

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

Vol. 53

January 2023

No. 9

## Editorial

### What Does the Bible Teach?

#### REDEEMING THE TIME

THANKS BE TO GOD for keeping us and allowing us to have another year. In the last few days many have greeted us with a Happy New Year, and likewise we have said the same to so many people. Certainly we all are looking forward to have a happy and blessed New Year, but to make a happy new year there must be a proper use of time. Someone has pointed out, “Dost thou love life? Then waste not time, for that is the stuff that life is made of.” The apostle Paul wrote, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” (Ephesians 5:16). Someone else has rightly said, “Nothing is more precious than time and those who misspend it are the greatest prodigals.” Character may break to pieces and be built up again. Health may be lost and regained. Silver and gold might be lost but time can regain them. But time itself cannot be recalled. The brevity and uncertainty of time emphasizes our responsibility in the way we should use it. True, nothing is more precious than time. To redeem the time means taking advantage of the available time or to buy back the neglected opportunities.



When the children of Israel were heading to the Promised Land, and when they came near it, just before entering the Land of Promise, Joshua who was leading them, cautioned them by saying, “That you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before.” (Joshua 3:4). They were going to enter into a new territory, and God, through His servant Joshua, was

directing their travel and would lead them right if they would follow His directions. Friends, we haven't yet lived over this New Year. We have just touched the hem of it. Are we going to allow God that He through His Living Word might direct our steps as we live each day of this New Year?

We should realize that we are living on "borrowed time." We are not here forever. And who knows this may well be the year of our summon to meet our Creator God! None of us know how long we are going to be here on this earth. The Psalmist very correctly pointed out when he wrote, "The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off and we fly away." (Psalm 90:10). The exhortation of the wise preacher is equally worthy of note, "Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed.... Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:6, 7). Are you prepared to meet God, even if this may well be the year of your summon to meet Him?



## DEFINING THE CHURCH

**J.C. Choate**

OFTEN WHEN SPEAKING OF the Lord's church the question is asked, "What is the church of Christ?" That most certainly is a good question and deserves a scriptural answer.

However, before telling what the church is let us begin by telling you what the church isn't.

Too many people are confused about the church because they often think it is something that it isn't.

The church of Christ is neither Catholic, Jewish, nor Protestant in origin or in practice. It is not a denomination or a group of denominations. It is not the meeting house or a material building.

It is not a political organization. It is not just a social club. No, it is none of those things at all, although you would be surprised to know how many people think of the church as being such. Because of such a misunderstanding they are led to be a part of groups, promote organization, etc., that are entirely out of harmony with the will of God.

But someone may want to know, "If the church is none of these things then what is it?" Well, that is the thing we want to find out.

According to the way the term is used in the Bible the word “church” comes from the Greek word *ekklēsia* which means “the called out.” That is the church is composed of those who have been called out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. (Colossians 1:13,14). Another way of putting it, the church is composed of those who have obeyed the gospel of Christ and are thus saved from their past sins. (Acts 2:38; 2:47).

In the Bible the church is given many descriptive titles. For instance, it is spoken of as a vineyard, stressing the need for more workers. It is called the kingdom, showing its dominion over all earthly kingdom. It is spoken of as the sheepfold a place of safety. It is described as the bride of Christ, and signifies the fact that it ought always to be beautiful, awaiting the return of the bridegroom, Christ. It is called the house of God, with the Lord as builder of the house. It is declared to be the family of God with, God being, the father, Christ as being our brother, and we as members of the church being brothers and sisters in Christ. It is referred to as the body of Christ, with Christ as its head and the body being composed of many members, individual Christians. This is the church, yea, the church of Christ.

To help better explain what the church of Christ is, please notice these facts:

1. It is spoken of in prophecy. (Daniel 2:44).
2. It was promised by Christ. (Matthew 16:18).
3. It was to come with power. (Joel 2:28; Acts 1:8).
4. It was established on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2).
5. The time was A.D. 33. (Acts 2).
6. The place was Jerusalem. (Luke 24:49; Acts 2).
7. It was to wear the name of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:27 Romans 16:16).
8. It was built upon the rock Christ. (Matt. 16:18).
9. It was a blood bought institution. (Acts 20:28).
10. Christ is head. (Colossians 1:18).
11. He is saviour. (Ephesians 5:23).
12. The obedient are added to it, and thus saved. (Acts 2:47).
13. Its work is to preach the gospel and help the needy. (Mark 16:15; James 1:27).
14. It is to worship God each first day of the week. (Acts 20:7).
15. It is composed of individual Christians. (Acts 11:26).
16. Its headquarter is heaven. (Acts 1:10-12).
17. Its guide is the Bible. (1 Peter 4:11; James 1:25).
18. It is governed by elders and deacons, and has preachers,

teachers, and members following God's word. (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1)

19. It will never be destroyed. (Hebrews 12:28).

20. The Lord is coming back for it one day. (Ephesians 5:27).

21. There is but one. (Ephesians 4:4).

22. Members of the church are called Christians (1 Peter 4:16).

The church of Christ is the greatest institution on earth. It has the greatest being to serve. It has the greatest work to perform. It is unique, but it is simple. It is not the saviour, but one must be a member of it to be saved. It is the only one of its kind. There are many imitations but only one true church.

