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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

IF ANYONE SPEAKS, LET HIM SPEAK AS THE ORACLES OF GOD



FOR ONE TO SPEAK as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), means that he speaks as one who transmits that which God has revealed, in His written word, the Bible, with the realization of his great responsibility that he might not be found a liar by adding to His word. (Proverbs 30:6). He is not to speak his own ideas, nor his own interpretations.

Before the word of God was given to us in its written form in the Bible, God at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets. (Hebrews 1:1). There are seventeen books of prophets in the Old Testament, such as, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc. In the book of 1 Kings chapter 22 we read about a prophet whose name was Micaiah. Although there is no “book of Micaiah” in the Bible, yet Micaiah was a great prophet. Micaiah lived during the reign of Ahab, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. One day Jehoshaphat came to visit Ahab, as we read in the account. Ahab asked Jehoshaphat, if he would be willing to go with him to war against the king of Syria, to take back from him Ramoth in Gilead, which Ahab said was his. Jehoshaphat said, that would be fine, I will go with you, but first inquire of the Lord, what does the Lord say, should we go or not? Ahab, king of Israel, as we read in the record, gathered together about four hundred men, who were his consulting prophets, to answer the concern of the

king Jehoshaphat, and asked them, should he go into battle against the king of Syria. They all in one voice said to the king, "Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king." (1 Kings 22:6). They knew, that was what Ahab wanted to hear. But Jehoshaphat, somehow, was not satisfied with their answer. So he asked Ahab, if there was still another prophet there from whom we could enquire? Ahab said, there was one, whose name is Micaiah, but I don't like him, "because he does not prophesy good concerning me." However, at the insistent of Jehoshaphat, Ahab ordered for Micaiah to be brought in. The messenger who had gone to bring Micaiah, told him, what all the four hundred prophets of the king has said to the king, and that he should also say the same to the king to encourage him. But Micaiah said, "AS THE LORD LIVES, WHATEVER THE LORD SAYS TO ME, THAT I WILL SPEAK." (1 Kings 22:14). Micaiah was different, he didn't want to speak or preach as others did. He said, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak. And this is exactly what he did, when he was brought before the king. He told the king that the Lord has said, that he should not go, because he would be killed and Israel will become as sheep that have no shepherd. Micaiah knew the consequences of speaking the truth, as we read, he was put in prison (1 Kings 22:26-28). But he was a man of courage and principle. He spoke what the Lord wanted him to speak.

When Christ, in the beginning, according to His promise, had built His church (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:37-47), all His followers were called Christians, (Acts 11:26); they all followed His apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42), which is also the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9), they all worshipped in the same manner (John 4:24; Acts 20:7). There were no "Reverends" and "Fathers" and "Pastors" amongst them to lead them; they all recognized themselves as brothers and sisters in Christ, as Christ had taught them. (Matthew 23:8-12). They had all become Christians in the same way: by believing in Christ, repenting of all wrongs or leaving everything that was wrong, religiously and otherwise, and by being baptized, (immersed in water, as Christ had commanded, Mark 16:16), for the forgiveness sins, (Acts 2:38; 22:16). All who were thus saved, Christ Himself added them to His one church daily. (Acts 2:47). They were a church of Christ in any location. Everywhere their congregations were known as "churches of Christ." (Romans 16:16).

Many years later when men began to build their own churches, denominations, calling them by different names, as there are hundreds of thousands today all over the world, people in general see no difference between the church Christ had established in the beginning, about which we read in the pages of the New Testament of the Bible, and various denominational churches men have built through the years everywhere.

But there is a huge difference between denominational churches and the church of Christ. While all denominational churches are like the four hundred prophets of king Ahab, who spoke to please Ahab, without the authority of the Lord. The church of Christ still believes, to speak where the Bible speaks and to remain silent where the Bible is silent. Church of Christ is not just another denomination. The prevailing notion that various kinds of denominational churches are different parts of the whole of Christianity, or the church of Christ, is completely wrong.

Christ did not build any denomination. He is not the head of any denomination. But He is the head of His church. (Colossians 1:18). His church is His body (Ephesians 1:22, 23). And there is only one body. (Ephesians 4:4). He purchased His church with His blood, which is not a denomination. (Acts 20:28). His church is not Catholic or Protestant. In all denominational churches there may be many good and honest and God-fearing people, but they are honestly and sincerely mistaken, just as the many people of whom we read in Matthew 7:22, 23. They were very religious, sincere, followers of Christ, but they were wrong all the time. Jesus said to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

Like Micaiah, who said, "whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak", the church of Christ respects and follows the authority of the Lord in all things as is revealed in the Bible, by wearing His name, and following His commandments as given in the New Testament. For instance, almost all denominational churches believe, one is saved by only believing in Jesus or by "faith only." But the church of Christ still preaches and believes that one must both believe and be baptized to be saved, as we read in Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Most denominational churches have women to lead in some ways in their worship assemblies. But the church of Christ follows what the Scripture says, "Let your women keep silent in the churches...." (1 Corinthians 14:34). "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence." (1 Timothy 2:11, 12). On every Lord's day, Sunday, churches of Christ everywhere come together to partake in the Lord's supper, in memory of Christ's supreme sacrifice, following the Scriptural example mentioned in Acts 20:7; Luke 22:19, 20. Unlike denominational churches, in their worship, churches of Christ, while singing spiritual songs, do not use any kind of musical instruments, as the Scripture specifically says to sing. (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 13:15). Churches of Christ have been known far and wide as people who are Bible-based and Bible oriented. We believe in speaking where the Bible speaks and remaining silent where the Bible is silent.



