

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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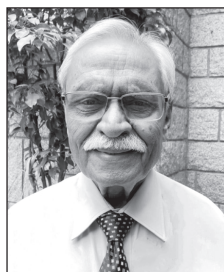
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## Editorial

### **What Does the Bible Teach?**

*If Anyone Desires To Come After Me,  
Let Him Deny Himself, And Take Up  
His Cross Daily, And Follow Me*



CHRISTIANITY IS NOT “ONCE A YEAR” RELIGION, but it is every day religion, this is what Christ meant when He said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.” (Luke 9:23). “Daily” implies the persistence of discipleship.

There is no other time of the year when Jesus Christ is remembered and worshipped more, throughout the world, than in the last week of December every year. During this time of the year, people everywhere come forward to proclaim their faith, in large numbers, in Christ. Church buildings are full of people all over the world as people come to celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ, Christmas. People suddenly become very religious, prayerful, loving, giving, kind and forgiving. But after that event passes away, things slowly get back to where they were; in other words, Christ is forgotten. Those who had seemingly become very religious and godly in December, again go back to live their lives as before.

Most people do not, in fact, understand the Person of Jesus Christ; who He really was and why He had to come on earth, and why and how He should be remembered. What does the Bible teach? Speaking of Christ, the Bible says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God..... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1,14). The Word,

Who was with God from the beginning, and was God, the same became flesh, a Man. He was not a man, but became man; hence God became man. He was called Jesus, meaning, the Savior, and Christ, meaning, anointed, that is, the anointed Savior. He was one of the Persons in the Godhead. (Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9; Acts 17:29; Matthew 28:19). We read, in Philippians 2:6-8, "Who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." John described Him as "The Word", because word conveys the idea of a message. Jesus Christ brought from heaven the greatest message of God for man: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). The apostle Paul declared, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." (1 Timothy 1:15).

The greater emphasis, therefore, is placed upon the death of Jesus Christ in the Bible. His death on the cross brought the hope of salvation from sin to whole humanity. His death brought to us life and liberty and freedom from sin and to have eternal life in heaven with Him. The Bible boldly declares, "He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10). His death for our sins and His resurrection from the dead is the Gospel, the Good News of God for mankind. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Mark 16:15).

While nowhere in the Bible we are taught or commanded to remember and celebrate Christ's birthday, yet again and again we are shown and commanded, in the Bible, that we should remember and celebrate the death of Christ by observing the Lord's Supper, which Christ Himself had instituted for His followers, just a few hours before His death, saying, "Do this in remembrance of Me." (Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19). The apostle Paul later reminded Christians and said, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you; that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). We are told, as the Lord had instructed, His disciples indeed came together on the first day of the week, (Sunday), to "break bread" or to

partake in the “Lord’s Supper”. (Acts 20:7). The Lord Jesus Christ, according to the Scriptures, arose from the dead on the first day of the week. (Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:1-6). This is the reason, Christians everywhere, even today, come together as a church on every first day of the week, Sunday, to break bread or to partake in the Lord’s Supper, which consists of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine or the grape juice, (Matthew 26:17-29), and thereby remember and proclaim Christ ‘s death till He comes again. We need to remember Jesus Christ throughout the year, and not just once in a year.

—Sunny David

## ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

J.C. Choate

THERE IS A RIGHT WAY to worship and there is a wrong way. There is man’s way and there is the Bible way. There is the theory that it doesn’t make any difference how you worship just so long as you are honest and sincere. However, the Bible teaches that there is just one way to worship and that is the way the Lord has ordained.



Christ said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). The Lord said that this is the way it must be done. He didn’t say that it could be done this way if it pleased us, but he said this is the way it **has** to be. How’s that? Acceptable worship must be directed toward God and it must be in spirit and in truth. That is, one must worship God with understanding. He must be sincere about it. And in the next place, he must worship God according to the truth, or according to the teachings of the Bible. This is worshipping in **spirit** and in **truth**. It is possible to worship with the understanding but not according to the scriptures. And it is possible to worship as the Bible teaches but to be insincere about it. In either case, such worship would not be accepted. To worship God in such a way as to please him, one must of necessity worship in both spirit and truth.

But what does the New Testament teach with regard to the acts of worship? Well, through a study of the scriptures you’ll find that there are five acts of worship, or five distinct things that the Lord asks the Christian to do if he is going to worship in a pleasing way. We will study these one by one.

First, the Christian must meet with the Lord’s people each first day of the week to study the scriptures. Paul says, “Study to show thyself

approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

Second, Christians are to come together on the Lord's day (Sunday) to pray to God. There are a host of scriptures that suggest this. For instance, in Acts 2:42 it says that the early Christians continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, which included prayer. Paul says in I Thessalonians 5:17 that we should pray without ceasing. The Lord said in Luke 18:1 that men ought always to pray.

Third, Christians are to meet for the purpose of singing songs of praise to God. We read, "Speaking to your-selves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). Again, the same writer says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

Fourth, Christians are to partake of the Lord's Supper each first day of the week. The bread is to be partaken of in remembrance of the body of Christ and the cup is to be partaken of in remembrance of the blood of Christ. Please listen to the divine record as the Lord instituted this supper. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28). In I Corinthians 11 Paul referred to the Lord's statements, and in Acts 20:7 we have an example showing that this supper was partaken of on the first day of the week.

