

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST IS THE POWER OF GOD TO SALVATION FOR EVERYONE

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST IS the Good News from God to man that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). After His death on the cross for the sinners, and His burial in a tomb, and His resurrection from the dead by the power of God, Christ, before returning back to heaven to be with God, as He was with Him from the beginning (John 1:1, 14), commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15).



The gospel of Christ, and not musical entertainment and concerts, or so called “healing services” is the power of God to salvation. (Romans 1:16). The power of God to save souls is revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Nowhere, in the Bible, people were ever told to pray the “sinner’s prayer” to be saved, or to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their “personal saviour” to be saved from sins. The apostle Peter, in Acts 2:38, told the huge number of believers, to “Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” Sins are not remitted or forgiven by just believing in Christ or accepting Him “personal Saviour”. Because Christ had said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved.” (Mark 16:16). Ananias, a preacher sent to Saul (Paul) by Jesus to

tell him what he should do to be saved, told him, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). There are many preachers today who are preaching a perverted gospel, and the apostle Paul said, "let them be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-9).

The preaching of the gospel means that God is at work through the preaching of the story of the cross, which is foolishness to those who are perishing, those who have no concern for the salvation of their souls; but for those who are being saved, those who want to prepare themselves to enter heaven after this life is over, it is the power of God. The gospel teaches: "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). This is the gospel the good news for every man and woman on earth. "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). Sin is driving every human being into hell, (Romans 3:23), but God is not willing that any should perish in hell (2 Peter 3:9), but have eternal life in heaven. The sweet message of the gospel of Christ is: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23).

The action of God initiated in the cross continues through the proclamation of this saving event. Preaching is not just a re-telling of what God did once-upon-a-time, but it is the power of God presently at work in the world to draw estranged mankind into the realm of reconciliation. Man cannot save himself from his sins, he is separated from God because of sins (Isaiah 59:1,2). The gospel of Christ teaches that God is at work through Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son to reconcile the world unto Himself. The gospel is the proclamation of the presence of God's redemptive activity. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). The content of the gospel is the offer of salvation to man, and the result of trusting this offer brings man to salvation. Thus the gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation for everyone. But like any power, if not contacted, will not produce the desired result, so is the gospel power. To be saved by the gospel, one must obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, by believing in Him, repenting of sins, and by being baptized for the remission of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

THE NAME

J.C. Choate



THE NAME THAT ONE WEARS is very important. It identifies him. It tells who he is. Companies recognize the value of their name and therefore they advertise it in order that they may do even more business. Just about everything is classed “good” or “bad” on the basis of its name. The same principle applies in the spiritual world. And so there is something in a name. The Bible teaches, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Realizing the importance of the name, the question that faces us is, what name should we wear if we belong to Christ? The Bible may speak of us as being children of God, holy, sanctified, saints, as belonging to the Lord, but what name or title should we wear to express all of this and even more? Well, let’s return to the word of God and see what such people were called in the first century. We read, “And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). What are they called now? Christians. Just Christians. Well, weren’t they a certain kind of Christian? No, they were Christians, and Christians only. Now what do you suppose the Lord’s people should be today? That’s right. Christians, and Christians only. If we belong to Christ then what else can we be? If we are walking in the steps of Christ then naturally we will be Christians, which means “Christ-like.”

Peter said, “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Peter 4:16). Who was Peter talking about? He was speaking of those who had taken upon themselves the name of Christ, those who had become Christians. Furthermore, he was simply pointing out to them that they should not be ashamed of that name but rather that they should glorify God through wearing it. The only way we can glorify the Lord is through doing all that we do through the name Christian.

Paul said upon one occasion, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3:17). But let me ask you this question: how can one do all through the name of the Lord unless he is wearing his name? Why, he can’t! And so many people are wasting their time because they are trying to serve the Lord through denominational

names and titles, through man-made names, and it can't be done. It is strange that man is always wanting to tuck something on to the name Christian. He calls himself a Catholic Christian, a Methodist Christian, a Presbyterian Christian, etc., when all the Lord wants one to be is just a Christian. Yes, it is possible to be just a Christian. How? By obeying the gospel and becoming a member of the Lord's church. If you are anything more than a Christian then you are not a true Christian. If you are anything less than a Christian then you are not a Christian. The Lord wants us to belong to him, not to some man. Let us be Christians only.

But as a group of Christians, that is, as the church, someone might want to know what name the church should wear. Well, who promised it? Who established it? Who is its head? Who is the Saviour of it? Who shed his blood to purchase it? Who is coming back for it? According to Matthew 16:18; Acts 2; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23; Acts 20:28; and Ephesians 5:27, Christ is the answer to all these questions. Therefore, the church should wear the name of Christ. So what do we have? We have Christians who are members of the church of Christ. It is just that simple.

