

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## Editorial

### What Does the Bible Teach?

#### *Jesus Christ Came Into The World To Save Sinners*



TODAY ALL PEOPLE ON EARTH everywhere accept and admit, advertently or inadvertently when they write a date on any piece of paper, receipt, or document that almost two thousand years ago Jesus Christ was born into this world. A.D., Anno Domini, declares that we are living today in the year of our Lord, and all the time before His birth on earth is called B.C., that is, before Christ. The Bible says, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Timothy 1:15). But what if Christ had not come?

If Christ had not come into the world, we wouldn't know who the true God is. Most people on earth believe in God, just as people in Athens of Greece did, when the apostle Paul preached in the first century A.D. The apostle told them, "Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you." (Acts 17:23). They were worshiping God, but they were worshipping Him ignorantly, just as many do today. Jesus Christ came into the world to reveal who God is. The Bible says, "No one has seen God at any time, The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:18). Before coming on earth as a human being, Christ was in heaven with God as God. We read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And then, it says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1, 14). Thus

Jesus Christ on earth in human flesh was God. He was God with God in heaven, but came into this world as a man to save sinners. Once when one of His disciples asked Him, "Lord, show us the Father," Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves." (John 14:8-11). His mighty and wonderful works testified to the fact that He was not a mere man. (John 20:30, 31).

It is said that God is love. But how do we know this, for sure, what is the evidence? Again, the Bible says, "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:9, 10). Through Jesus God revealed how much He loves us. He is the manifestation of God's love. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). The apostle Paul added to that, "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8). Remember, Christ just didn't die, but He died for us. And this is Good News. This is how we know that God is love.

For if Christ had not died to be the propitiation for our sins, what hope would there be for us? God's book says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). We would live and die in sin. All people hope to go to heaven after they die. When one dies people say, he or she has gone to the "heavenly abode". But how do we know? Heaven is God's home. No sin can enter there. And all have sinned. The Bible tells us: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23). Through Jesus Christ God made possible for us to become worthy of heaven. Here is how He did this, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21). By being in Christ man becomes righteous, and thus worthy of heaven. Man cannot make himself righteous by his own efforts. (Isaiah 64:6). In Jesus Christ God revealed His righteousness. (Romans

3:21). “There is therefore”, says Romans 8:1, “now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” God allowed Him to die on the cross for our sins. He condemned Him in our place so that we might not be condemned. He is the propitiation for our sins. According to God’s word, when one believes in Christ and repents of sins, and confesses Him to be the Son of God, and is baptized (immersed in water) for the remission of sins, one gets into Christ or puts on Christ, and thus one becomes a Christian or a follower of Christ. He has hope to go to heaven, if he continues to walk in the newness of life which he has obtained in Christ. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27).

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## CHURCH ORGANIZATION

**J.C. Choate**



IT WOULD HARDLY BE POSSIBLE to make a real study of the church without giving some thought to its organization or government. One important reason for this is to establish a Bible picture of this phase of the church instead of leaving the idea that its government is like that of the denominational churches.

First, let it be understood that Christ established the church. Therefore, he is the builder, the owner, and the head of it. Paul says of him, “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18). It should be very clear then that the church of the Bible is without an earthly head, a president, a bishop or any other supreme leader that gives directions for the Lord’s people to follow.

Second, since Christ is the head of the church and since he is now in heaven, then it is naturally concluded that the headquarters of the church are in heaven. Another way of putting it, the church of Christ does not have any earthly headquarters. It never has, does not today, and never will.

Third, there is but one church, but it is made up of many congregations. Christ said that he would build his church (Matthew 16:18). He was speaking of the church universal. However, the apostle Paul later spoke of the churches of Christ (Romans 16:16), having reference to the various congregations that compose the one church.

Fourth, each congregation is autonomous. That is, each congregation is complete within itself and is not dependent on any other congregations,

as such. A congregation may cooperate with other congregations in doing some particular work but cannot be forced to do so. Each congregation has its own government and therefore could survive even if all other congregations apostatized or fell away. Or if a given congregation becomes unfaithful, then that does not necessarily endanger the other congregations.

Fifth, each congregation is to have its own elders or bishops. They are not to dictate, but are to lead, feed the flock, etc. (Acts 20:28). In the New Testament church they are called by several names, such as elders, bishops, shepherds, presbyters, and overseers. Their qualifications are listed in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. If a congregation does not have men who can qualify to be elders, as Christians they are to continue without them until they develop to the point that they can qualify. It should also be noted that only men can serve as elders, or in any public office of the church.

Sixth, each congregation is to have its own deacons. They are to work under the elders of the church. They are to be helpers or servants, doing these things that perhaps the elders do not have time to do. Many think of the elder's job as having to do with the spiritual matters of the church and the deacons' work pertaining to the physical or material aspects of the church. Both groups are important. Not just anyone can be a deacon, as is evidenced by the fact that there are qualifications given for them likewise in I Tim. 3.

Seventh, in the church may also be found preachers, evangelists, teachers, and just plain Christians. To mention these different ones does not necessarily indicate that they represent offices or positions, but rather indicates their field of services. The church of Christ is not composed of just a number of offices that its members must be continually striving to fill, but the church is very simple in nature and should be left as the Lord planned it.

