

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 54

September 2023

No. 5

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

CONTEND EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH

JUDE IN HIS EPISTLE wrote the Christians that he had been very eager to write to them about the common salvation enjoyed by all followers of Christ in Him, but suddenly he changed the subject and said, "I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3). The faith here implies the recognized body of teaching as we have today in the New Testament of the Bible.



Nothing could have been more important in Jude's generation, nor in our own, than the necessity of contending earnestly for the faith that was once forever delivered to Christians. To contend means to strive to protect something. The apostle Paul said to the Christians at Philippi when he wrote them, "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs. That you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Philippians 1:27).

Scripturally speaking, there is only one faith (Ephesians 4:5). This one faith comes by hearing or learning from the word of God, written in the Bible. (Romans 10:17). 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, "For we walk by faith." This means we should believe and practice only those things which are written in the Bible. Sometimes, people ask whether they should, as Christians, observe or practice certain things. My answer is, is it commanded in the Bible, more specifically, in the New Testament, under which we live today. We, as Christians, cannot attempt to justify any belief or practice by the Old Testament. (Galatians 5:4).

While Christians are taught to contend for “the faith”, there are, on the other hand, many faiths in this world, even amongst those who call themselves Christians there are diverse faiths. For example, there are those who call themselves Roman Catholics, they maintain their faith according to their “Catechism”, which is the manual of their faith. Then there are those who identify themselves as Methodists, they follow the “Book of Discipline”, this book constitutes the law and doctrine of that church. Others are called Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, they follow their faiths according to their creed books or “Manuals” and “Confession of Faith.” Anglicans, church of England, or the Episcopal church maintain their faith according to “The book of common prayer.” Then there are Pentecostals, Jehovah Witness, Seventh Day Adventists, and numerous other denominational churches, they all have their own sets of faiths and doctrines.

The apostle Paul, at 1 Corinthians 1:10, said to those who were trying to divide themselves in different groups, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement.”

Is it possible? Is it possible for all who claim to be the followers of Christ to speak the same thing, so that there be no divisions among them? If it was not, the apostle of Christ wouldn't have asked for that. The only way for all who claim to be Christians, and yet follow different faiths, to be united in one faith, is what the apostle Peter wrote at 1 Peter 4:11, he said, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.” This simply means to speak as the word of God says. This is exactly what the apostle Paul was pleading for to all followers of Christ at Corinth, when he said, “that you all speak the same thing”. Let the Bible speak.

At Acts 11:26 we read that the disciples or the followers of Christ were first called “Christians” at Antioch. They were simply called Christians. When King Agrippa heard Paul preaching Christ to him, he said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” (Acts 26:28). Peter said, “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.” (1 Peter 4:16). Christian is the only name authorized in the Scriptures for all followers of Christ. All denominational and sectarian names are divisive. They should be discarded, if we all want to speak the same thing as the Bible speaks.

Christ, while speaking to Peter on his confession of Christ being the Son of God, in Matthew 16:18, said, “And on this rock I will build My church.” Which church did Christ promise to build? He said, He would build His church. Did He build His church. Sure, He did, as we read in

Acts chapter 2. There, we read, the gospel of Christ was preached to a great multitude of people. In verse 37, those who believed asked, "What shall we do?" The apostle told them to "Repent, and let everyone 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.... Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.... And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:38-47). To what church were they added? Christ had promised to build His church, and to this church, His church, He added all the saved ones. The Bible speaks of no other church. Men have, through the centuries, established and built all kinds of churches of different brands and names everywhere on earth, but the Bible still speaks of only one church, which Christ established in the beginning, in Jerusalem, in A.D.33. The Bible says, the church is the body of Christ, and that there is only one body. (Ephesians 1:22,23; 4:4), of which He Himself is the head (Colossians 1:18). Numerous congregations of the church of Christ all over the world are called "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16). No one joins the church of Christ, Christ Himself adds to the church daily those who are being saved, (Acts 2:47), when they believe in Christ, repent of sins, and are baptized for the remission of sins. (immersed in water by the authority of Christ, (Mark 16:16).

Congregations of the churches of Christ all over the world come together in different locations on every first day of the week (Sunday), the day on which Christ was raised from the dead, to worship God as New Testament teaches (John 4:24). Members of the church of Christ in worship partake of the Lord's Supper to commemorate Christ's supreme sacrifice for the world (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26), study from God's word, (2Timothy 2:15), Sing spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), give a portion of their income (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), and pray (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

If we want to go to heaven to have eternal life, we must contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to Christians. We must strive to abide in the doctrine of Christ. (2 John 9). Speaking of the day of judgment, Christ said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" (Matthew 7:22,23). How sure they were to enter heaven, because they had relied on their own faith, in what they thought was right. But they were wrong. They had not followed God's law, His rules given in the Bible. Aren't there millions of people today who are innocently

making the same mistake? They could be sincere, honest, Godfearing, Bible loving, followers of Christ, yet making the same mistake of leaning on their own understanding. (Proverbs 3:5). The writer of the book of Hebrews, at Hebrews 10:31, said, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”



INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

J.C. Choate

THE WORD BIBLE LITERALLY MEANS “the book.” It is the greatest book in all the world. It is the world’s best seller. Actually, it is a combination of many books.