Paul says in Romans 16:16, "The churches of Christ salute you." Somebody is ready to say that this suggests a number of denominational churches. But if you will read the context you will find that the apostle was speaking of the church of Christ at Corinth, the church of Christ at Thessalonica, etc., and so, in writing to the church in Rome, he said, "all of these churches of Christ or congregations of the church of Christ send greetings to you brethren in Rome." But someone immediately mentions the seven churches of Asia of Revelation 1-3, with question: "Weren't they seven denominations?" There again you simply have several congregations of the church of Christ. Surely the Lord did not establish many churches but he established only one church, and only one way, and his church was to wear his name. Mark it down then that any church today that does not wear the name of Christ is a fake, an imposter, and does not belong to him. For how can it belong to the Lord if it does not even wear his name?

Christ wants individuals to be Christians and as a whole, members of the church of Christ. Could you blame him? Are you, therefore, a Christian? Are you a member of the church of Christ? If not, then how can you be pleasing to God and abiding by his word? And if you can't prove this, then what hope do you have? Investigate these truths for yourself.

THREE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SALVATION

Jack Harriman

FIRST, YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT YOU CAN BE SAVED. God's desire is that you be saved (2 Peter 3:9). Christ died for every man (Hebrews 2:9). The Gospel was to be preached to every person (Mark 16:15). Why? Because every person could be saved. You can understand and believe the Gospel message. You can repent of past sins. You can confess your faith in Christ and be baptized (Acts 2:38). No one can keep you from obeying the Gospel, not even the Devil himself. You can be saved.

Secondly, you should know that you can lose your salvation. Jesus said, *"If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned"* (John 15:6). Paul said, *"... in the latter times some shall fall away from the faith"* (1 Timothy 4:1). John recorded Jesus as saying, *"He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life"* (Revelation 3:5). You can so live as to lose your salvation.

Thirdly, you should know that you can insure your salvation. You don't have to lose it, and you can take steps to insure that you won't lose it. Peter tells us how. *"... add to your faith virtue ... knowledge ... temperance ... patience ... godliness ... brotherly kindness ... love. For if these things are in you ... they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful ... brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if you do these things you shall never fall"* (2 Peter 1:5-10).

You can be saved, and then you can do one of two things with your salvation. You can either lose it, or you can insure it. God wants you to be saved. So do I.

PERSPECTIVES FROM PSALMS

Tom Holland

THE ANCIENT INSPIRED PSALMS, often quoted in New Testament Scripture, are relevant. Anyone who doubts this observation should read the Psalms.

People were experiencing a lot of pain when the Psalms were written.

The Holy Spirit used a suffering person, through whom He revealed some great lessons of life. The technological advances and the communications revolution of the current century have not changed the fact that people are hurting physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Perhaps there are times when you, too, feel as if *“many bulls have surrounded me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They gape at me with their mouths, like a raging and roaring lion”* (Psalm 22:12,13).

The persistent, perplexing problem of evil people prospering and good people suffering is as current as it was when David nearly lost his faith when he considered how unfair life was (Psalm 73). This vexing problem of suffering seems to be one of the strong arguments of those who deny God's very existence.

Like David, we must tackle the problem of life being unfair from the perspective of eternity (Psalm 73:17). Life on earth for the wicked is both brief and uncertain. *“Certainly every man at his best state is but a vapor”* (Psalm 39:5,11). God's people must learn to *“wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land”* (Psalm 37:34).

The loving care and providence of God catch the attention, challenge the mind, and comfort the heart of the careful reader of the Psalms. The enduring mercy of God flows from Psalms to God's people (Psalm 136). Indeed God *“heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds”* (Psalm 146:3).

God's goodness, His majesty, His power, His glory, His involvement with people, call for man's recognition and respect which breaks forth in sincere praise to God. These 150 inspired poems end with, *“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!”* (Psalm 150:6).

THE BIBLE

Dalton Key

THE BIBLE IS BY FAR the best book in the world. It merits our reverence, our respect, our love, our belief, our trust, our subjection, and our complete obedience. Without the Bible we would be as helpless, hopeless nomads traveling the road to eternity with no purpose, no map, and no guide. If it were not for God's book, the Bible, we would know nothing of God's law, will, love, and eternal purpose; we would be ignorant of Christ's sacrifice, blood, intercession, and advocacy; we would be without knowledge of our sin, our need for salvation, and our eternal nature and destiny.

The word “Bible” is not found within the pages of God’s eternal revelation to mankind. God’s book refers to itself as the law (Psalm 119:97; James 1:25), the word (Psalm 119:11), the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15), the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), scripture (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 3:16; Acts 17:11), doctrine (2 John 9; 2 Timothy 4:2,3), and truth (John 8:32; 17:17). It describes itself as a sword (Ephesians 6:17), a fire (Jeremiah 23:29), a hammer (Jeremiah 23:29), a seed (Luke 8:11), a lamp (Psalm 119:105), and a light (Psalm 119:105).

The Bible is not a “dead letter.” According to the Hebrews’ writer, God’s Word is both quick and powerful (Hebrews 4:12). It was by the word of God that the worlds were framed and the heavens were made (Hebrews 11:3, Psalm 33:6). The Bible quickens (Psalm 119:50), begets (James 1:18), cleanses (John 15:3), purifies (1 Peter 1:22), converts (Psalm 19:7), saves (Acts 11:14; James 1:21), pricks (Acts 2:36-38), cuts (Hebrews 4:12), and will judge us in the day of Judgment (John 12:48).