The church of Christ is to be found around the world. And yet, the majority oppose it. This church is not popular because it seeks to preach the truth only. It is persecuted because it opposes all evil and false religion. But those who are Christians are the most blessed people on earth because they not only have hope in this life but in the world to come, eternal life.

This, then, is the church of Christ.

---

## *WHO MADE YOUR MOUTH?*

**Robert Lupo**

*"WHO MADE MAN'S MOUTH?"* was the question that God asked Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 4:11). God had commanded Moses to be His spokesman before Pharaoh and the people (3:10-11, 13-18). Moses, however, began to make excuses why he could not do it (4:10). As is demonstrated in the verses that follow, God, being the Creator of man's mouth, knew what Moses was capable of doing with his mouth. As biblical history bears witness, Moses became a great leader who often spoke to Pharaoh and to the people of God. I would like for us to consider some spiritual truths about the mouth that God created.

### **POTENTIAL TO BE USED FOR GOOD**

Man and his mouth were created by God with great potential for accomplishing good. That is what God desires of us. Good uses of our mouth include:

- Preaching and teaching the Gospel (2 Timothy 2:2).
- Speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).
- Speaking truth in general rather than lying (Ephesians 4:25).
- Answering any that ask about the reason of the hope of our

calling with meekness and trembling (1 Peter 3:15). Similar to this is Colossians 4:6, which says, **“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one.”**

- Singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16-17).
- We can admonish the disorderly and encourage the fainthearted (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Similar is 2 Timothy 4:2, which teaches us to **“reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”** Though some of this may sound somewhat negative, these are actually positive uses of our mouths.

### **SPEECH CAN ALSO BE USED FOR EVIL PURPOSES**

Man has often disappointed His Creator by doing or saying things that he ought not do or say. When you hear what comes out of some mouths, you would think that Satan made mouths instead of God. Jesus said:

*Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things: and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment (Matthew 12:34-36)*

Notice the following from this important teaching.

- Our speech indicates whose child we are—a child of God or **“the offspring of vipers”**—poisonous, injurious, wicked and deadly (v. 34). Some people are of their father the devil (John 8:44). So is anyone who persists in corrupt speech. See also James 3:8.
- Our speech is an indication of a good heart or of an evil one. Therefore, the good or evil of a man can be determined by his speech (v. 35).
- Man will give account for his speech on the Day of Judgment (v. 36). Every useless thing, every insult, every profane word, each nasty joke, every lie and every tearing down criticism spoken in one’s life (if not forgiven) will be heard again on Judgment Day when each person must answer for himself.
- The words we speak will either save us or condemn us (v. 37). Our words can save us by confessing the good name of Jesus Christ as we profess Him in our daily speech and by

speaking words of kindness. Our words will condemn us as illustrated above and in the following.

- Telling lies (Revelation 21:8).
- Speaking out of anger; *“but I say unto you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of **the hell of fire**”* (Matthew 5:22).
- Preaching false doctrine (Matthew 15:13; 1 Timothy 1:10). Romans 16:17-18 says:

*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent.*

- Slandering, whispering, backbiting and gossiping are all condemned in God’s Word (Romans 1:29-32; Galatians 5:15).
- Corrupt, filthy, shameful speech (Ephesians 4:29,31; 5:3-4; Colossians 3:8). Clamor and railing are very interesting words that have to do with sinful speech. Clamor is loud continued or repeated speech, while railing adds insults or accusations.

### **LET GOD TEACH ABOUT SPEECH**

God said to Moses, *“Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt speak”* (Exodus 4:12). We acknowledge that miraculous, verbal inspiration from God to the man, Moses, is the focus of the context and this verse (vv. 2-15). While we do not have direct, divine revelation from God to man today, He has taught us everything we need to know concerning proper speech in His written Word.

Truly, we need to let God teach us what we should say and should not say. All of the verses we have cited previously should be studied. Here are a few more.

- *“My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, and my soul, which You have redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long”* (Psalm 71:23-24).
- *“I will remember the works of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds”* (Psalm 77:11-12).
- *“Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing*

*psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works!”* (Psalm 105:1-2).

- *“All Your works shall praise You, O LORD, and Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom and talk of Your power”* (Psalm 145:10-11).
- *“A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!”* (Proverbs 15:23).
- *“In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains **his lips is wise**”* (Proverbs 10:19).
- *“The heart of the righteous studies how to answer”* (Proverbs 15:28a).
- *“There is gold and a multitude of rubies, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel”* (Proverbs 20:15).
- *“Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from **troubles**”* (Proverbs **21:23**).
- *“He who gives a right answer kisses the lips”* (Proverbs 24:26).
- *“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver”* (Proverbs 25:1).
- *“By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, and a gentle tongue **breaks a bone**”* (Proverbs 25:15).
- *“In all things showing thyself an ensample of good works; in thy doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us”* (Titus 2:7-8).