The Bible is divided into two main divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament. Old Testament has reference to the old law or old will that was given to God’s people in the long ago. Naturally, the New Testament is the latter law or will that was given to replace the first law.

The Bible is composed of sixty-six books, with the old section having thirty-nine and the new division twenty-seven. Beginning with the Old Testament we have it broken down into several divisions. First, there are five books of law, which are also called the Pentateuch. These are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Next there are twelve books of history. We have Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Then comes five books of poetry. They are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. The remaining seventeen books are composed of prophecy but even these may be divided into two distinct sections. First, we have the major prophets with five books. There is Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Second, there are the minor prophets with twelve books and they are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

In the New Testament we also have the books broken down into divisions or sections. The first four books are biography and they consist of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There is one book of history and that is called the Acts of the Apostles. Next comes twenty-one books, epistles dealing with Christian living. Beginning with Romans, they

continue with I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John, and Jude. And finally there is one book of prophecy, the book of Revelation.

Even though the Bible had many authors, and even though it was written over a period of many years, nevertheless, there is complete harmony and unity throughout. It never contradicts itself. One writer does not pen something, and another write just the opposite. This is one proof of its inspiration by God, for what other book can boast of such a record?

The Bible is the only book that gives the story of the beginning of things, of man's creation, of the purpose of his existence, and where he shall eventually go. This great volume not only tells of the good traits in man's character, but also points out the bad side as well.

Through this book we may learn of the past, know what is expected of us at the present, and be able to look into the future. The many prophecies contained in it have been fulfilled. The many promises have been thus far kept. Could there be any doubt that it will not stand the future tests as well?

God himself speaks through this medium. Through it he has revealed his Son and his will for man. It tells of the beginning of the church and of its growth. It assures victory to all who will obey its precepts.

In speaking of it in the long ago, the apostle Paul said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3: 16, 17). Thus, it is all inspired of God, it is from God, it is the word of God, and therefore completely informs man of the good work he is to do.

Christ spoke of the scripture as truth and only the truth can make one free (John 8:32; 17:17). Peter says that we are to speak only as the oracles of God, that is, in harmony with the teachings of the Bible (I Peter 4:11). Again, Paul says that we are to study the word and Christ adds that the scriptures are to be searched (II Timothy 2: 15; John 5:39). And last, but not least, we are warned not to add to or subtract from the word (Revelation 22:18, 19).

Yes, the Bible is the greatest and grandest book in the world. It can bless you if you will obey it or will curse you if you neglect it or oppose it. Study its contents, respect it, love it, and obey it, and it will prove to be a blessing to you, both in this life and in the world to come.

If God Became A Man

Max Patterson

IF GOD BECAME A MAN, we would expect supernatural doings. The great miracles of Jesus testify to this.

If God became a man, we would expect Him to manifest the love of God. Christ was completely unselfish. He cared for the sinful, brokenhearted, the contrite, the despised, the poor. His supreme act of love is what He did on the cross.

If God became a man, we would expect His personality to be true humanity. God has shown us what a true, real man should be like. He has shown us, as well as told us, what to do.

The character of Jesus is one of the greatest evidences of His deity that can be given.

I believe Christianity can be verified through the miracles Christ performed. Would the New Testament be worth believing without miracles? Miracles authenticate the message of Christ. Jesus appeals to His miracles for His true divinity (John 10:24, 37, 38; Luke 7:20-22). These miracles were performed in the full light of history. Many were performed before the public eye. Many were performed in the company of unbelievers. There were all types of miracles. We have the abundant testimony of the cured. There is no adequate evidence contrary to miracles.

I believe Christianity can be verified through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. The resurrection is the miracle. Despite the unbeliever's attitude toward this miracle, not one through the ages has been able to explain it away. And what about the hundreds of people who saw Jesus after His resurrection, and on many different occasions (I Corinthians 15)? The testimony is sure and our faith in Christ is certain.

Is There A God, Isn't There?

Bert Thompson

“IN THE BEGINNING WAS MATTER, which begat the amoeba, which begat the worm, which begat the fish, which begat the amphibian, which begat the monkey, which begat man, who imagined God. This is the genealogy of man.” So stated Charles Smith, former president of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, in his booklet, “Godless Evolution.”

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." So stated the inspired prophet Moses in the first chapter, the first verse, the first book of the Bible — Genesis 1:1.

Who is right? Is there a God, or isn't there? Is Exodus 20:11 correct when it asserts *"For in six days Jehovah made heavens and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day . . ."*? Or did organic evolution — the result of spontaneous generation billions of years ago — produce all that you see before you today? What is the answer?

This is a situation of intense proportions and tremendous magnitude. Either there is a God, or there is not. There is no middle ground. Any attempt to remain neutral is automatically synonymous with unbelief. Whatever decision you reach, it is an important one. And who among us makes important decisions without first gathering, examining, and weighing all the facts of the case? The question then arises, what is the evidence offered for God's existence? Who is right? Is there a God, or isn't there?

If there is a God, then there is an eternal heaven to be gained and an eternal hell to be avoided. If there is a God, then nothing else really matters; if there is no God, then nothing matters at all. If there is no God, then the atheistic creed of life is entirely satisfactory. If there is no God, there is nothing to stop us from living by atheism's golden rule: "Do your own thing; if it feels good, do it." On the other hand, if there is a God, and if the Bible is His inspired Word to man, as Christians claim it to be, then we are faced with an entirely different realization that mankind was created with a purpose — and a lifetime to fulfill that purpose. To succeed means joy forever with God in eternity; to fail is to fail throughout all eternity.