REPENTANCE

J.C. Choate

THE TERM REPENTANCE MEANS TO reverse oneself completely, to have a change of heart. In this case, it means to quit sinning. For sure, one could not hope to be what the Lord would have him be unless he was willing to lay down his sins and to have a change of life.

Christ put it simply, "I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). In other words, repent or perish. Does this mean that it makes no difference with the Lord whether one repents or perishes? No, for it certainly does make a difference. Peter said, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but if one refuses to repent then he will perish. Therefore, it is up to the individual.

In speaking on Mars Hill, Paul made it clear that God would have all men to repent. He said, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). One cannot say that the Lord has not asked him to repent, for he has. He has even commanded this of us. If you have reached the age of being responsible, that is, to know right from wrong, then you are included in this admonition.

One cannot be so good that he needs not repent and one cannot become so evil that he cannot repent if he so desires. All people, regardless of what kind of life they live, have sinned and are therefore in need of salvation. Paul declares, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). And even as a Christian, John writes, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). This suggests that even the Christian is not perfect. He may make mistakes, err and sin through ignorance or weakness. In such a case, John further writes, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

In this particular article we are not discussing Christians primarily but we are talking about what the sinner must do to be saved and we have found that he must repent of his sins after he has gained faith in God. In previous lessons we have seen that one must hear the truth and then he must believe the truth, and in lessons to follow it will be

shown that he must confess Christ and be baptized. But right now, right in the middle of all of this, he must repent. To give an example, Peter told people on the day of Pentecost that they should do this very thing. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). To another group of people he said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). Now what do we have? We have this command being given to the people to repent. It was of God and therefore necessary to salvation.

In every case of conversion in the book of Acts you'll find it stated either directly, or implied, that before the people were baptized they repented of their sins. So it is today that before one is baptized he must repent. Of course, one may be immersed without genuinely repenting but he is only fooling himself. The Lord knows his heart and if he doesn't repent, there is no forgiveness of sins and no salvation.

One must be so sorry for his sins that he will want to quit them and live a better life (II Corinthians 7:10). But it is not enough just to be sorry about one's sins. He must actually leave them behind. Then he must replace his deeds with righteous acts, otherwise, the old sins will return (Galatians 5:19-24; Ephesians 4:24-29).

Repentance alone will not save. One may quit sinning and live a good life, but unless he has obeyed the other commandments of God, he is still a sinner. Too, one may repent of his sins, complete his obedience to the gospel, and live the Christian life for a while but then slip back into sin. What will happen to him? Unless he repents again and returns to the Lord through prayer he'll be lost as though he never repented in the first place (II Peter 2: 20-22).

It is easy to do right if you'll remember that by failing to do what the Lord says, you are gambling with your soul. Sin will damn you but righteousness will save you (Romans 6:23). Remember, too, that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap (Galatians 6:7-8).

SATAN

Kabita Gootam

WHO IS SATAN? He was an anointed Cherub created by the God almighty. LORD said to him, "You were the seal **perfection**. Full of wisdom, perfect in beauty ... was prepared for you on the day you were **created** ... you were the anointed **Cherub** who covers ... you were in

the holy **mountain**.... You became filled with violence within. And you sinned, therefore I cast you as a **profane** thing, out of the mountain of God ... Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty ... I cast you to ground" (Ezekiel 28:12-19). Again in Isaiah 14:12-15, it is written, "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of morning... For you have said in your heart, 'I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God ... I will like the **'Most High'** yet you shall be brought down to sheol, to the lowest cleft of the pit." (Isaiah 14:12-15).

Lucifer was an anointed Cherub created by God the almighty. He rebelled against God thrown down with his followers. Satan or Devil has many names.

(1) The great dragon (Rev 12:9): "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast which the LORD had made. He said to the woman. "Has God indeed said, 'you shall not surely die' " (Gen 3:1-3; Rev 20:2).

(2) Deceiver (Rev 12: 9): "For Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived (by Satan) fell into transgression. (I Tim 2:14). Eve was deceived by Satan and disobeyed God's command. And death entered into this world.

(3) Accuser (Rev 12:10): "... for accuser of our brethren (Christians) who accused them before our God day and night..." (Job 1:9-11).

(4) Tempter (Matthew 4:3): "**Now** the **tempter** came to Him, he said, "If you are son of God, ... "being **tempted** for forty days by the **devil**..." (Luke 4:2)! "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has proved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those disciple in the garden of the Gathesemane," "... Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation." (Luke 22:46, Mathew 6:13).

(5) "Prince of the power of air (Eph 2:2): "... in which you once walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who works in the sons of disobedience." "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this age" (Eph 6:12)!

(6) Murderer (John 8:44): "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning ..." Cain The first son of Adam and Eve killed his younger brother Abel by the influence of Satan the devil.

(7) Liar (John 8:44): "... and he does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources. For he is a liar and the father of it." He told lie to Eve, that they will not die if they eat forbidden fruit. Apostle Peter told to Ananias ... Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy spirit and keep back

part of the price of the land for yourself?” (Acts 5:2) God abominates **lying tongue** (Prov 6:16, Eph 4:25, Ps 15:2).