The Bible is unlike any man-made book or creed in that it is perfect (Psalm 19:7), verbally inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13), and eternal in nature (Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:24,25). While the books of men rise and fall in terms of public acceptance and popularity, the Bible has throughout the years sustained a “best seller” status. Other volumes are constantly undergoing revision, yet the Bible is every bit as relevant — up-to-date — today as it was in the ancient days of its inspiration.

There are various attitudes in regard to the Bible. Some reject it, some wage war against it, some are apathetic toward it, and some love, cherish, and respect it. Many, like Jehoiakim, would like to burn it, while others, like David, love it to the point of making it their constant meditation (Jeremiah 36:23; Psalm 119:97). What is your attitude toward the Bible?

THE BIBLE IS FROM GOD

E. Claude Gardner

GOD IS JEHOVAH, THE ETERNAL, personal, living God who has always existed, and He lives today to guide and influence nations, families, and individuals. God is not dead, but He is alive evermore.

God has made Himself known through two “books” — The Book of Nature, and the Book of Books, the Bible. By observing nature and our universe, we are forced by reason and Scripture to conclude that what we see came by a Creator. They are the handiwork of a mighty God.

Jesus, the Son of God, was the agent of creation, *"All things were made by Him"* (John 1:3). The apostle Paul attributed creation to Jesus when he wrote, *"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him"* (Colossians 1:16).

Nature does not reveal a complete picture of God; therefore, His characteristics and goals for mankind are unfolded in the Bible. Both in the Old and New Testaments God is revealed as good, kind, and longsuffering, but He also holds us accountable and requires us to be obedient. God reveals Himself in many places in the Bible, and one of these is through Nahum of the Old Testament. *"The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.... The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.... God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth..."* (Nahum 1:3,7,2).

Now that one has concluded that God is as He is described in the Bible, then one is able to accept the truth that God has revealed His will to us through the written Word. If one believes in an everlasting God who is all-wise, then one can believe that He can and did give a divine revelation. It not only instructs mankind in right living, but instructs him in how to be delivered from sins, and how to worship One greater than we. Indeed God has *"spoken unto us by his Son"* (Hebrews 1:1,2). Jesus spoke through the apostles and evangelists. They were endowed by the Holy Spirit to reveal His message of truth concerning His divinity, the church, the Gospel plan of salvation, grace expressed by the cross, and eternity. While on earth and shortly before His return to heaven, Jesus promised that the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would come to His followers, who would *"teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I said unto you"* (John 14:26). Furthermore, He promised that the Holy Spirit, called *"the Spirit of truth"* will *"guide you into all truth"* (John 16:26). The Bible writers did not write as human beings write, but rather it was by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They wrote by *"inspiration"* (God-breathed message), which was supernatural, rather than by their native talent only. The apostle Paul claimed divine guidance when he stated, *"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"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Since the Holy Spirit directed the Bible messages, they are divine and without error. The Bible is accurate in all of its doctrine and in the facts related to history, geography and science (see 2 Peter 1:21; 1

Peter 4:11).

Many proofs establish the divine nature of the Bible. One major way is through prophecy and many years later, the fulfillment. One example will suffice. Isaiah recorded that a virgin would give birth to a son, who would be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). About 700 years later Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled this prophecy (see Matthew 1:21-23). Numerous instances of prophecy and fulfillment are found to show that the Bible is a special and divine book from God.

Other books accepted by devout people cannot measure up to the divine standard of the Bible. Bible believers are happy to compare it with the Koran, Book of Mormon, Veda, Westminster Confession of Faith, or any other “holy book.” The Bible is open to thorough investigation.

Since the Bible claims divine inspiration and that it is without error, it follows that it must be the **authority** in all of our doctrine, practice, and manner of living. Hence, we accept it as the Word of God, which is the final authority in answering all questions pertaining to our life here and in the next life. When we decide to go by the Word of God only, we reject as authority the long-held traditions of man; cultural religious teaching of our ancestors; the hierarchy of popes, bishops, and priests; synods and creed books; and claiming that mysterious feelings are Spirit-directed, separate from the Bible. Jesus, who has spoken to us through His Word, claims to have all authority both “*in heaven and in earth*” (Matthew 28:18). When we accept the Bible as our sole authority, we also accept the authority of Jesus as Lord (see Acts 2:36).

By the authority of Jesus one may obey Him and the Gospel and be delivered from all sins of the past. “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*” (Mark 16:16).

THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS

Avon Malone

IT IS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT Paul’s purpose in preaching centered in and derived itself from the message itself. It was Paul’s purpose to convey Christ and His cross. Since it is the “*word of the cross*” that saves (1 Corinthians 1:18), Paul sees himself sent “... *to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void*” (1 Corinthians 1:17). Christ’s cross is the “preaching” — the message that saves (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

Paul’s purpose was not simply to get folks to feel good about them-

selves and to get on with fulfilling their human potential. Only the Gospel can really resolve the fundamental problem of human guilt (1 Corinthians 15:3ff; Romans 4:18,25; 25; 5:9ff) and it can greatly affect the way one feels about himself. However, Paul's message concerned itself with the great spiritual realities.

