

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 53

October 2022

No. 6

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Why Then Are They Baptized For The Dead?



WHILE TEACHING THAT CHRIST'S RESURRECTION was the greatest proof of our own resurrection, which will occur at His coming to judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31; John 5:28-29), the apostle Paul asked the Corinthians, "Otherwise what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?"

Some have tried to understand this passage of the Scripture by saying that there was a custom then, practiced by some, in the first century, of baptizing people, living persons, for the benefit of the individuals who had died without baptism. It is thought by some that in 1 Corinthians 15:29 the apostle was using an argumentum -ad-hominem, that is, an argument based upon what some Christians were doing at Corinth, that is, they practiced vicarious baptism, baptizing Christians on behalf of deceased acquaintances who, while under instruction and faith development, had died before completing their primary obedience to the gospel. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). The obvious difficulty in imagining such allusion here is met by emphasizing that the apostle did not here evaluate such a practice, with which he would have been in complete disagreement, but merely mentioned it in argument in making his overall case for the resurrection. Moreover, had such a custom existed there or at any other place, in the first century, then certainly the apostle Paul would

have denounced it, as he did in every other case where Christians were deviating from the truth, instead of using it as an example to teach the most important truth of resurrection. So we observe, the apostle rebuked them, when some of them were causing division in the church (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-4). He rebuked them for their immorality that was defiling the church (1 Corinthians 5). In another instance the apostle reprimanded the Corinthians for their corrupting the institution of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). One can no more obey God and have the blessing transferred to the dead, than he could disobey the Lord and have that condemnation imputed to some deceased person. Proxy baptism is not in view here.

In 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle was particularly and specifically dealing with the biblical doctrine of resurrection, which certain false teachers were denying. He argued that since Christ rose from the dead, so in the same manner all will rise from the dead. And it was in the hope of resurrection of the dead that they were baptized. The Corinthians were baptized (Acts 18:8). But before going through the act of baptism one must repent or die to sin (Acts 2:38), and that is precisely what they had done. Before their baptism—their burial in the watery-grave of baptism—they had, by repentance, died to sin. Through baptism they were put in the grave of water as dead men and women. A living person is not buried in a grave, but a dead person is. Their baptism was a planting in the likeness of the burial of Christ, and was a raising in the likeness of His resurrection from the dead. They were buried in the grave of water, through their baptism, as dead men and women, and were raised from the tomb of water to walk in the newness of life. (Romans 6:3-5). The inference is, their baptism was in the very likeness of the death and burial and resurrection of Christ. But if Christ had not risen, and the dead rise not, then their emblematic burial in water and coming out of the watery-tomb of baptism had no meaning. So the question: Why then are they baptized for the dead? How vain a thing had their baptism been if there will be no resurrection? Must they stand by it or renounce it? They themselves were baptized for the dead, that is, with the view of their own death to sin, through repentance, they were buried in the tomb of water and had come out of it, declaring their own death and burial and resurrection, to walk in the new Christian walk. Immersion of a believer in water symbolizes his death or separation from the old existence lived under the power of sin, and coming out of the grave of water of baptism portrays the resurrection of Christ after His death.

The purpose, the scope, and the connection will admit of but one meaning—if the dead rise not, what shall they do who are baptized in the hope of the resurrection? One is “baptized into Christ” to live in Him and die in Him, and finally be raised as justified and saved in Him. (Romans 6:3-5)

THE LAW OF MOSES

J.C. Choate



MAN WAS PERFECT IN the beginning but because of disobedience he fell and was driven from paradise. (Genesis 2:3). Later, God decided that he would send a flood to destroy him. Noah and his family were spared because they were found to be righteous. (Genesis 6: 7),

Sometime after the flood God chose Abraham through whom he was to raise up a mighty nation. However, his descendants, the Israelites, eventually found themselves in bondage in the land of Egypt, and it was here that Moses came into the picture for he was selected to lead them out. After many generations of slavery they left Egypt with God's help and went to Mt. Sinai where God presented them with a law that has come to be called the law of Moses. (Exodus 19: 20).

The specific laws given were in the form of ten commandments but this was not all of that law by any means. It contained scores of laws that dealt with man's social behaviour as well as his relationship with his maker.

It should be noted and remembered that this law was given solely to Israel. It was never given to the Gentiles and was never intended for them. The only way they might have been brought under it would have been for them to have been made proselytes and thus be made Jews.

But why was this law ever given? Paul said many years later, “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator”. (Galatians 3: 19). Now notice why the law was given. It was given because of transgressions. In other words, the Lord gave his people a law to follow until a certain time should come. For how long? Till the seed should come. Who was this? Christ. Paul continues in Galatians 3:29, “And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed,

and heirs according to the promise.” That is to say, that the law ended with the coming of Christ.

It was Christ who said that one jot or tittle of the law would not pass away until all had been fulfilled. (Matthew 5:17,18). Then he said, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” (Luke 24:44). Were all things fulfilled? Even while on the cross he said all things were finished. And Paul adds, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” (Colossians 2:14).

