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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Trust In The Lord With All Your Heart,
And Lean Not On Your Own Understanding

CENTURIES AGO THE WISE old Solomon counselled by saying, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5). We must learn to live a life of dependence upon God because that is the only way to be safe. God, the creator of man,



has always revealed His will for man to follow. This is the point the writer of the book of Hebrews was making when he wrote, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son....” (Hebrews 1:1,2). There was a time when God spoke to the people directly, just as in the case of Adam, Noah, Abraham and others. He revealed His will through signs, dreams, and visions, and by the prophets. Then He gave His people a written law, what we call today the Old Testament, the first part of the Bible. Today we live under the New Testament law of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Reading through the Bible we understand that in every age those who followed God’s instructions as He had said were blessed by Him, but those who did not follow His instruction were punished by God. Pointing to those who had lived under the Patriarchal age, before God gave the Old Testament law through Moses, and to those who had lived under the Old Testament law, the apostle Paul said, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” (Romans

15:4). Adam and Eve were punished because they did not follow God's instructions. Noah and Abraham received God's blessings because they had followed God's instructions. All those people who lived before us are examples for us. God has not changed, and He will not change. He remains the same forever. (Numbers 23:19). Although today He is not punishing instantly those who reject His will or make changes or substitutions in His commandments, as He did in the time past, but "He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:31). Hebrews 10:31 says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Listen to Christ Himself, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." (John 12:48).

Has not Christ said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16). What will happen to those on the day of judgement who believe in Christ but refuse to be baptized to be saved or for the remission of their sins, as the Scripture says? Then there are millions of people who believe in Christ, and claim to have been baptized, but they have never truly been Scripturally baptized. Because most of those have been sprinkled with little water in a religious ceremony, arranged by their parents, when they were little babies. They think, they were baptized, but they are simply leaning on their own understanding. Because Christ commanded, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." How could a little infant believe? One must be old enough to believe in Christ, after hearing His gospel, to be a fit subject for baptism. Also, to be Scripturally baptized to be saved, one must repent of all sins and wrongs, that is, decide to leave all former beliefs, bad habits, wrong ways of living. In Acts chapter 2 we read, after hearing the good news of Christ when people had asked the apostles, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" The apostle Peter told them to "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:37, 38). Further it says, there were about three thousand people on that day who believed in Christ and repented of their sins and were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins and the Lord added them to the church. (Acts 2:41, 47). Further more, remember, most importantly, sprinkling of water is not baptism. The Greek word "Baptisma" means a burial. In Acts chapter 8 we have an example where an individual was baptized. We read, "Then Phillip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And

the eunuch said, "See here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Phillip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Phillip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him." (Acts 8:35-38). To Christians at Rome, the apostle Paul wrote, "Or do you not know that as many of us as have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death; that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3,4). Those who refuse to be baptized under whatever pretext are leaning on their own understanding and are not trusting in the Lord, who said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved."

Christ also promised to build or establish His church. Which He did according to His promise on the day of first Pentecost following His death, burial and resurrection, in A.D.33, in the city of Jerusalem, (Matthew 16:18; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2). The Bible says, He has purchased the church with His own blood. (Acts 20:28). The church is the body of the people (Ephesians 1:22,23). He is the head and the saviour of His church, (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22,23). The church which Christ built is not a denomination and neither consists of all the various denominational churches found on earth today. Many people are deceived into thinking that as long as they are members of any church they are members of the church that Christ built in the beginning. They are leaning on their own understanding. The notion or the belief of many that thousands of denominational churches, Catholics and Protestants, wearing different names, following different doctrines, and patterns of worship are the one church or the one body of God's people is totally wrong.

The church which Christ according to His promise established is His spiritual body, housing all the saved. (1 Timothy 3:15). Christ's church is distinctive from all other man-made churches existing on earth today, and can be positively identified with its unique marks of identification and doctrinal features. Its divine makeup can be easily distinguished from all other denominational and sectarian bodies of human origin. The Bible teaches that Christ Himself adds daily, those who are saved, to His church. (Acts 2:47). No one, therefore can join the church of Christ by his or her own choice. To be saved one must believe in Christ with whole heart, repent of all wrongs, leaving all former beliefs, and be baptized (immersed in water) for the remission of sins. Wherever people today obey the Bible's teachings explicitly, there the Lord's church exists. (Acts 2:38, 47). Christ's church wears His name, and is not called by

any other name. (Romans 16:16). Members of the church are called Christians (Acts 11:26), and not by any other sectarian name. The worship of church of Christ consists of coming together on every first day of the week (Sunday) to partake in the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26); singing, without the accompaniment of any musical instruments (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19; Hebrews 13:15); giving as one has been prospered (1 Corinthians 16:1,2); praying (1 Thessalonians 5:17); and studying from the Bible (Acts 20:7; 2 Timothy 2:15). There is no clergy or laity in the Lord's church. All members are considered brothers and sisters (Matthew 23:8, 9). No one is called "Reverend" or "Pastor" or "Father" or by any other title to exalt one over others.

Churches of Christ today everywhere are pleading to one and all for a return to the same original pattern of Christianity and the one church that Christ had established in the beginning. Our goal is to be that church which Christ in the beginning had established—nothing more, nothing less—to be just basic New Testament Christians as people were in the first century. Let us all learn to trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not on our own understanding.