It should be pointed out that in the religious world as a whole you'll find several different types of church government, most of which are unscriptural. Because of such systems there has developed what many call the clergy and the laity. There is on the one hand the higher-ups in church government, and on the other hand, those who are mere members and only take orders. In Catholicism, the pope serves as the head, and a long stream of officers work under him. In Protestantism there are bishops, presidents, and other important men who pull the strings. But wouldn't it be better to leave all of that and get back to the Bible teaching on church organization and government? With man's system, man is glorified and exalted. With the Lord's way man does not hold such a position but looks to Christ as his head and leader in all

spiritual matters. Regardless of what is said, the Way is the right way and only it will stand the test of time.

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## MARRIAGE LIFE

Hans J. Dederscheck

AT THE VERY BEGINNING OF the Bible we read, *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ...”* (Genesis 1:26). *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them”* (Genesis 1:27). When God created man and woman He blessed them and said, *“Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth...”* (Genesis 1:28). *“And the Lord said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him”* (Genesis 2:18). Jesus Christ insists on the oneness of marriage. *“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh ... What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”* (Matthew 19:4-6). Marriage is an essential element of God’s creation.

Marriage in the Bible is seen in a very positive way. *“A virtuous woman is a crown of her husband”* (Proverbs 12:4). Marriage is able to produce a happy life (Proverbs 31:10-31). The Song of Solomon is filled with the beauty of marriage, the love between a man and his wife. Proverbs 5:18 says, *“Rejoice with the wife of thy youth.”*

Marriage is a great mystery in the sense that it ought to reflect the union between Jesus Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:22,23). The Bible teaches that marriage is strictly monogamous (having only one mate), for Jesus Christ has and can have only one bride. A second marriage is possible if the first mate dies (Romans 7:2,3; 1 Corinthians 7:39), but *“only in the Lord.”* A second marriage is also a possibility in cases of fornication. God intends for marriages to last. *“What God has joined together let no man put asunder”* (Matthew 19:6).

The married couple form a unit of oneness, a reflection of Christ’s unity with the Christian. Christ is the head of His body, the church (Ephesians 5:22-33); the man is the head of the woman (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:9-15). However, the husband performs his role, not as a dictator, but as one who loves his wife (Ephesians 5:33; Colossians 3:19).

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# THE ROD IN PROVERBS

Dayton Keesee

IN AN AGE OF CHILD abuse on the one hand and neglected discipline on the other, some consider the rod in Proverbs an outdated idea for child rearing. Take a close look through this article and see if you would agree.

The solution as to Solomon's words about the rod is to understand, not misapply, them. Note that Solomon wrote that a father who "loves" his son "disciplines" him "diligently" (Proverbs 13:24). The hand holding that rod is related to a heart that loves (Hebrew *Aheb* — "to love as one's own soul, to breathe after, desire") and disciplines (Hebrew *Musar* — includes correction, admonition, example, instruction). That discipline is done diligently (Hebrew *Shachar* — "to seek, carefully prepares chastisement, to long after"). Would that rod in that hand and from that heart ever be guilty of child abuse? Never! What a beautiful God-guided example of discipline Solomon gave to us.

**Remember that the rod is still in God's word.** In Proverbs 22:15 that rod will remove "foolishness" (Hebrew *Ivveleth* — "impiety, power, pre-eminence of fools") that is bound up in the heart of a child. Removed by this "rod of correction" is a spirit of no respect for property or principles. Does our society still need that rod? Unless it offers **correction**, that is not the rod Solomon has given.

Proverbs 23:13f goes even further to state that we should not hold back discipline, adding "*if you beat him with the rod, you would 'deliver' (Hebrew *Natsal* — "to snatch out of danger, to escape") his soul.*" When you apply the rod so that it snatches a child out of danger, is that a bad method of discipline?

In Proverbs 29:15 the rod is blended with "reproof (Hebrew *Tokachath* — "the act of arguing, showing, maintaining the right, positive in assertions, correction, punishment") to give wisdom. The failure to use the rod with reproof is seen as Solomon adds, "*but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.*" What a price is paid when a parent is left with that "shame" (Hebrew *Bosh* — "astonished, confounded, put to silence, paleness and terror, to fail in hope and expectation, overwhelmed with unexpected calamity"). The rod and reproof that can avoid those heart-wrenching emotions is not only needed, but an imperative!

When you have the rod in a hand that corrects, through words of **reproof** that give **wisdom** out of a heart of **love**, surely God through Solomon has supplied us with good guidelines for discipline.

Haim Ginott made this observation: "Whatever grandfather did was done with authority: whatever we do is done with hesitation. Even when in error, grandfather acted with certainty. Even when in the right, we act with doubt." Those responses inspired some unknown writer to pen the following poem:

### **WE NEED MORE GRANDPAS**

*Junior bit the meter man  
Junior hit the cook;  
Junior's anti-social now  
(According to the book);  
Junior smashed the clock and lamp,  
Junior hacked the tree;  
(Destructive trends are treated  
In chapters two and three).*

*Junior tossed his shoes and socks  
Out into the rain;  
(Negation, that is normal — Disregard the strain).  
Junior set Dad's shirt on fire,  
Whittled Grandpa's pine;  
(That's to gain attention, see page eighty-nine).*

*Grandpa seized a slipper,  
And yanked Junior cross his knee;  
He's read nothing but the Bible Since 1893!*

Apply Solomon's suggestions to Junior, and he will grow up to be a better boy!