Paul's purpose in preaching was to save sinful men (Romans 1:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:8,9; 1 Corinthians 9:16,22). He was consumed with the cross. To him, preaching was not a method; it was a message! It was *"Christ and Him crucified."* That great act of faith, Bible baptism, is crucial because it is *"unto His death"* (Romans 6:3; Acts 2:38; 22:16). Whether preaching to sinners or teaching saints, Paul's message always centered in the cross.

Does It Matter What You Believe?

Bill Dillon

ASTRANGE STATEMENT OFTEN overheard is, "Well, it doesn't make any difference what you believe...." Is this statement an accurate reflection of the will of God, or is it man's wishful thinking? Is the statement designed to please men, or please God? The Bible, God's will for man in this age, teaches that what you believe does make a difference:

1. It matters if we believe in God. Hebrews 11:6, *"He that cometh to God must believe that he is..."*
2. It matters if we believe in Christ. Jesus said in John 8:24, ***"Except ye believe I am He, ye shall die in your sins."***
3. It matters if we believe false prophets and teachers. John, the apostle of love, said, *"believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God"* (John 4:1). Peter wrote, *"There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies"* (2 Peter 2:1).
4. It matters if we believe the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:12 says, *"That they all might be damned who believed not the truth...."* The truth is God's Word (John 17:17).

The negative attitude which says, "What we believe doesn't matter," discourages research, stifles investigation, and puts a premium on ignorance. Unless error is the same as truth, up the same as down, and yes the same as no, then it does matter what we believe. The Bible says Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). The Lord commands His Gospel to be preached to every creature under heaven, and *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he*

that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15,16). Reader, think carefully, if it doesn't matter **what** you believe — then it doesn't matter if you believe!

"The Power of His Resurrection

W. Douglass Harris

"...That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection"
(Philippians 3:10).

IN THE TEXT ABOVE, Paul speaks of the power of His resurrection. We are living in a power-conscious age. We know there is power in steam, in water, in electricity, in explosives, in the wind, etc. In more recent times we have heard about atomic and nuclear power, but Paul spoke of a different power — the power of Christ's resurrection. This power is revealed in the following ways:

1. In the Institutions and Ordinances it has Established. One of these is the church. Christ promised to build His church in spite of His death (Matthew 16:18). He was made head of the church through His resurrection (Ephesians 1:19-23). Had He not been raised from the dead His church would have never been built. His resurrection gives meaning and authority to the conditions of entrance into His church (Acts 2:37,38). Baptism is a symbol of His burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12). Without His resurrection, He would not eat and drink with us in the Lord's Supper, as He promised (Matthew 26:29). His resurrection sets apart and specializes the Lord's day (John 20:1; Mark 16:9; Revelation 1:10).

2. In the Faith It Creates. It established the fact of Christ's Messiahship and His divine nature (Acts 2:36; Romans 1:3,4). If Christ had not been raised, He could not have been accepted as the Christ of God, and there would be no basis for our faith. Without His resurrection, our faith would be vain (1 Corinthians 15:12-27).

3. In the Hope It Inspires. When Jesus was crucified and buried, His disciples lost hope (Luke 24:13-21). This hope was revived and vitalized by His resurrection. It is His resurrection that gives us hope of immortality (1 Peter 1:3,4). Peter describes it as a living hope and an inheritance that fadeth not away. His resurrection gave Him power to raise us, and this begets hope in us (John 5:28,29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13,14). What a glorious hope!

4. In the Transformation of Life It Instills. Before the resurrection His disciples were filled with fear and dismay (Matthew 26:31-

35,56,58,69-75). After His resurrection they became bold and aggressive. They began a mighty campaign to evangelize the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Acts 2:14; 4:18,19; 5:29). Genuine faith in Christ and His resurrection changes one's life (Colossians 3:1-4). It is the power that enables us to subdue sin (Romans 6:1-14).

5. In the Victory It Gives Over Death. The world of humanity dies nearly three times in a century. All the forces of earth cannot halt the ravages of death. But through His resurrection we can overcome death (2 Timothy 1:10). His resurrection is a pledge of our resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-23,51-57).

Thank God for the power of Christ's resurrection! Do you desire to know this power as much as Paul did? This is the support of the entire Bible — the law, prophets, and the Gospel, and the fact of His resurrection makes all of His promises good.

GRACE ONLY?

Jimmy Jividen

MAN NEEDS GRACE. He finds that he is a sinner — one who has rebelled against God's will. He is guilty and lost and can do nothing to save himself. His judgment is damnation without hope.

Grace is the unmerited favor of God. It cannot be earned by good works or bought with money. God unconditionally gave it to man without cost. That is what makes it grace. Paul described it thus:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Grace is free to man, but it cost God His Son. God loved man even though he was unworthy and sinful. To show that love, He graciously sent Jesus into the world to live as man and die for man. Grace cost Jesus His life. He graciously died on the cross to save man from the punishment that his sins deserved. So, although grace is free, it was very expensive for God.