### A FINAL WORD OF CAUTION

Psalm 50:16-23 says:

*As for the wicked, God says, “How dare you recite my statutes or speak about my covenant with your lips! You hate instruction and toss my words behind you. When you see a thief, you befriend him, and you keep company with adulterers. You give your mouth free reign for evil, and your tongue devises deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son...”*

The Lord did not want His people, Israel, to speak or teach His Word, if in their lives they did not exhibit righteousness. Worse than refusing to speak for God is the Christian who speaks or lives perversely but also speaks the Word of God. We may call it hypocrisy. The Lord calls it sin and does not want to be represented by such people.

Dear Christian, Who made your mouth? Do you act accordingly?

# *The Final Judgment*

**T. Pierce Brown**

THERE IS SO MUCH LOOSE and liberal thinking today suggesting that we must never condemn anything because Jesus said “**Judge not, that ye be not judged**” (Matthew 7:1) that I hesitate to write anything that might be used to justify the false idea that the Bible offers hope that almost anyone can be saved eternally even without obeying the Gospel, especially if they mean well. The fact that 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 says that God will come “**rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might**” does not seem to mean anything to some who are connected with our brotherhood.

However, we need to understand something else that many conservative brethren do not seem to understand. That is, there is a difference in teaching what the Bible teaches about a general truth and assuming that we have either the right or the responsibility to apply that general truth to a specific person in Judgment Day. God committed that judgment to His Son, not to you or to me (Acts 17:31).

For example, all liars, thieves, fearful and various kinds of sinners will be consigned to the fires of everlasting Hell (1 Corinthians 6:10; Revelation 21:8). In Matthew 25:25, we find a picture of a man who hid his talents and said, “**I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast thine own.**” His lord said in verse 30, “**And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**” We need to teach that without compromise or hesitation.

Now, suppose you have found a person in your congregation, or see his reflection in a mirror, who has not properly used his talents. He was not as actively engaged in personal evangelism as he should be because he was fearful that he did not know enough, might turn someone away or any other number of illegitimate excuses. He dies and you have his funeral service. Is it your ability, responsibility or privilege to consign him to some particular place in eternity?

Many preachers define a liar as a person who fails to tell the whole truth about anything. This is not the proper definition but is still quite popular. In your congregation there is a person with a malignant tumor of the brain that causes the doctors to predict that



he has less than a month to live. You ask him how he is getting along. He replies, "I am doing fine." He dies the next day. Where will he go? Does the fact that you may assume that he lied when he said, "I am doing fine," when he was sick enough to die give you any right or responsibility to consign him to Hell? **Are you in the consigning or judging business?**

More than 50 years ago, a precious lady whom I presumed to be a Christian visited in our house. There was a straight pin on the sofa that she picked up and put in her lapel. She left with it. A thief may be defined as one who takes that which does not belong to him or to her. She did that. Suppose she had died on the way home. I would have probably been asked to conduct her funeral. In fact, I did conduct it several years later. Did I have the right to define what she did as a mortal or a venial sin, or a sin at all, and consign her to some destiny? Or, did I have the right or responsibility to make excuses for someone who steals a small item, but condemn one who steals one more costly? Did her motive of trying to remove an object that might injure someone give her an excuse to take something that did not belong to her? If so, does a good motive excuse some wrong actions?

I am aware that almost every preacher, whether liberal or ultra conservative, will begin to rationalize at points like this and find a way to justify whatever conclusion he reaches. I am not concerned about the possibility of being classified one way or the other. I am only concerned about teaching what the Bible teaches and glorifying God in all my life and teaching.

What does the Bible teach about these things? It teaches that all liars, thieves and fearful will suffer eternal punishment, and I have no right to compromise, soften or change God's decree. I also have no right or responsibility to make any sort of assumptions about how the specific individual is going to be judged in the Final Judgment. God's Final Judgment will be in terms of one's ability, opportunity, motive, words and actions as well as in terms of what God's Word actually says. **To assume that you know or have the right to pass judgment on another person's ability, opportunity or motive is to assume too much.** You may know what God's Word teaches about thieves, liars and all sorts of other persons, but you do not know how God is going to apply His Word to a specific person in terms of his ability, opportunity and motive. Since God did not give us either the ability or the responsibility to make such judgments, why bother trying? Preach the Word. You have no right to offer hope to a person who disobeys that Word, no matter what

your assumptions might be about how gracious God is, or what God might or might not do for a person who fails to obey.

In the Lord's church, we have the problem on the one hand of compromising what God has said and trying to rationalize or to excuse almost anyone or anything in order not to be judgmental. On the other hand, we have the problem of some brethren assuming that because the Bible teaches some particular truth, we have the right and the responsibility to apply that truth to every specific situation that may come to our attention.