FAITH

J.C. Choate

WHAT IS FAITH? The Hebrew writer says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1). Although the inspired author did not intend this to be a definition of faith, it certainly gives us some idea of what faith is. Faith is that which is produced in one's heart as a result of hearing the word. (Romans 10:17). That is, it bring one to the point of accepting without question the truths of God's word, and upon that he builds, he obeys, and has the hope of that which is to come.

To illustrate this, let me say that I believe that there is a President of the United States, that there is a Tokyo, Japan, that there is a Mount Everest. I have never seen the President, or these places, but I believe they exist. Why? Because of the many evidences of their existence, and because of the many testimonials from those who have seen them, and those who have written about them. Thus, I freely express my faith in them to others.

I have never seen God or Christ. I have never been to heaven. But I believe that God and Christ live and that one day the righteous will go to heaven. Why? Because of the many evidences of their existence and because of the witnesses of Christ and testimonies concerning him and because of those things written concerning them. Hence, I affirm these truths to others without hesitation.

This kind of faith is necessary on our part. Without faith we would be miserable people. We all believe in someone and in something, so the important matter is to be sure our faith is founded upon the truth and is channeled in the right direction, for the Bible says. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6). Please note that before one can come to God, first, he must believe that he is, and second, that he rewards or blesses those who seek him.

Naturally, then, faith is a condition of salvation. It is not the only condition, but it is a primary one because one could not obey the other commands of God unless he first had faith. With this in mind, let us notice a few passages of scripture that stress the importance of faith, or belief, in obeying the gospel. We read, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever **believeth** in him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). When the jailor asked Paul and Silas what to do to be saved, the scripture says, "And they said, **Believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:31). Some automatically jump to the conclusion that all one has to do to be saved is to believe. Well, as mentioned earlier one must first believe before he can obey, and reading further in Acts 16 you'll find that the word of God was preached to those people and then they were taken and baptized. But when does the Lord save one? Christ answers by saying, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). Faith, or belief, saves only as it leads one to do what the Bible teaches.

When it comes to faith only; James says that it damns one instead of saving him. Listen, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (James 2:17). Again, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only." (James 2:24) Christ says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15). So it is important that we understand the proper relationship of faith and works. Faith alone will not save, and neither will work alone save. (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Put them together and they spell salvation.

Faith will lead one to repent of his sins, to confess that Christ is the Son of God, and then to be baptized for the remission of sins. Faith will

not only do this, but it will likewise lead one to live according to God's word all the days of his life, and then give him the hope of eternal life. Why? Because the things that are written have been written that we might believe, and then by following the truths therein the blessings of God are showered upon us. (John 20: 30, 31; Revelation 2:10).

Don't be afraid to believe. Turn your faith loose. Don't limit it. You'll be surprised to see what it will do for you. Remember, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that **believeth**: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall **live by faith.**" (Romans 1:16, 17). The Bible also declares that we walk by faith and not by sight.

TO WHICH MISSION DO YOU BELONG? (MATTHEW 15:13)

Gordon Hogan

LATE IN 1960 MY FAMILY AND a fellow-missionary family were traveling overland from Germany to Pakistan. We encountered an interesting experience when crossing the border into the country of Lebanon. During the usual routine of clearing our passports we were asked what our jobs were. We replied that we were preachers of the gospel of Christ. The officials then asked to which mission we belonged, Catholic or Protestant? When we replied neither, but that we were simply Christians, a long discussion began, for these men had been trained in the language and religious thought of the world. It seemed impossible to them that someone could be simply a Christian, rather than a "Catholic Christian" or a "Protestant Christian."

During the thirty-two years of our work in Asia, the question, "To which mission do you belong?" has been asked over and over again. Let us observe some of the things that this question implies.

Where did such thinking originate? The idea of different, distinct missions did not originate with God. The apostle Paul, writing to Christians in the city of Ephesus, points out clearly, "*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling*" (Ephesians 4:4). However, in Paul's farewell message to the elders of the church in Ephesus he warns, "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you*

overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:28-29). This warning from Paul became a reality in about A. D. 300. This apostasy took place because of a departure from the Word of God and exalting the opinions and traditions of men.

In the sixteenth century certain religious leaders, tiring of the oppression and wickedness of the Roman Catholic organization, revolted. From this movement have come the Protestant denominations, or *missions*, as we know them today.

The common conception persists that in Christendom a person must be either Catholic or Protestant. The Bible speaks no such language.

Men plant the seeds of denominational doctrine. Honest men and women will carefully examine the doctrines of the "mission" to which they belong. Did man or God plant the teachings of your "mission?" Many religious groups teach that infants inherit the sin of Adam and therefore must be baptized. Is this the teaching of God? If so, we should be able to read it from the Bible. Search as you may, such a doctrine is just not in the Word of God. On the contrary, this concept is condemned. The Bible clearly teaches that sin *cannot be inherited* (Ezekiel 18:20). The New Testament declares that individuals must hear the gospel and believe it *before* they are fit subjects for baptism (Mark 16:15,16). An infant is not capable of meeting these requirements.