(8) God of this age (2 Cor 4:4): “... Whose minds “**the god of this age**” has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” Jesus said, “Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12:31).

(9) Angel of light (2 Cor 11:13-15): “ For such are false Apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into Apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light... whose end will be according to their works.” Apostle Paul warns about the false prophets (Phillip 3:19).

(10) Designer of evil devices (2 Cor 2:11): ... Lest Satan should take advantage of us far we are not ignorant of his devices. Apostle Paul talks about forgiving our brethren.

(11) Roaring Lion (1 Peter 5:8): Be sober, vigilant, because your **adversary** the devil walks about like a **roaring lion**, seeking whom he may devour. Satan enters in our lives when we are weak and not vigilant (John 13:26, Acts 5:3, Luke 22:31, Job 1:7).

Apostle John writes, “For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world.” (I John 2:16). These three are weapons, that satan uses upon all mankind: **Lust of the flesh: Hunger:**

“Then Jesus was led up by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, And when he was fasted forty days and forty nights afterward He was **hungry**. Now the **tempter** came to Him ... (Matthew 4:1-3; Gen 3:6).

Essau lost his first - born right for food (Gen 25:29-34; Heb 12:6): The children of Israel sinned against the LORD, murmuring about not having water in the wilderness of Zin.” (Number 20:2) **Adultery:** “You should not commit adultery. (Exo 20:14). Samson the mighty man fell because of his adulterous life (Judges 16 and I King II chapters)

Lovers of Pleasure: This group of people are lazy, pleasure seeker. The rich farmer told himself, “... take your ease, drink and be merry. (2 Tim 3:3; Luke 12:20).

Lust of Eyes: our first mother ate the forbidden fruit, ... it was pleasant to the eyes” (Gen 3:6). An Israelite soldier, “... saw among this spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels, I coveted ...” (Joshua 7:21). His covetousness was the cause of his and his family’s death. We read about King David’s lust for Bathsheba in 2 Sam 11:1-12: 12:1-12).

Satan used this weapon against Jesus (Math 4:8). Jesus said, “The

lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good. Your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness, how great is that darkness.” (Matthew 6:22-23).

Pride of Life: The reason Lucifer was cast out from Lord’s holy presence, was his pride. “For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God ... I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the most High ...” (Isaiah 14:13, 14). The king of Babylon king Nebuchadnezzar said to himself, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built for a royal dwelling by **my majesty**.’ ... that very hour the word was fulfilled ... he was driven from men’ (Daniel 4:30-33) Many kings of Judah and Israel fell because of their pride. “... But the proud He knows from afar.” (Ps 138:6) The God said to the rich, proud farmer. “You fool! ... who will those things be which you have provided.” (Luke 12:16-20), “... for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled.” (Luke 18:14). God heard the prayer of the humble tax-collector, but not of the proud pharisee. “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6, Prov 3:34, I Pet 5:5).

Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christian. “Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of **the devil**. For we don’t wrestle against the ruler’s darkness of this age ... girded your waist with truth (John 17:17) ... breastplate of righteousness (Ps 129:172) ... Gospel of peace ... faith (Roman 10:17) ... Helmet salvation ... the sword of spirit, which is the word of God.” (Eph 6:10-17). So let us be sober, be vigilant, because our **adversary the devil** walks about like a roaring lion. Seeking whom he may devour (I Pet 5:5, Job 1:6-7). Resist the devil, don’t give place to him (James 4:7 and Eph 4:27).

“And the God of peace will **CRUSH SATAN** under your feet shortly...” (Roman 16:20). “Now thanks to God who always *leads* us in triumph in Christ...” (2 Cor 2:14, 1 Cor 15:5).

HOW ARE PERSONS MADE BELIEVERS?

G.F. Raines

THE APOSTLE PAUL SAID to the Corinthians, “*For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel*” (1 Corinthians 4:15).

The literal meaning of this statement is, “*I have made you believers through the Gospel.*” (See 1 John 5:1.)

If people are begotten, or made believers, through the Gospel, they are not made believers by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit apart from the Gospel. “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the*

word of God" (Romans 10:17).

There is no recorded instance in all the New Testament of a person becoming a believer and being converted to Christ apart from the Gospel, because as Paul says in Romans 1:16, the Gospel of Christ *"is the power of God unto salvation."*

When Jesus gave the Great Commission to His apostles, He said, *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:15,16).

In the very first Gospel sermon preached under the Great Commission, the apostle Peter, speaking as the Holy Spirit gave him utterance (Acts 2:4), unequivocally said, *"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38).

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

Bill McFarland

FELLOWSHIP IS OF GREAT value for the Lord's people because *"two are better than one."* The preacher stressed this fact in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, where he pointed out four essential benefits of partnership.

- **Accomplishment.** *"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor"* (verse 9). Two working together will get more done and bear more fruit than we would working by ourselves.
- **Encouragement.** *"For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; But woe to him that is alone when he falleth, and hath not another to lift him up"* (verse 10). What a blessing it is to have someone to lift us up when we are down and to encourage us on the way!
- **Survival.** *"Again, if two lie together, they have warmth; but how can one be warm alone?"* (verse 11). The needs and challenges of the Christian life are such that we cannot "go it alone." We are dependent upon fellowship one with another to keep faith from growing cold and dying.
- **Strength.** *"And if a man prevail against him that is alone, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken"* (verse 12). Just as a rope of three cords woven together is strong, so is a Christian whose life is woven together with his brothers and sisters in Christ.