To press the point even more, in order to make it clearer or more emphatic, the Bible says that he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved and that baptism doth also now save us. To compromise that, water it down, deny its importance is unsound, unscriptural and condemned by God's Word. So, we have a person who is 12-years-old who has never been baptized. He has been at church services all his life. He is one of the sweetest, nicest children we know. On his way back from school, he gets off the bus and is hit by a car and dies. You have his funeral. Is it your right or responsibility to tell his parents where you know he will spend eternity? If so, who gave you that right? If not, is it your right or responsibility in any other case of which you know? Of course you might have less hope of his brother who was 18-years-old and was killed in a car wreck the next week, but the fact still remains that you are not the judge, and you can admit it without compromising the truth. **God did not ask us to pass judgment on specific persons but to preach the Word.** One reason for this is that we simply do not have all the facts in hand to make the judgment. Another one is, no matter what your conclusion is, you do not change anything. If you judge a person to be saved and God judges him to be lost, he will be lost. If you are sure that he will be lost, but you did not understand his ability, opportunity, motive or any other factor that God will use, you have changed nothing in his destiny. You may have lost your opportunity to help another see the truth, however, if you assume the right of a judge in those matters that are none of your business.

I am aware that some brethren may read this and accuse me of teaching that God says one thing but will change His mind on Judgment Day. That accusation would be wrong. When God says, **"Baptism doth also now save us,"** He will not then say, "I have changed my mind about that, and baptism really is not important." He can say, however, "John Doe, whom you assumed was accountable and thus condemned, I pronounce saved." When God

says, “All teachers of unsound doctrine stand condemned,” He will not change that and say, “Doctrine is not really important.” He can say, however, “The person you thought was teaching unsound doctrine and was therefore lost was merely mistaken in the meaning of some passage. It was not a rejection of my Word, nor a perversion of the Gospel, and I have forgiven him, for he had a penitent, obedient attitude.” Surely every thoughtful person can see the difference in a person teaching that we will be judged in terms of what God’s Word has said, and one assuming that he is to be the final judge of how God’s Word must be applied to a specific individual. If you cannot see that, perhaps God, in His mercy, will forgive you for thinking that you can take the place of God on Judgment Day.

---

## *Rejoicing at Adversity*

**D. Gene West**

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF some trouble or hard times falling on one’s foe, then felt a sense of glee and responded with, “He got what he deserves”? It is a safe assumption that all who have been hurt by another have done so. Rejoicing over hardship that comes on an offending person is, unfortunately, a part of our *human nature*. As a matter of fact, it is so much a part of human nature that even those striving to live righteous lives will engage in such, never realizing the seriousness of it. We fail to grasp that such rejoicing is the same emotion one feels when he is finally able to take forbidden vengeance on an old enemy (Romans 12:19-20). Revenge has been accomplished, though it is just that someone or something else has acted in our stead.

Christians do this too often, and they soothe their consciences by saying that they did not take vengeance on the offending person, but nevertheless, “He got what he deserves.” After all, everyone knows “What goes around comes around,” right? The plain fact of the matter is that such an attitude is sinful—displeasing in the sight of our Father. Rather than rejoicing at the tragedy of an enemy, one should mourn. Genuine grief is a part of loving our enemies as Jesus commanded when in Matthew 5:44-45 He said, ***“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the***

**good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust**” Rather than delighting, we should lament the bad fortune, pain, adversity or tragedy that came on one who hurt us. Human nature tells us such an attitude is ridiculous, but godliness tells us we are rising above human nature to have **“the mind of Christ”** (Philippians 2:5-8).

Some three thousand years ago, the inspired Solomon wrote to his “son” in Proverbs 24:17-18, **“Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him.”** Why would Solomon give this command when it is so contrary to human nature and so difficult to accomplish without a degree of hypocrisy? Possibly, for four reasons: **First**, it is the will of God that we take no satisfaction in any kind of evil, not even what comes on perceived enemies. **Second**, it is a part of the pathway to sonship of our Father in Heaven. **Third**, it is much healthier for us mentally, emotionally and certainly spiritually, showing the Christian’s ability to rise above the crowd! **Fourth**, it is Christ-like; one is never more like his Lord than when he overcomes evil with good (Romans 12:21)!

---

## The Church Can Still Grow

**Steve Snider**

One cannot read the Book of Acts without being impressed with the rapid growth of the church after her establishment in Acts 2 (cf, Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 11:21; 13:49; 16:5). These passages show the church growing spiritually and numerically. Both are important! Numerous passages make it clear God wants His church to grow in faith (Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12), for numbers represent precious souls, and we certainly know that God **“is not willing that any should perish but all to come to repentance”** (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:3-4). The purpose of this article is not to promote a particular method but to suggest a couple of areas on which we must focus if we want to see the church grow.

Let me suggest first that **we must develop a mind to grow**. I am afraid Satan has really done his work well and has convinced us that growth isn’t going to happen. I believe we have allowed ourselves to be convinced that people aren’t interested and there is little or nothing we can do to change that. If the church is going to grow, we must develop the mindset that we truly believe it can

grow. **We must believe that God is still able to do amazing things through His church.** Do we still believe Romans 1:16? Do we still believe Matthew 11:28-30? Do we believe that Jesus is the answer to the problems of life? Do we really believe people are lost without the Gospel (Romans 3:23; 6:23; John 14:6)? **We need to strive to develop the passion that Christ, the apostles and the early church had for the lost** (Luke 19:10; John 4:34; 9:4; Acts 5:18-20).