MY REASONS FOR BELIEVING

Willard Collins

THERE ARE MANY REASONS why I believe that there is an Almighty God who can be my answer in this world of insecurity. I believe in God because I believe in prayer. In the twenty-third Psalm, when David said, *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want,"* I believe that somebody heard David. Don't you? When in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed, *"O my Father . . . not as I will, but as thou wilt"* don't you believe that that message of Matthew 26 had somebody in the great beyond to hear it? My friends, when Stephen was being stoned to death and uttered a prayer to Almighty God in the name of the Savior, don't you believe

that there was somebody to hear? When the Christian mother bows down by the bed of her sick child and talks to God, don't you believe there is a God to hear? "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*" (James 5:16). The hand of God is in control of this universe. I believe that the prayer of righteous people can do things in this old world. I believe in God because I believe in prayer.

I believe in God because of all the material things that I see. Think about a clock. This clock tells me that somebody made it. Is it reasonable for me to think that all the parts of this clock just came together and began to tick? My friends, I look around me and see a beautiful earth: flowers, birds that sing, and persons with physical bodies. I look around and see stars at night, and I see the great expanse that we call the sky. In the daytime I behold the sun. Is it reasonable to say that all these things just came together by chance, and thus we have the universe? The Bible declares, "*In the beginning God...*" (Genesis 1:1). I believe in God because of all these wonderful things that I can see with my eyes.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF JESUS

Royce Frederick

THALLUS, A SAMARITAN-BORN historian, wrote in Rome around A.D. 52. No complete copies of his writings have survived to our present time, but we do have some quotations from his works. Julius Africanus, who lived in the second century, quoted from the writings of Thallus. Africanus wrote, "Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun."

"This darkness" refers to the darkness which covered the land for three hours when Jesus was hanging on the cross. "*Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land*" (Matthew 27:45; see Mark 15:33). Thallus claimed that the darkness was not a supernatural event, but merely a natural, solar eclipse — which occurs when the moon passes between the sun and the earth. But Africanus explained that the darkness could not have been a solar eclipse, because an eclipse of the sun cannot occur during the full moon. He observed that Jesus was crucified during the Passover, when the moon would have been full.

Thallus opposed Christianity. He did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. However, by trying to explain the darkness, Thallus confirms that a period of darkness did occur at the crucifixion of Jesus. Thallus only argued about the cause of the darkness, not about the fact of the darkness. Therefore, writing in A.D. 52, this historian verifies that

the Bible is historically accurate regarding three facts: (1) that Jesus was a real person, (2) that Jesus was crucified, and (3) that there was a period of darkness when Jesus was crucified.

Jesus of Nazareth is not a myth or mere legend. Human historians reveal that He was a real person who lived and walked upon this earth. The New Testament reveals many more facts about Jesus of Nazareth, including His divine identity. The testimony within its pages shows us *“that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God”* (John 20:31).

THE GEHENNA

Hans J. Dederscheck

THERE IS A HEBREW WORD in the Old Testament which means “the valley of the son of Hinnom.” We find this terminology in Joshua 15:8 and 2 Kings 23:10. Indeed, it is a deep depression situated to the south of the city of Jerusalem, There was celebrated the pagan worship of the idol called Moloch. The kings Ahaz and Manasseh sacrificed their children (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6). Josiah was the famous king who reformed the religious life in those days and called it an *“unclean place”* (2 Kings 23:10). In that place were burned dead bodies and refuse (Jeremiah 31:40; Isaiah 66:24).

The prophets of God pronounced judgments on that valley. In their preaching Hinnom became the scene of the coming punishment (Jeremiah 7:3-8; 19:6; Isaiah 31:9).

In the New Testament doctrine of Christ, Gehenna stands for eternal punishment, no longer localized in the valley of Hinnom as such. As we look at the term “Gehenna,” we find that there are many equivalent expressions:

- The eternal fire (Mat. 18:8-9; 25:41)
- Unquenchable fire (Mat. 3:12; Mark 9:44-48)
- The fire and the worm [Mark 9:48]
- The furnace of fire (Matthew 13:42)
- The lake of fire (Revelation 20:14)
- Fire and brimstone (Rev. 14:10; 19:20)
- The torment (Rev. 14:10-11; Luke 16:23)
- The pit (Revelation 20:3)
- Eternal punishment (Matt. 25:46)
- Outer darkness (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30)

Of course, the context confronts us with a little problem. How can Gehenna be a place of fire and darkness at the same time? The symbols are quite clear. To Israel, fire was always a symbol for the presence of

God (Exodus 19:18; 40:38; Deuteronomy 4:12; 5:4). The same was said regarding God's holiness, which cannot endure evil. God destroys by fire all that displeases Him. *"For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains"* (Deuteronomy 32:22).

The Gehenna as such has no power, but the Lord God imposes punishment by fire. The "outer darkness" stands in opposition to "light," which is salvation and life eternal. This we will understand even better as we realize that outside the kingdom of heaven there is only darkness (sin), (Matthew 22:13).