Fellowship in Christ has the power to bless our lives. There is no substitute for it. Let us make sure that we continue steadfastly in fellowship (Acts 2:42).

DRINKING FROM THE SAUCER

*I've never made a fortune, and I'll never make one now.
But it really doesn't matter cause I'm happy anyhow.
I go along my journey reaping better than I've sowed.
I'm drinking from the saucer, cause my CUP has overflowed.*

*I don't have many riches, and sometimes the going's tough.
But while my kids still love me.
I think I'm rich enough.
I'll thank God for His blessings.
His mercy he bestowed -
I'm drinking from the saucer cause my cup has overflowed.*

*If He'll give me strength and courage, when the road grows steep
and rough.
I'll not ask for other blessings -
I'm already blest enough.
May I never be too busy to help bear another's load.
I'm drinking from the saucer cause my CUP has overflowed.*

—Copied

HAVE YOU BEEN BORN AGAIN? IF NOT, WHY NOT?

George Funk

ACTS 22:16, “And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name.” Do you realize that you will take the most important, life-changing step in your entire existence?

The answers to life's problems are found in Jesus Christ. For centuries man has been trying to find the answers on his own, but without God, all other solutions are either temporary or void.

Jesus said, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6).

Friends, Jesus is the Way! Look what God has promised us through Jesus:

1. “Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old things passed away, behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

2. *"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).*
3. *"For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13,14).*

Is it not exciting to realize and recognize those promises that we are new creatures, we have eternal life, we have forgiveness of sins, that we have been transferred into the Kingdom of God and we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)! What more do we want? The promises of God concerning the believer go on and on.

Salvation is God's plan for the entire world (1 Timothy 2:4). God wants all to repent and be baptized into Jesus.

Water baptism is a symbolic representation of the penitent sinner being crucified, dead and buried with Christ, and then raised up with Him (being born again) to new and everlasting life (John 3:5). After baptism, old things are passed away; behold new things have come.

If you have not experienced water baptism, let me encourage you to follow the examples of those early believers in the Bible and be born again (Galatians 3:27). *"Put Jesus on"* in baptism (Romans 6:3), *"die, be buried and raised"* and become His child. Oh, how important are His children! Being baptized into Christ is the most life-changing step you can take.

When Was Paul Saved?

Owen D. Olbricht

MANY PREACHERS AND RELIGIOUS teachers say that Paul was saved on the road to Damascus. The assumption is made that Jesus' appearing to him brought about his salvation. Is this true? What proof is offered that he was saved when Jesus appeared to him?

Three reasons are usually given for the basis of the conclusion that Paul was saved at that time: (1) Jesus appeared to him for the purpose of giving him salvation. (2) Jesus gave him the Holy Spirit as a seal of his salvation. And (3) Ananias called him "brother Saul" when he came to him.

Nothing is said in the New Testament to indicate that Jesus appeared to Paul in order to save him. Such a teaching is merely an assumption and not a stated fact. If Jesus appeared to him for this purpose, this was an exception and not the rule. No where is it recorded that Jesus appeared to any others in order to save them. In all other cases a God-

approved preacher preached Jesus and salvation (Acts 2:36-38; Acts 8:12, 35-39; 11:14).

The text shows that Paul was not an exception. Jesus did not tell him what to do, but rather told him, *"Go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do"* (Acts 9:6). Ananias, whom Jesus sent, told Paul to *"Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). The appearance of Jesus was not for the purpose of bringing about salvation. Paul stated that *"Last of all he was seen of me also"* (1 Corinthians 15:8). If seeing Jesus brings about salvation, then Paul was the last person to be saved. Jesus explained why He appeared to Paul. He did not say He appeared to him in order to save him. He said, *"I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee"* (Acts 26:16). This was Paul's call by Jesus to be an apostle. He could not witness with the other apostles the resurrection (Acts 1:22) had he not seen the resurrected Lord. Paul argued that he was an apostle, based on his having seen Jesus (1 Corinthians 9:1).

The New Testament does not state when Paul received the Holy Spirit. The safe conclusion is that he did not receive the Holy Spirit until after baptism. We know that Paul did not receive the Holy Spirit on the road to Damascus, because three days later when Ananias (Acts 9:9) came to Paul he had not received the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17).

The most likely conclusion is that Paul was not an exception but that he received the Holy Spirit as others received Him. Those who are baptized (Acts 2:38), obey Jesus (Acts 5:32), becoming sons of God (Galatians 4:6), and are the ones who receive the Holy Spirit. The only exception to this rule that is recorded in the New Testament were the first Gentiles, Cornelius' household, to whom the Holy Spirit was given in order to prove to Jewish Christians that God would accept Gentiles (Acts 10:47; 11:17; 15:7,8).

The fact that Ananias called Paul, "brother Saul," is not proof that Paul was already saved. Peter called his fellow Jews, "brethren" (Acts 2:29), but then told them to *"Repent, and baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 2:38).

On other occasions, Peter also called fellow Jews "brethren" (Acts 3:17), as did Stephen (Acts 7:2), and Paul (Acts 13:26,38; 22:1; 23:1, 5, 6; 28:17). Ananias did not call him "brother Saul" because he was a brother in Christ, but because he was a fellow Jew.