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## *Her Power In The Home*

**Betty Burton Choate**

GOD HAD SAID OF ABRAHAM that he was the kind of faithful man who would "*command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him (that 'I will make you a great nation ... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.')*" (Genesis 18:19; 12:2,3).

Abraham's son, Isaac, was faithful to God. He had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Esau chose to marry women who were not believers in God, so his descendants fell under that influence of paganism. Genesis 26:35

says of Esau's idolatrous wives, "*They were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.*" In Genesis 27:46, Rebekah said to Isaac, "*I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth (her pagan daughters-in-law); if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?*"

Rebekah recognized the need for marriage and the home to be built on faith in God, in the heart of the wife as well as the husband. What an important factor this has been throughout history, and how wise parents would be today to teach their children to choose mates only among those of like-faith.

Because of Rebekah's insistence, Jacob was sent to Haran, to his uncle's house. There he met Rachel, his cousin, and a worshipper of the true God. He loved her immediately, and with such a deep love that he agreed to work seven years for her, "... *and they seemed but a few days to him because of the love he had for her.*" (Genesis 29:20) At the end of that time, Laban tricked Jacob and gave him his older daughter in marriage instead of Rachel.

God's plan for marriage from the beginning of creation had been 'one woman for one man'. Concerning Adam and Eve and marriage, God had said, "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*" (Genesis 2:24)

Contrary to God's will, in those days it had become a common practice for men to take more than one wife. This was evidently tolerated by God at that time, though He never spoke approval of it. In the case of Jacob, Jacob had loved and chosen Rachel, and evidently would have married only her. For seven years he had kept himself true to his commitment to her. In all good faith he had gone through the marriage, believing his bride was Rachel. But, "*It came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, 'What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?'*"

Laban explained that it was not their custom for the younger daughter to marry before the elder. He suggested that he would also give Rachel to Jacob — if he would work for her seven more years! Jacob's love was so great that he agreed to Laban's suggestion.

What happened as a result of this practice of polygamy? Were they a large happy family? No, we read that Jacob "*loved Rachel more than Leah.*" (Genesis 29:30) Naturally this was so, since Rachel had been his choice. But this caused jealousy. Leah, who was not loved, gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, saying, "*The Lord has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me.*" Her statement shows her misery at being an unloved wife. Leah gave birth



to a second son, and she said *“Because the Lord has heard that I am unloved. He has therefore given me this son also.”* (Genesis 29:33)

*“Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, ‘Give me children, or else I die!’”* (Genesis 30:1) Such pain and emotional torment we read in the words of these sisters!

With the passing years both women gave their handmaids to Jacob, claiming as their own the children born to them. This, too, was a practice of that age. Finally Rachel gave birth to Joseph, who became Jacob’s favorite child. At last, Rachel died giving birth to Jacob’s last son, Benjamin.

What had the mixture of polygamy, jealousy, favoritism, and competition done in the lives of Jacob, Leah, Rachel, and their thirteen children? Did it bring happiness or pain? What effect did these wives have on their husband’s life? How did they influence their children?

Though these things happened in another age, reading the biblical narratives in the latter chapters of the book of Genesis, we can feel the strong emotions. We can almost see their tears. We can learn from their mistakes that God’s way is best.

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## A BIBLE STUDY ABOUT JESUS

**Kerry Holton**

WE CARE ABOUT OUR LOST FRIENDS. We do not want them to suffer eternal condemnation. We would like to begin a Bible study with them. But where do we start? How about telling the story of Jesus? Just proclaim the Gospel! What follows is a recommended outline. Just read the Scriptures together and ask questions as you go.

Jesus was born of a virgin (Matthew 1:18-25).

He is the Son of God (Matthew 3:13-17).

He performed miracles (Matthew 1:2-6; John 20:30, 31).

He turned water into wine (John 2:1-11). He has power over nature.

He healed an official’s son (John 4:46-54). He has power over space and time.

He healed a crippled man (John 5:2-18). He has power over disease.

He fed five thousand (John 6:1-15). He has power to supply man’s needs.

He walked on the Sea of Galilee (John 6:16-21). He has power over nature.

He healed a man born blind (John 9). He has power over physical senses.

He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-53). He has power over death.

He lived a sinless life (Hebrews 4:14-16).

He was crucified (Matthew 27:27-54).

He was raised from the dead (Matthew 28:1-10).

He was taken into heaven (Acts 1:6-11).

He is coming back for His followers (Acts 1:11; John 14:1-3).

After we introduce our friends to Jesus, it is time to talk about other subjects. We will want to demonstrate how the Bible is our only guide and authority in religion. We will need to discuss our sin problem, the judgment to come, and how Jesus became our substitute when He paid the penalty for sin on the cross. We must talk about obedience, faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. This is how God has prescribed that we accept His offer of salvation. We'll want to study about the church, worship, and Christian living. But before we talk about these essentials, let's talk about Jesus. *"And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ"* (Acts 5:42).