God's grace has been extended to all men. Does this mean that all men will be saved? Not at all. God's grace is sufficient for all men everywhere — but not all men will receive His grace. A gift of water to a man dying of thirst will not be of any benefit unless he drinks it. Even so, the gift of God's grace will not benefit man unless he receives it. Man is not saved by grace alone, because God does not force His grace upon anyone.

A man can respond to God's grace in two ways. He can receive it

in faith and submission, or he can reject it by rebellion and neglect. Grace can be offered to a person, but without benefit because it was received *“in vain”* (2 Corinthians 6:1).

Why would anyone refuse to receive the grace of God? It is free to all who receive it. However, it must never be used as an excuse to continue in sin (Romans 6:1,2).

DEGREES OF FAITH

John Thiesen

THE WORD OF GOD emphasizes the importance of faith to our salvation. Most people understand the need to believe in God and in His Son Jesus Christ. What some may not realize is that there are degrees of faith, some good and some bad.

DEAD FAITH

There is such a thing as a **dead faith**. *“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”* (James 2:20). James went ahead to explain that if our faith does not move us to obey God by doing good it is like a dead body, without movement. For example, he said to fail to give a needy person food or clothing is to have a dead faith (verses 15-17). What counts with God is not just to believe that He exists, but to put our faith to action with a *“faith which worketh by love”* (Galatians 5:6).

SHRINKING AND STRETCHING FAITH

There is also a **shrinking faith**. This happens when a believer begins to get discouraged and starts losing his faith or confidence in God. *“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him”* (Hebrews 10:38).

Contrast this with its opposite, which is a **stretching** or **elastic faith**. It stretches through the whole life of the person. This faith will carry him on to eternal life. The Hebrews writer said, *“But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul”* (Hebrews 10:39).

STRONG AND WEAK FAITH

Abraham is the greatest example of a **strong faith**. He was *“Not weak in faith ... but was strong in faith, giving glory to God”* when he believed God’s promise to give him a son in his advanced age (Romans 4:19-21). Believing in God, he left his own country as an old man and journeyed to a distant land he had never seen but that God promised to give to him. A **weak faith** would have been unsure, hesitant, doubtful,

partly believing and partly pessimistic.

OVERCOMING FAITH

What we need most of all is an **overcoming faith**, one that endures to the end of our life. John said, *“And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”* (1 John 5:4). With this kind of faith, we will be able to overcome sin for Christ. With it we will not turn back, but confidently look to the reward of faithfully serving Christ, which is eternal life. Let’s have this living, strong, stretching, overcoming kind of faith.

“I AM THE RESURRECTION”

John Dobbs

TO A WEEPING, HEARTBROKEN, grief-stricken friend, Jesus gave the most awesome message of the universe. Martha’s brother Lazarus was dead. Her only plea to the Lord was that if He had been there, her brother would not have had to die. Jesus assured her with the words, *“Your brother will rise again.”* Martha was a woman of great faith in God. *“I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”* Indeed he will, as will all of the dead.

But into that moment of a bittersweet confession of faith in the God who can do anything came a flash of lightning from the lips of the Divine Son. *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”* How could she believe? How can any of us comprehend this magnificent proclamation of source? Jesus is the source of life, and as such, He is the Resurrection. He empowers, enables, and enforces resurrection. No life exists or is sustained without the intervention of His will.

“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.” The following events took place as if in a whirlwind. Mary arrived. Jesus wept. The Jews were amazed at His love. Jesus prayed. They moved the stone.

And then a shout that stirred the celestial spheres, *“Lazarus, come out!”* The text reads with steady, yet intense certainty, *“The dead man came out...”*

The ultimate question for us all is resurrection. Is there anything else after this life is over? If not, then life doesn’t matter very much. If there is no afterlife, no heaven, no resurrection, then there is no reason for existence, no reason for character, no reason for morality, and no reason for God. But Jesus proclaimed to be the resurrection.

THREE DARK DAYS

For three dark days and with incomplete faith, the disciples of Jesus Christ rehearsed it all. They thought about the words spoken to them by the Master. Some certainly thought it was over. Some wondered about the coming third day.

They all agonized over the brutal and violent death of their friend. The echoes of hammers striking the nails which pierced the Savior rang in their ears. The helplessness. The fear. The tears. The crown. The shame. The darkness. The blood. And yet, like a small beam of sunlight high above them in the cavern of their sorrows, there was a ray of hope.

THE STONE WAS ROLLED AWAY

Then it happened. John records that Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and found the stone rolled away. She ran to Peter and John, her facts right, but her conclusion wrong. *"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"* The race was on. They all ran toward the tomb, saw the burial clothes, and John went inside.