PRECIOUS THINGS COST NOTHING

Godfried Kwao

LIFE'S INDISPENSABLE AND substituteless things cost almost nothing. Because they have no price tags, man does not see their importance: the sun, air, water, etc. There are no manufacturing companies which make these things. Our Divine Father has perfected and put them in place for us to enjoy and use. What if we did not have the sun, air, and water? Human, animal, and plant life would cease.

Man without the Gospel ceases to exist spiritually.

God has given us the Gospel in its perfect divine form, no blemish, no spots, pure! Because the Gospel is free, men do not see its importance. If God were to put a price tag on it, surely millions would be attracted to it. Instead of spending no farthing to embrace pure Christianity, man chooses to spend thousands to subscribe to lies and erroneous doctrines.

Our salvation was designed from the very beginning of human life, Genesis 3:15. It is impossible to diminish the value of something that dates back to the beginning of human life. The Gospel has no equal; Christianity is second to none. Man gains everything in Christianity — safety from misery here on planet earth, and hellfire hereafter. Though difficult times do come in the Christian's life, these are nothing compared to the manifold blessings that come his way.

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Isaiah 55:1,2).

SHOULD WE BE DOGMATIC?

Hollis Miller

IN HIS INTRODUCTION TO BENJAMIN Warfield's work, **The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible**, Cornelius Van Til said: "The Christian is bound to believe and hold that his system of doctrine is certainly true and that other systems are certainly false." If the system of doctrine to which Van Til referred is understood as the teaching of Jesus and His apostles as it is recorded in the New Testament, then every believer in the New Testament's authority must surely agree. A Christian cannot say, "God probably exists," or "Christ probably arose from the dead." These propositions belong to the very foundation of Christian faith. He who would come to God **MUST** believe that He exists, and if Christ has not risen, then we are still in our sins (Hebrews 11:6; 1 Corinthians 15:17).

Christian faith cannot be successfully compromised. When Jesus said that the man who rejects Him will be judged by His Word (John 12:48), He did not add, "Unless a more promising system of truth should later be unveiled." And when John declared that keeping God's commandments is equal to knowing Him (1 John 1:3ff), he did not add, "Unless one should discover a superior commandment."

If the Bible teaches a doctrine, then Christians may certainly be dogmatic in their belief of it. How can one believe something and at the same time be skeptical toward it? One can and should seek further enlightenment about Bible doctrines, but that is not the same as disbelief of them. Rather, it belongs in the biblical category of growth.

Every Christian owes both to himself and others the debt of properly distinguishing between Bible doctrine and personal opinion. In opinion, one should not be dogmatic. Romans chapter fourteen is quite clear in teaching that personal opinion should remain just that, personal opinion. Great liberty can be enjoyed among brethren in matters of opinion without disturbing the unity of faith which all believers hold in common. A good knowledge of the Scriptures will usually settle easily any question about what is doctrine and what is opinion. Problems arising over differences in opinion are more often the result of lack of love and ignorance of the Scriptures than of genuine desire to learn truth.

HOW TO KNOW TRUTH

David Deffenbaugh

“AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Thank God the Word did become flesh. Man desperately needed grace. Just as desperately, man needed truth. Only by it is man able to be free (John 8:32) and sanctified (John 17:17). By it is man’s only access to God (John 14:6).

However, it is sometimes difficult for man to discern truth. Many people today even believe that absolute truth is not a reality. But short of this abandonment of *knowable* truth, is the problem of *apparent* truth. Many ideas, concepts, and teachings exist that sound true, but simply are not. How is man to know what is true and what is not?

The brief statement from Jesus in praying to the Father that *“thy word is truth”* (John 17:17) is most profound. The Bible is not only the measure, but it is the very expression of truth. The reason this is so important is that man simply could not figure it out on his own. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he addressed Greeks, a people quite proud of their attainments in human reasoning and philosophy. Paul proclaimed the *“foolishness of God . . . wiser than men”* (1 Cor. 1:25).

Left to his own devices, man would never arrive at an understanding of the kingdom, Christian living, baptism, or the cross. These have meaning only as they are revealed in the Bible. By the same token, the Bible is able to safeguard against ideas that under certain circumstances may have tremendous emotional appeal, but are not truth. Currently such ideas would involve the expanded role of women in the church, a relaxing of God’s marital laws, an easing of moral dictates, and so on. Only by adherence to truth can one ensure they are being led by the Spirit of God and not the spirit of the age.

Since God has explicitly revealed the absolute necessity of truth, we can be assured that such truth has been made quite accessible and knowable.

GOD’S TRUTH

Don W. Walker

“AND SAUL SAID UNTO SAMUEL, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice” (1 Samuel 15:24).

Aristotle once said, "Plato is dear to me, but dearer still is truth." The Bible stresses bountifully how we should respond to truth. In Proverbs 23:23 we are told to buy the truth and sell it not. Too many times, people's decisions are based on what the ramifications will be, rather than what is right and good and consistent with truth. In areas of doctrine, the question is not what will be the response, but rather what is right.