The Bible teaches that at one time God spoke through Moses but he now speaks through his Son Jesus Christ. “God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” (Hebrews 1:1,2). At the transfiguration God said of Christ, even though Moses was present, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” (Matthew 17:5). God asked man to hear who? Was it Moses? No. Was it John the Baptist? No. But Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Again, the Hebrew writer clearly shows how the old covenant or testament has been taken away and a new one has taken its place. (Hebrews 10). We are no longer under the law of Moses but under the grace that comes through Christ. (John 1:17). We are not bound to a system of laws that demands animal sacrifices but are under a law that was sealed with the blood of Christ once and for all. (Hebrews 9).

Many people of our day want to hold to the law of Moses, especially the ten commandments. But they served their purpose and were blotted out in order that a new and better law might take its place, the law of Christ. Why should one want to leave a perfect law to go back to something that is imperfect? The old law could not save anyone. If it could have then it would not have been taken away. Again, why should one want to leave the blood of Christ to go back to animal sacrifices?

Hence, only a man ignorant of the Bible would attempt to return to the law of Moses. Only a foolish man would strive to keep two laws at once. That would be like trying to keep the laws of two distinct countries when both laws contradict and oppose one another in certain instances.

The wise will leave the past laws to history and will live in the present accepting the law that God has ordained that we be governed by. A study of the scriptures will show that even though the ten commandments were not brought over to the new law as such, nevertheless all but one was incorporated in it. The one missing is the Sabbath day law. The nine were incorporated because they were divine truths that have ever been binding and will ever remain binding upon man. For example, the government might discard former laws and set out to make new ones, but it might be deemed wise to include certain laws that were in the old one. And even though one obeys the new law in full, he cannot say that he is keeping the old law.

The law of Moses was meant for Israel, but the law of Christ is open for all who will obey it. Christ has invited all to come and receive rest. Thus, the law has changed.

THE SALVATION OF OUR OWN DEPENDS ON US

Jesus Rodriguez

ON APRIL 15, 1912 an event occurred which moved the world. Man had boasted of having constructed a transport ship to travel the seas which was so safe that it would be almost impossible to sink. We all know the history of the Titanic, the ship which sank in the northern seas after colliding with an iceberg. Around 2,000 lives were lost, owing to the over-confidence and sense of security on the part of the builders, the crew, and the passengers in their belief that the ship was impossible to sink.

That night there were both acts of heroism and truly sad situations. But what made the most profound impression upon the consciences and minds of people of that time were the acts of nobility and love. Most of the survivors on that fatal night were children and mothers. The fathers gave their lives in order to save those they deeply loved. They did everything possible to save those who still had life and opportunity before them. Through the sacrifice of their own lives, they gave their wives and children a second chance at living.

Let's think about those fathers who opted to lose their own lives in order to save those they loved. How would they have felt in making that decision? With what peace and contentment would they have

died, knowing that their own survived? Surely even in death there was bitter-sweet satisfaction in knowing that they were not dying in vain.

God wants each father and mother to be responsible for their children in every way—physically, emotionally, and especially spiritually. He wants us to dedicate our time to ensuring that no glacier or iceberg strikes the ship of our lives to cause our children to fall overboard and perish. It is not the church that is responsible for teaching our children the way of the fear of Jehovah; it is *our* responsibility.

Looking further afield, in some cases we are blind to the fact that we have some very near to us, some who have been with us in the ship since infancy, who are at the point of falling into the sea. I am speaking of our own family members, parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, cousins, and other relatives. We must dedicate ourselves to seeking out and teaching those who are on board with us, while there is still time.

God has given a great treasure of souls into our hands. We must respond to Him for the confidence He has placed in us by not being like the unfaithful servant who did not use the only talent that the Lord had turned over to him (Matthew 25:14-30). Let us not allow the torrents of darkness to envelope our loved ones. Let us make sure that those of our household are always safe in the ship that will carry them to eternal life.

Growing Up

Stan Mitchell

“THEN JESUS SAID TO his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me’” (Matthew 16:24).

When I was a little boy, my mom cooked meals on a wood stove, and an outhouse was commonplace for friends and neighbors. So, am I an old-timer recalling faded memories of days long gone? No. But the hiss of a pressure lamp did fill my evenings. Are these the musings of an octogenarian? Not exactly. I remember the pop-pop of a flywheel John Deere tractor, however. I remember the sound and smell of a gas pump, hand-cranked, filling to glass dial, then pouring into the tank of our vehicle.

Am I a longstanding member of the AARP? Well, no, I’m not. I’m 44 years old, elderly to some teens, I imagine, but not nearly old

enough to remember the scenes I just described. So how is it possible that I grew up with them?

Well, I am a missionary kid. I grew up in a country several decades behind the United States. Tough life? Bitter memories of deprivations? Traumatic years of readjustment to the United States?

Not on your life! My experiences include standing on the edge of the Victoria Falls and seeing one of the great wonders of creation. I grew up hearing the African people sing hymns with matchless harmony. I grew up learning that the best—the absolute-without-comparison-mission method was to take to another culture the Word of God in all of its purity. When I listened to locals complain of having their religion filtered through a Roman, British, or American point of view, I wondered at the beauty, the simplicity, of presenting Zimbabweans with a *“thus sayeth the Lord”* for every action, every doctrine.