Secondly, **we must have the proper message.** Looking at the message of the early church, we can learn these things: **It was a message that included the whole counsel of God.** Paul made that statement to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:27. The message of the early church was Christ-centered, convicted men of sin, called them to repentance and then provided the solution for sin. Furthermore, it challenged false religions. Christianity confronted people with making sacrifices for the cause of Christ (Acts 2; 17; 19)

**It was an uncompromising message.** It did not reach out and embrace every religious view and lifestyle. There was an exclusiveness about the message that made it appear narrow minded to many who heard it (Acts 4:12).

**It was a message of good news centering on Christ and especially the death, burial and resurrection of Christ** (Acts 2:26; 3:14; 4:10; 5:29-31). People need the good news. They need to know that Jesus loves us, left the glories of Heaven, died a horrible death on the cross and conquered death so that we might have the good life now and eternal life in the end.

Finally, **it was a proclaimed message.** Early Christians went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4). They had good news, and they wanted the world to hear it! They felt compelled to proclaim it (Acts 4:19-20; 8:4).

We live in difficult times, and reaching people with the Gospel is not easy. Yet, if we will develop the mind to grow, taking the message of Christ to all who will listen, **the church can still grow!** May God help us to not allow Satan to discourage us and convince us not to grow. Instead, let's put into practice these biblical principles and allow God to work through us and His Word.

---

## ***The Divine Origin Of The Church***

**Ed Meriott**

THE CHURCH ORIGINATED IN THE mind of the infinitely wise God. Man could not have created such an institution. Jeremiah

proclaimed, ***“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps”*** (Jeremiah 10:23). After sitting at the Lord’s feet for perhaps three and one-half years, His chosen apostles still did not understand the idea of the establishment of the church. In ignorance they asked, ***“Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”*** (Acts 1:6). He answered, ***“It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”*** (Acts 1:7-8). When the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 2:1-4), they with one accord began preaching the Gospel and baptized the multitudes, and the ***“Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”*** (Acts 2:47).

The establishment of the church was not dependent upon the wisdom of men. The apostles preached only what was given to them by the Holy Spirit. The church was established on the first Pentecost after the death of Christ. Churches such as Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, etc. have much later dates of establishment. What conclusion must be reached in light of this information? These churches and all others with like dates of establishment cannot be the true church of Christ about which one reads in the New Testament.

Furthermore, the church was designed and built by that great Architect, Jesus the Christ. He stated, ***“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock [Peter’s bed rock confession of faith—”You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Matthew 16:16] I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”*** (Matthew 16:18). The wise man wrote, ***“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it”*** (Psalm 127:1). Just as it is the case with the establishment date, so also with its builder. If a church was built or established by man, it cannot be the true church of Christ!

Additionally, the church must have been established in Jerusalem. Isaiah the Prophet wrote, ***“...For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem”*** (Isaiah 2:3b). Acts 2, that great hub of the Bible, records the place of establishment to indeed be Jerusalem. Present day denominational churches have been established in a multitude of places, including the United States. What, then, are we to conclude about these churches? They cannot be the true church of Christ, about which one reads in the New Testament!

The original church, established by authority from God (Matthew 28:18), on the first Pentecost after the Lord's death, built by the Son of God (Matthew 16:18) in Jerusalem, was given everything necessary for its existence and perpetuation. Peter wrote, "**as His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge [Bible] of Him who called us by glory and virtue**" (2 Peter 1:3). The church is "**complete in Him**" (Colossians 2:10). **The church is indeed divine in origin!**

---

## *I'm Not the Man I Used To Be*

**Raymond Elliott**

There is a religious song that is often sung by different quartets, groups and individuals, emphasizing how one's life has been changed by Calvary, noting the death of Jesus Christ Who died on the cross for the sins of the world. Regardless of how a person lived previously, when he or she believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, is penitent of sins and obeys the Gospel of Christ, his or her sins are forgiven and forgotten (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Hebrews 8:12).

Mankind is not so merciful and forgiving. Recently, I read about "Boeing's communications chief who was forced to resign because of an article he wrote criticizing women in combat in 1987—more than 30 years ago—when he was a Navy fighter pilot." The gentleman explained he no longer held the same views about women serving in the armed services as he did when he was a young man. Nevertheless, he was forced to resign his position with the company. This is a prime example of the extremes people go sometime.

What if God treated mankind in like fashion as those responsible for pressuring this person to resign from his work with Boeing? Consider the following men who said or did something that was not in harmony with the will of God, and yet the Lord forgave them and used them in His kingdom.