According to Ananias, Paul's sins were not forgiven **until he was baptized** (Acts 22:16). Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus

but, rather, he was saved when his sins were washed away by the blood of Jesus at the time of his baptism (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

God does not show partiality. We must obey Him in order to be saved (Hebrews 5:9) now that Christ has all authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18-20). He said we must, *“Believe and be baptized,”* in order to be saved (Mark 16:16), which is what Paul did to have his sins forgiven (Acts 22:16).

Ehud, Israel’s Second Judge

Charles Box

EHUD WAS A LEFT-HANDED Benjamite who delivered Israel out of the hands of Eglon, king of Moab. Ehud’s work resulted in eighty years of peace in the land. Read his story in Judges 3:12-30.

The story of each judge centers around evil done by God’s people. When Israel sinned, God raised up an oppressor. *“And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord. Then he gathered to himself the people of Amman and Amalek, went and defeated Israel, and took possession of the City of Palms, So the children of Israel served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years”* (Judges 3:12-14). God’s judgment against Israel’s wickedness was designed to bring them to repentance.

1. God punished the sins of His own people (verses 12-14).
2. The lesson is that one can easily lose by his own sins what he has gained by the power of God (verse 13).
3. Israel’s first servitude was eight years (verse 8), and this second one was eighteen years (verse 14). Failure to learn means one pays an even greater price.
4. Ehud was raised up after Israel had prayed (verse 15). There is power in prayer, as God answers us through His providential care.
5. Benjamin was most likely the weakest tribe at this time. Ehud was a left-handed man from the tribe of Benjamin. But God can raise up power out of weakness (1 Corinthians 12:24).
6. Ehud came against Eglon with *“a message from God”* (verse 20). The Bible provides us with a message from God.
7. Ehud led Israel in total victory over her enemies (verses 27-29). God is pleased with nothing short of total surrender to His perfect will.
8. Ehud challenged Israel to follow him (verse 28). There is no substitute for good leadership.

9. Israel had rest eighty years (verse 30). Those who will obey God can enjoy eternal rest.

Ehud and the rest of the Judges teach us the need of faithful service to God. Obey the Gospel (Acts 2:36-41) and remain steadfast (1 Corinthians 15:58). God demands our faithfulness!

WHO WAS JERUBBAAL?

David Deffenbaugh

JERUBBAAL? WHO WAS HE? Actually, it is not that name by which he is most easily identified. How about Gideon? Gideon is a man worthy of note. Far more than the average amount of space is devoted to his story in the book of Judges compared to the other judges' stories. Much is to be learned from this man of God.

SERVING GOD IN ADVERSITY

Gideon was a judge in Israel. By definition that means adverse conditions. The work of a judge was to deliver God's people out of the adversity of oppression from an enemy. Gideon was found by the Lord, with the rest of the Israelites, hiding in mountain caves and dens for fear of the Midianites. More specifically, he was beating out wheat in the wine press (as opposed to the threshing floor), trying to keep at least some of the produce of the land from the marauding hordes from Midian. How much easier it would have been for Gideon to reject God's call because of the adversity of the times. It will not be at the most convenient moments that we are called upon to serve others either.

GOD USES THE "UNQUALIFIED"

Gideon's response to the Lord's call was to point out his lowly position. *"'But Lord,' Gideon asked, 'how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family' "* (Judges 6:15). Gideon, thought that surely there was someone else more qualified than he to carry out this task. Quite often we too are quick to think of others more talented, with more time, with more experience, etc., etc., when it comes to the Lord's work that needs to be done. While all of those things may be true, something else is also true: God wants to use us in His service, even as "unqualified" as we may be.

The victory belongs to God. The best-remembered event from Gideon's career as judge was the paring down of his army. God reduced the army from 32,000 to 10,000 to 300; a mere 300 men to defeat an army described *"as numerous as locusts"* and whose camels were *"as*

numerous as the sand on the seashore!" God's expressed purpose in doing so was that Israel not become boastful, saying, *"My own power has delivered me"* (Judges 7:2). So, we are reminded that as God's children we possess the power of God, the Gospel, unto salvation (Romans 1:16), yet we have this treasure in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7). The victory of the army and of the church now, belongs to God.

Indeed, we are instructed from what *"was written in earlier times"* (Romans 15:4).

SIMON PETER

Ray Hawk

HE WAS A GALILEAN fisherman with his brother Andrew, and his partners, James and John. Jesus called him Cephas, which means "a stone." When the apostles are named, Simon is always the first to be mentioned.

Although John was the closest to Jesus, Peter was the forerunner in many areas. He was not bashful when it came to asking questions. *"Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?"* Nor was he hesitant in rebuking Jesus when he thought he was right. *"Never, Lord!"* he said. *"This shall never happen to you!"* Peter's loyalty was fierce, and no one had to ask him where he stood. He declared, *"Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."*

When others wanted information about Jesus, they usually went to Peter. When Jesus asked questions of the apostles, Peter was usually the first to reply. He was not afraid to ask questions or to demand answers. *"We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"* He wanted to honor Jesus and spoke of this on different occasions. *"Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."* Out of the Twelve, he was one of the inner three. Yet, Simon Peter was human.

In spite of his loyal statements, Jesus told Peter that his heart was in the wrong place, *"Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."* In the garden, Jesus had asked His disciples to watch while He prayed, but Simon, with others, went to sleep. However, it was to Simon that Jesus addressed His remarks, *"Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?"* Jesus told him that before the rooster crowed twice, he would deny Him three times. When Peter realized he

had fulfilled that prophecy, he went out and *“wept bitterly.”* Jesus recognized the leadership abilities of Simon. He told him to *“Feed my sheep.”* Here was a complicated man who at one time was not afraid to go against his culture and enter the house of a Gentile to preach to him, even if it meant criticism from some in the church. Yet, on another occasion, he feared what would be said and refused to associate with Gentile Christians.