I watched as the church of the New Testament unfolded in a far country. I observed the grace of an incomparable God transform communities. I saw men turn from the terror of serving demons and witch-doctors to serve the *“living and true God”* (1 Thessalonians 1:9). I watched as they gladly surrendered family and position, and served God completely. My only culture shock upon returning to the United States was to see so many brethren, encumbered with materialism and worldly sophistication, abandon their responsibility to serve God with all of their hearts. I had never known great blocks of Christians to not sing at worship. I had never seen children of God dismiss Bible Study for other, much lesser pursuits. And I wonder, still, was it I who was so wrong?

My upbringing as a missionary kid was a privilege. I have just one question for you: If you were told that the way to save your child’s soul was to leave for another country, worship in an infant church, and draw water from a nearby well, would you save your child’s soul?

The Obedience Of Faith

E.S. Smith

IN THE STUDY OF faith one thing has been generally overlooked. Paul in Rom. 1:5, speaking of his apostleship through the grace of God, says that it is, **“unto obedient of faith among all the nation.”** Again in Rom. 16:26 Paul says the mystery which had been kept in silence through times eternal is **“made known unto all the**

nations unto the obedient of faith.” In both of these passages we find a marginal rendering which would make these passages read, **“Obedient to the faith.”** This is in the harmony with the record of the conversion of certain ones in Acts 6:7 where we read, **“A great company of the priests became obedient to the faith.”**

Of course this calls up the question, **“what is the faith?”** and this question must be answered. In Jude 3 we read “Beloved while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation. I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to **contend earnestly for the faith** which was once for all delivered unto the saints.” This passage together with 1 Tim. 6:21; 1 Tim. 5:8 shows us that the faith is that rule of life that is otherwise known as the Gospel of Christ or the New Testament.

It becomes apparent, therefore, that to receive the blessings of God an individual must be obedient to the commands of the Christ in the word. Many passages indicate the correctness of this conclusion, “and having been made perfect, he became **unto all them that obey him** the author of eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:9). Again Paul has said in 2 Thess. 1:8 that at the appearing of the Lord Jesus he shall come in flaming fire, “Rendering vengeance to them that know not God and obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus.” Not salvation but rather condemnation is the lot of everyone who refuses to obey the commandments of God or as otherwise considered, refuses to be **“obedient to the faith.”**

Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17), and it is therefore certain an “obedience to the faith” is an obedience to the “word of Christ.” We therefore should search diligently to know how we may obey him and thus he classed among those “obedient to the faith”.

The record, the first few chapters of the book of Acts will help us much if we will only study it. Under the teaching of the apostles in Jerusalem this great company of priests “we obedient to the faith.” If we can learn what these apostles were teaching and what they commanded men to do we can know how men were in that time “obedient to the faith.”

Turning to the second chapter of Acts we have a record of the beginning of their teaching under the direct guidance of the Spirit. From that day on they were under the power of the Spirit and what they taught that day is just what they taught ever after. Upon that day the first division of teaching was to establish the facts of the gospel which were then and are now to be believed. Peter preached to them the “death, burial and resurrection of the Christ.”

These facts concerning the Christ which were here proclaimed for the first time are essential to our salvation. We must have faith in the Christ who “died for our sins, according to the scripture; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third, day according to the scripture.” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). These facts of the gospel as given by Paul, were preached on Pentecost by Peter as the gospel which the Lord commissioned him to preach. When heard they produced faith and this faith then was called upon for an expression.

From the beginning of God’s dealing with man until now we cannot find one single solitary case where He ever blessed faith until it expressed itself. So as always this faith had to be expressed. As they heard and believed they cried out, “What shall we do?” and the answer given is very plain, “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins.” (Acts 2:38). Here then are the commands of the gospel to be obeyed: here then is **“the obedient to faith.”** Without this obedience to faith; without this expression of faith our faith must be dead.

This is the one thing in the study of faith that has been overlooked. Too many people are trying to be saved by a faith that will not work, a faith in which there is no obedience. It seems that God knew that such a practice would arise in the world and He therefore inspired one of His apostles to refute it about nineteen hundred years ago.

In Jas. 2:14 by the question asked we have exactly this idea brought in for examination. Here we read, “What doth it profit my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? Can that faith save him?” The answer is forcibly presented and such a faith, without works, is shown to be dead and valueless.

James says that faith without works is of no more value than words are to a hungry, asked man. Just to say, “be warmed and filed” will not put clothing on the man or fill his stomach. “Even so, **Faith if it has not works, is dead in itself** (Jas. 2:17). True faith is evidenced in obedience and without such faith is vain and valueless. **The obedience of faith or obedience to the faith** is an essential part of faith that cannot be forgotten.