In Galatians 1:10 Paul wrote, "*For do I now persuade men, or God? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*" Paul's point was, if it is Truth, he will proclaim it no matter what the result. Again, in 1 Thessalonians 2:4 Paul writes, "*But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.*"

These must have been the thoughts of Paul when he wrote young Timothy, "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Like Amos, we must be ready to speak and follow truth, no matter what the end result (Amos 7:10ff). Stephen's concern was truth, no matter what the end would be (Acts 7), just as John the Baptist's actions would display the same.

We need to be men of courage and honor concerning God's Truth. We dare not compromise simply because it may be convenient. May we each be strong in the Lord and valiant for truth.

TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

Bobby R. Key

TRUTH IS THE MOST PRECIOUS commodity on the market. Nothing in this world is quite as valuable as truth; no word is more beautiful than truth; nothing is quite as powerful as truth — especially spiritual truth. We are instructed to "*Buy the truth and sell it not*" (Prov. 23:23).

Truth is truth in all generations. Truth is truth in every community — in every state — in every nation on earth. Truth will not perish. In his debate with Douglas, Abraham Lincoln said, "I will die and my name will be forgotten, but the principles for which I contend will live on forever." All truth will live on forever. The Word of God is truth (John 17:17). It is truth even if no man on earth believes or practices the teaching of the Lord. "*The grass withereth and the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever*" (Isaiah 40:8). "*But the Word of the Lord endureth forever*" (1 Peter 1:25).

Suppose the earth should stand for a million years. A million years from today men would dig up the great cities of the earth, such as New

York, London, and Paris. In that far off future day our political parties will have been forgotten and the issues over which they fought will have perished. The religious denominations will have disappeared. Things that divide us here will be buried beneath milleniums of oblivion.

Yet, the book of God will be there, and it will tell in whatever language that race may use that Christ was born in Bethlehem; that He was crucified on a Roman cross; that He was buried in Joseph's new tomb; that He arose from the dead on the morning of the third day; that He commanded His disciples to *"go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. . ."* (Mark 16:15,16). They will read that the disciples were called Christians and came together on the first day of the week to break bread. They will read where Jesus is coming again to put the devil out of business and raise the dead and take His children home to Heaven.

It is thrilling to know that the truth is able to set us free. Error capitalizes upon ignorance. Let the people know the truth, love the truth, obey the truth, and proclaim the truth. Souls will be saved from damnation, and Heaven will rejoice.

Jesus died for our sins according to the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Parts of the Bible have been published in more than 1,400 languages and dialects. Among the 46 new languages which came to the attention of the American Bible Society in one year, 19 of them had Bibles printed in that language within the year. Some years add almost two translations in a new language within a month. Translation work is an endless task in which the Bible Societies assist in the goal of providing the Scriptures to every person on earth in the language he can read and understand.

Glory to God! His Truth marches on! It is powerful; it is timeless; it is international! The Gospel is for all.

WILLING AND ABLE

Ancil Jenkins

WHY DID THE PRODIGAL SON stay away so long (Luke 15:11-32)? Several factors may have influenced him.

His pride might have overcome his desire to return. Underlying his thinking was his incorrect view of his father. He thought the best he could expect was to be hired as a servant. He did not anticipate that his father would run to meet him. He did not expect the great display of love.

Do we lack a similar unfocused image of God? Isn't it reasonable to assume that if we can find a clearer picture of God, it will do much

to revolutionize our relationship with Him? How can we gain this better view of God? Jesus said, "...Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (John 14:8). Let's look to Jesus to see what God is like.

Two aspects of God's nature are seen in Jesus' treatment of the hurting and helpless. The father of the demon-possessed boy pleaded with Him, "*But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.*" "*If you can?'*" said Jesus. "*Everything is possible for him who believes*" (Mark 9:22-23).

With a true awareness of His and His Father's power, Jesus promises, "*Everything is possible for him who believes.*"

God is able to do far, far more than anything we ask or think. This power is not only His, but is also available to us who believe (Ephesians 3:20-21). If we can come to this understanding of Him, we can find our lives transformed.

Coincidental with His power is His willingness to use His power on man's behalf. "*A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.' Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!'*" (Mark 1:40-41).

Heartless is anyone who has power and is unwilling to use it for man's good. Impotent is one who is willing to use the power but not possess it. Thanks be to God that He is both **able** to do all things and that His **willingness** is equal to His power!

IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT JESUS THAT YOU DO NOT LIKE?

Jack Harriman

I KNOW — YOU DON'T LIKE some religious people that you have observed. Neither do I. But I like Jesus. I do not know of anything He ever said or did that I don't like.

His religion was not impractical or ridiculous. He was not haughty or proud. He did not avoid the poor, nor did He favor the rich. Even His enemies never accused Him of hypocrisy. I like that! He was not consumed with Himself. He did not have a scribe following Him around recording every word and action. Nothing was done just for show. I like that!

He had a special compassion for people who were hurting in some way. The sick, the bereaved, the lonely, the troubled — all were objects

of His compassion. He had all power, but never used it for His own sake or His own convenience. I like that. And there was no prejudice in Him. In a society where there was so much of it, how did He grow up without any of it? I don't know, but I like it.

And there was no vengeance in His heart. He was not enraged at Judas. His look at Peter was not a hateful look, but was for Peter's benefit. *"Father, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing."* I don't understand it all, but I like it. I like Him. And He was totally honest. He told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, even when it hurt Him and His cause.