Some may tend to think that Peter was more of a god than a man. We, like Cornelius, might bow before him. Yet, Peter would tell us what he told the centurion, *“Stand up, I myself also am a man.”*

One cannot help but admire this fisherman who became an evangelist and an apostle. Although the Holy Spirit inspired his written and spoken messages, he was given no special speaking *ability* or supernatural powers to be *bold*. He, like Paul, could say, *“And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God”* (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

One might classify Peter as a home-town boy who made good. But, when everything is said, if it had not been for Jesus, Peter would have remained a nameless fisherman. Jesus took an outspoken man and turned him into one who spoke out for Him. He took a man who fed people with fish and made him into a feeder of human sheep. All that he was and became was because Jesus walked into his life. Peter had the wisdom to recognize that Jesus could make a difference. Do you?

POOR MOSES?

Dalton Key

MOSES, THE VALIANT LEADER of millions, the man whom God chose to deliver and lead His people out of Egyptian slavery, the revered lawgiver, endured a life of rejection and heartache. His troubles began in Egypt and followed him for the whole of his 120 years.

He had just successfully led Israel in their escape from Pharaoh when the Amalekites attacked. It wasn't long before the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Amorites, and Midianites all joined together in an attempt to block Israel's path to Canaan.

His own people were no help to him either. Though God's chosen

nation had been awed and sustained by miracle after miracle, they still wallowed in the mire of murmuring. They incessantly grumbled against God and His helper, Moses. They began complaining before they were out of Egypt and kept it up even when the Promised Land was in sight. To make matters worse, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram attempted to overthrow Moses. Marah, the Wilderness of Sin, Rephidim, Taborah, Kazereth, Meribah, and Kadesh all found the Children of Israel either complaining or trying to overthrow Moses. At one point the people were all ready to stone him to death!

And his trusted leaders were many times untrustworthy and more of a hindrance than a help. Aaron made the golden calf at the foot of Sinai while Moses was up on the mount receiving the law from the Lord. Miriam and Aaron attempted to usurp the God-given authority of Moses at Hazeroth. And of the twelve spies sent into the land of Canaan, ten led the already rebellious nation in a refusal to enter. Yes, Moses had his share of troubles.

And yet, through all of the muck of murmuring and insult of insurrection, Moses emerged a better man. Inspiration commends him as *“very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth”* (Numbers 12:3). He was meek, but by no means weak. He meekly stood his ground in the face of adversity. His life served to prove the yet-to-be-written words of Paul, who wrote, *“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope”* (Romans 5:3,4).

The next time you are tempted to complain about your troubles, think of poor Moses. His troubles made him stronger, better. The same thing can happen to you.

BURDEN BEARING

Bruce Buckley

Was Paul dealing in double talk? The answer is NO.

The BURDENS of verse 2 and verse 5 come from two Greek words looking to different situations. The burdens of verse 2 represent an overload, more than people can bear. If they do not have help, they will sink ... but this does not mean to take the burden from them, but simply to give help with the burden.

The burden of verse 5 has reference to the burden of a soldier. That burden had to be borne at all times. It could not be passed to another. We have burdens of many types today that cannot be passed to anyone else. There are physical burdens and disabilities that must be borne by

individuals. We should try to get relief by medical means when and if possible, but in the long run, they must be borne, and hopefully without complaining. There are burdens of a non-physical nature also. Christianity places burdens on one that no other can bear. No other person can obey the Gospel for us; that is our burden. The practice of baptizing for those who are already dead is not according to the scriptures.

A sin may be forgiven, but its consequences may still remain a burden. Paul still had his thorn in the flesh and it was still a burden. He said his past as blasphemer and persecutor was out of ignorance and unbelief.

But the beauty of all of this is that while we are busy bearing burdens that are ours, we are at the same time learning more how to bear the burdens of others **"AND SO FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST"** (Galatians 6:2). It is then that our own burdens become lighter and easier to bear.

GOD'S SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS TO MANKIND

Don L. Norwood

PSALM 23

THIS PSALM OF DAVID CONTAINS beautiful and simple statements, expressing the spiritual relationships between God and His faithful spiritual children. Let us study it carefully.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." To the Christian, Christ is Lord (Romans 10:8-10; Acts 2:36). He is also the bishop and shepherd of the Christian's soul (1 Peter 2:25). The statement ***"I shall not want"*** expresses the idea that as a faithful child of God one will always have all the spiritual and material blessings that one needs (Matthew 6:24-33; 1 Timothy 6:6-12).

"He makes me to lie down in green pastures." Using this terminology with the idea of a shepherd" and his sheep out, in the pasture, it suggests that as we follow our Shepherd and do His will, we will have peaceful rest for our souls from the troubles and cares of the world.

"He leads me beside the still waters." This suggests that the Lord will lead us in the kind of life that makes for stability and security (Philippians 4:4-8; Galatians 5:22,23).

"He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Alter the rebirth, the person must learn and follow the teachings of Christ

faithfully all the rest of his life (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Peter 1:1-4; 2 Timothy 3:16,17).