They went home to discuss these events, but not Mary. She wept by the tomb, telling a stranger, *"They have taken my Lord away, and I don't know where they have put him ..."* The stranger spoke, and how I would love to have heard the way he spoke. *"Mary."* She then knew that he was no stranger, no gardener, no tender of the earth. In a rush of dynamic reality, she knew she was speaking to the Resurrection. This woman of faith went to the disciples with the gripping message, an intriguing testimony, a dawning utterance of the Gospel, *"I have seen the Lord!"*

JESUS IS THE RESURRECTION

On the glorious morning that Jesus conquered death, sin, and Satan by rising up from the grave, He proved for all time that He is the Resurrection. The awesome power of this should never become commonplace in our hearts. It is the ultimate evidence of His divinity. It is the empowering motivation of Christian hope. It is the triumphant display of the redeeming force which He possesses. It is the fulfillment of messianic prophecy. It is the significance of the cross. It is so important that the very decision to become a follower of Christ is a living re-enactment of the event. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is eloquently pictured in our death to sin, burial in water, and arising to live a new life as a new creature. Though some would place faith in their verbal confession as sufficient to save, the Bible makes the resurrection a visible part of our true conversion to Christ, without which we are not

promised forgiveness.

The proclamation by Jesus that He is the Resurrection is the essence of redemption. We will all rise to meet the Lord. Everyone who has ever died in body will be raised in spirit. This is our hope. On this hope we stand, live, and proclaim. He is risen. He is coming. We shall rise. Hallelujah, Maranatha, and Amen.

JUST WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Dillard Thurman

DEFINING “CHURCH”—“THE CALLED OUT”

The first mention of “*church*” is found where Peter had confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus accepted this bed-rock of Truth, and promised: *“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* (Mt. 16:18). But just what did Jesus mean by the term “*church*”? The word “*church*” is from the Greek word “*kuriakon*”, meaning “Belonging to the Lord.” But the more prevalent derivation is from the Greek word, “*ekklesia*” (or *ecclesia*) meaning “That which is called out.” The word used in Mt. 16:18 was “*ekklesia*,” meaning “the called out.” This corporate body is often presented under other terms. For an example, Matthew refers to this church as the “kingdom” no less than 36 times. This concept will become more clear as we study the church as the body, the kingdom, God’s household, temple, and other terms. But our present study has to do with our relationship with the Lord and with the world. This is fundamental, and most essential!

A CHOICE: CHRIST, OR THE WORLD!

From the outset, Jesus Christ showed there could be no compromise between Him and the world! Confronted by critical Jews, He said: *“Ye are of this world; I am not of this world.”* (Jno. 8:23). Not only was He apart from the world, but He called the disciples from it! *“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”* (Jno. 15:19). From this one verse, we have a pretty good picture of what the “called out” is called out of! Soon thereafter He spake thus to His Father: *“I have given them my word; and the world hateth them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”* (Jno. 17:14). Even then, Christ was calling His disciples out of the world!

When a sinner confronts Christ, he must choose between Christ and the world — he can’t have it both ways! Facing death, Jesus

declared, *"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."* (Jno. 18:36). Don't be confused that Jesus speaks of the kingdom with reference to the church! Its relationship to the world was the "called out," but He had been asked about His kingship! He was the head of the body, but king over his kingdom! But the salient fact is that the church or kingdom was not of this world! Many having a materialistic notion about it being an earthly kingdom, try to make Jesus Christ a liar!

THE CHURCH KNEW ITS SEPARATION!

That early church knew there was a great gulf between the church and the world! Paul wrote *"Unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Thes. 1:1). That transition had been made plain to them, and they also could say of God, *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of God's dear Son."* (Col. 1:13). They had been "called out" of the world's darkness into the light of the kingdom of God's Son! Paul also ascribes this blessing to Christ, *"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."* (Gal. 1:4). Because they were lately called out of the world, saints were continually warned against going back to its lures and attachments. *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."* (Rom. 12:2). Peter cautioned, *"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance."* (1 Pet. 1:14). They were expected to be different, and were cautioned to maintain that separation from the world, out of which they had been called!

NEW PURPOSE AND HOPE IN CHRIST!

To the saints at Colosse, Paul wrote, *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."* (Col. 3:1-3). Theirs was a new life, for they had been called from the world, and into Christ, and their heart reflected the change: *"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."* (Phil. 1:20). They received the charge: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, -and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that*

doeth the will of God abideth forever." (1 Jno. 2:15-17). There must be a great change, from serving self and sin, to serving God with a true heart in full assurance of faith!

VIEWING THE CROSS AND THE CHURCH!

The church is affixed to the cross of Christ! Paul wrote, *"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."* (Gal. 6:14). While we extol the cross of Christ, let us not forget what was purchased by it! *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* In baptism we entered into Christ's death where the saving blood was shed; and as Christ was raised, so we are raised to a new life, for that blood is applied! But let us read on: *"For if we have been planted in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that the old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."* (Rom. 6:3-7). Thus one turns from the world to serve Christ!

HOW THE CHURCH IS CALLED OUT!

The transition is clear: being planted in likeness of Christ's death and burial, our resurrection from our sinful past is assured. But we must remain free from sin! *"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him."* (Rom. 6:8). There is no passage that more clearly shows how the church is called out of sin and into Jesus Christ than this! And with what results? *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things become new."* (2 Cor. 5:17). This led Paul to write: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that 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). Paul knew he had been separated from the world of sin!

THE GREAT COST OF THE CHURCH!