Many teach that **baptism is not essential to salvation.** God and His Son declare that it is. Read carefully Mark 16:15,16 and Acts 2:38. The apostle Peter, by inspiration, writes, "**baptism doth also now save us**" (I Peter 3:21).

Does the "mission" to which you belong consider the Lord's Supper an act of worship to be participated in every Sunday, or possibly once or twice each month, or maybe only once or twice in a year? The Bible gives us a clear example of the disciples of Christ partaking of this great memorial on the first day of the week, and indicating that such participation is a necessary part of our worship every Sunday (Acts 20:7).

Conclusion: To which mission do you belong? I belong to **none.** But I do belong to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ *which has a mission*, the salvation of the souls of men. Jesus tells us, "*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:31,32).

REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD INVESTIGATE THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Ken Tyler

1. It was built by Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “*And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church ...*” (Matthew 16:18).
2. It is scriptural in name. Paul said, “... **the churches of Christ salute you**” (Romans 16:16).
3. Christ is its only head. Paul said, “*And hath put all things under his feet, and **gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all***” (Ephesians 1:22-23).
4. It is scripturally organized. Notice the beginning of the Philippian letter, “*Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the **bishops and deacons***” (Philippians 1:1).
5. It is scriptural in worship. Lord’s supper (Acts 20:7); singing (Ephesians 5:19); praying (1 Thessalonians 5:17); preaching (Acts 20:7); and giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
6. It’s plan of salvation is the same preached by Christ and the first century church. Hear (Romans 10:17); believe (Mark 16:16); repent (Acts 17:30); confession of Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37); and baptism “... *for the remission of sins...*” (Acts 2:38).
7. It is not one of many denominations, because we do not read of denominations in the New Testament. Paul said, “There is **one body** (church)...” (Ephesians 4:4). See Ephesians 1:22-23 for proof the body and church are the same.

The above statements are very important aspects of the Lord’s church. Each one of us must practice what the Bible teaches about the church if we expect to go to heaven. Please examine the church of Christ. I think you will like our plea to be the church Jesus built.

GIVING WORTHILY

Bill Nicks

SOME OF THE SAINTS IN Sardis will walk with Christ in white garments, “*for they are worthy*” (Revelation 3:4). Whatever we do for the Lord must be done worthily, that is, in a worthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27).

Our walk must be commensurate with our vocation (Ephesians 4:1). This is especially true with reference to our giving back to the Lord a liberal portion of that with which he has blessed us materially. It is imperative that we consider this a priority, inasmuch as many of the parables, such as the parable of the unrighteous steward, the rich man and Lazarus, the rich fool, and many other teachings of the Lord and the apostles, place great emphasis on our responsibility to make proper use of them.

In 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, Paul gives five reasons why we should give worthily. They are just as applicable in our 20th century life as to those in the first century. It is in our interest to avoid covetousness, from a Greek word that is never used in a good sense in the New Testament. This illicit desire for more will so warp the disposition that one can be led to steal, to lie, to commit adultery, and even to kill in order to obtain worldly gain. Except by the grace of God through Christ, all of us would be covetous. Christianity endows one with a heart of generosity, which leads to sharing with the poor and needy, and in turn makes one happy. We are too selfish to make ourselves joyous, but when we share what we have with others, it comes back to us with an even disposition of love and joy and peace. Otherwise, we become miserly and selfish.

(1) The first reason Paul assigns for giving worthily is the example of others. Paul stirs up the Corinthians in the Province of Achaia, with the example of the saints in Macedonia, who had been generous in spite of poverty and affliction. Someone has said, "It is the poor who help the poor." Perhaps this is because they know more about what poverty is like and can empathize. It was the common people, those who were poor, who heard the Lord gladly. Most of the rich elite rejected Him. It has ever been true that "*not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called*" (1 Corinthians 1:26). Riches can be a curse or a blessing, depending on one's use of them. It is not wrong to have wealth; it is wrong not to share it! Note the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. He had some wealth, but used it to help the man fallen among thieves. If you observe that others are using their God-given means to bless the church and their fellowman, you can follow their good example. Good examples inspire others. Paul knew this and used the Macedonians as a means of inspiring the Corinthians.

(2) "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Giving began in heaven, not on earth. "*God so loved the world that he gave ...*" (John 3:16). And the gift He gave was "*his only begotten Son.*" Jesus voluntarily laid down His life (John 10:18). He could have called down from heaven

“twelve legions of angels” to prevent it (Matthew 26:53), but He was in love with lost, ruined man, and knew this was God’s only plan to save them (Romans 5:8ff). Our Lord’s wonderful example of compassion and liberality should stir us to new heights in giving worthily. We can save the lost sinners of the world only to the extent the church is awakened to give till it hurts, then keep on giving till it doesn’t hurt, because by then we have grown in Christian spirit to love giving. It costs to send missionaries, to conduct meetings, and to go out to the vast areas of the world who have not heard the story of Jesus and His love. A dying church may be one having spent millions on finely structured, cathedral-like buildings, but the box marked for missions has cobwebs surrounding it. It is not wrong to have nice buildings, but it can be wrong if we, in building them, have forgotten the one grand mission of the church, that of saving souls. And this is costly, demanding sacrificial giving.