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## OUR CHIEF WORK

David Pharr

**IT IS THE MISSION OF THE church to preach the gospel to the whole world. As a member of the church you have a part in this mission.**

Read Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; and Luke 24:47. These passages have often been called "the great commission" because they give Christ's great order that the Gospel is to be taken to all people.

It is obvious that the church in modern times is failing to accomplish this. Regardless of what our excuses might be, it is certain that all is not being done that needs to be done. This should cause us all to have greater zeal that the church might move forward in evangelism at home and abroad.

The seriousness of failing to teach others was recognized by the apostle Paul when he wrote, *"Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel!"* (1 Corinthians 9:16). But the apostles and public speakers were not the only Christians involved in preaching. In Acts 8:1-4 we read that the members of the church were driven from their homes by persecution,

but verse 4 tells us that *“they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.”* This indicates that they were all involved in telling others about Christ.

Acts 20:20 tells of preaching that was done *“publicly, and from house to house.”* There are many ways in which the Gospel might be spread to large numbers at once (papers, radio, television, etc.), but there will always be a great need for individual Christians to teach others on the personal level.

In the New Testament there is great emphasis on the growth of the church. (See Acts 2:41,47; 4:4; 5:14.) Today we should all be involved in working for the growth of the church. We should all pray for growth. We should all rejoice every time a precious soul is added to the body of Christ.

Everyone does not have the same talent or training. You should not feel guilty because you do not have all the capabilities that others have. For example, everyone cannot go to foreign lands as missionaries; but others can stay at home and provide financial support. All cannot preach from the pulpit; but they can support and encourage those who do. A husband may go out to teach in homes while the wife stays at home to keep the children. She is helping in the preaching of the Gospel by making it possible for him to go. The point is, the work is accomplished by the cooperation of each doing what is needed.

It is important, however, for each one of us to learn as much as we can about how to teach others so that we will be prepared when opportunities do arise.

The church should always be an evangelistic church. This means that the members should have evangelistic zeal. Each of us enjoys the blessing of salvation in Christ. We were given the opportunity to learn the Lord’s will for our lives. Now it is our duty to do what we can to share the Gospel with relatives, friends, neighbors, every person in the whole world.

Remember to pray for every soul-winning effort. Pray for missionaries. Pray for all local efforts to teach in homes. Pray for preachers who publicly proclaim the Gospel. Pray for lost people you are seeking to reach. Pray for yourself, that you will never lose your zeal and that you will be effective in bringing others to Christ.

**Whether you personally know them or not, you should pray for the dedicated men and women who are working as missionaries around the world. Pray that more will accept the challenge and that the brotherhood will support and encourage them.**

# JESUS AND HIS PREACHING

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

WHEN JESUS BEGAN HIS MINISTRY, He “*came preaching.*” We should study carefully His preaching as our role model.

Jesus’ preaching was not just a presentation of propositional truth. His content was truth that man needed to know to be free (John 8:32). But follow Him closely and you will see that His message was people-oriented. It was not just a string of theological propositions.

He preached wherever people were, including: (1) the temple court (Matthew 21:23); (2) synagogues (Matthew 4:23); (3) and through all the towns and villages (Matthew 11:1). He preached in Galilee and Judea and in Gentile territory. But wherever He preached, His messages were shaped to the needs and situations of His hearers.

He went where the people were. A meal in a home provided an opportunity to share great insights into life. Some audiences were composed of multitudes, but most of His teaching was where two or three were gathered. He walked on busy roads and down village paths. He went to those that society wanted to forget. He never went to a place to advertise a meeting and send invitations. He went to people, and the common folk heard Him gladly. He went to the work place and called people right off the job. Peter and Andrew were fishing, and Matthew was gathering taxes.

Jesus identified with people. Since Jesus was a carpenter from a small town, the ordinary people found it easy to identify with Him. He knew and understood the hurts they experienced. He moved among them with a keen eye and a listening ear. He heard their pain, fear, and desires. He heard the plea of mothers, fathers, and friends. He disputed with religious leaders, talked to women, and even ate with sinners.

Jesus was a people person. He demonstrated respect and compassion for humanity. He never sought to manipulate or exploit any person. Jesus took risks that endeared Him to some, marked Him as foolish to others, and made Him appear as a courageous teacher to yet others.

So, His preaching was not just propositional. It was also relational. Let’s emulate His example and be committed to truth, and also be people-oriented.

# LYDIA'S OPEN HEART

Maxie B. Boren

RECORDED IN ACTS 16:13-15 is the conversion of a woman by the name of Lydia. The apostle Paul (with Silas, Luke, and Timothy accompanying him) had gone to the city of Philippi on his second missionary journey, for the purpose of preaching the Gospel of Christ. While there, on the sabbath day, Paul and his companions went down by a riverside to pray. Some women had also gathered there, including a lady by the name of Lydia. She was from the city of Thyatira; and, being a seller of purple goods, was evidently in Philippi on business. A believer in God, she had apparently become acquainted with other believers; and, in their company, had gone to this place of prayer. It was there that she and the others met Paul and his helpers, and obviously listened as the Gospel was taught.