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Physical death is inevitable for all people (Hebrews 9:27; Romans 5:12). A faithful Christian can face death with calm resolve and trust the Lord’s promises relative to it (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 14:13). The rod and staff were used by a shepherd to catch a wayward sheep and return him to the fold. This is symbolic of the Word of God which makes us understand the reason for death and how to prepare for it.

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.”

A table prepared seems to symbolize the Lord’s spiritual communion with His people (1 Corinthians 11:23-30; John 6:48-58; 1 Corinthians 10:16,17). It may also include His care for His people in all their physical needs as well (Matthew 6:33).

“You anoint my head with oil.” Anointing one’s head with oil symbolizes the Lord’s care of His children when they are sick, and especially when they are spiritually ill (James 5:13-15; Luke 10:34; Isaiah 1:6; Jeremiah 8:22; 46:11).

“My cup runs over.” This symbolizes the fact that a child of God has more than he needs in all aspects of his life (John 10:10).

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” The Psalmist wrote, *“Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about”* (Psalm 32:10).

“And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” While living in the flesh, the Christian is a member of God’s great household (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 2:5,9,10). A home awaits the Christian in heaven (John 14:1-6; 1 Peter 1:4,5).

WONDERFUL ASSURANCES

David Pharr

1 JOHN 1:6-2:6

IT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR A Christian to be concerned and even fearful over what he knows are shortcomings in his life. This lesson will consider a wonderful passage of Scripture which can help us see how God forgives our imperfections.

Read 1 John 1:6-2:6. After reading these verses carefully, go back and see the following truths from each verse.

Verse 6. “Walk” has reference to the life one lives. To walk in darkness means to live without the guiding light of God’s Word. A hypocrite — one who claims to be in fellowship with God while deliberately living in sin — is a liar.

Verse 7. What does it mean to “*walk in the light*”? It means to walk in the pathway of life that God has lighted for us (compare Psalm 119:105). When we live a life that is directed by God’s Word, we have fellowship and Christ’s blood cleanses us of all sin. Notice that “*walk in the light*” does not mean sinless perfection, because if it did, there would be no sins for the blood to cleanse. The point, therefore, is that a person can live a Christian life (“*walk in the light*”) even though he may sometimes sin through ignorance and weakness.

Verses 8, 10. The fact is that we all sin. No one lives absolutely above sin. As long as we are in the flesh we will have weaknesses and shortcomings. You are no different in this from any other Christian. It is this fact that makes the blood of Christ so vital to us. We are in constant need of the forgiveness He provides.

Verse 9. This verse tells us what we must do about our sins. We are to confess them. Remember that an alien sinner is required to be baptized for the remission of his sins. But after baptism we need only to confess them to be forgiven. To confess sins means to penitently acknowledge them, asking for forgiveness. Notice how certain it is that God forgives our sins when we confess them.

Chapter 2, verse 1. John, however, did not write these things to make us think sin does not matter. Instead, they are written “*that ye sin not.*” That is, that you make it your aim to overcome sin. No one walking in the light will want to commit sin. One who thinks he can just go ahead and sin now while thinking he can easily get forgiveness later does not really understand what it means to walk in the light.

Verses 1, 2. Still, when we are weak, when we do fail to do right, Jesus Christ has died to save us. God never fails to forgive His penitent children.

Verses 3-6. The way we know that we have the right relationship with God is by obeying His commands. Though we must admit that our obedience is imperfect, still we can know whether we have been baptized, whether we have quit deliberate acts of sin, whether we worship faithfully, etc.

A simple summary of the assurance of these verses might be worded this way: You know you have become a Christian. You are trying to live a Christian life. You know you often fail in this. But you confess your

sins to God and to your brethren, and you know you are forgiven. Thus, by the grace of God and the cleansing power of Jesus' blood, you know you are God's child and that if you live and die in Him, you are on your way to heaven.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH

Jerry L. Davidson

Introduction

1. Everybody has a name and a social security number, or Aadhar, along with other descriptive features (gender, race, fingerprints, and blood type, etc.).

2. An individual can be identified by knowing certain characteristics. The church of the Bible can be identified by certain marks that are found in the Bible.

3. The New Testament church can be restored anywhere in the world by following the biblical pattern.

I. The founder and builder of the church is Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18).

II. Christ is the foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11).

III. The church was established in Jerusalem in 33 A.D. (Isaiah 2:2,3, Acts 2:47).

IV. Christ is the only head of the church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22,23).

V. The church's only rule of faith is the inspired scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16,17; Romans 10:17)

VI. Specific instructions for truth-seekers today are found in the New Testament (New Covenant). See Hebrews 1:1,2; 9:13-16.

VII. The importance of being in the church is stressed by the fact that Christ paid for the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7).