Abraham, the 'father of the faithful,' was not perfect. In two incidents, he intended to deceive rulers in order to protect his life. When Abram "*went to Egypt,*" because of the beauty of Sarai his wife, he said to her, "*Please say you are my sister that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.*" Thus, Pharaoh and others believed that Sarai was only a sister to

Abram and not his wife (Genesis 12:10-20). While this statement was partially true, it was not the whole truth. Then, there was the time when Abraham and Sarah went to Gerar. While there, he told others, *"She is my sister."* King Abimelech took Sarah. God intervened, and the king did not touch her (Genesis 20). David, after much time and many obstacles, became King of Israel. God richly blessed him abundantly with power and material things. Yet, he lusted after a woman, committed adultery with her and had her husband killed (2 Samuel 11). Peter denied his Lord three times (Matthew 26:69-75). The apostle Paul, prior to his conversion, persecuted the church of the Lord (Acts 9). He referred to himself as being the *"chief of sinners"* (1 Timothy 1:12-15).

Abraham matured his faith in God and his belief *"was accounted to him for righteousness"* (Romans 4:3, 5). King David was truly penitent of his sins (Psalms 32; 51). The apostle Peter was genuinely sorry for his denial of Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:75). Saul (Paul) believed in Jesus, repented and was baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 9:9-18; Acts 22:16).

These individuals were not the men they used to be. God did not hold their past mistakes, faults and sins against them. Have we not all thought, said or written something that displeased God and then sought His forgiveness? We should be thankful for the infinite mercy of our Heavenly Father. God has given His children this blessed assurance: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). *"As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us"* (Psalm 103:12). *"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins"* (Isaiah. 43:25).

---

## Some Practical Instruction Concerning Scripture

### Wayne Barrier

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S INSTRUCTION to Timothy and to us concerning Scripture is short and practical. With all of the division in the beliefs of the "Christian" community today, biblical guidance is needed.

First, from 2 Timothy 2:14-17, we read:

*"Remind them of these things and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved,*



*a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene...”*

These instructions are direct and easy to understand. The problem is that they are not easy to follow because much study is required to “rightly handle” the Word of God. Believers often are unwilling to take time and make the effort to achieve this competence in knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures. Next, Paul made a straightforward statement concerning the comprehensive quality and authority of Scripture. In 2 Timothy 3:12-16, we read:

*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*

This passage is simple yet powerful. We can put our trust in the Scriptures to provide the information needed to obey and to please God. Nothing is more important, and nothing other than Scripture is dependable. Are you familiar with the content of all 66 books of the Bible and understand how they fit together to become a single, comprehensive, harmonious message for guiding our lives of faith in God and His Son Jesus Christ?

---

## *ALL OF SCRIPTURE*

**Robert Johnson**

There are all sorts of ways to think about the Bible. It is its own library, containing 66 books, which offers us God’s wisdom regarding life and eternity. It’s like a large mansion, with each room having different items in it, but considered together, one can get a clear picture of the One Who built it and gave it the order it possesses. It has been considered being like a quilt, each piece its own unique design and offering its own perspective but providing a rich tapestry when all the pieces are joined together.

Another analogy of Scripture is it being like a jigsaw puzzle. Most pieces cannot be identified alone, apart from the other pieces they join. When they are all put together, you have a clear picture of what it's all about. Viewed as separate pieces, without any connection, it can be hard to see the whole picture. Taking verses and passages of the Bible out of context, viewing them in isolation from the whole, one can draw wrong conclusions and misinterpret what God communicates to us through His Word. By patient study, putting it all together, we not only understand what each section of Scripture says, but we have a better understanding of what God's overall plan is for all of humanity, as well as how that fits into our lives individually.

Like a jigsaw puzzle, some people begin a study of Scripture, only to just connect a few pieces here and there. They don't stay with Bible study to gain an understanding of the complete theme of God's Word to see how it all fits together for their lives. Such an approach can be discouraging, causing them to give up, never seeing the beautiful picture for life God offers us. Others study the pieces that interest them but never try to connect them to the whole. They can draw wrong conclusions about not only each piece but what they infer the whole emphasizes. **Many errors and false teachings have come about from not connecting the whole teaching of Scripture together, focusing on just isolated parts here and there.**

The view that Scripture presents of itself is found in Paul's statement to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. ***"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."*** Paul spoke of Scripture as a whole, not a group of individual books or letters that are disjointed and have no continuity to the whole. The Bible is not a loose collection of books, each applying only to itself and not to be related to the rest. The sixty-six books in the Bible are those inspired by God, those that God wanted us to have as His Word. We recognize they were written under various circumstances and times to various groups and individuals. However, by also considering them together as a unit, as God's Word for us, we have a complete picture of Him and His will. By examining Scripture this way, we can have a complete understanding of what we must do to be saved, of how we can live the Christian life and of the promise of eternity. **All Scripture is inspired of God, and all Scripture reveals God and His will to us.**

We need to take the time to look at each part of Scripture and connect it together to see the marvelous unity it possesses and the purpose it serves, offering us eternal life and leading us in the way

that guides us there. We'll never get there reading it haphazardly, bits and pieces here and there, or even worse, taking a pair of theological scissors to it, trimming the pieces to fit how we want it to look. Instead, put it together for our lives as God desires. Can we read it from cover to cover? Yes. Can we read it a book at a time? Of course. Can we choose themes to examine? Definitely. All of this can help enrich our view of the complete picture it offers and of what it reveals about how we should live. Never forget, however, that the theme of God's love in Christ touches it all and how that love affects how we respond.