Upon hearing the message of salvation so graciously offered by God through Jesus Christ, the Bible informs us that the Lord “*opened*” her heart to give heed. As a result of her receiving the Word, she was baptized, as was her household.

Some theologians have mistakenly interpreted the opening of Lydia’s heart to mean that in some direct, overpowering fashion, God arbitrarily did the “*opening*,” independent of Lydia’s will. This, however is a false conclusion. The truth of the matter is that Lydia herself was responsive to the will of God as taught by Paul. Notice that verse 14 clearly states that Lydia “**heard**” what Paul and those with him had to say. Because of her receptive attitude to the Gospel, the Bible thus characterizes the Lord as having opened her heart. This should be understood in the same sense as the Bible telling us that God “*hardened*” the heart of Pharaoh. God did not harden Pharaoh’s heart independent of his will, but only as he hardened his own heart. (Read Exodus 7:3,13,14, in the light of Exodus 7:22; 8:15,32; 9:34, and 1 Samuel 6:6). The principle is this: whoever hardens his/her own heart against God, the Almighty One has decreed that indeed such a person’s heart will be hardened! But on the other hand, whoever is receptive and responsive to opening up his/her heart to God and His will, such a person’s heart will be opened. **Never does God arbitrarily and directly** either “*open*” or “*harden*” a person’s heart independent of his/her own free will.

Lydia was a person who wanted to do God’s will, and when she learned what His will was through the preaching of the Gospel by Paul and his companions, she was obedient to it. She obeyed her Lord by being baptized. Read what Jesus taught in Matthew 28:18,19 and Mark

16:15,16. In that sense ... as Lydia listened and heard (received) the Gospel, the Lord “*opened*” her heart. The principle is also seen in such references as Matthew 7:7,8; Acts 13:44-46; Acts 17:11,12; James 4:6b-8; etc. If we will open our hearts to God, our hearts will be opened. If we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us. But if we harden our hearts toward God, our hearts will be hardened. If we turn our backs on Him and walk away from Him, He will “*give us up*” to that course of action. Read Romans 1:20-28.

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## LET US NOT HARDEN OUR HEARTS

Max Patterson

IN EXODUS CHAPTER 7 THE STORY is told of how Pharaoh hardened his heart. There are three factors involved in the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. First, there are the actions of God, Exodus 7:2. God made demands of Pharaoh with regard to allowing the children of Israel to leave Egypt that were against the political and financial interests of Egypt, and certainly against the pride of Pharaoh.

A second factor involved in the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart is the Magicians. In imitating some of the plagues, they tried to destroy the force of God’s efforts to get Pharaoh to let the people go.

A third factor is Pharaoh himself. Rather than having an interest in justice, duty, and obedience to God, he was only interested in himself and his wishes.

Consider some of the commands of the Gospel, against which many people today have hardened their hearts.

**1. Hearing the Word of God.** When such is contrary toward our fleshly desires, we have a tendency to harden our hearts. If we study our own interests — money, pleasure, power, popularity, etc. — the result will be the same as in the case of Pharaoh.

**2. Baptism for forgiveness.** The Scriptures teach: “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*” (Mark 16:16). When we listen to the preachers, or parents, or peers, rather than to the Word of God, it is easy to become hardened.

**3. Study the Scriptures.** Under the guise of being too busy, or making a living, or whatever, we sometimes do not study. However, we cannot stand still. We either grow (2 Peter 3:18), or we become set in our own way (hardened).

**4. Preach the Gospel to the Lost.** So many in our day and time have excused themselves for not carrying the Gospel to the lost, and they have become deluded into thinking we do not need to, or do not have to.

Will we follow in the steps of Pharaoh, or will we learn from his example (Romans 15:4)?

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## He Loves Me

*I've walked life's dreary road alone,  
I wandered far and wide.  
And oft time wished it would all end,  
At times for death I cried.*

*There was no hope, no help, nor friend,  
No one came to my aid.  
Why should I struggle on with life,  
Yet, death made me afraid*

*One day as I sat pondering  
The meaning of it all,  
I wondered, could there really be  
A God that I could call?*

*A God up there somewhere beyond  
Who really cared for me,  
One whom, if I called up in prayer,  
From grief could set me free.*

*Then suddenly a song once sung  
Came drifting back to me.  
That song I learned on mother's knee  
When I was only three.*

*'Twas "Jesus loves me, this I know,  
The Bible tells me so."  
This song came soft, then rang out  
And filled my heart and soul!*

— Harry B. Barton

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# ***Jesus Christ Intercedes For Us***

**David W. Chadwell**

PAUL'S ABOVE STATEMENT IS one of the most powerful reassurances given to Christians. If the two rhetorical questions are repeated in the form of statements, they declare: No one — in Satan's realm or on earth — can bring charges against the person who is living in Christ. No one can condemn to hell the person who is living in Christ.