VIII. The church has descriptive names.

A. Collectively, the church is identified as:

1. Church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2).

2. House of God (1 Timothy 3:15).

3. Church of the Firstborn (Hebrews 12:23).

4. Churches of Christ (Romans 16:16).

B. Individually, believers are called:

1. Christians (Acts 11:26).

2. Disciples (Acts 11:26).

3. Saints (1 Corinthians 1:2).
 4. Brethren (Galatians 6:1).
- IX. The worship of the church is described in the New Testament.**
- A. Worship must be rendered *“in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24).
 - B. The day for weekly worship is *“the first day of the week”* (Sunday), according to Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2.
 - C. The acts or avenues of worship are:
 1. Singing (vocal music) — (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19).
 2. Praying (Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 2:1,2).
 3. Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29).
 4. Preaching and reading (2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Timothy 4:13).
 5. Giving (collection) — (1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9:7).
- X. The terms for salvation and becoming a member of the church are described in the New Testament scriptures.**
- A. Hearing God’s Word (Romans 10:17).
 - B. Believing in Jesus as Lord and Savior (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6).
 - C. Repenting of sin (Acts 17:30).
 - D. Confessing Christ (Romans 10:8-10).
 - E. Being baptized (immersed) — (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16).
 - F. Upon being converted to Christ, one is added to the church (Acts 2:41,47).
 - G. A member of the church lives faithfully to God (1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 10:23-26).
- XI. Church (congregations) that are fully organized have:**
- A. Elders who are appointed to be overseers (Acts 14:23; 20:17,18; 1 Peter 5:1-3; 1 Timothy 3:1-7).
 - B. Deacons who have special ministries assigned them (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13).
 - C. NOTE: According to the New Testament, the church has no higher organization than what is found in the local congregation — thus, each congregation is independent and autonomous.
- XII. The church being the body of Christ, He is the savior of the body** (Colossians 1:18,24; Ephesians 5:23,24).

Conclusions

1. All of the foregoing points are earmarks of the church in the Bible.
2. Having the guidance and comfort of the Scriptures, believers are equipped spiritually in living the Christian life (2 Timothy 3:16,17; Hebrews 4:12).

THE KINGDOM IN PROPHECY

Frank Chesser

THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH are one and the same (Matthew 16:18, 19). The kingdom was to be established during the lifetime of Jesus' contemporaries (Mark 9:1). It was "*at hand*" in the first century (Matthew 4:17). It was to come "*with power*" (Mark 9:1). That power was to come with apostolic reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). The Gospel that was to usher in the kingdom was to be preached first in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47).

These promises join and culminate in Acts 2, resulting in the kingdom, or church. Jesus is presently reigning on the spiritual throne of David, in the kingdom, or church of the living God (Acts 2:29-33). At the second coming, the world will be consumed by fire (2 Peter 3:10), and Jesus will deliver the kingdom, or church, back to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). Thus, the concept of a thousand year reign in a physical kingdom is only a figment of man's imagination.

The Old Testament anticipates the kingdom. God's promise to David regarding his kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12-16) transcends the old physical kingdom of Israel to enjoy ultimate fulfillment in the universal spiritual kingdom, the church. This is not human guesswork. This truth is verified by David's own statement in Psalm 132:11 and the plainly stated fulfillment in Acts 2:29-33. This text explicitly declares that Jesus is now reigning on David's spiritual throne, which is the kingdom or church of the New Testament. As people obeyed the Gospel, they were added by God Himself to that very church and thus, they submitted themselves to the Kingship of Jesus (Acts 2:47).

Isaiah 9:6,7 is an undeniable prophecy of the coming of Christ. This text promises that Jesus would sit "*upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever*" (Isaiah 9:7). This prophecy has absolutely nothing to do with a physical kingdom, throne, rule, and a thousand year reign.

The Jews of the first century had that concept of the kingdom, and Jesus denied it for the three years of His earthly ministry. He stressed time and again the spiritual nature of His kingdom as described in John 18:36. Again, Acts 2 makes it plain that Jesus is sitting on the throne of that very kingdom and has-been since the first Pentecost following His resurrection.

Daniel 2:44 prophesies of the establishment of the kingdom "*in the days of these kings*." Who were those kings? Nebuchadnezzar's image

consisted of four basic parts: head of gold; breast and arms of silver; belly and thighs of brass; and legs and feet of iron, mixed with clay in the feet (Daniel 2:31-33). Daniel informed Nebuchadnezzar that these four parts represented four kingdoms, commencing with Babylon as the head of gold.

The Babylonian kingdom was followed by the Persian kingdom, the Grecian kingdom, and finally the Roman kingdom. It was in the days of the kings of this fourth kingdom that the Lord's kingdom would be established. This harmonizes with all the other passages on this subject. The church or kingdom was indeed established during the rule of the Roman kings in the first century on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2).

What is the law of this kingdom? Jeremiah prophesied of its spiritual nature (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The Hebrews writer quoted this prophecy and applied it to the New Testament (Hebrews 8:6-13). Consequently, Jesus is now reigning over His kingdom (church) and is ordering its worship, work, and practice by His law revealed in the New Testament.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN?

Max Patterson

HOPHNI AND PHINEHAS, SONS OF Eli, knew not the Lord (1 Samuel 2:12), did not respect the worship of God (1 Samuel 2:17), and were immoral (1 Samuel 2:22). Because of this disobedience God rejected the house of Eli and brought it to an end. In addition, this corruption of the priesthood was one of the primary causes for the people turning against God and requesting a king like the nations about them.

As the children of Israel fought the Philistines, Hophni and Phinehas were slain. When 98 year old Eli was told this, he fell out of his chair backwards and broke his neck and died. His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was thrown into labor, and she bore Ichabod and died (1 Samuel 4:11,22).

One of the main reasons for the Lord's rejection was that Eli's sons were vile, "*and he [Eli] restrained them not*" (1 Samuel 3:13). Would Eli have restrained his sons had he fully realized what was going to happen?

Today we know from experience, and from the Scriptures, what will happen if we do not restrain our children. Therefore, as Christian parents, we must do our best to bring them up in the discipline of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4).