(3) The past record of the Corinthian church was another means Paul used to stir them to faithful and worthy giving. They had *“made a beginning a year ago, not only to do, but to will also”* (2 Corinthians 8:10). It was imperative they finish what they had started. Many good plans fail because we leave them unfinished. It is right for all to remember this adage: *“Never fall below your very best.”* It is never right to rest on the laurels of the past; our present negligence cancels out good deeds of the past.

(4) It is necessary to put good feelings into action. Paul commended them for having *“a readiness to desire it,”* but reminded them that they needed to *“complete out of your ability”* (2 Corinthians 8:11). God will judge us according to our own opportunities and abilities, for it is *“acceptable according as a man hath, not according as he hath not”* (verse 12). Edgar Guest said in the famous poem, *“Sermons We See”*:

**The best of all the preachers
Are the men who live their creeds.
For to see good put in action
is what everybody needs.**

(5) Life has a way of evening things up. The Gentiles, said Paul, are now helping the Jews in carnal things. The Jews had first received the Gospel and had shared it with the Gentiles, Paul being one of those Jews. The abundance of the Gentiles in European Greece evidenced that they were prospering, but Jews were in a famine, and many were being persecuted because they had left their own religion of Judaism and had become Christians. Now, it would even things up *“by equality: your abundance being a supply at this present time for their want, that*

their abundance also may become a supply for your want; that there may be equality: as it is written, 'He that gathered much had nothing over; and he that gathered little had no lack' (2 Corinthians 8:14ff).

"Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). This is Solomon's way of saying what Jesus said, "Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, running over, shall they give into your bosom, for with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

It does not necessarily impoverish one to give, for he reaps what he sows. Through God's providence, man is blessed richly (Psalm 37:25; Romans 8:28; Galatians 6:7ff).

SIN

Basil Overton

OF ALL BAD THINGS, sin is the worst. If I could wish for just one thing as a gospel preacher, I would wish for the ability to adequately describe sin. Some think that the devil is a fallen angel; he may be (1 Timothy 3:16). If he is, sin is worse than the devil, for sin made him the devil.

The Bible was written on the subject of sin. If one says: "But I thought it was written on the subject of the scheme of redemption," I would ask: "Redemption from what?" The answer would have to be: "Redemption from sin."

Sin is real. No Bible writer was skeptical of its reality. Jesus did not try to prove that sin was real with philosophical arguments. In fact, He did not try thus to prove anything He said. He was the divine dogmatist! He just told men that they were sinners, and there was no argument about it (John 8:7, 21,24,44). Those Jesus called sinners were religious people; they were religiously wrong. Some of the worst sins that Jesus rebuked were sins of religious error. When people do things in their religion that are a violation of God's standard as revealed in His Word, they sin!

No amount of sincerity, conscientiousness, and honesty makes such sin any better. Perhaps one of the greatest sins in the sight of God is the sin of substituting traditions, sentiments, and the commandments of men for God's Word. It is a sin to substitute sincerity and honesty for God's Word. One must be sincere and honest if he is a member of God's family, which is His church, but one can be honest and sincere, and still be wrong religiously. And when one is shown that he is wrong according to the plain teaching of God's immutable counsel, His Word, and that one refuses to do anything about it because he has been sincere

and honest, then he substitutes sincerity and honesty for God's Word. The Bible is our only guide to heaven, and when we substitute anything for it, we sin grievously! Paul was honest, sincere, and thought he was right while he persecuted Christians and the church of Christ, but he was wrong (Acts 22:3,4; 23:1; 26:9-11)! When Paul realized he was wrong, he quit the wrong.

Men sin when they do that which God tells them not to do. *"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law"* (1 John 3:4). Transgression of any of God's laws is sin. Many people who believe this seem to forget something else that the Bible teaches on the subject of sin. When one fails to do that which God requires of him, he sins. *"Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin"* (James 4:17).

The Bible teaches men to believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son; it teaches men to repent of their sins, and upon a confession of their faith, to be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (John 8:24; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; 17:30). When people thus obey the Gospel they become members of the church that we can all read about in the Bible. It does not matter with God how "good" a man may be otherwise, if he does not do that which God tells him to do, he sins.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

HOMOSEXUALITY

Tom Kelton

HOMOSEXUALITY HAS BECOME A MAJOR issue these days. Many seem to forget that it was an even more common matter in antiquity, greatly practiced and frequently discussed.

In 1 Corinthians 6: 9-11 Paul writes, *"Do you not know the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God, and such were some of you."*

Paul is not making a special sin out of homosexuality. He simply handles it in the same way as theft, abuse, drunkenness, and fornication. He says that it is wrong!

In Genesis 1:27 the image of God is said to reside jointly in the male and female. *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"* (Genesis 2:24). Sex is given either for the marriage of one man and one woman,

or else for celibacy. This is the hard teaching of the Bible. Adultery, fornication, sodomy, polygamy, bestiality, and homosexuality are all found in the Bible, but are all repudiated. This is not what God intended sex to be. All break the one-flesh unity of man and woman in which God's image is found. Accordingly, is no surprise to find that every reference in the Bible to homosexuality condemns it (Genesis 19; Judges 19:22ff.; Leviticus 18:22,20:13; Romans 1:24-32; 1 Timothy 1:8-10; 2 Peter 2:6-10; Jude 7; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Homosexual behavior is a sin.