Why is it impossible to charge the person living in Christ with evil or condemn him for sin? Is it because all people living in Christ are beyond sin? No! No Christian is sinless because he never sins. Even the most mature, devout Christians are never beyond sin. Despite our best efforts (and who lives daily in "his best efforts?"), we all continually sin.

These two truths create an incredible situation. All of us sin continually. All of us are guilty of spiritual failure that is deserving of "being charged." If each of us were to be subjected to divine justice, we all justly would be condemned to hell.

Yet, though we deserve to be "brought up on charges" before God, though it would be just for us to be condemned, God will not listen to any charges brought against us. He will not permit justice to condemn us. He will not permit such to happen, as long as we continue to live in Christ as His elect.

How is that possible? It is possible because God justifies us. As long as we continue to live, in Christ with penitent hearts, God continually cleanses us (1 John 1:7,9). God's cleansing so totally destroys our sins that God looks upon forgiven sins as though they never happened.

It is possible because Christ intercedes for us. God continually forgives us because the crucified, resurrected Jesus constantly intercedes for us. Because we live in Him, He continually stands by God representing us. Every sin, every act of unrighteousness, every spiritual failure would deeply offend and insult our pure and holy God were it not for Jesus constantly interceding for us.

Without Jesus' continual work as our intercessor, no Christian could stand uncondemned before our pure, holy, righteous God. Every ignorant sin would deeply wound Him. Every act of rebellion and transgression would insult Him. Every time we chose pleasure, greed, or selfishness over devotion to godliness, sacrifice, and humble service, we would offend and abuse His love and grace.

Only because we have put on Christ by being baptized into Christ, only because we live in Christ, can Christ intercede for us. Only because Christ intercedes for us are we forgiven by God. Only because God



forgives can He look at us as though we have not sinned. The Jesus who bore our sins on the cross rescues us daily. *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1).

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# PAUL’S PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN HAPPINESS

William Woodson

A RECENT STUDY OF THE Letter to the Philippians gave occasion for a careful reading of this beautiful book. Many great themes are discussed within its pages. In chapter four, as Paul is concluding the book, several verses relate to the general theme of Christian steadfastness and rejoicing. It is beneficial to note these themes as a means of attaining and maintaining a sense of Christian happiness. The details can be noted in the verses cited in Philippians 4. The principles are as follows:

- The resolve of gentleness and forbearance (verse 5). A measure of self-control and consideration for one’s self and others is involved in this word *“moderation,”* or *“forbearance.”* The nearness of our Lord is a basis for this grace of Christian outlook and conduct.
- The practice of genuine prayer to avoid excessive anxiety (verse 6). Whether rendered *“careful”* or *“anxious,”* the thought is of concerns which are allowed to shatter the unity and wholeness of our soul. The four-fold expressions of prayer, supplication, thanksgiving, and requests provide avenues of approach to God, Who can and will provide.
- The claim of God’s peace for His people (verse 7). The word *“keep”* or *“guard”* indicates the power of God which is made available to and for the Christian heart and mind. God’s people are not alone and without strength in the facing of concerns and problems; indeed, God’s strength is there to help and protect them.
- The guidance and control of one’s thoughts are to be in keeping with God’s will (verse 8). The specifics of the verse (truth, honesty, justice, purity, beauty, honor, courage, and praise) provide “door keepers” for the kind of thoughts which will enter and fill the mind and heart. What is in keeping with these “door keepers” is welcomed; what is not in keeping with them is refused.

- The behavior which reflects proper instruction and examples is presented to mankind (verse 9). One learns how to live from the guidance from the Lord and from good examples of others who model the Lord's will in their lives. These qualities of life are learned and practiced in one's own Christian life.
- Other people are considered and assisted (verse 10). There is a legitimate need to care and provide for one's own needs, to be sure, but there is a danger of self-centeredness which can become obsessive. The balancing of one's interest in and service to others with a legitimate care of one's own needs is both restorative of happiness and a means of preserving happiness.
- The learning of contentedness of mind and life (verse 11). The thought is that of an inner strength which has developed as one's life ebbs and flows. Not every day will be joy; not every day will be sadness. The possession of a view of life which is positive, which is strong, which is aware of blessings past and present, enables this inner strength to prevail and guide life in the future.
- Finally, one learns to rely on the grace of God (verse 23). There is a series of actions which are necessary on the part of the Christian, and rightly so. There is also the awareness that the love, mercy, and grace of God will be present in and for the life of the Christian.

Other great principles of Christian steadfastness and courage in life are present in this remarkable chapter. The book itself is a beautiful expression of the faith and strength of soul of Paul, who, at the time of the writing, was in a Roman prison. Such a life as Paul's and such great themes as this book provides are sources from which to draw for happiness and usefulness in God's service.

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## **A WIDOW'S FAITH**

**2 KINGS 4:1-7**

**Frank Chesser**

**SHE WAS A WIDOW.** The arms of strength that once held her now lay rigid and cold in death. His voice of love and affection had been silenced by the grim reaper of life. There was an empty chair at the table, a vacancy in her bed, and a deep void in her heart. The days stretched into forever and the nights were bathed in tears. There would

be no togetherness in retirement years, no quiet walks at evening, no aged reminiscing of the days of youth. Who can measure the pain, the hurt, the aloneness of the loss of a mate?