Finally concluding along this line James says in verse twenty-four of this chapter, “Ye see that by works a man is justified and not by faith only.” And then again in verse twenty-six, “for as the body apart from the spirit is dead, **even so faith apart from works is dead.**”

For your help along this line turn to the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the great “faith” chapter of the Bible. Here note this list

of heroes of faith; note the accomplishments and triumphs of faith and see that in every case from righteous Abel on down that faith brought the blessing when the individual responded in obedience to the will of God. Never a blessing until the recipient of the blessing moved in obedience to the divine will.

Therefore, today get the lesson that is taught and truth no longer in a dead faith. Move by faith in obedience to the divine will. In this obedience of faith; in your **obedience to the faith**, the gospel of your salvation, you will find the blessings of God which are promised to the faithful.

God's Whole Counsel

Hollis Miiler

SELDOM DOES A SINGLE WORD, phrase, or sentence exhaust all the Bible has to say about a subject. For example, Paul instructed the Philippians to think about certain positive things, but the balance of biblical teaching makes it plain that Christians are also to think about other things (Philippians 4:8).

Timothy was instructed by Paul to teach brethren that the love of money is a root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). By this, however, the apostle did not mean that a Christian should not pursue acquisition of necessary material things. Elsewhere in the New Testament Christians are taught to work that they might have excess to share with those in need (Ephesians 4:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11). Paul himself was a tentmaker in order that he might earn money to support himself. Loving money and being sufficiently frugal so as to have means of livelihood in whatever society a Christian may live are not equal to each other.

Some teachings of the Bible are meant to express general principles by which the Lord's people are to govern their lives. The principles are not to be forced to the point of absurdity. I have never met a Christian who believed his or her bank account should be opened to every fraudulent, slothful individual who might ask to borrow from it (Matthew 5:42). Total abandonment of good judgment in handling requests for loans could easily disable one with regard to discharging other Christian responsibilities, such as having the funds to care for one's own (1 Timothy 5:8).

The teaching of Jesus that His disciples are to turn the other cheek is a principle of human relationship, and not a command that

Christians must permit evil men to do to them whatever they choose to do without objection (Matthew 5:39). Paul resisted Elymas as well as the servants of the high priest who struck him on the mouth (Acts 13:8-11; 23:1-5). It is obvious that the apostle did not understand the teaching of the Lord to mean that he should say or do nothing.

When the teachings of the Bible are permitted to explain themselves in the larger context, the whole counsel of God will then be every Christian's guide.

The Flood: Not Local, But Global

Bill Nicks

Those who argue for a local flood in the days of Noah, as recorded in Genesis, are usually believers in evolution. To sustain their theory, they must reject the obvious supernatural act of creation, as well as the supernatural events connected with the flood.

Peter says, "*Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished*" (2 Peter 3:6). The word "overflowed" is from the word **kataklysmos**, from which our English word "cataclysm" is derived.

The flood was a great hydraulic and tectonic upheaval, in which the waters underneath the earth were "*broken up*" (Genesis 7:11) and the "*windows of heaven were opened.*" In this supernatural act, the Lord split the crust of the earth with waters beneath the earth, which caused, along with rainfall for 40 days, waters to raise the ark and cover the mountains.

By observing the words of the inspired writer Moses, we may gather these simple facts which show of necessity that there was a global flood.

1. If it were a local flood, Noah could have moved to a higher ground, and animals could have fled away from the waters.

2. The text says the mountains were covered "*fifteen cubits upward,*" which means the waters prevailed above the highest mountain more than 22 feet. This could not have been a mere local flood. All flesh died in the flood except those in the ark.

3. The token of God's covenant that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood was the rainbow, which we may still view today as a symbol of God's faithfulness. But this would be meaningless if it were a local flood, because this kind of flood is still

common in our world. See Genesis 9:8-17. But God's promise is sure—there will never be another global flood. Rather, the world will one day be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:10-12).

There is a God in heaven (Daniel 2:28), who created the “heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). The flood was a supernatural intervention into the natural laws of the earth, just as was the virgin birth of Christ and His resurrection from the dead.

It is best to take the Bible at face value, accept it as the Word of the living God, and believe it with all your heart. That kind of faith will lead one to salvation in Christ and eternal life in the world to come.

Who Are Those Christians, And Why Do They Study The Bible?

Keith Sisman

THIS QUESTION IS SURPRISINGLY easy to answer. The term Christian is first used three times in the Bible by Luke and Peter, and therefore dates back nearly two thousand years (Acts 11:26, 26:28 and 1 Peter 4: 16).

We soon realize from the Bible that the term Christian is used of somebody who is *in Christ*, and therefore *of Christ*. That person is somebody that through faith has obeyed Christ in baptism and continues in faith and action to live life as a Christian. This term, therefore, belongs to the Bible, being used by writers inspired of God. It is not a term created by man.

The term ‘Christian’ cannot be Scripturally used by somebody who merely wishes to be called a Christian but who has not obeyed God. In the world today, as in the past, many people call themselves Christians who have no right to do so. Usually by choice they have not studied the Scriptures. In not obeying the Gospel, they have rejected the call of God and salvation (Acts 2:38).