If this seems very hard, particularly for those with a predisposition toward their own sex, Paul has some good news. Homosexuality can be changed. *"But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of our God"* (1 Corinthians 6:11). That verse speaks volumes. It shows the weaknesses to which they were prone, from which they had turned away, for which they had been forgiven.

It is simply not true to say that homosexuality cannot be changed. Each individual has the freedom to *choose* obedience to God.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Hans J. Dederscheck

THE LORD'S SUPPER IS a part of our worship, to be observed on the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day is the first day of the week. Christ Himself instituted the Lord's Supper. Therefore, it is of divine origin, and it constituted the central part of the worship of Christians. *"Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"* (Matthew 26:26-28). The "bread" and the "cup" are witnesses to the sacrifice on Calvary where Christ gave His life for the sins of the world. In consequence, every time Christians partake of the Lord's Supper they bring back to their memory Christ's sublime deed for the remission of our sins.

The apostle Paul wrote the following text: *"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, **and** one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."* (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). The Lord's Supper is a communion.

Again Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29: *“Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself if he discern not the body.”* The mere act of partaking of the Lord’s Supper does not mean much. Real communion with Christ is demonstrated only if the Christian submits himself to a self-examination, that is, the heart of the worshipper must be right. The Christian must be in reverence and deep meditation; otherwise, it is in vain that we eat the bread and drink the cup. The Lord’s Supper is, therefore, also a self-examination.

Since the Lord’s Supper is taken in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, His church, Christians, the members of the kingdom of Christ, have the privilege of communion at the Lord’s table. Listen to Jesus: *“And I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom...”* (Luke 22:29-30). *“The saints and faithful brethren in Christ”* were in the church, the kingdom (Colossians 1:2,13). Christians partake of the Lord’s Supper because it is Christ *“in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace”* (Ephesians 1:7).

The doctrine of transubstantiation has nothing to do with the teaching of Christ. Transubstantiation is simply the invention of theology. It was declared as part of the Catholic Church at the Council of Trent. The text says: *“In the Eucharist are contained truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently, the whole Christ.”* In addition, we read, *“The whole substance of the bread is converted into the body and the whole substance of the wine into the blood.”* However, God’s Word does not teach such an idea. The Lord’s Supper is a spiritual feast to spiritually-minded Christians (1 Corinthians 11:23-34).

According to the New Testament, the first-century Christians met each first day of the week, the Lord’s Day, and observed the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7). Our worship today must be done by precept and example of the New Testament teaching.

Finally, when Christians partake of the Lord’s Supper they *“proclaim the Lord’s death till he comes”* (1 Corinthians 11:26). Indeed, the Lord’s Supper is the central act of a sincere and honest worship service, a weekly celebration of victory in Christ.

PICTURES OF FAITH

O.P. Baird

PEOPLE HOLD DIFFERENT VIEWS OF how faith brings the blessings of God, but all agree that one must have faith to be a Christian. A chapter in the New Testament, the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, tells what faith is and gives examples showing how faith worked in the lives of many people to bring blessings from God.

What faith is: *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is necessary: *“And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him”* (Hebrews 11:6).

From this we see that faith in God is believing that God is real and that He can and will reward those who seek Him. The spiritual rewards of God cannot be seen with the natural eye, and the rewards beyond this life are greater than our minds can comprehend. Those who have faith in God and in His Son Jesus Christ live in hope of receiving those eternal blessings, and faith gives them assurance of the reality of those blessings and conviction that they will receive them.

In the rest of the chapter we have examples which may be called “pictures of faith.” These examples describe how people of God obtained various blessings. In every case the blessing was received by faith, *“For therein the elders had witness borne to them”* (Hebrews 11:2).

One of the most striking of these “pictures” is given in Hebrews 11:30, *“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days.”* The account of the walls falling is given in the Old Testament book of Joshua, chapter six. When Joshua led the Israelites into the land God had promised them, the first city they came to was Jericho. The city was protected by a great wall around it. *“And Jehovah said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thy hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor”* (Joshua 6:2). God gave them the city. Therefore, they received it by God’s grace.

God told Joshua and the Israelites to march around the city once each day for six days and seven times on the seventh day, then for the priests to sound the horns and for the people to shout. God promised the wall would fall when they did this. They obeyed and the wall fell, and the people went in and took the city (verse 20). They had to obey the commands of God, but that did not keep it from being by grace that they received it. Also, it did not keep it from being by **faith** (Hebrews 11:30). If Joshua and the Israelites had thought like many people today they probably would have said, “There is no power in marching to cause the

walls of a city to fall. If we had to do anything we would be receiving the city by works instead of faith.” But Hebrews 11:30 shows that to be false reasoning. The only reason Joshua and the Israelites marched around the wall was that God commanded it and promised to give them the city when they obeyed. That made it purely an act of faith. They took God at His word and acted upon His promise. If they had said, “We will just believe and let the walls fall,” that would have indicated a **lack of faith**.

Let us compare this with receiving salvation from sin. We are saved by God’s grace, and through faith, “*For by grace have ye been saved through faith ...*” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

We receive salvation by the grace of God (as a gift), and we get into (have access into) the benefits of His grace through faith, “*Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God*” (Romans 5:1-2).