Jesus was both divine and human. He was the God-man. And yet He lived life on earth as a human being. *Do you know of anything that He ever did, said, or was, that is distasteful or unattractive in a human being?* O how I want to be like Him! Don't you?

"Where Is The Wise?"

Bob Plunket

PAUL RAISED THIS QUESTION ALMOST 2,000 years ago at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:20). It is a rhetorical question that he answers. Paul is really saying, "What has human wisdom without God really accomplished? Where are all the great philosophers, and what have their lives accounted for?" Many would answer the question — "Where is the wise?" — by saying that they are in our universities. Others would say they are in politics, or perhaps in the great scientific programs. Few would say that they are in our pulpits, they are in church pews, they are men and women of faith. Paul was not asking about who the wise are, but where they are.

Paul met some of these wise men in his own day at Athens, and what did he tell them? He told them that God made the world. He is Lord. He is a spirit. He is independent. He is the giver of life, and made all nations from one man. He determined their bounds, gave seasons to the earth in the hope that man would seek Him and find Him, because He is not far from us. We have our being in God. Since we are the offspring of God, we must not think that God is like a stone covered with silver or gold, crafted by man. This now is inexcusable, he says. God demands repentance, because there is a day of judgment in which He will judge all people by the man He hath ordained. The assurance of this was His resurrection from the dead (Acts 17:16ff.).

Yes, where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer

of this world? “Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world” (1 Cor. 1:20)?

Who was the wisest: Plato, Aristotle, or the Apostle Paul? Time, history, and experience answer that Paul was. Paul said of the godless wise in Romans 1:22, “Professing themselves to be wise they became fools.”

Jesus Christ Is Your Hope

E. Claude Gardner

THE GOOD NEWS FOR YOU is that Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, has brought you hope. “... *Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Col. 1:27).

Christ came from heaven and He promised, “*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10). He wants you to be happy and joyful by following His teachings and example.

Christ wants to be your Savior. “*And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins*” (Matt. 1:21). You have sins and imperfections, and the only Savior to deliver you from them is Jesus.

Christ wants you to have spiritual life. “*In him was life: and the life was the light of men*” (John 1:4). You are “*dead in trespasses and sin*” (Ephesians 2:1) until you are made alive in Christ. “*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*” (1 John 5:11).

Christ sacrificed Himself voluntarily, and, with the shedding of His blood on the cross, He purchased the church. When 3,000 obeyed the commands of Jesus and came to Him, they were saved, and all of the saved were added to the church (Acts 2:47). For you to be cleansed by Christ and His blood, you must believe fully in Christ, turn from a life of sin, and be immersed “*for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38).

Christ will bring you victory. “*But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

The Lord Jesus Christ is your hope and the hope of the world. Become a friend of Jesus and live for Him. “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*” (Gal. 2:20).

A WAGON FULL OF CHILDREN

Ron Stough

AROUND 80 YEARS AGO, in a small community in West Texas, there lived a large family with eight children. That family did not attend church services anywhere, but down the road lived a man who worshiped regularly. In fact, he began driving by in his wagon and picking up the children each Lord's Day. One by one, those children grew to maturity and were baptized into Christ. Eventually, the parents too were baptized.

Today those parents and all eight children have died, but they had children and grandchildren who still serve the Lord. One, in particular, comes to mind. She left five children, thirteen grandchildren, and fifteen great grandchildren who are all workers in the kingdom. She was my wife's grandmother, and I had the privilege of speaking at her funeral service.

As that Christian family gathered for her funeral, we could not help but wonder what might have happened if that loving neighbor had not picked up those children for worship long ago. Would she ever have heard the Gospel? Would her family be united in Christ today? What a difference that man made on generations yet to come!

We may never know what an impact our actions may have on those yet unborn, but we can know that God has promised that He will give the increase if we will sow the seed. Let's make sure to take advantage of every opportunity.

WAS JOHN THE BAPTIST A FAILURE?

W.T. Allison

ANYONE WHO BOLDLY PROCLAIMS a standard of conduct that is a righteous contrast to all the political and ecclesiastical corruption of his day will face opposition. Such a person was John the Baptist, who preached repentance and the need for an inner change of heart. The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. John told his contemporaries that repentance must result in forsaking sin. He informed them that being a member of the nation of Israel would not save them. Calling them a "brood of vipers," he warned of coming judgment and the need to get right with God.

John spoke the truth and forfeited his head. Some might suggest that if only he had been less intolerant of sin he would have lived longer and accomplished so much more for the Lord. If he had compromised

God's eternal principles for a temporary truce with sin, think what a success he could have been! But such weakness could not save Israel, and compromising teaching cannot save any nation today.

The Lord Jesus Christ didn't consider John's life a waste. He said, "*I tell you, among those born of woman, there is none greater than John*" (Matthew 11:11). The true standard of greatness, in God's view, is how close to the Lord a person is living and how faithful one is in doing God's will. John called upon his nation to turn from their sin and get right with God. He warned them of coming judgment. He pointed sinners to the Lamb of God who came to take away their sins through His blood shed on Calvary.

A nation will not be delivered from its downward course of decay, death, and destruction until its people come to terms with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Our only hope is in returning to the Living God. He is the originator of all immutable principles of what is right and wrong in human conduct, and He is the source of all our blessings. He can be found if we are willing to seek Him. He has revealed Himself in His Word and through His Son.