Fifth, and last, we have the command that the Christian is to give on the first day of the week. Paul says, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (I Corinthians 16:2). He says again "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7). This is the way that God is to be worshipped. To do more than this is too much. To do less is too little. God has spoken and man is to follow.

God's way is simple and to the point. It gives all the opportunity to worship him whether rich, poor, educated, uneducated, or whatever the circumstances may prevail. However, some want to complicate matters and put a lot of formality into worship. They would have an individual bowing, kneeling, chanting, burning candles, marching, etc., etc. Mark it down, these things are of man and not of God.

If all men would worship the same God they would all worship him the same way, that is according to the Bible. Take heed to it.

# ABANDONED BY GOD

**Bobby Dockery**

ONE OF THE MOST SOBERING statements in all of the Bible is found in Romans 1:26. Of certain people involved in sinful and degrading life styles, Paul wrote: *"God gave them up..."* Because of their addiction to vile practices, God completely washed His hands of them! To further emphasize their spiritual isolation, Paul twice repeated the indictment: *"God gave them up..."* (Romans 1:24,28).

What a terrifying condition! To be abandoned by God! Adding to this tragedy was the fact that these people were entirely responsible for their hopeless condition. They brought it upon themselves! They had been abandoned by God only after they had first abandoned Him! Turning their backs on God, these people became *"filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice... insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful..."* (Romans 1:29-31).

From this catalog of the "sins of the abandoned" three truths about sin and its nature emerge.

**1. Sin is real.** The abandoned condition of these people was the result of the actual presence of sin in their lives. Theirs was not a case of cultural deprivation, social mal-adjustment, or psychological disturbance. They were guilty of rejecting God's standards and attempting to replace them with standards of their own. Their sin had placed them under the sentence of divine wrath (Romans 1:18).

**2. Sin is destructive.** One of the great tragedies of sin is what it does to the sinner. Sin destroys the intellect. The reckless sinners of Romans 1 became "fools" in their abandonment (Romans 1:22). Sin corrupts the emotions. Paul characterized these sinners as *"depraved reprobates"* given to *"vile"* and *"degrading"* passions (Romans 1:26,28). **Sin wrecks the body.** Paul noted that sin had caused some of them to *"dishonor"* their own bodies (Romans 1:24).

**3. Sin drives a wedge between us and God.** The greatest tragedy of sin is what it does to a person's relationship with God. Sin is an intolerable offense against the holy nature of God. It is an act of rebellion against the authority of God. Those who do not repent and abandon their sins become completely and irrevocably alienated from God! The prophet Isaiah pictured it this way:

*Behold the Lord's hand is not so short  
That it cannot save;*

*Neither is His ear so dull  
That it cannot hear.  
But your iniquities have made a separation  
Between you and your God,  
And your sins have hid His face from you  
So that He does not hear.*

(Isaiah 59:1-2)

If you live in sin, you live apart from God. It is essential that you do something before your separation leads to abandonment. How frightening to be among those of whom it is said: *"God gave them up...."*

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## DO WE REALLY CARE FOR THE UNSAVED!

**Johnny Ramsey**

JESUS CAME TO SEEK AND save the lost (Luke 19:10). He left the glory of heaven to suffer and die for the unredeemed (Luke 24:46). The Lamb of God desires to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29) and reconcile mankind to the Creator. We often sing:

*"Souls in danger look above  
Jesus completely saves  
He will lift you by His love  
Out of the angry waves."*

But, factually, Christ left the task of salvation in the hands of His followers. The parting concern of the Savior dealt with preaching the Gospel to every creature in every nation till the end of time (Mark 16:15). First century saints took the Master seriously (Acts 8:4) and daily, publicly and privately proclaimed the glad story of victory over sin and death (Acts 5:42).

*"Sing the sweet story  
Redemption's sweet song  
Over and Over  
The chorus prolong."*

Yes, we have a definite responsibility to share *"the gospel of the grace of God"* with the sin-cursed masses of humanity groping in darkness (Acts 20:24). Since Christ came to give light to those in the shadow of death (Luke 1:79), we need to come out of the shadows and preach peace to the billions in our world that are hopelessly lost!

*"He who lives to himself  
And dies to himself*

*To himself and none besides  
Lives as though Christ never lived  
As though He never died."*

Do we really care? Can our neighbors cry, in the language of Psalm 142:4, "No man cares for my soul?"

If lost souls bother us, we will do the following:

1. Learn the Bible so we can teach it to others—far and near (1 Peter 3:15)!
2. Grasp every opportunity to speak up for Jesus (Psalm 107:2).
3. Expose error so truth will shine (Ephesians 5:11).
4. Never encourage false teachers (2 John 11).
5. Present the Truth clearly at all times (John 3:32).
6. Learn denominational doctrines and church history so we can converse intelligently with others (Colossians 2:8-10).
7. Be Christ-like and never lose our composure even if those in error ridicule us and the Gospel (Acts 26:25).
8. Be steadfast in spite of many who will not listen and obey (Galatians 6:9).
9. Remember that the seed of the kingdom is the Word of God (Luke 8:11) and that the Lord gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).
10. Never emphasize "responses," but always stress "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" (Colossians 1:27).