Does God give any commands for the sinner to obey before receiving forgiveness of his sins? The first example of people being saved by faith after the resurrection of Jesus is found in the book of Acts, chapter two. The apostle Peter preached a great sermon on the day of Pentecost. He and all the apostles testified that they had seen Jesus alive after His resurrection. He said to the people, “*Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, 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. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him*” (Acts 2:36-39). “*They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls*” (Acts 2:41).

At the city of Jericho God gave commands and promised a blessing. When the commands were obeyed the blessing was received. It was received **by faith**. On the day of Pentecost God gave commands and promised a blessing. When the commands were obeyed the blessing was received. It was received **by faith**.

Joshua and the Israelites lived under the old covenant, and Peter, on the day of Pentecost, was preaching the message of the new covenant. Commands differed under the two covenants, but faith is the same under the new covenant as it was under the old covenant, and it works in the same way to bring the blessings of God. When God wanted to show new-covenant people what faith is like, He used old-

covenant **pictures of faith** to do it. Therefore, the nature of faith is the same under both covenants.

There are other examples in the book of Acts of people being saved. In all the examples, faith brought the blessing of God in the same way, as those people were moved by their faith to obey God.

Dear reader, if you have faith in God and His Son Jesus Christ, but have not acted upon your faith by repenting and being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, Christ waits in love to receive you, if you will come to Him “by faith.”

THE FEW WHO DILIGENTLY SEEK GOD

Don L. Norwood

WHEN A PERSON IS CAREFUL to consider what our Lord Jesus Christ said about obtaining eternal life with God, it is indeed sobering in thought. In Matthew 7:14 He said: *“For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it.”* The writer of the Hebrews epistle also said: *“... for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him”* (Hebrews 11:6). Peter wrote: *“Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure...”* (2 Peter 1:10). The **few** as opposed to the many will enter the narrow gate and walk the straitened way. It is a narrow gate because it requires that a person empty himself of himself and become totally devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14). It is a straitened way because it requires that one walk by the teachings of the Gospel of Christ to the end of one’s life (Romans 8:1; Hebrews 3:12-14). God will reward only those who sincerely seek after Him. Jesus said that to know God and to know Him whom God sent (Christ) is to have eternal life (John 17:3). John wrote: *“And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”* (1 John 2:3).

Diligence requires carefulness and earnest interest in what we are doing. Paul wrote these words to Christians at Ephesus: *“Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”* (Ephesians 5:15-17). Jesus said, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21). He also said, *“... My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me”* (John 7:16).

Will you be-one of the few who diligently seeks God?

CINNAMON IS DEAD!

T. Pierce Brown

CINNAMON WAS OUR LITTLE DOG who, for about sixteen years, had thought she was a part of the family. As I dug a grave for her beside an oak tree behind our house, I started crying. Frankly, that shocked me, for I take a little pride in my presumed ability to handle emotional situations in a rational way. Can you imagine a reasonably intelligent, mature, grown man crying about the loss of a dog?

I am sure that I do not know all the reasons why people cry, but these thoughts occurred to me which may be helpful to you.

First, I thought of one of God's precious little creatures suffering as she did for a while before she died, and I felt grief for her. But I wondered, "How much grief do I really feel for the millions of God's precious creatures who are going to be suffering for eternity if someone does not bring them to the Great Physician for His cure? How many tears have I shed for the lost of the world?"

Second, I felt a personal loss of one who had loved me and needed me. So, it was a selfish kind of grief, for there would be no longer a joyous welcome of a little friend who just got pleasure from being with me—whether walking or resting. But I wondered, "How many persons of my acquaintance have I so cultivated or treated that they feel a great joy at being with me, and show a loving need for my presence? How much difference do I really make in anyone's life and happiness because of my love and care for them?"

I cannot help but wonder how many thousands of Christians (?) spend more energy and time caring for their dogs than they do in striving to save a soul. How many spend more each year for dog food than they do for preaching the Gospel to the lost? How many would be more heartbroken at the loss of their pet than at the loss of a thousand souls?

COMFORT IS COMFORTING

Tom Holland

WORDS HAVE BOTH HURTING AND healing power. One of the healing words of the Bible is the word "comfort." The word frequently translated "comfort" in the New Testament is a compound word in the original. The word literally means, "a calling alongside of" (2 Corinthians 1:3,4; 7:13).

There are some comforting synonyms for this concept, such as

consolation, help, solace, a soothing, to be refreshed, braced up.

Most people sometime in life need comfort. Sorrow and suffering come into most lives (Job 14:1,2).

One of the blessings of experiencing real disappointment and pain in life is the way one is prepared by hurts to genuinely comfort those who hurt.

The apostle Paul stated it this way, *“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation (trouble), that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God”* (2 Corinthians 1:3,4).

God comforts us through His Word (1 Thessalonians 4:18). If we will listen, God assures us of His love (Romans 8:38,39). God promises that He will not let us be tempted beyond what we are able to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). God has promised to be with us (Hebrews 13:5,6). We have access to heaven’s throne any hour of the day or night.

God also comforts us through His people (2 Corinthians 1:4). God’s people have a genuine care and a loving concern which causes them to reach out to those who are hurt by forces of life over which they have no control, and in reaching out they reach into the heart and give consolation, solace, help, and a soothing of the soul.

THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Leon Cole

THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH is clearly defined in the New Testament. It may be stated in several ways. The ministry is triple. It is **upward, inward, and outward**. To put it another way, the ministry of the church is **to God, the godly, and to the godless**.

The ministry directed to God is *worship*. Worship is reverential service toward God, expressed in acts of devotion. Worship is not for the *entertainment* of would-be worshippers. It is not a light thing of “fun and games”, but must be reverential and sincere if it is to be acceptable. It is not directed toward ourselves but toward God. New Testament worship was always marked by simplicity, not pomp and ceremony. The very purpose of the church’s existence is *“that we should be to the praise of his glory...”* (Ephesians 1:12).

The inward ministry of the church is edification. It is *“the perfecting of the saints”* (Ephesians 4:12). We treat the sheep in the fold. There is responsibility to help those we’ve converted meet their personal problems. There are so many broken lives, blasted dreams, and blighted

hopes. There is widespread lack of concern about a teaching ministry for building up the saints. Let's not forget the same Lord who said "make disciples" said "teach them to observe all things" that He commanded.

Then there is the outward ministry. "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42). We fail if we limit our ministry only to worship or ourselves. Jesus instituted the church and left it in the alien environment of the world because He had something for it to do in the world. We reach out publicly by gospel preaching. We also reach out privately. Every hearer should be a herald. Every Christian every day, everywhere, in some way should seek to tell the gospel story. This is the ministry of the church.

TIME IS RUNNING OUT

Dale Grissom

THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT are necessary if we want to be successful soul-winners.

- (1) We must first have the desire in our hearts to win lost souls for Christ. This desire must be cultivated if it is to grow and motivate us to seek lost souls. We must care so much that, even after working all day, we are willing to take the time to teach someone about Christ.
- (2) Soul-winners are to confront kindly and lovingly. The difference between being successful and failing lies in our ability to confront, in a non-threatening way, those who are lost. Kindness is very important; people respond to kindness. The way to confront lovingly is to confront others in the way we would want to be confronted. We must consider that those we are wanting to teach are sensitive, caring people, and must be treated with kindness and love.
- (3) We must be confident, believing that people want to hear about Christ and learn more about what it means to be a Christian. We must have confidence that those with whom we study will obey the gospel. We should teach until we have answered their questions and know that they understand what they must do to be saved. When this happens they will respond—God will give the increase.

We must make the most of the time we have. People are dying every day outside of Christ. These people need the opportunity to hear the gospel. Brethren, you and I have the responsibility to teach the gospel while there is still time. We are His servants who have been entrusted

to carry His Word to a lost world. The harvest is white and the workers are so few. Won't you determine to be a soul-winner and really try to take someone to heaven? Time is running out; we must act while it is day.

The Most-Obeyed Commandment

Bob Plunket

THE MOST-OBEYED COMMANDMENT is found in Luke 9:21. *“And he commanded them to tell no man.”* What was this that Jesus asked them not to tell any man? That He was Christ, the Son of God. Why did Jesus make this request right after Peter's great confession? Some scholars think that Jesus said this because Peter and others did not fully understand the message of Jesus yet. There is good evidence for this in Matthew 16:22, where Peter had to be rebuked for his misunderstanding of the cross. Christ had a timetable for all things, and it was not the right moment to reveal this.

There is an alarming silence in the church today. Many do not talk about Jesus at all after they leave the church building. What they experienced in worship does not carry over to their daily life, in a desire to share it with others. They do not talk of God with their neighbors, their children, or the people with whom they work.

“...tell no man” is the most-obeyed commandment because you don't have to get involved, or study, or answer any questions, or contend with anyone, or disagree with anybody. Many do not want to jeopardize friendships.

We must remember, however, that this command was for the apostles for a brief, limited time. We are to tell Jesus, to share Him, to take the gospel to the whole world. The growth of the early church was not only due to the great preachers, but to every member sharing Christ with his neighbor. They could not be silent. They said, *“We must speak that which we both saw and heard”* (Acts 4:20).

And so must we.

SILENCE OR SUBJECTION?

Dayton Keese

Since the Word is God's power unto salvation, it is imperative that we handle that Word aright (Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 2:15). Certain textual formations seem to cause us more trouble than others. Figurative

language, approved examples, and necessary inferences have stimulated concern in some quarters. Phrasing in 1 Corinthians 14:34 has made it a passage of concern relative to the place of women in the church.

Note the passage with special emphasis given to two words placed in bold print: *“Let the women keep silence in the churches: for it is **not** permitted unto them to speak: **but** let them be in subjection as also saith the law.”* If emphasis is placed on “silence” and prohibiting them to “speak,” real problems arise, and a real disservice to women in Christ is launched. For example, they could not sing in a service, for as we do that we are to speak *“one to another”* (Ephesians 5:19).

WHAT DOES THE TEXT TEACH?