In speaking to elders of the church in Ephesus, Paul said, *"Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* (Acts 20:28). We cannot overstate the great sacrifice Jesus made for His church, *"in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the*

forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:14). He now calls on the church to be *"unspotted from the world."* (Jas. 1:27). Our first view of the church should reveal its purity and holiness. *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend with the world is the enemy of God."* (Jas. 4:4). Remember these words: *"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."* (Eph. 5:25-27). The church is called out of the world to be apart from the world in holy and godly living! Let the whole world see that Christians loathe and despise sinful living!

SO, JUST WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The church is composed of ordinary folk who have been called out of sin and degradation, but called into God and His Son Jesus Christ, to show forth the good works which glorify God in their obedience and self-sacrifice. They are not in a state of sinless perfection; yet they do not grovel in sin, nor defame their God by worldly behaviour! They are "sinners saved by grace," in that they have laid hold on the hope set before them.

Do Not Blame God!

Johnny Ramsey

An important question we need to ask and answer is this: "What are the causes of denominationalism?" One thing that cannot be successfully accused as the cause of division is the word of God. Were all men to practice and teach only what is authorized by the New Testament there would be no denominationalism. The word of God *"is able to save your souls"* (Jas. 1:21) and set us free from the shackles of bondage (Jno. 8:32) if we will do what it plainly teaches (Matt. 7:21; Jas. 1:22-25). But when we leave its dictates, we stumble in chaos and division.

One of the primary causes of division today in "Christendom" is departure from the word of God. In 2 Tim. 4:3-4 we read of some, *"They will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away from the truth, and turn aside unto fables."* This simply means that they departed from the truth of God and sought out teachers who would please them by teaching what they wanted to hear. We believe this

same attitude prevails today as a principle cause of religious division.

Another great cause of division is the exaltation of men and their teachings. This certainly happened at Corinth, as they began to exalt Paul, Apollos and Peter above Christ (1 Cor. 1:10-13). Today we see in the evidence the same point. It caused division then; it continues as one of the basic reasons for denominations in the world today. We should do away with the human names and allegiances of this modern age and call ourselves Christians and only by this name (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16).

Another contributing factor to the confusion in religion is the abundance of creeds, manuals, catechisms and disciplines of the various sectarian groups. Friends, as long as these exist, we can never hope to see Christ's prayer for unity fulfilled. These creed books forever stand in opposition to God's divine will. In Psa. 19:7-9 we read, *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."* Paul tells us that the inspired (not man-made) Scriptures will *"make the man of God complete"* (2 Tim. 3:16-17). These plain passages teach that God's word alone is all that we need. The Bible can be the only source of authority in religion. And it should be. Unity would prevail if we would all use the Bible as our basis, but, as long as we hold to creed books written by men, we will continue to see the -reality of religious division.

So we, as members of the church of the Lord, plead for a return to the Book of books—the precious Bible, the Book divine.

THE PRINCE OF LIFE

Don W. Walker

IN ACTS 3 A MAN WHO has been lame from his mother's womb asks alms of Peter and John. *"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth"* the man was healed. *"And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping and praising God"* (Acts 3:8). The wonder and amazement caused the people to run to Peter and John. Peter then takes this opportunity to preach Jesus.

In his teaching Peter makes a very interesting statement. In Acts 3:15 he says, you *"killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses."* Note the interesting contradiction in Peter's statement: *"You have put to death the Prince of Life."*

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, *"Upon this rock I will build my church;*

and the gates of hell (the bars of death) shall not prevail against it." Jesus says death will have no effect on His church. Jesus' power over death is seen in His statement to Martha. *"I am the resurrection, and the life: He that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever, liveth and believeth in me shall never die"* (John 11:24-26). In John 10:10 Jesus said, *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."* The very words Jesus spoke *"are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63).

In Genesis 3:15 we read, *"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."* Here we see the victory over death prophesied. In Romans 1:4 we first learn Christ was *"declared to be the Son of God with power. ... by the resurrection from the dead."* No wonder Jesus would say, *"I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death"* (Revelation 1:18). What a contradiction — putting to death the Prince of Life.

The victory can be ours, also. Paul would proclaim boldly, *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ... Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* May we strive for the life that Christ provides, as we die to ourselves in becoming a living sacrifice to Him (Romans 6:6; 12:1,2).

WHERE IS THE LIGHT?

Frances Parr

IT WAS A SUNNY TUESDAY MORNING, the day after a holiday. I was busily catching up on chores from the day before plus regular activities when I realized I needed something from the store. My thoughts roamed as I drove the six miles into town. Having made that trip two to five times daily for over twenty years, there was no need to think about it.

As I stepped out of the car, it seemed the sunshine had a strange glow. Glancing skyward, I saw no clouds in sight, but I thought little of it. Probably my sun glasses were smeared or dusty.

Inside the store I overheard people talking. "It's just beginning; you ought to come look," and "Remember, don't look right at it."

Suddenly I remembered. It was May 10, 1994, and there was an eclipse, visible in the central part of the U.S.A. At that moment the moon was passing in front of the sun!

