. Vine Dictionary of Greek. “Miracles” is from “dunamis”—power, inherent ability -and is used for work of a supernatural origin or character.

Since the creation of man, there have been miracles performed by God for man to see and glorify Him. This was so of the miracles that were performed by Moses, when God sent him to deliver the children of Israel from the hand of the Pharaoh into the promised land.

Before the gospel could reach the sinful generation, the people needed some evidence, such as miracles and signs, before they would believe (John 20:30-31). They were in Jesus’ plan when he chose the 12 apostles to propagate the good news of the Kingdom and also work wonders. (Read Matthew 10). He further sent 72 to go and propagate the gospel to the lost world, but they came rejoicing and informed Christ that even demons responded to them. (Read Luke 10:1-8).

In Acts we can see that the apostles went on preaching the blessed gospel and worked miracles to confirm their message. Their mighty

works are mentioned many times (Acts 2:43, 3:7, 5:5-10, 9:32-42, Mk. 16:20, Heb. 2:3-4). Also much is said about Paul (Acts 13:11, 14:10, 16:18, 19:12, 20:10, 28:3-6, 28:8-10). Others are Stephen and Philip (Acts 6:8, 8:6-13). Thus, the book of Acts gives us a brief history of the miraculous work of the apostles.

Apart from I Corinthians 12-14, the miraculous power and gifts of healing given to some are seldom mentioned (I Cor. 12:28-31). The conditions at Corinth were so bad that they needed to be discussed. They were misusing the special gifts, and they were carnal-minded, had lawsuits against one another, a dreadful fornication in their midst, were drunk at the Lord’s table, and had false doctrines. Those gifts are not mentioned in the other epistles—even in the epistle of Romans, which was written after the close of the book of Acts.

Our Lord Jesus Christ plainly warns us in the Gospel of Matthew 7:22-23 that “many will say to me (Jesus) in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?...and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I (Jesus) profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Beware of the saying of Christ Jesus.

HEALING

In W.E. Vine’s dictionary of Greek words, “iaomai” means to heal or of physical treatment in Matt. 15:28. In Matt 4:23, “Jesus went through Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.” My Lord Jesus Christ did not go about inviting or calling people to bring those who are sick, blind, or paralyzed. We can see that the spiritual healers do announce for the general public to come and see their wonderful works and receive healing.

And our emphasis should be upon the eternal, as in 2 Cor. 4:17-18 (NIV), “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far out weighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

Some faith healers may say that since Heb. 13:9 says “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever”, He can still perform wonders. We do not question our Lord’s ability. But God has manifested Himself in a different manner in each of the various periods of the history of mankind.

We have the full accounts of God’s words in our hand, and we need to study to show ourselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15, 2 Tim 3:16).

James 5:14-16 (NIV) says, “Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the

name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

The healing in these verses is not made dependent upon the position of the elders nor upon the anointing oil, but rather upon the prayer of faith. It is fully evident that this is something quite different from what happens in many so-called faith healings.

The devil also has power to perform healings, and people too do believe in him. The so-called Spiritual healers say that they can heal, but we can see that many people are suffering in hospitals, rehabilitation centers and on principal streets in cities and towns, whereby they cannot provide them with their healing power. I wonder if these spiritualists ever read what Apostle Paul says about them in Gal. 1:6-10.

Remember the word of Christ in Matt. 24:24: “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” Again, the Lord has warned us in 2 Thess. 2:8-13: “And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

2 John 9 (NIV) says, “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.”

Considering these Scriptures, we cannot afford to believe in such a doctrine merely because false wonders are performed by its advocates. The Scripture lets us know in the strongest terms that Satan performs wonders to make people think that he is God.

The Bible tells us that “yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and **truth**, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in **truth**.” (John 4:23-24 NIV).

My beloved friends, if you are still in these faulty healing churches, the Bible tells you today, “Come out of her” (Rev. 18:4-5).