Today there are thousands of different so-called Christian denominations who propagate many totally different views on biblical questions. But there is only one doctrine, one true way, one true church to whom any Christ-centered Christian will be added by God *after* baptism (Acts 2:47).

The Bible speaks of Christians being a spiritual people (1 Peter 2:4-12), those who are in Christ and therefore in His church, having rejected the ways of the world. Denominations or divisions are

spoken against in the Scriptures and are not of God but are of the world (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

Christians are sometimes accused of worshipping the Bible. This particular charge is often aimed at those people who wish to share their joy of being in Christ with those who have not yet found the truth and who will live in eternity without God if they die in that condition (Mark 16:15,16). Christians worship the true God, (Matthew 28:19) not the Bible.

It has been nearly two thousand years since the deaths of those who were able to live with Jesus and to touch Him. The nearest we can get to Christ is to listen to His inspired Apostles through their writings, in the Bible. When Christians earnestly search the Scriptures it is to find Christ and his teachings. By knowing His teachings we can know Christ, we can obey Him, putting our faith in Him. We can be ‘in Christ’ where there is salvation. We do not worship the Bible but we worship Almighty God Himself and Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son (Romans 10: 14-17, Titus 2:13, Matthew 4:10).

WHO IS RIGHTEOUS?

Cecil May, Jr.

WHO IS RIGHTEOUS? “*There is no one righteous, no, not one*” (Romans 3:10). All have sinned, and **sinner** is the opposite of **righteous one**. To claim to be righteous is to ignore what we know of ourselves, as well as to deny the Word of God.

This answer is found in a context in which the discussion centers around how a person may be “declared righteous” by God. Theoretically, any who **are** righteous, that is, who have never sinned, are justified. But sinners are condemned, not justified. To be justified on the basis of one’s own deeds, therefore, one would have to have never sinned. Since “*all have sinned*” (Romans 3:23), no one is justified that way. In that sense, “*There is no one righteous.*”

If we think we keep God’s law well enough to justify ourselves by it, we blind ourselves to our faults, or boil the law down just to outward rites we can scrupulously keep. According to Jesus, some Pharisees did both (Matthew 23). Paul also spoke of those who. “*set out to establish their own righteousness*” and did not humbly seek by faith the righteousness that comes only to those who know they need it as sinners (Romans 10:3).

If we trust in ourselves that we are righteous, we miss the only

means of justification for sinners (Luke 18:9-14), trusting God for justification by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 1-3).

Who is righteous? *“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. . . Whoever does not do righteousness is not of God”* (1 John 3:7,10). Whoever claims to be born of the righteous One is righteous or else belies the claim. If we are unrighteous in our daily conduct, we do not know the righteous God.

This answer is found in a context in which certain antichrists are declared to be false in their claim that our relationship to God is a matter of spirit only, and it does not matter how we live in the flesh. John reminds us that to know and be born of God is to keep His commandments (1 John 3:24), walk as He walked (1 John 2:6), and be righteous as He is righteous (1 John 2:29).

To convince ourselves that the choice between righteous and unrighteous living makes no difference at all in our relationship to God, we must ignore most of the Bible, particularly the teachings of Jesus. *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21). *“If you love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). *“This do, and you shall live”* (Luke 10:28).

If we walk in sin and iniquity we are lost, whatever we may profess of faith or doctrine.

Who is righteous? These two answers approach the question from different standpoints. Both truths are essential to know and to live by. If we say we know God but there is no significant difference in our lives, we may deceive ourselves, but we do not deceive God (Galatians 6:7). If we think the difference in our lives is so great and so much of our own doing that we are thereby righteous, we exalt ourselves and will be humbled by God (Matthew 23:12).

God’s Family Values

Jack Harriman

EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT family values and everyone claims to be in favor of them. But, of course, we do not all mean the same thing when we speak of family values.

The Standard For Family Values

For those who do not believe in God, the standard is whatever

they want it to be, and it varies greatly from person to person. But for the believer, the standard is set by God and is revealed in the New Testament. So the family values of God become the family values of God’s people.

Some of Those Values

- One man and one woman married to each other as long as both shall live (Matthew 19:3-9).
- Sexual faithfulness each to the other (1 Corinthians 7:2).
- The love of the husband for his wife is patterned after the sincerity and depth of Christ’s love for the church (Ephesians 5:25-29).
- The wife loves, respects and submits to her husband as she does to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22; Titus 2:4).
- The husband leads his family both physically and spiritually (Ephesians 5:23).
- Father and mother rear children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:4).
- Children obey and honor parents when they are young and care for them when they are old (Ephesians 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:8).

The *greatest threat* to the family in our society is not actually the family values of unbelievers, but the “lip service” that is paid to God’s family values by *half-converted “believers”*.

Preaching The Way

E. Claude Gardner

AT LEAST SIX TIMES IN Acts, Luke refers to Christianity as “*the way*.” When Paul described his religion he declared, *“But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers...”* (Acts 24:14). Luke also uses this expressive word “way” in Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 24:22.

A reading of these passages shows that four actions were expressed toward the way as follows: (1) membership in the way; (2) persecution of the way; (3) worship according to the way; (4) taught or preached the way. It is the purpose of this lesson to stress the necessity and importance of preaching the way.