She was a widow in debt. There was no pension, no Social Security, no retirement account. She had no resources for the present, no savings for the future, and no means of quenching the avaricious thirst of her creditor. Not content to have just one of her sons, he threatened both with bondage as payment for her debt.

She was a widow with children yet at home. At best, parenting is a difficult and demanding experience. Even in a home blessed with both parents, the daily routine of child-rearing is not an easy task. Now she was alone, a single parent striving to fulfill a dual role. Gone was the strong, masculine, fatherly influence so needed by her sons. Blessed are parents who live to see their children grown and on their own.

She was a widow with great faith. She could have argued with the prophet. His proposed solution was so contrary to human wisdom. Instead, she proceeded immediately to act upon his word. That's what faith is, taking God at His word and doing what He says. No argument, no debate, no "I think, want, or wish," just simple, childlike compliance with what God says.

The stream of life does not always flow in the mold of human design. There is the unexpected, the unplanned for, the feared. However, the trials of life were no match for the resolute faith of the widow. Walking "*in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham*" (Romans 4:12), as did the widow, will allow the oil of divine blessing to continue on its unabated course.

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## THE POOR WIDOW'S MITES

Dick Sztanyo

### Introduction: Mark 12:41-44

*AND HE SAT DOWN OPPOSITE the treasury, and began observing how the multitude were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. And calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say unto you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."*

1. The various widows of the Bible present an interesting and inspiring study. There is the widow of Zarepheth, whose son Elijah raised (1 Kings 17:8-24); the widow of Nain, whose son the Lord raised (Luke 7:11-15). Then, there were the Grecian widows who were neglected in the daily distributions of the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:1-6). The persistent widow, whose persistence in prayer teaches us a most valuable lesson (Luke 18:1-8). Finally, there are the “widows indeed,” who are the unnamed special servants to the flock (1 Timothy 5:5,9-11).

2. Another unnamed widow is introduced in this marvelous passage. Her example is recorded for all generations to consider and to imitate.

### **I. Her Commendation**

**A. She was less able to give than others.** However, she was like so many other generous souls who have learned what it is to depend upon God from day to day. Those who are affluent may have great difficulty thanking God for daily bread.

**B. She gave less than others.** Her two mites amounted to 2/5 of one cent, which is about 1/40 of the daily wages of a laborer in the ancient land of Palestine. Her example forever proves that the Lord, who knows our hearts (1 John 3:20), views our actions qualitatively rather than quantitatively!

### **II. Some Implications**

- A. The Lord knows what we are giving!
- B. The best that we can do is always appreciated by God!
- C. She gave her all because she trusted in God’s ability to care for her!
- D. Christ commended the faithful widow, but condemned the faithless rich!

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## ***“Let There Be No Denominations”***

**Clem Thurman**

WHEN THE APOSTLE PAUL CAME to Corinth, he found a most unique city: a commercial seaport, a “melting pot” of humanity of that era, a people diverse in both background and interests. When the gospel was preached there, *“Many of the Corinthians, hearing believed, and were baptized”* (Acts 18:8). Thus the church of the Lord was begun in Corinth, and Paul stayed about two years to strengthen and build up the church. But after the apostle’s departure, a number of problems arose. One of the first, and most serious, was division. *“Each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ”* (1 Cor. 1:12).

Believers began to divide into “groups” and denominated themselves after Paul, Apollos or Peter (1 Cor. 1:12) — a situation much like is found in the religious world today.

No, I know that 1 Cor. 1:10 doesn’t read exactly like our title, but the meaning is there: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”* These were denominations, in any sense of that word. Thus God, by the apostle Paul, is addressing a condition that might be found in your city today. Had you asked any of those who said, *“I am of Paul,”* I am sure they would have said that they were Christians — but they were Christians of “this particular faith,” or they were “this kind of Christian.” They were divided and denominated themselves, and it is in this context that they were told, *“Let there be no divisions among you”* (1 Cor. 1:10).

Because of this denominational condition in Corinth, Paul asks three questions that strike at the heart of such division. These questions were designed to bring all of these believers out of the sectarian, denominational spirit and back into the unity of the one body of Christ. They are found in 1 Cor. 1:13.

### **“IS CHRIST DIVIDED?”**

Jesus prayed for unity of all believers, *“That they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me”* (Jno. 17:20-21). The Lord never planned, nor desired, that His people should be divided. He forcefully taught, *“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation”* (Matt. 12:25). The apostles likewise taught the necessity of unity in Christ (Eph. 4:1-6; Jude 3; etc.). It was much later in human history that man conceived the idea that division didn’t matter, and that it was fine for each to have “the church of his choice.” Look around you. On nearly any corner is found a group that claims to follow Christ, yet is different from all other groups who make the same claim — in doctrine, faith, organization, worship, etc. And to separate themselves from those others, they “denominate” (or “name”) themselves with a designation whose purpose is to separate and divide them from others.