Those who are not ashamed of the Gospel will always be ready to pay the debt we owe to those about us — the message of salvation (Romans 1:14-16). Joseph Grigg wrote these words of exhortation in song:

*"Ashamed of Jesus! Sooner far  
Let evening blush to own a star  
And O may this my glory be  
That Christ is not ashamed of me."*

Do we really care for lost humanity? If we do we will give generously to the cause of Christ that truth might cover the world as waters cover the sea. While the souls of men are dying in iniquity we dare not sit by idly. There is something we can do. Parents can rear children with a deep desire to preach in difficult places where others will not go. Prosperous brethren could live in smaller houses, drive less expensive cars, wear cheaper clothes, forego fancy jewelry, do away with smoking and other wasteful habits so that more money is released to send the good news of the Savior to earth's remotest boundaries. Do we really care? If so, we could write letters to preachers on foreign soil and difficult

areas. We could teach more on personal and world evangelism and the value of each soul (Mark 8:36). We could change the emphasis of young people in the church from entertainment to evangelism (Romans 14:17), and a new day would dawn in many congregations.

Paul's **spirit stirred within him** (Acts 17:16) at the lost condition of Athens. Sin must bother many of us very much. Jeremiah could not keep quiet because God's Word was too precious (Jeremiah 20:9). And, the Scriptures are of deep value in our day also (1 Samuel 3:1). Two centuries ago, Isaac Bickerstaffe sadly wrote these words:

*"I care for nobody, not I."*

But the love of Christ propels us (2 Corinthians 5:14) into sharing the saving message to those steeped in error. With David and Paul we exclaim: *"I have believed, therefore I have spoken."*

The ransom price has been paid (1 Timothy 2:6), but many of the captives don't even know it.

*"While the souls of men are dying  
And the Master calls for you  
Let no one hear you idly saying  
There is nothing I can do."*

Do we really care if many are lost?

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## ***One Woman's Efforts***

**Jane McWhorter**

SEVERAL YEARS AGO ON THE Harding University campus I met Mary Lea Thompson, a young woman whose story greatly impressed me in showing what one person can do in reaching the lost. *"Go ye therefore and teach all nations ..."* (Matthew 28:19) includes each of us. Although women cannot speak publicly in a mixed audience in proclaiming the Word (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12), they still have a tremendous responsibility in sharing the good news.

Upon graduation from college a number of years ago, the newly married Mary Lea and her husband moved to New Jersey to teach school and, most important, lead others to Christ. Undaunted by a culture which knew practically nothing about New Testament Christianity, Mary Lea trusted the power of the Word as she began inviting her friends to her house for a period of Bible study each Thursday afternoon. Several of the women who taught at the same school accepted the invitation, as well as some neighborhood women. One afternoon each week this group of women met around Mary Lea's kitchen table with nothing but



open Bibles. Many of the students had never before studied directly from the Word of God. Mary Lea always began with one of the Gospel accounts, verse by verse, and then proceeded to the book of Acts. She told how captivated these women were with the records of conversion found in this study. The stories were completely new to most of them, and how fascinated they were! No one had to be asked to obey the Gospel. Instead, when they read of a conversion, they would excitedly exclaim that they wanted to do exactly what these early Christians had done, even though their actions would alienate them from their own families and cultural ties in the communities. Mary Lea was there to help them with any problems.

That fall I spoke to a ladies' retreat in the Northeast. There I met five of Mary Lea's most recent converts, whom she had brought for spiritual nurturing and growth. A snapshot of this devoted teacher and her friends is one of my most prized possessions, and I have taped it in the front of my Bible as a constant reminder of the power of the seed and the faithfulness of one woman to scatter that seed, even on some most unpromising soil. How rich has been the harvest! What power is in the seed!

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## ***Mens Hearts Provide Soil For The Kingdom Seed***

**Gary C. Hampton**

### **Introduction**

The word "parable" actually comes from two Greek words. "Para" means "beside." "Ballein" means "I throw," or "I place." Thus, we have, "to throw or place beside." In parables, Jesus and other inspired men laid stories that would be familiar to their listeners alongside spiritual truths. The people who were receptive could then learn something of God's will.

### **The Parable of the Sower**

In Mark chapter 4 Jesus told about a farmer who went out to his field to sow some seed. A portion of that seed fell on the wayside, or foot path. Palestine in the days of Christ was a land without fences. People walking through an area naturally followed basically the same path. Eventually, such led to there being a hard, packed way through the fields. Seed which fell on this ground would either be trampled under foot or eaten by the birds.

Other seed fell on rocky ground. This was a rock ledge covered by a small layer of topsoil. Seed on such ground would readily spring up. However, because its roots could not go deep, the plant soon withered. Some of the seed fell on ground already covered with thorns. The thorns would compete with the young seedling for sun and moisture. At last, the thorns would choke the seedling to death. Seed also fell on good ground. Harvest time found such ground yielding thirty, sixty, or one hundred times as much grain as was originally sown.