What Is the Way?

The way is the Christian system; it is *the way* of true worship;

and it is *the way* of living. Adam Clarke comments on Acts 9:2 as follows, “. . . this religion . . . *the way* of the Lord, implies the *whole* of worship due to him, and prescribed by himself: the *way* or path in which he wills men to walk, that they may get safely through life, and finally attain everlasting felicity. The Jewish writers designate the whole doctrine and practice of Christianity”

Christianity is the way of life, the way of salvation, the way of service, and the way of hope. It is through the way we enjoy life here and eternal life in the world to come (see 1 Peter 3:10-12; John 10:10; Luke 19:10; John 2:25).

Communism, socialism, and other ideologies are accepted by millions as ways of living, but the way of Christ is the way all men ought to go. Christianity should be viewed as that which governs and influences us in every facet of our existence. Christian principles should govern us in the home, in recreation, at work, in the church, and in society. Christianity must not be a form or ritual divorced from our everyday living.

What Is Preaching the Way?

When one preaches the way, he preaches Christ and the Gospel. Several expressions found in the Bible mean the same and indicate what we are bound to preach. When we preach the way:

1. We preach Christ. Philip preached Christ to the Samaritans and to the eunuch (Acts 8:5,12,35). Christ our salvation should be our theme, for He is the way (Acts 2:22; John 14:6). We must not preach ourselves, our opinions, doubts, personal desires, or hobbies (see 1 Corinthians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:5).

2. We preach the church. In Samaria Philip, who preached Jesus, is said to have preached the church or “*the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ*” (Acts 8:12). We cannot preach the way without declaring the nature and value of the New Testament church. Christ and the church are inseparables (see Ephesians 5:32; Acts 28:23,31).

3. We preach the Gospel. Jesus has commissioned us to “*preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:15, see also 1 Corinthians 9:16). Paul was an educated man, yet he preached the Gospel (Galatians 1:11,12). It is our privilege to bless the world with “*the good news*” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

4. We preach the truth. “Truth,” like “way,” is a comprehensive word that conveys the whole of Christianity. We are to speak “*the truth in love*” (Ephesians 4:15). The truth makes us free (John 8:32; 1 Peter 1:22).

5. We preach the Word. We are commanded by Paul to preach

the Word, and by Peter to speak as the oracles of God (2 Timothy 4:2; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 4:11). A command is not a request or a suggestion. Inspiration puts a limit on what we shall preach.

6. We preach the preaching of God. When Jehovah commissioned the prophet Jonah to cry against wicked Nineveh, He charged him to “*preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee*” (Jonah 3:2). Whatever has come from God we must be careful to proclaim without addition or subtraction, and without fear or favor (Acts 20:26,27; Galatians 1:8,9; 2 John 9).

Why Should We Preach the Way?

We go forth under the banner of Jesus, the “captain” of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10), preaching to the world. We do this because we have already been saved through preaching (1 Corinthians 1:21). The Gospel believed and obeyed results in salvation (Mark 16:15,16). Paul wrote that the Gospel is “*the power of God unto salvation*” (Romans 1:16). It is powerful enough to reform lives, destroy sin, insure peace, save a city, and change the world.

The world is lost, and we should feel the weight of evangelizing the world (Romans 3:23; John 4:35).

The Gospel to the whole world in our generation is not an idle dream. Motivated by love, faith, and hope, we can accomplish what the Savior asked us to do. When Moses hesitated to lead Israel, God promised, “*Certainly I will be with thee*” (Exodus 3:12). Likewise, we feel our insufficiency and limitation of resources, but if we do our utmost to preach the Gospel to every creature, the Lord will be with us “*always, even unto the end of the world*” (Matthew 28:20).

Admonish Those Who Accept the Way

In our efforts to induce sinful man to accept the way we should admonish him to continue his “*walk circumspectly*” (Ephesians 5:15). One should enter the way and remain in the way that “*leadeth unto life*” (Matthew 7:14). In our conduct we should be reminded that to be a Christian is to walk in the “*way of holiness*” (Isaiah 35:8). Also, in our walk we should constantly seek the “*old paths*” (Jeremiah 6:16).

When I follow the path of the Lord, where will I go? What way will I follow? It will be in the path of righteousness (Psalm 23:3); in the path of love (1 John 4:19); in the path of faith (Hebrews 11:6); and in the path of service (Matthew 23:11,12).

May we preach the way so effectively, fervently, and faithfully that the lost of the earth can be the redeemed of heaven. “. . . *Lead me in the way everlasting*” (Psalm 139:24).

The Power Of Partnership

Bill McFarland

FELLOWSHIP IS OF GREAT value for the Lord's people because *"two are better than one."* The preacher stressed this fact in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, where he pointed out four essential benefits of partnership.