Determine to spend time each day in this book of life, the Bible. Look at each piece, but connect them together. See how all of Scripture fits together in all of life to bring us to eternity. Don't miss the point God seeks to make for your life through all of Scripture! Don't misunderstand what it says by only focusing on one piece! Find the blessings it can offer you when you're willing to connect it all together in the picture of your life. ***"The entirety of your word is truth, each of your righteous judgments endures forever"*** (Psalm 119:160).

---

## ***The Way Of The Cross***

**Johnny Ramsey**

*"JESUS OUR LORD ... who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification"* (Rom. 4:25). This passage gives the basic anchor for our souls, when we learn that Christ died for us and was raised for our justification. Oh, what marvelous grace (Acts 20:24)—heaven came down and glory filled my soul!

The law of Moses required that every animal offered in sacrifice to God was to be without blemish: *"If there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill Blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the Lord thy God"* (Deut. 15:21). However, the prophet Malachi shows that this decree was regularly violated with sacrifices of animals they would not dare present to the governor of Persia. *"If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person, saith the Lord of Hosts"* (Mal. 1:8). They were giving scraps to God.

When heaven gives, it provides the best of the divine realm. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). Without flaw, without spot or blemish, the Lamb of God laid down the only perfect life ever known for the sins of mortal

man. No wonder the angels sing, *“Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation”* (Rev. 5:9). We are, without doubt, recipients of the deepest love the world could ever know.

### KEY WORDS DESCRIBING OUR SALVATION

**RECONCILIATION**—Our state without Christ is described in Eph. 2:12, *“Ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”* But through the events at Golgotha, we can, as sinners, be brought back to our Creator. That process of bringing back together those who are estranged is reconciliation. *“And might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby”* (Eph. 2:16). Estranged from God by our sins, Jesus died for us: *“For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of the cross”* (Col. 1:19-20).

**REMISSION**—To have the guilt of the past washed away and to stand on level ground at the foot of the cross is a sublime value. *“For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood”* (Rom. 3:23-25). The apostle Peter told those sincere salvation seekers on the day of Pentecost, *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins”* (Acts 2:38). The beauty of Acts 3:19 thrills our souls: *“Repent and turn again that your sins may be blotted out,”*

**REDEMPTION**—*“In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace”* (Eph. 1:7). We can be redeemed through the precious blood of the Son of God and walk in a new-life (Eph. 4:22-24) that has a bright future. From darkness to light, our journey takes us toward the land of fadeless day (Acts 26:18).

**RANSOM**—*“Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all”* (1 Tim. 2:6). We had been kidnapped by Satan and held in bondage by sin (Rom. 7:13-14), but Jesus paid the ransom price to set us free. *“Up from the grave He arose”* by the power of God: *“Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”* (Rom. 1:4). As Eph. 4:8 declares, Christ set the captives free and destroyed Satan’s power over death (Heb. 2:14).

**ATONEMENT**—“*My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins*” (1 John 2:1- 2). Entering the strong man’s house and spoiling his goods (Matt. 12:29), our Savior triumphed over Satan. Because the power of God in us is greater than the world (1 John 4:4), we can now be at peace with our Maker and the past has been demolished. We now walk hand in hand with our Lord (Col. 1:10), Paul had been at enmity with Jesus, but when he obeyed the good news, his sins were washed away (Acts 22:16). The burden of guilt and the vast chasm of rebellion vanished away. The glorious and awesome power of the blood of Jesus was now a bridge Saul of Tarsus spanned to come back home to God (1 Tim. 1:12-15).

### **YE WERE BOUGHT WITH PRICE**

In 1 Cor. 6:19-20 we find a jewel that challenges our attention. “*Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price.*” The Lord bought us with a very high price. We must, therefore, glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are His! It is as though we were on the auction block to be sold to the highest bidder. The devil wants us and is willing to raise his offer, whatever the cost. But just as all seems lost, a sweet but distinct voice of compassion and concern breaks the silence. It is the voice of the Creator who saves us at the precise moment that all seems lost.

God is our Creator. He made us and does not want us to be lost to the enemy of our souls (1 Pet. 5:8). Strangely, we rejoice to realize, we were redeemed to be set free, not to be the slave of a tyrant, but the child of the King! Only the efficacy of the blood of Jesus could cause us to enjoy the liberty of the sons of God (Gal. 5:17). We are free to want to do what God wants us to do. Should we not gladly obey and serve the Savior that released us from the bondage of iniquity?

### **THE POWER OF THE BLOOD**

The events at Calvary form the most important moment in the history of the world. There is, indeed, power in the blood of the Lamb. There are several rich points developed in the Scriptures in regard to the blood of Christ. Notice these truths that make salvation obtainable.