### **The Importance of Learning From the Parables**

Jesus called for those who could hear His message to seek for an understanding of its meaning. Parables were intended by our Lord to uncover that which had been hidden. The word “mystery” is used in the New Testament to refer to the plan of God for the redemption of man which had been hidden from previous generations (compare Romans 16:25-27).

Of course, parables were also intended to hide the truth from those who were not ready to receive such. To them, the stories told would be innocent little stories of common life. Interestingly, Paul says the rulers of this world would not have crucified Jesus if they had fully understood the mystery (1 Corinthians 2:6-8). Jesus promised that those who had receptive hearts would find the parables teaching them much more about the kingdom of heaven. Those who had little understanding and refused to receive more would find the parables a puzzle which obscured understanding.

### **Explaining the Parable of the Sower**

Christ used this parable to point out the responsibility an individual has when he hears. The seed of the kingdom is God's Word. The sower is someone who preaches the Word. The four soils represent different conditions of the human heart.

The wayside soil represents the person who has closed his mind completely to the Word of God (Hebrews 3:12-13). The rocky soil represents the person who fails to think out carefully what he has heard. He does not follow through completely and develops no depth of understanding. So, when hard times come, he abandons the truth. The thorny-soiled heart is that individual who loves the cares and pleasures of this life more than God's kingdom. This one allows such to choke God's Word out of his life. The good soil represents the person who understands, receives, and keeps with patience the Word of God.

### **Applying the Parable of the Sower**

Reception of the Gospel and the fruit it produces depends upon the

heart of the one who receives it. The real hearer is the man who listens, who understands, and who obeys. *"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves"* (James 1:22). We must, therefore, be sure our minds are open and receptive to the Word of God.

Teachers also need to remember that it is their job to sow the seed without regard to the types of soil it falls upon. God is the one who will give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:5-7; Isaiah 55:10-11). God expects every faithful Christian to sow the seed of the kingdom (2 Timothy 2:2; Mark 16:15-16). We cannot be faithful and be quiet!

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## HOW TO CHOOSE A CHURCH?

**David Thurman**

A WOMAN RECENTLY TRIED TO sell an old painting in a ragged frame at her garage sale. She asked five dollars. No one was interested. One man offered three dollars, but she held out for five and he would not offer more than three. At the end of the sale, she still had her old painting. She decided to clean up the frame and have it appraised. To her great delight, she found that it was a painting by a well known artist which was worth more than thirty five thousand dollars! She had a treasure in her possession that was hidden by the dust and dirt of the years.

The same principle can be applied to churches. Many churches look like masterpieces, but they are, in fact, cheap counterfeits. Other churches look like beat up relics that have outlived their usefulness, but are, in fact, the real thing. If you are looking for a church, how can you find the genuine masterpiece, the church of the New Testament that God wants you to be part of? How can you tell the genuine from the fake? The apostle Peter gives us the way.

*"Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. For, All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord abides forever. And this is the word which was preached to you. Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up*

*spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in him shall not be disappointed. This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone, and, A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation (1 Pet. 1:22 - 2:12).* Peter gives us several things to look for when searching for the genuine thing.

### THE WORD OF GOD

Peter stresses the role of the word. It is the word that will endure (1 Pet. 1:24-25). It is the truth of that word that we obey, and that process purifies our souls (1 Pet. 1:22). It is the word that has lasting power to save, lasting power to change lives. As you search for a church that is the real thing, begin by looking for a church that bases its teaching, its practice, its ministry on the only that endures—the word of God.

This will be a church that considers the word to be the authority from God. *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day”* (John 12:48). Any church or group that denies the authority of the Bible, the word of God, may look like a masterpiece, but it is a fake. It is the word that Jesus spoke that will judge us. Find a church that teaches the Bible in all things.

But also look for a church that takes that word and makes it a living process. *“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14). Jesus is described as the living word of God. The Word became flesh. That is, Jesus became human and lived the word of God in the world. As you seek a church, look for one that makes the word alive in their bodies. Look for a group of believers who seek to take the words off the page of the Bible and live them in all

aspects of life. So Peter tells us to long for the word so that we can grow in our salvation (1 Pet. 2:2).

### THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Peter emphasizes Jesus as the cornerstone, which the builders rejected, but which was used by God to establish His new kingdom. Jesus must be at the center of any church that is the real thing. When churches start chasing human issues, human creeds or human traditions, they clutter up the masterpiece that is the church of the Bible. Eventually, no one can see the real thing, because human creeds, written or unwritten, get in the way.

So, as Peter discusses the priesthood of all believers, the chosen race we are called to be, he stresses the work of the Christ. As Paul says, *"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"* (1 Cor. 2:1-2). Paul had power to do miracles, but he preached Christ crucified. Paul was educated, trained, skilled in the Bible, but he didn't preach his wisdom and knowledge—he preached *"Jesus Christ and him crucified."* Seek a group of people who lift up the cross of Jesus Christ in all its teaching, worship and practice.