- **Accomplishment.** *"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor"* (verse 9). Two working together will get more done and bear more fruit than we would working by ourselves.
- **Encouragement.** *"For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; But woe to him that is alone when he falleth, and hath not another to lift him up"* (verse 10). What a blessing it is to have someone to lift us up when we are down and to encourage us on the way!
- **Survival.** *"Again, if two lie together, they have warmth; but how can one be warm alone?"* (verse 11). The needs and challenges of the Christian life are such that we cannot "go it alone." We are dependent upon fellowship one with another to keep faith from growing cold and dying.
- **Strength.** *"And if a man prevail against him that is alone, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken"* (verse 12). Just as a rope of three cords woven together is strong, so is a Christian whose life is woven together with his brothers and sisters in Christ.

Fellowship in Christ has the power to bless our lives. There is no substitute for it. Let us make sure that we continue steadfastly in fellowship (Acts 2:42).

The Holy Priesthood

John Thiesen

EVER SINCE THE FALL OF Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, mankind has been separated from God by sin. It is this separation which has created the need for a priesthood to represent us to God.

Priests are Mediators

A priest is a mediator who stands between God and sinners. His

job, from the earliest times, has been to offer up sacrifices to God in order to make propitiation for sinners and to pray on their behalf to God. For example, Moses' brother Aaron was a priest. Every year, when offering up the sacrificial atonement animals both for himself and for all Israel, he laid his hands on the scapegoat and confessed all the sins of Israel before releasing it to carry the iniquity of the nation into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:21). No one could take this priestly authority to himself, but only those called by God for the purpose. *"And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron"* (Hebrews 5:4). Among the Jews, only Aaron and his sons were set aside for this holy work. It was important that the priest be a merciful person in order properly to approach God on behalf of others.

Even before God set up the Israelite nation, he had priests operating in the world. Melchizedek, for example, who came out to bless Abraham following his victory over the kings, was called *"the priest of the most high God"* (Genesis 14:18). During that same pre-law period, Moses' father-in-law was known as "the priest of Midian" and offered sacrifices to God with Moses, suggesting he may have been a priest authorized by God (Exodus 3:1; 18:12).

God's Priesthood Today

Our High Priest today is Jesus Christ the Son of God, *"set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens"* (Hebrews 8:1). At God's right hand, *"he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them"* (Hebrews 7:25). The sacrifice He offered for our sins was His own blood on the cross. This supreme sacrifice of Himself supersedes all previous sacrifices offered in the world, which were only a shadow of His. *"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified"* (Hebrews 10:14).

Under Christ their High Priest, all Christians function as sub-priests, *"an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 2:5). These spiritual sacrifices consist of: (1) Praise and thanks of our lips; (2) Doing good to others; (3) Sharing with those in need (Hebrews 13:15,16); and making intercession by prayer for all people and authorities (1 Timothy 2:1,2).

Have You Been Born Again? If Not, Why Not?

George Funk

ACTS 22:16, “And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name.” Do you realize that you will take the most important, life-changing step in your entire existence?

The answers to life’s problems are found in Jesus Christ. For centuries man has been trying to find the answers on his own, but without God, all other solutions are either temporary or void.

Jesus said, “*I am the Way and the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father, but through Me*” (John 14:6).

Friends, Jesus *is* the Way! Look what God has promised us through Jesus:

1. “*Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old things passed away, behold, new things have come*” (2 Corinthians 5:17).
2. “*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life*” (1 John 5:13).
3. “*For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*” (Colossians 1:13,14).

Is it not exciting to realize and recognize those promises that we are new creatures, we have eternal life, we have forgiveness of sins, that we have been transferred into the Kingdom of God and we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)! What more do we want? The promises of God concerning the believer go on and on.

Salvation is God’s plan for the entire world (1 Timothy 2:4). God wants all to repent and be baptized into Jesus.

Water baptism is a symbolic representation of the penitent sinner being crucified, dead and buried with Christ, and then raised up with Him (being born again) to new and everlasting life (John 3:5). After baptism, old things are passed away; behold new things have come.

If you have not experienced water baptism, let me encourage you to follow the examples of those early believers in the Bible and

be born again (Galatians 3:27). “*Put Jesus on*” in baptism (Romans 6:3), “*die, be buried and raised*” and become His child. Oh, how important are His children! Being baptized into Christ is the most life-changing step you can take.

God Calls Us To Be His People, His Family

Ron Bryant

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS personal, but it is not individualistic. Each one who becomes a Christian becomes part of a fellowship of caring and sharing—a family of believers who belong to the Lord and to one another, and who have responsibility to one another (Acts 2:41,47; Romans 12:1-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:1-6,11-17).

If there is any truth set forth in the New Testament, it is that Christians need one another, even as in the physical body the eyes and the ears need the hands and the feet.

Paul wrote by inspiration, “*But now are they many members, yet but one body, and the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you ... Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*” (1 Corinthians 12:20,21,27). In God’s design every member of the body needs every other member. Likewise, in God’s plan for the church and its functioning, individual Christians cannot go their own way.

Even when the figure of speech is changed and the church is spoken of as a family, the plan of God is still the same. God’s plan for life in the spiritual family which was created in Christ is not one of individual self-sufficiency, but one of interdependency. The people of God are a family of interdependent members.