But, *“Is Christ divided?”* The whole system of denominationalism is based on the idea that Christ IS divided, and that He is with each of these denominations. But can anyone honestly believe that Christ is with one denomination teaching one thing, and is in another denomination teaching the exact opposite? Is Christ opposing Himself (Matt. 12:25) by participation in denominations that oppose each other?

That is the very point Paul makes when he asks, *“Is Christ divided?”* It deserves an answer from every person who believes denominationalism is approved of Christ.

Some in Corinth could have protested, “We are not dividing Christ, we are only dividing ourselves.” But they knew better. Christ and His church are one (Eph. 5:22-32), and what is done to the church is done to Christ. When Saul was persecuting the church (Acts 8:3), Jesus asked him, *“Why persecutest thou me?”* (Acts 9:4). To seek to divide the church is to divide Christ. I believe that this question, honestly faced by all, would forever destroy denominationalism. It is clear that Christ cannot be divided. Believers may depart from Christ, but they cannot divide Him and make Him oppose Himself.

### **“WAS PAUL CRUCIFIED FOR YOU?”**

It was announced before His birth, *“Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for it is he that shall save his people from their sins”* (Matt. 1:21). He became the means of our salvation by His death on the cross (Heb. 2:9; 9:22; Col. 1:18-22; etc.), and the apostles said of Him: *“In none other is there salvation”* (Heb. 4:12). They preached *“Jesus Christ and him crucified”* (Acts 2:22-24,36; 1 Cor. 2:1-2), for there is no other Savior. Yet here in Corinth believers were calling themselves after the name of Paul! So Paul asked them, *“Was Paul crucified for you?”* The implication is clear. Only Christ died for you, only Christ can save. Therefore all should follow Christ and honor Christ by wearing the name of Christ.

The principle of following only Christ is everywhere taught in the word of God. Peter and John said, *“Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot be speak the things which we have seen and heard”* (Acts 4:19-20). They told the rulers, *“We ought to obey God rather than men”* (Acts 5:28). The apostle John declared that *“we have not God”* when we go beyond the teaching of Christ (2 Jno. 9). And later in his letter to Corinth, Paul wrote, *“These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sake; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written”* (1 Cor. 4:6). Don’t follow anyone who was not crucified for you. Don’t wear the name of anyone who didn’t die to save you.

### **“WERE YOU BAPTIZED INTO THE NAME OF PAUL?”**

The apostles never knew “there is nothing in a name,” as many today declare. In fact, they knew better! The *“name of Jesus Christ”* denotes His authority, so that whatever we do is to be authorized by Christ: *“In word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”* (Col.

3:17). When believers on Pentecost cried out, *“What shall we do?”* they were told, *“Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins”* (Acts 2:38). The household of Cornelius was commanded *“to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ”* (Acts 10:48). And when Paul found some who had been baptized with the baptism of John the Baptist, he taught them of Christ and His authority, and *“they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus”* (Acts 19:5). It would have been difficult to convince any of those people that there is nothing in a name!

The implications of this question show the importance of baptism. Baptism is essentially into a name. And you don't have the right to wear a name unless you were baptized into it. When people were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, they were then called *“Christians”* (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). But, Paul argues, they have no right to wear Paul's name because they were not baptized into that name. The *“one baptism”* (Acts 8:36-38; Eph. 4:5) made them one with Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:26-27), and it was the name of Christ that then was to be worn to glorify God (1 Pet. 4:16).

To show the need for unity, Paul speaks of baptism. Why? Believers are *“baptized into the death of Jesus Christ”* (Rom. 6:3) in order that the blood of Jesus should *“wash away”* their sins (Acts 22:16). This same baptism is *“into Jesus Christ”* (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27), where we are made one in Him (Eph. 2:14-16). Thus, all who are *“baptized into the name of Jesus”* (Acts 19:5) are *“baptized into one body”* (1 Cor. 12:13), which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). To show their relationship with Christ and with other Christians, Paul uses baptism in the name of Jesus. That should show the importance of both baptism and unity in Christ.

*“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?”* These are three great questions. The Lord never intended that believers in Him should be divided into hundreds of different groups. Denominationalism today is no more right than it was in Corinth 1900 years ago. It was wrong then, it is wrong now. Let us determine to lay aside all denominational loyalties and be one with Christ and with all those who believe in Christ. Let us reject every human creed, every human name and every human doctrine that separates us. Let us determine to be a members of the one body, the church, that we read about in the Bible, and be members of no other. Then, and only then, can we be united *“in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (1 Cor. 1:10).

# GRANDMA'S GLASSES

*Two small boys were discussing eye glasses.*

*"Wouldn't you hate to wear glasses?" one asked.*

*"No," answered the other, "not if I could have the kind my grandma wears! My mother says she can always see when folks are tired or discouraged or sad. She sees whenever somebody is in need and she can always recognize when you have something on your mind that you need to talk over. But best of all she can always see something good in everybody!"*

*The little fellow continued: "I asked my grandma one day how it was that she could see that way. She said it was because of the way she's learned to look at things since she's gotten older. So I'm sure it must be those glasses of hers!"*

*Wouldn't it be wonderful if all of us could see others through Grandma's glasses?*

— Unknown

## Form IV (See Rule 3)

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I Sunny David, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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Sunny David