Paul employed an oriental figure of speech in which the negative “**not**” is followed by the conjunction “**but**.” In such a formation the negative is not to be considered in an absolute sense, but rather to emphasize what follows the conjunction. If I were to say, “I am **not** going home, **but** I am going to class,” would you conclude I never would go home? Jesus said, *“Work **not** for the food which perishes, but for the food that abides unto eternal life”* (John 6:27). Should we conclude that Jesus meant that we never could work for the food that perishes? That cannot be His message (see 1 Timothy 5:8). Note this same sentence formation in other passage. (Matthew 6:19f; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 1:17; 1 Peter 3:3f).

Remember that the point of emphasis in each case is what follows the conjunction “but.” In 1 Corinthians 14:34 the emphasis, therefore, is on women being in subjection. Women are to be in subjection to men in general (1 Corinthians 11:3), as a wife (Ephesians 5:22), and in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34). In a church service, or at home, or on a street corner, women are called on to be in subjection.

- Can a woman sing in a service and be in subjection? Yes.
- Can a woman ask a question in a mixed Bible class and be in subjection? Yes.
- Could a woman answer a question when called on in a class, and teach a man sitting there? Yes. Note Acts 18:24-26.
- Can a woman speak up to confess her faith in Christ during the Sunday morning worship assembly, and be in subjection? Yes.
- Can a woman give directions while in subjection (as directing guests to be seated in the room where they need to be)? Yes.

We answer “yes” in each of the above cases, because a woman can so do and be in subjection.

Can a woman preside at the Lord’s Table, over a class of men, be in charge of singing in a mixed assembly, or be an evangelist (see 2

Timothy 4:2-5; Titus 1:5)? No! Since “preside” means “to be in a position of authority: to be in charge of a meeting ... to have control or authority,” she cannot so be over men, because Paul said, “... *But let her be in subjection as also saith the law.*” Paul’s point of emphasis was for women to be in subjection. When they are in subjection, they are free to speak, but when they break the subjection barrier, they are to be silent. Women need to recognize where the line of subjection is, and stay within that line. Then we as brethren need to recognize their freedom to speak within that area. How sad when sisters in Christ with proven ability are held back in His service because of misapplied Scripture. It is equally sad if women consider the covenant of Christ outdated, failing to maintain the subjection called for by Christ.

Keep this “**not — but**” construction pattern in mind as you read God’s Word. It can help you avoid extremes on the one hand, and understand passages that have confused some people on the other hand.

Becoming Perfect

John M. Davis

JESUS MADE A SHOCKING STATEMENT: “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*” (Matthew 5:48). The way I look at that statement, that sets a high standard. When you think about it, God has continually called for a high standard for the redeemed. He has always wanted His people to become **perfect**. The perfecting of the Body has been in His plan from the beginning, and throughout history God has been working out that plan.

When we speak of perfecting the Body, what do we mean? The whole point of the Christian life is to move toward perfection. Christians are to grow, to mature, to attain spiritual growth. Consider these biblical expressions: “*For the perfecting of the saints*” (Ephesians 4:12); “*Unto a perfect man*” (Ephesians 4:13); Christians are to “*be no more children*” (Ephesians 4:14); Christians are to “*grow up into Him*” (Ephesians 4:15); the Christian is to attain “*the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:13).

The Christian cannot attain sinlessness (Romans 3:23), but he can sin less. A Christian can become a well-rounded Christian. That should be the concern of all Christians. Babies in Christ are to grow up, mature, to be fully equipped for all good works.

“Perfecting” means “complete within itself, full-grown, filled to capacity.” When we think about it, no Christian should settle for anything

less than being fully equipped, complete, and grown-up.

Here is the challenge: The whole Body of Christ must be brought to full maturity (1 Corinthians 7:1). How will we do this? *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers”* (Ephesians 4:11). The result of their work is that the Body of Christ will be built up in love (Ephesians 4:16).

It is sad, but *some members of the Body will remain spiritual babes all of their lives.*

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

John Dobbs

FOR YEARS PREACHERS HAVE DILIGENTLY striven to urge people everywhere to embrace **undenominational** Christianity. What has been meant by that phrase is that the church spoken of in the Bible was not a divided group of people consisting of diverse core doctrines, but people who are part of a universal church—or body—of Christ. The phrase “of Christ” is not a title, but a description of ownership, as if I would speak of my automobile as “the car of John.”

The church belongs to Jesus and not to men. That is why we are not to do as we please in the church, but as He pleases. When Paul writes *“... All the churches of Christ send greetings,”* he means that everyone who belongs to Christ, everyone who is a part of the Body of Christ, sends greetings.

Any title used of the church in the Bible is scriptural (of necessity). So, when I use the term “church of Christ” to denote the idea of “the people of God,” I do so in keeping with the Bible.

However, I am not a “Church of Christ” preacher—I am simply a Christian who is a preacher in the Lord’s church; I am not a “Church of Christ” kind of Christian, but a Christian only.

I serve the church that is dedicated to being “of Christ.” I am dedicated to the idea of *belonging to* Jesus Christ—and my devotion belongs to Him alone. Anyone who does what it takes to *become* a part of that Family and does what it takes *to stay in* that Family is *in it*—and we all are brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Undenominational Christianity is not always popular — but our allegiance is not to the whims of men or their preferences; neither is it to the “Church of Christ,” but to the *church which belongs to Jesus*. May we study long and hard to determine if we are indeed in that grand company of saints about whom we are told in the Bible.