But, also look for people who lift up the cross in their daily lives. *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me"* (Gal. 2:20). The apostle Paul says that he died to himself and now allows the living word to operate through him.

Seek a people who have obeyed Jesus. *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it"* (Matt. 16:24-25). Some churches lift up the cross of Christ in their teaching, but not in their practice. Seek a body of believers who not only preach Christ crucified, but live their lives as if they, like the apostle Paul, have died to self.

### THE UNITY OF BELIEVERS

Peter says repeatedly that we are all one people, joined together by the common work of God through Jesus Christ. We are told to *"love one another fervently"* (1 Pet. 1:22). We are a *"chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession"* (1 Pet. 2:9-10) because God has called us out of darkness into His light. God has taken a bunch of sinners, forgiven them through the blood of Jesus, and turned them into a loving and distinct group of people.

It is this type of behavior that sets the genuine church apart from the fake. The genuine body of Christ is known by its love. *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:34-35).

Moreover, it is how we treat each other that convinces the world we are the genuine body of Christ. *"I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me"* (John 17:20-21). Jesus says it powerfully and simply. If we love each other and get along with each other, the world will see that we are the body of Christ. When we fail to love and get along with each other, we convince the world we are not the body of Christ.

### **WHAT CHURCH ARE YOU IN?**

Paul speaks of *"the churches of Christ"* (Rom. 16:16). The people he refers to are not just another church trying to do good. They are the churches that claim Jesus, follow Him in His word and love each other fervently. Find one of these churches of Jesus Christ and learn how to become part of that family. At first glance, that church may look old, out of date and worthless. But buried within could be a treasure worth much more than a piece of art. It could be a Treasure That will save your soul. Look for that church.

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## **"... BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE ..."**

**Byron Nichols**

SURELY WE HAVE ALL BEEN impressed with some of the statements made by outstanding statesmen of the world in times past. Included among the more notable ones are Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death," Winston Churchill's "I have nothing to give but blood, sweat, and tears," and Henry Clay's "I'd rather be right than be President." Such words of commitment and exhortation have helped countries and causes to be victorious instead of suffering defeat.

As great as these proclamations of courage and dedication were and are, they do not measure up to the significance of many declarations found in the Bible. It would be hard to find one more inspiring than a statement by Joshua in his farewell speech to the people of God just before his death. In Joshua chapter 24 the faithful leader of the Israelites reminds them of all that God had done for them and their ancestors,

delivering them from their enemies and providing all their needs for them, including a special land in which to live. He then proceeds to tell them that they have a great decision to make: Are you going to serve pagan gods, as your fathers did at times, or are you going to render loyal service to the God who has delivered you and lovingly provided for you? Then, in the last part of verse 15, Joshua makes this great statement of commitment, dedication, and determination:

**“... but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.”**

Joshua was able to make this remarkable declaration because of his great love for God, his Israelite brethren, and his family. His words were prompted by his deep gratitude to the Lord for all that He had done for Joshua and all those he loved. Surely more of us would join with Joshua in these words if we understood what Joshua understood. Surely few of us would drift very far away from the Lord while fully comprehending all that He has done for us and continues to do for us.

It's one thing to make a commitment for ourselves, but it's quite another thing to make a commitment for others. How could Joshua speak for his family when he said, “... *but as for me **and** my house...*”? He could do so in the sense that he was determined to do all within his power to see to it that his family members were as committed to faithfully serving the Lord as he was. His loved ones still had the freedom of choice; they could become like the pagan nations around them if they so chose, but it would not happen without his having made every possible effort to get them to share his deep love and gratitude for God.

Many more husbands and fathers need to follow Joshua's example. An alarming number of families, even Christian families, are in great need of spiritual repair. God has given the husbands and fathers the major responsibility in such matters, as is clearly shown in Ephesians 5:22-6:4.

Perhaps there is an even greater need for more elders and preachers who will fearlessly take their stand with Joshua and echo his commitment. It is a very elementary fact that no group, religious or otherwise, will ever succeed beyond the level of its leadership. The church of the Lord absolutely must have men as its leaders who will duplicate the determination of Joshua to stand with and for God, regardless of the opposition, even if the opposition should sometimes come from within the church itself. Satan will never make it easy for God's people to loyally serve the Lord, and at times he even uses some of God's own people, as was true in Bible times, to lead the church astray. As a result, there is perhaps a greater need than ever before for elders who will lovingly and boldly live up to the words of such notable passages as Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 3:4,5; and Titus 1:9-16. Preachers, too, are



called to be faithful to the admonitions of such passages as 2 Timothy 4:1-5 and Titus 2:1, just to name a few.

Knowing that each one of us will one day be called before the Lord in judgment, dare we live our lives now with less of a commitment to Him and His Word than that of His loyal servant Joshua? May God's children everywhere dedicate themselves fully to Him and to the furtherance of His great cause here on the earth. Let's be sure that God can depend on us.

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## ***“Meet For The Master’s Use”***

**Clarence DeLoach, Jr.**

IT IS EVIDENT FROM A study of the Bible that God can take people of all kinds and make them suitable for His work. He can take ordinary, little and unknown men, place His spirit and power upon them, and work with and through them.