He calls on us as He did Israel, "*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow*" (Isaiah 1:18).

Misconceptions about SALVATION

David Pharr

NOTHING IS MORE FUNDAMENTAL than a correct understanding of the gospel plan of salvation. All other commendable practices in religion and life are of secondary importance, because if one is not saved from the guilt and consequences of his sins, all else will be in vain. It must further be concluded that a church must teach the plan of salvation correctly if it is to be a church of Christ.

In spite of this, however, Satan has been effective in perpetuating numerous errors concerning the plan of salvation. Many characteristically fail to teach the truth on this, and people generally misunderstand God's will in the matter. Consider some common misconceptions:

1. The notion that salvation is by grace alone

This view argues that man has no responsibility, but that God saves those who will be saved, regardless of what they do. The proponents of the view, however, are divided into two groups. There are the universalists who reason that God loves all men and that, therefore, no

one could possibly be lost. Then there are the old-time Calvinists who argue that God's grace is only extended to certain predestinated souls.

The first view is wrong because the Bible plainly shows that many will be lost in torment. The second is wrong because the Bible equally as plainly shows that God's grace is extended to all (Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:2). The truth is that no one can be saved *without* God's grace, but neither are men saved *by grace alone*.

2. The doctrine that salvation is by faith only

The view usually held by "faith only" advocates is that one is saved from his sins at the instant he believes in his heart, before and without any additional response to God's commands. This doctrine is directly opposite the plain statement of James 2:24 which declares that we are *not* justified by faith only.

3. The delusion that morality is all that matters

Many people feel that as long as one lives a fairly decent life, not participating in gross sin and being reasonably charitable, he is justified before God. This view seems plausible because they see it as practical. Their thinking, however, ignores the reality of sin and the need for a Savior. If people could be saved by their own goodness, Christ died in vain. There is absolutely no salvation for any person (regardless of how morally good he is) except *in* Christ and *through* His plan. See Romans 3:23; John 14:6; John 8:24; Acts 4:12; John 3:5. A good moral man is as surely in need of a Savior as is the worst criminal in the land.

4. The illusion that one is saved by a religious affiliation

This idea may not be commonly expressed, but it seems evident that some people think they are safe simply because they belong to a certain church, regardless of their obedience, or lack of obedience, *to God's commands*, and regardless of how they live. If questioned about their soul's condition they might reply, "I am a member of the _____ church." Such a view does not consider that salvation is personal, not corporate. God saves individuals, not organizations. It is true that all saved people are added to Christ's church (Acts 5:23), but it is a deadly mistake to think one is going to heaven simply because his name is on a church roll.

5. The false security that claims "once saved, always saved"

Few errors are more forcefully answered in the Bible (Luke 8:13; 1 Corinthians 10:12; 2 Peter 2:20-22; etc.). Yet a great many still think that having been once saved, they always will be, no matter how they live. Those who walk in the light, confessing their sins, continue to be

cleansed by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7-10); but those who wilfully choose to turn away from the Lord will fall from grace (Hebrews 10:26,27; Galatians 5:4).

6. The false doctrine that baptism is not directly connected with conversion

Almost every denomination contradicts Bible teaching regarding baptism. Most say that one can have his sins forgiven, is born again, and becomes a Christian without being baptized. The New Testament, however, is clear. From Jesus' words to Nicodemus (John 3:5) to Peter's reminder (1 Peter 3:21), every verse that mentions baptism and salvation (or any equivalent terms) **always shows that baptism comes first.** See Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27, etc.

7. The unscriptural practice of "praying through" at a "mourners' bench"

Many denominations give what they term an "altar call" which has people pray until they feel they have been saved. This may be a very emotional experience or it may be somewhat formal, depending upon the degree of sophistication of the group. Either way it is totally without scriptural sanction. Closely associated with this is the idea that one is saved through some mysterious experience, or by having simply "received Jesus in my heart." Never, however, do we find such things in the Bible. The apostles had a mandate from Christ and were miraculously guided by the Holy Spirit, and they never taught nor countenanced anything like this. Even when the penitent Saul of Tarsus was fasting and praying, he was urged, *"And why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16).

Salvation is always by grace through faith and can never be through the works of merit or invention of men (Ephesians 2:8,9). Those who would be saved through Christ, therefore, must comply with His terms. Five requirements must be met by any person who wants to become a Christian. (1) He must come to **know** the truth of the Gospel (John 8:32; Romans 1:16). (2) He must sincerely **believe** it (Hebrews 11:6). (3) He must **repent** of sin (Acts 17:30). (4) He must **confess** his faith in Christ as God's Son (Romans 10:9-10). (5) And he must be **baptized** in the Lord's name for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38).

When one has complied with these requirements, God forgives him of his sins and adds him to Christ's church, with the assurance that if he faithfully continues, he will have a home in heaven (Revelation 2:10). Friends, this is the plan of salvation that we read in the New Testament.

FACTORS IN SALVATION

W. Douglass Harris

ONE OF THE SERIOUS MISTAKES made by many Bible-believing people in understanding the Bible is focusing on one factor involved in salvation to the exclusion of all the other factors. Even some brethren have fallen victims to this false approach. An established rule of Bible study is to collate all that the Bible says on a particular subject to determine the whole truth on that subject (Psalm 119:160).