No Christian can afford to be careless about his or her place in the body of Christ, the family of God. This is basic, for it is God who adds the saved together (Acts 2:41,47). It is also vital, for it is bound up in the fact that “*Christ is the head of the body, the church*” (Colossians 1:18,24).

In this plan we see that God’s appointed means of strengthening each believer, of protecting each, and stimulating growth in grace on the part of each, is in the context of a fellowship—a fellowship of mutual commitment, and mutual caring and mutual sharing.

It is in view of these great truths that we each are to consider our purpose in the family, our participation in the fellowship—the work and worship, the ministry and outreach of the church. In view of *God's purpose*, we must not be careless about the worship, the fellowship, or the unity of God's people.

Undergirding all of this is the fact that God's eternal purpose for the church is bound up in the blood of Christ. Jesus purchased the church with His own blood! The church of Jesus is no mere social entity, of only temporary import! The church—the people of God—is a blood-bought family that God expects to function as **His family!** It is a family that is preparing for eternity.

EHUD, ISRAEL'S SECOND JUDGE

Charles Box

EHUD WAS A LEFT-HANDED Benjamite who delivered Israel out of the hands of Eglon, king of Moab. Ehud's work resulted in eighty years of peace in the land. Read his story in Judges 3:12-30.

The story of each judge centers around evil done by God's people. When Israel sinned, God raised up an oppressor. *"And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord. Then he gathered to himself the people of Ammon and Amalek, went and defeated Israel, and took possession of the City of Palms. So the children of Israel served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years"* (Judges 3:12-14). God's judgment against Israel's wickedness was designed to bring them to repentance.

1. God punished the sins of His own people (verses 12-14).
2. The lesson is that one can easily lose by his own sins what he has gained by the power of God (verse 13).
3. Israel's first servitude was eight years (verse 8), and this second one was eighteen years (verse 14). Failure to learn means one pays an even greater price.
4. Ehud was raised up after Israel had prayed (verse 15). There is power in prayer, as God answers us through His providential care.
5. Benjamin was most likely the weakest tribe at this time. Ehud was a lefthanded man from the tribe of Benjamin. But God can raise up power out of weakness (1 Corinthians 12:24).
6. Ehud came against Eglon with *"a message from God"* (verse

20). The Bible provides us with a message from God.

7. Ehud led Israel in total victory over her enemies (verses 27-29). God is pleased with nothing short of total surrender to His perfect will.
8. Ehud challenged Israel to follow him (verse 28). There is no substitute for good leadership.
9. Israel had rest eighty years (verse 30). Those who will obey God can enjoy eternal rest.

Ehud and the rest of the Judges teach us the need of faithful service to God. Obey the Gospel (Acts 2:36-41) and remain steadfast (1 Corinthians 15:58). God demands your faithfulness!

Do You Bring Out The Best Or The Worst In Others?

W.T. Allison

A QUARTER OF A CENTURY ago a sociology professor at John Hopkins University assigned a research project to his class. He told them to go to one of Baltimore's worst slums and study the environment of 200 boys. After they studied the habits, homes, and education of the boys, they were to predict how many of them would become criminals. The students' research predicted that of the 200 boys studied, 180 of them would wind up in jail.

Twenty-five years later the same professor assigned another class the job of locating the 200 boys to test the validity of the earlier predictions. Most of them were found. The students were amazed to learn that only 4 of the 200 had ever been in jail. The majority were solid, decent citizens.

In talking to these men, it was discovered that there was a common denominator in their lives. Each had been taught by the same school teacher. The sociology class located the teacher, now well over 70 years old, in a nursing home. When asked how she made these boys into such fine men, despite their disadvantages, she answered, "Why, all in the world I ever did was to be kind to them and love them!"

Love, when properly understood and applied, will produce changes in the life that intimidation and fear can never make. Successful human relations can be boiled down to a single sentence: You will perform better for people who expect the best from you than you will for those who expect the worst.

That's how God treats us! When we were sinners, without hope, He looked at us and thought we could do something better. He saw potential in us. We were worth something in His eyes. That's why He took the great risk. That's why He sent His Son!

As a child of God, redeemed by the blood of His Son, **do you bring out the best or the worst in others?** Love and kindness change people. Such a simple thing to do! Will you help change the world?

How Are Persons Made Believers?

G.F. Raines

THE APOSTLE PAUL SAID TO the Corinthians, *“For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 4:15).

The literal meaning of this statement is, *“I have made you believers through the Gospel.”* (See 1 John 5:1.)

If people are begotten, or made believers, through the Gospel, they are not made believers by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit apart from the Gospel. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17).

There is no recorded instance in all the New Testament of a person becoming a believer and being converted to Christ apart from the Gospel, because as Paul says in Romans 1:16, the Gospel of Christ *“is the power of God unto salvation.”*

When Jesus gave the Great Commission to His apostles, He said, *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”* (Mark 16:15,16).

In the very first Gospel sermon preached under the Great Commission, the apostle Peter, speaking as the Holy Spirit gave him utterance (Acts 2:4), unequivocally said, *“Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:38).