Look at the apostles! They were not the world's great! Some of them are still obscure. What do you know about James, the son of Alphaeus? He is even called James, the less (Mark 15:40). The original word actually means “little.” Little what? Was it stature? Age? Influence? It could be that he was a small, young person with a personality not too commanding. To say the least, it is encouraging that the Lord does not depend upon superstars!

You don't have to have the finest personality, a great education, a commanding voice, great leadership, unusual insight, exceeding ability to be a servant for Christ. James, the less, Bartholomew, Simon, the zealot were all **apostles**. However, they are marked by obscurity. The Lord used ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. He still does!

Hebrews chapter 11 is a great chapter on faith. After naming those who were outstanding, the writer concludes the chapter with a reference to a host of unnamed people who through faith wrought amazing things (Hebrews 11:33-38). Then, he added that the world was not worthy of the silent heroes of faith.

The point in all of this is obvious! The human instrument is not the focus—Christ is! Humble, ordinary servants who dare to trust, obey, and place their very lives in the hands of Christ can be used by Him for remarkable service.

It is not the instrument, but the touch of the Master's hand, that makes the difference. Will you allow the Potter to “mold and make you” after His will?



# OUR NEED FOR JESUS

John Thiesen

ONE OF THE HARDEST TASKS, and at the same time the most important in the world, is to get across to people their great need for Jesus. If they understood their need for Him and what He offers them, more would be coming to Him.

## We Need Forgiveness

All of us, without exception, need Christ. For instance, we all need the forgiveness of sins which He brings. No one has passed through this world without sinning. Everyone at some time in his life has either lied, cursed, envied, coveted, cheated, stolen, hated, gotten drunk, been irreverent, or done something immoral. *“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).

God has taught us in His Word that doing these things will separate us from Him and cause us to be lost. *“For the wages of sin is death ....”* (Romans 6:23). Since we all have sinned, if we don't get forgiveness from the Lord, we will be lost in the judgment day. But this is exactly where Jesus enters the picture. He is God's way of removing our sins. Christ suffered a terrible substitute punishment for our sins on the cross.

## Christ's Salvation Available Now—Not Later

However, this mercy of God is only available to us now while we are still alive. It is not offered after death. Many are thinking to take their chances on Judgment Day, hoping that somehow the good about them will outweigh their sins in God's eyes when they stand before the throne of judgment. They are in for a shock. God's mercy will not be extended on Judgment Day, but right now, while we are on the earth drawing our breath in the flesh. The mercy is found by all who in this present life turn to Christ. Then, in the judgment, those sins will not be there to condemn us, because they were taken away in life.

It is to the living, not the dead, that Jesus sent the message that *“repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”* (Luke 24:47), and *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15,16).

If we could only get across to people this vital message that their only chance of salvation is now, not later, and that Jesus Christ is the only way, then maybe their urgent need to turn to Him would be impressed on their minds and we would be seeing many more coming to the Lord.

# Salvation, God's Way

Hollis Miller

JESUS WAS ASKED: *"Who is my neighbor?"* In reply he told a parable about a man who had been robbed and left by the side of the road. Three men: a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan, travelled the road and saw the stricken man. But only the Samaritan stopped and cared for him. Having completed the parable, Jesus asked: *"Which of these three do you think proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"* (Luke 10:25-37). The answer was too obvious for the inquirer to have a choice other than the one who had helped the victim.

Let us borrow from the parable of Jesus and apply it to a different story. A man was seeking salvation, and made inquiry of three teachers concerning how he might obtain it. The first teacher cited the doctrines of his church and urged the man to accept them. The second teacher appealed to the rulings of the hierarchy above him, stating that he was bound by what the hierarchy decided. The third teacher asked the inquirer to get a New Testament and search the Scriptures with him for an answer to his question. Which teacher properly responded to the inquirer's concern?

How tempting it is for men to subdue the truth that salvation is God's subject, and not their own. It is God who planned it, and it is God who implements it. Man was, is, and always shall be wholly passive with regard to planning what one must do to be saved.

The Bible is the only source known to men wherein Jesus and His apostles revealed the will of God concerning salvation. We learn from the Bible that certain things are absolutely required by God for salvation. No man, or council of men, can ever change them. They will stand until the Lord returns for his own. The things absolutely required are:

## 1. Belief in God

*"Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"* (Hebrews 11:6).

## 2. Faith in Christ

*"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16, see John 8:24).

## 3. Repentance

*"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent"* (Acts 17:30).

#### 4. Rebirth of Water and of the Spirit

*"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"* (John 3:5).

Whatever may be said or written about the foregoing requirements for salvation, no man has the right to change them, for they are divinely decreed.