An honest and complete search of the Scriptures reveals several contributing factors (causes) in salvation.

Original Factor

God is the original factor. Since man could not devise a plan by which to save himself (Jeremiah 10:23), the divine scheme of human redemption was conceived in the mind of God (Ephesians 1:4,9,11; 3:8-11; 2 Timothy 1:9). In these passages note the expressions “*purpose of his will*,” and “*eternal purpose*” that were in the mind of God from the beginning, but had not been revealed. This conception is a demonstration of God’s grace, mercy, and goodness (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8,9). In this sense God is referred to by inspiration as our Savior (1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; 4:10).

Sacrificial Factor

Animal sacrifices were not efficacious to take away sins (Hebrews 10:4), but “*without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins*” (Hebrews 9:22). Christ’s death is our atoning sacrifice (Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:26; 10:12; Romans 5:8). To reject this sacrifice leaves us without any other atoning death (Hebrews 9:22). Christ’s willingness to humble Himself to become our atoning sacrifice is the supreme expression and demonstration of God’s grace, love, and mercy. “*There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins*” (Hebrews 10:26).

Procuring Factor

Christ’s blood is the procuring factor (1 Peter 1:18,19; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:11-14). By His blood the guilt of all faithful saints in the past was blotted out (Hebrews 5:15; Romans 3:24,25). The blood of Christ even cleanses Christians of their sins as they walk in the light of God’s Word (1 John 1:7).

The issue has never been whether or not we are saved by the blood of Christ, but *how* and *when* that blood is contacted or appropriated. If we believe the Scriptures, it could not be before baptism with its scriptural

prerequisites (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-4). In the light of these passages, if one is saved at the point of faith, *he is saved without contacting the blood of Christ*.

Revealing Factor

We would know nothing about the foregoing factors without this participant, which is the Holy Spirit. Christ's apostles were promised the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead them into all the truth (John 14:26; 16:13). The "mystery" (God's plan not revealed in the past) was revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles, which we have in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 2:9-16; Ephesians 3:1-5). The revelation is now complete and all-sufficient (1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:16,17). This means that there cannot be any "latter-day" revelations.

Instrumental Factor

Revelation, or the inspired Word, is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of sinners (Ephesians 6:17), and in the sanctification of saints. It was given for this purpose (2 Timothy 3:16, "*reproof*," conviction). This requires hearing and learning the Word (John 6:44,45). Neither can its preaching be bypassed (1 Corinthians 1:21). It is the Spirit *through the Word* that gives life. God's word is not a dead letter (John 6:63; Hebrews 4:12).

Appropriating and Consummating Factors

These involve man's response to God's grace in providing the means of salvation. It is by faith and obedience (appropriate, not meritorious factors) that man is saved. Man comes to God by faith (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24). It is the obedient believer that is saved (Mark 16:16; Romans 1:16), because faith without works of obedience is dead (Hebrews 5:8,9; Romans 6:16-18). Baptism is a part of this obedience (Acts 18:8; 1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is no more meritorious than faith and repentance; they are simply appropriate in nature.

Sustaining Factor

Paul says that Christians are saved by hope (Romans 8:24), and hope is described by the writer of Hebrews as the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19). Christ's resurrection is the foundation of this hope (1 Corinthians 15:19; 1 Peter 1:3) which is given to us through grace (2 Thessalonians 2:16).

Conclusion

To focus on one of these factors to the exclusion of the others is to do violence to the Holy Scriptures. They are all undergirded by God's grace and work in conjunction with each other. Every passage should

be checked to see if we have made correct application, and you are requested to do this. In man's response he believes through grace, repents through grace, confesses Christ through grace, and is baptized through grace (Acts 18:27). Blessed is he who reads and hears the Word of the Lord (Revelation 1:3).

DO MEN HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE WRONG?

Ken Tyler

MANY PEOPLE IN THE RELIGIOUS world believe that as long as your religion meets your needs and you are satisfied, then it doesn't matter what you believe and practice. After all, we are all headed to the same place. As a result of this attitude, individuals can believe what they want to and teach what they want to, and still be acceptable to God. But is this attitude biblical? Did the New Testament church teach different doctrines that contradicted one another and then say that as long as their needs were met everything was all right? Did men have the right to be wrong in the first century? Do men have the right to be wrong today?

The Bible answer is clear — men do **not** have the right to be wrong. Jesus plainly taught that one's salvation is dependent upon following the truths of the Scriptures. Listen to Matthew 7:21-23: *"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 which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name: and in thy name have cast out demons? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* Jesus graphically described religious people who were lost. The reason — they were not doing the will of the Father in heaven. They did not have the right to be teaching and practicing that which was contrary to God's will. This passage is very important, and each one of us should pay close attention to the seriousness of it. Get the idea out of your mind that it doesn't matter what you believe. Jesus has plainly told us that it does. God's will, the truth, will take you to heaven, and nothing else can do that.

The devil has done an unbelievable job in deceiving people to believe that it doesn't matter what they do in religion. It's amazing how many different doctrines we have today, and the majority thinks that it doesn't matter. We had better get back to the Bible and listen to God if we want to go to heaven. **No! Men do not have the right to be wrong, ever!**