I hurried home, grabbed two sheets of white paper, and poked a pin through the center of one. I took my scientific experiment outside, where the sunlight beaming through the pin hole showed a perfect shadow image of the phenomenon. I watched, fascinated, as the moon passed across the face of the sun and continued on its westward trek. Then the sun was brightly shining again.

The sun's brilliance cannot be endured by the naked eyes of man. From a distance of 93,000,000 miles its heat can blister human skin in a very few hours. This magnificent fireball was easily created by a mere thought of God and contains only a fraction of His great power. In itself, the sun is a small part of a vast solar complex, perhaps one of many such systems.

During the eclipse I thought about the sun's light and how it changed as the moon blocked off a portion of its brilliance. Would my life be changed if God blocked off even a small part of His power?

As I go about my daily life, I give little or no thought to my lungs breathing, my heart beating, or the perfect, intricate workings of the different parts of my body. Unless something goes wrong, I usually don't think about it at all.

While I frequently thank God for the beauty of the earth around me and for His care of me, I generally take for granted the air I breathe, the coming of day and night, and the seasons in their turn.

If He suddenly withdrew all things which He has created and given to mankind, how would I be affected? The earth would be in total darkness, perhaps careening uncontrolled through space. Would my lungs explode from lack of air? Would my brain forget to tell my heart to beat? Without God's constant care, my life would end instantly.

It was not difficult at all for God to bring about such fantastic things as the sun, stars and planets, and the earth with its surging oceans, tall mountains, and deep valleys. This same power is available to you and me in our daily lives. No matter what the circumstances, God can handle it. All we have to do is to let Him!

"BORN AGAIN CHRISTIAN"

Sunny David

WE HAVE ALL HEARD PEOPLE talk about a "born again Christian." What do they mean by such an expression? Is there any other kind of Christian?

According to the Bible, every Christian is a born again person,

born of water and of the Spirit. In fact, one cannot be a Christian in any other way. The phrase or the term “born again Christian” is not even once mentioned in the Bible, because it denotes the idea of a special kind of Christian. A Christian is simply a Christian, a follower of Christ (Acts 11:26), one who has been saved by the propitiatory death of Jesus Christ; whom the Lord has added to his church; and who has the hope of entering into the eternal kingdom of God. (Romans 3:21-26; 5:6-11; Acts 2:27; 2 Corinthians 5:1).

It is indubitably obvious that to enter into God’s eternal kingdom of heaven one must be born again, anew, and that that new birth must be of “*water and of the Spirit*.” Christ Himself taught that “*unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*,” and **to explain** that more explicitly, the Lord said, “*unless one is born of water and the Spirit **he** cannot **enter** the kingdom of God*.” (John 3:3,5)

How then is one born of water and the Spirit? We must understand that it is a command of the Lord with which every person must comply. It is something that one must do individually. It is not a mystical experience bestowed upon the person by the Lord, which is “better felt than told.” Such a concept is not even mentioned in the Bible anywhere.

Certainly, one must be born again to become a Christian, and if one *is* a Christian it is because he *has been born again*, since one cannot be a Christian in any other way. But there is no mystical experience promised by the Lord in being born again, nor is there example in the entire Bible of any such experience by which anyone ever became a Christian.

The Bible must be our standard of authority for becoming a Christian and for everything that is enjoined to Christianity. According to its teaching, one becomes a Christian when he hears the gospel of Jesus Christ preached, and believes in Christ, repents of sins, and is baptized in water (immersed) for the remission of sins. (John 3:16; Acts 2:38) Notice the parallel readings: “*Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*” and, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*.” (John 3:5 and Mark 16:16) Only the saved will enter heaven.

It was by the Spirit, or the Holy Spirit, that the word of God was delivered to man. When man obeys that word, it leads him to salvation. Notice what the apostle Peter wrote to Christians: “*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another with a pure heart, **having been born again**, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word*

of God which lives and abides forever.” (1 Peter 1:22,23) How did they purify their souls? In obeying the truth that was brought to them by the Spirit. How were they born again? Through the word of God.

Here is an example: When a multitude of people had heard the gospel of Christ for the first time, we read, *“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ Then those who gladly received his words were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”* (Acts 2:37,38,41) In the last verse of the same chapter we read about those people that *“They were praising God and having favour with all the people and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”*

Were these penitent people *born again* of water and the Spirit? Of course they were, because if they had not been, the Lord would not have added them to His church, since He adds to His church only those who are saved. Yet that wasn’t the result of some sudden mystical experience “better felt than told.” They had heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, and had believed in Him, and had repented of their sins, and were baptized (immersed in water) for the forgiveness of their sins.

The new life begins with the new birth. *“Or do you not know,”* said the apostle Paul, *“that as many of us as have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* (Romans 6:3,4)

Baptism of a believer signifies the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ, as well as of the believer who died to sin by repentance and allowed himself to be buried with Christ in baptism. Coming out of the waters of baptism, he begins to walk in the newness of life in Christ. This is how one is born again—born of water and of the Spirit—and this is how one becomes a Christian. There is no other way.

Think about it: A Christian is not born again. But one must be born again to become a Christian!