Difficulty in understanding the word "water" in John 3:5 is traceable to doctrines which leave no room for baptism in the scheme of redemption. It is quite plain that if salvation is by faith only, then the water to which Jesus referred cannot be a reference to baptism. One expositor explained Jesus' words thusly: "Jesus now described the new birth in terms of water and Spirit. Of these two, Spirit is the more crucial...water may well refer to the emphasis of John the Baptist on repentance and cleansing from sin as the necessary background for, even the negative side of, the new birth." (**The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible Commentary**, p. 289.) Another says: "Various interpretations have been suggested for the water. Does it refer to natural birth, which is accompanied by watery fluid? Or is it a symbol of the Spirit (John 7:37-39) so that "water" and "Spirit" are merely a hendiadys, two words referring to the same thing? Or is it a symbol of baptism? The best answer seems to be that if Jesus was attempting to clarify his teaching for Nicodemus, he would answer in familiar terms; and the author would want his readers to understand his phraseology. Since Jesus' ministry came shortly after that of John the Baptist, Jesus may have been referring to John's preaching, which dealt with the baptism of water, signifying repentance, and with the coming messenger of God who would endow men with the Holy Spirit (John 1:31-33). The new birth is conditioned on the repentance and confession of the individual in response to the appeal of God and by the transformation of life by the gift of the Holy Spirit." (**The Expositor's Bible Commentary**, Vol. 9, p. 47.) If, as these citation suggest, Jesus employed the word "water" in reference to the earlier preaching of John the Baptist, then does His statement not necessitate that John's message be proclaimed today? What, then, happens to the all-sufficiency of the Gospel? (See Galatians 1:8,9.) Such interpretations of what Jesus meant by "water" would never have been introduced had men not ruled baptism out of God's plan for saving man.

Efforts to circumvent the teaching of the New Testament in order to uphold false doctrine will always lead to confusion and harm. How important it is for men to permit the Bible both to speak for itself and interpret itself. The proper interpretation of "water" in John 3:5 begins with the words of the Lord in Matthew 28:19, continues through the

book of Acts, and ends with several references in the letters (see Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 3:26,27; 1 Peter 3:21; Colossians 2:12). No one in New Testament times was born again who was not baptized in water into Jesus Christ. (Acts 8:35-39)

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## FINDING "HEART-FELT" RELIGION

Ancil Jenkins

***"Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 18:31).***

DR. CHRISTIAN BARNARD REVOLUTIONIZED surgery by performing the first successful heart transplant and continued to pioneer this field for many years. On one occasion, one of his heart transplant patients asked to see the removed organ. Dr. Barnard brought him a large bottle that contained the old heart. As the man looked at the scarred organ that had once pumped life through his body, the doctor realized that this was the first time in human experience that a person had ever seen his own heart. This historic occasion became even more significant by the comment of the transplant recipient. Realizing that this old heart was worn out and that without the transplant he would be dead, the patient said, "I'm glad I don't have that old heart any more."

The Bible speaks of man's heart as the center of his actions. (The Bible "heart", of course, is not man's blood pump, but his intellect, will, and emotions.) The outward expressions of man, his words and actions, come from within him, from his "heart." Jesus said, *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'...."* (Matthew 15:19,20).

What a difference a new heart can make! Only this operation can adequately and completely change man and his life. Man's need is not a little rest or a little reformation. Man, without Christ, needs a new heart. This alone can change him. This change is not optional. Unless we get a new heart, we die (Ezekiel 36:26)!

How about your life? Do you lack the ingredients that make it full, joyous, and free? Do you have an overload of guilt, fear, resentment, and regret? Do you feel right about all the wrong things

and wrong about all the right things? The solution is simply — you need a heart transplant. Jesus can take your old, calloused heart and give you one that is brand new. Then purpose with your heart, obey from the heart, cleave to Him with your heart, and love from your heart (2 Corinthians 9:7; Romans 6:17; Acts 11:23; 1 Peter 1:23). With a new heart and heart-motivated actions, you will have a real heartfelt religion.

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## THE SEED AND THE SOIL NECESSARY TO SALVATION

W. Douglass Harris

NOTE THE WORD “NECESSARY” in the caption of this article. It would be a waste of time, talent, and effort to discuss something not essential to salvation. Our title suggests two basic essentials to scriptural conversion—the right seed and the right soil. Without the God-ordained seed and the proper soil, there can be no salvation from sin.

### ***The Seed Necessary To Salvation***

*“The seed of the kingdom is the word of God”* (Matthew 13:19; Luke 8:11). God established His immutable law at creation that each seed produces after its kind (Genesis 1:11,24). Had the pure, unadulterated Word of God been sown from the beginning (that is, from Pentecost in Acts 2) until now, there would be only one church in existence now. This seed produced only one church in the first century, and it would have done the same thing in subsequent centuries if it were unmixed with doctrines and commandments of men.

Let us note some essentials of the seed to reproduce. (1) It must be alive, or the germ of life must be in it. Inspiration affirms that it is “living and active” as God gave it (Hebrews 4:12), and that it is God’s power unto salvation (Romans 1:16) and imperishable (1 Peter 1:23). (2) Seed must be planted. Peter and the other apostles were promised that they would do the first sowing (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). They were also promised another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, that would reveal to them the seed (John 14:26; 16:13). This was a promise of inspiration and infallibility. (3) There must a place to begin the development of the seed.