**The blood of Christ is Essential.** Acts 8:32-33 contains a marvelous reference to Isa. 53 and the One who was willing to do

that which was necessary to release us from the clutches of Satan. God allowed Christ to bear our errors and blunders and have them cleansed by His stripes that have the ability to heal us: *“Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls”* (1 Pet. 2:24-25).

**The blood of Christ is Efficacious**, *“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”* (Isa. 1:18). What a beautiful and expressive verse! Our scarlet sins can become as white as snow; though red like crimson, they can be as wool. The high cost of low living demands a price so high that only the death of the Lord Jesus could atone for mankind’s enormous blunders.

**The blood of Christ is Enduring**. In Rev. 15:3 we rejoice to read that the redeemed host was standing on the sea singing *“the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.”* In Ex. 14, the anthem Israel sang in Moses’ day at the crossing of the Red Sea declared that Jehovah would fight for them. Add to that the victory in the Savior’s blood (Col. 1:20) and we are truly more than conquerors (Rom. 8:35-37).

**The blood of Christ is Enabling**. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service”* (Rom. 12:1). Based on the unfathomable mercy and love of God, we are empowered to fight ardently and actively *“the good fight of faith”* (1 Tim. 6:12).

**The blood of Christ is Enriching**. In Jude’s brilliant benediction, we find the fruition and culmination of our life in Christ and His cleansing blood. Due to our relationship with our Redeemer, the Father above is able to keep us right with Him. *“Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore”* (Jude 24-25).

### WHAT IS THE WAY OF THE CROSS?

In Acts 2:36 and 13:38-39, we find the crux of the matter in God’s plan of salvation and way of redemption. The crucified One has *“been made both Lord and Christ.”* Those words mean “master” and “the anointed” of God! It is through Him that sins can be erased

and mankind can be brought back to the Creator. What a wonderful and gracious opportunity! To walk with the Lord in purity, integrity and hope is the way of the cross. Notice further, the way of cross.

Humility (John 6:38)

Sacrifice (Phil. 2:8)

Surrender (Matt. 26:42)

Service (Mark 10:45)

Loneliness (Heb. 5:7)

Obedience (John 17:4)

Victory (Rom. 1:4)

Compassion (Luke 23:34)

Concern (Mark 16:15)

When Jesus, our Savior, and God's perfect Son, shed vicarious blood at Golgotha, our hope for redemption was made accessible. Praise the Lord for such a Redeemer! The only life that counts is life in and through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

*What can wash away my sin?*

*Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

*What can make me whole again?*

*Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

*O precious is the flow*

*That makes me white as snow;*

*No other fount I know,*

*Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

## The Heart Of Worship

**Gary C. Hampton**

WORSHIP IS AN ESSENTIAL FEATURE of the assemblies of the saints. It is a time for the family of God to join together in praising the Father. Acceptable worship must involve both spirit and truth (John 4:24). We might use the heart to describe what is meant by the word "**spirit**."

**Our hearts must be filled with purity.** The Psalmist said the one who would be with God in His holy place must have clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3-4). God's instructions to Jacob to go to Bethel resulted in him telling his family, "**...Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves and change your garments**" (Genesis 35:2 NKJV). David keenly felt the guilt of his sin and asked God to create in him a clean heart (Psalm 51:10).

**Our hearts should bow in humility.** One singer declared, "**...I, by**

***your great mercy, will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple***” (Psalm 5:7 NIV). Peter instructed scattered Christians to humble themselves before God (1 Peter 5:6). Habakkuk reported, ***“But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him”*** (Habakkuk 2:20 NKJV).

We should also raise our voices in praise to God because of what is in our hearts. ***“I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness, And will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High*** “was proclaimed by a singer of Israel (Psalm 7:17). Another singer said, ***“I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High”*** (Psalm 9:2). Moses and the children of Israel sang praises to God after He drowned the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. Miriam and the women also praised the Almighty (Exodus 15:1-2,21).

We should truly be glad when anyone says to us, ***“Let us go into the house of the Lord”*** (Psalm 122:1). It is a wonderful opportunity to praise God from our hearts.

---

## *Is One Church As Good As Another?*

**David Tarbet**

**IF YOU HAVE THOUGHT** about this question, I am sure you will agree that:

**(1) A church which teaches error is not as good as a church that teaches the truth.** Jesus promised: “the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32), but those who teach something different from the truth revealed by Jesus and His apostles are to be rejected (Galatians 1:8-9).

**(2) A church which teaches part of the truth is not as good as a church which teaches all the truth.** Christians are to embrace the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). When man-made traditions are mixed with the pure Word of God the purposes of God are blocked (Mark 7:13).

**(3) A church which changes God’s plan of salvation is not as good as a church which upholds the plan of salvation.** God’s plan to save us from sin focuses on Jesus, who gave His life as a perfect sacrifice (Titus 2:14). Our response to His cross includes personal faith (John 3:16), repentance of our sins (Acts 17:30-31), and immersion in water (Romans 6:3-4).