In fulfillment of the promise to His apostles, the Holy Spirit descended on them in baptismal measure on the first Pentecost day after Christ's ascension into heaven to guide them into all the truth (Acts 1:4-8; 2). Peter and the other apostles were the sowers, the place was in Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit miraculously supplied the seed. Luke said this is where it would begin (Luke 24:44-49), and Peter referred to it as "the beginning" (Acts 11:15). Any seed that originated with any source other than the infallible (in teaching and writing) apostles of Christ is false seed. We now have the seed in the completed and final revelation in the New Testament (Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:16,17).

### ***The Soil Necessary To Salvation***

In the same parable where the seed is identified, the proper soil is also described—"honest and good hearts" (Luke 8:15). All the soils in the parable of the sower represent different kinds of hearts, but only the good soil—honest and good hearts—produced properly. And the order of "*honest and good*" is significant, which is the order in the Greek text. No heart is a good heart until it is first an honest heart. Note particularly the three requirements to produce fruit to perfection—a sower, good seed (pure Gospel), and honest and good hearts. It was the same seed that was sown in all the soils by the same sower; the great difference was **how** all heard the Word (see Luke 8:18).

Note the process at work in Acts 2. Peter's sermon (verses 22-36) prepared the soil for the seed. The audience asked, "*What shall we do?*" This implied that they believed the word preached by Peter and were convicted of their sins. Peter then bound on them what had already been bound in heaven as conditions of pardon (Acts 2:38; Matthew 16:19; 18:18). Luke records the results: "*They that gladly received his word (the seed) were baptized*" (Acts 2:41). Note the indispensable elements of preaching the Gospel (sowing the seed) and the reception into "*honest and good*" hearts. This same process is evident in every case of conversion recorded in the book of Acts, the book of conversions.

What fruit was produced? They were simply saints (later called Christians) and members of the Lord's church (Acts 2:47). The same seed, unmixed with the doctrines and commandments of men, planted today in the same kind of soil will produce now exactly what it did then. **If not, why not?**

# JUST GOOD MORALS DO NOT MAKE ONE A CHRISTIAN

Basil Overton

SOME THINK THAT ONE IS a Christian if he is a good moral person. However, just because one pays his debts, loves his family and friends, and is a good neighbor, does not mean he is a Christian. Truly one must be good morally to be a Christian. Christians should grow in their good qualities. But to become a Christian one must believe and obey the Gospel; he must do this regardless of how good he is.

The eunuch, whom Philip baptized, was a *good* man in many respects before he reached the blood of Christ and had his sins washed away. He was a man of great *authority*; he had the charge of all the treasury of a great nation; he was doubtless well educated; he was obviously intellectually adept; he was a *religious* man; he had been to worship, and on his way home he was reading his Bible; he was *honest*; he was a *gentleman*; he was an inquiring, humble man; but he was a *lost man* (Acts 8:26-40)! *He was lost in spite of all these good traits.*

Even though all these things were true of the eunuch, he had to hear the Gospel, believe it, and go down into the water and be baptized into Christ, where he could reach the blood of Christ.

That which has been shown concerning the eunuch is also true of others in the New Testament record, like Saul of Tarsus, and Cornelius (Acts 9,10). But they, too, had to obey the Gospel before they belonged to Christ.

Many today are depending on their good qualities to save them, and they *think* they are Christians because they are *good morally*. But before they are Christians they will also have to humbly submit to Christ and be baptized into Him.

If you have not obeyed the Gospel, you should! Dear friend, if you have not obeyed the Gospel like the eunuch and others, you are not a Christian (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

# Introducing The Church Of Christ

Garell L. Forehand

WE KNOW THAT IT IS very confusing in the religious world. It's hard to know where to turn or what to believe. The Lord led John the apostle to remind people to be very careful in establishing their religious beliefs. *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1). But **how** could you and I be able to test someone and his teaching to verify whether or not he is truly representing the Lord? Since the Word of God (the Bible) is supposed to be *"a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"* (Psalm 119:105), the guidance necessary to test spiritual matters must certainly be found in the Scriptures of the Lord. That's why the Bereans were called "noble" by the Lord—because *"they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so"* (Acts 17:11). They didn't even trust Paul until they had checked him out in the Bible!

With that in mind, we'd love for you to give the church of Christ a fair evaluation from the Bible's point of view. We do not claim to have any man other than Jesus as the founder of the church. There is no date, except the Day of Pentecost right after the resurrection of Christ, that we would point to for the beginning of the church of which we are a part. There are absolutely no doctrines that we teach or practice that have been originated by a man or group of men. There is not a single view that we hold to that has Alexander Campbell (or any other person) as its source. We try our very best to depend exclusively on the Bible itself to establish all of our doctrinal positions. Feel free to check us out on that claim as to **anything** we believe or practice.

We believe that the Word of God is the "seed" of the kingdom (Luke 8:11). And we believe that the truth will make us free (John 8:31,32)—that the Gospel is God's power to save people (Romans 1:16,17). If people will honestly and faithfully accept the Word of God, the Lord Himself will cleanse their sins by His grace, and add them to the church He built and purchased with His own blood (Acts 2:37-47). The seed of the kingdom (the Word) will grow **just Christians**. All other "plants" will finally be uprooted on the last day (Matthew 15:13). We are just people; but we are people who try to obey God's Word the best we can. Please take a closer look at the church of Christ.