

# **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?**

**BY**

**JERRIE BARBER**

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## DEDICATION

*To Christi Gail Barber, my daughter. At ten years old, she is a good student in Bible school and shows a great love for younger children. With God's help and blessing, she will be a great Bible school teacher.*

*Her presence in our home brings happiness to my life and a challenge to be a better servant of God and of others.*

## P R E F A C E

Without a doubt, the most effective media work that I have been able to do is a weekly newspaper article. This teaching opportunity which appears in the *Daily Citizen-News* in Dalton, Georgia, has brought requests for tracts, books, further study, and counseling. It has also made the church, my name and face known to virtually everyone in our county.

When J. C. Choate first suggested that these articles be printed in book form, I thought that the greatest use would be to give ideas to others who might like a similar article. However, after seeing and reading the edition that was first printed in India in 1981, I can see that the opportunities are far greater.

The topics are varied and the discussion of each is short, simple, and to the point. The articles will be helpful for sermon and class ideas, and for giving to those to whom we are trying to expound the way of God more perfectly.

For those who would like specific details on the way our newspaper article appears, I would be glad to send a sample printed article and the ideas behind it.



## **Preface**

I express appreciation to J. C. Choate who has persisted in encouraging me in the work of writing. It is a task which I find easy to put off.

It is my hope and prayer that you can water the truth presented in these pages and that God will give an increase.

Jerrie W. Barber  
P. O. Box 1201  
Dalton, Georgia  
May 26, 1982

## INTRODUCTION

Everyone is interested in knowing what the Bible says, especially those who believe it to be the word of God. The problem is, the majority do not take the time necessary to study it in order to have this knowledge, so they are easily led astray by false teaching, misunderstanding, and misapplication. When challenged about false beliefs, they counteract with many excuses and questions.

Brother Jerrie Barber preaches for the Central Church of Christ in Dalton, Georgia, U. S. A. In the course of his work he writes a weekly article for the local newspaper. He finds that by giving brief Bible answers to various questions with which he is constantly bombarded, a great deal of interest is created. The result is that people are taught the truth, error is answered, and brethren are edified. This column has been very popular and a great deal of good has been done through it.

I personally asked brother Barber to make these materials available for the work in India and he kindly consented to do so. I am grateful for this and I know that you will be grateful too after you go through these articles. Although

## Introduction

these questions came from those in another part of the world, still they are representative of questions asked by all people everywhere. Also the Bible answers given would be applicable throughout the whole world since truth is universal and therefore knows no boundaries.

As you do read and study these questions and answers please keep in mind that we are concerned with what the Bible teaches, because we believe the Bible to be the word of God, representing the final authority in all religious matters. Therefore, compare the answers given in these articles to that which is taught in the Bible. We believe that you will find that the truth is presented in every instance and we urge you to accept it because it is the truth.

J. C. Choate  
Church of Christ  
New Delhi  
Oct. 8, 1981

## SECOND EDITION INTRODUCTION

People in general are always wanting to know what the Bible teaches on various subjects. This is good because it indicates that there are many who are seeking answers about morals, human relationships, and religious matters. It also provides an opportunity to give an answer from God's word.

Brother Jerrie Barber has taken numerous questions and given Bible answers to them. He has used this format for a number of years in writing a newspaper article in Dalton, Georgia where he preaches for the Central Church of Christ.

Having printed a series of these questions in India a short time ago, and seeing how popular that book was there, we decided that we would also make it available here in the States. We feel that it can be used by both the Christian and the non-Christian in a very effective way. It can be given to those with whom you are studying, sent through the mail to contacts, put in libraries, etc. It can also serve as a text book in class situations.

We, therefore, want to commend brother Barber's book to you. It is hoped that others will follow.

J. C. Choate  
Flying to Singapore  
May 24, 1983

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## SINCERITY ALONE?

*Mr. Barber, isn't it true that the most important thing in our relationship to God is that we be sincere and not that we be correct in what we believe?*

No.

You are correct that we must be sincere. We cannot be saved without this characteristic. Paul prayed that followers of Christ "be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10).

There are many people who are physically dead because they sincerely believed that which was not true. A man sincerely believed that the gun was not loaded. He was mistaken. He pulled the trigger. He is dead.

Saul of Tarsus was a man with a clear conscience (Acts 23:1) who believed that he ought to persecute Christians (Acts 26:9). He later learned that he was wrong, even in his sincerity. Because of this, he called himself the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:13-15).

To have the blessings of Christ, we must sincerely follow the teachings of Christ. "Who-soever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth

in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9). Jesus Himself taught that man must follow His word, the truth, to be His disciple when He said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 32).

It is not a matter of sincerity or truth but sincerity AND truth to please God.

## WOMEN INFERIOR?

*Mr. Barber, since the church where you preach does not have women preachers, do you believe that women are inferior to men?*

The Bible does not teach and I do not believe that women are inferior to men.

However, the Bible does teach and I do believe that individuals in society have different roles and responsibilities. A designated role neither states nor implies inferiority.

I am not and do not feel inferior to President Carter, Governor Busby, the members of Congress, or any other official, but I must be in subjection to the government of which they are a part (Romans 13:1, 2).

I am not and do not feel inferior to the elders of the Central church of Christ where I

preach. I do respect them and obey them because of their office and responsibility and my relationship to them (Heb. 13:17).

In our country and in the church, certain people have the authority and responsibility to make decisions. As long as they do not conflict with the Bible, which is a higher law, as a Christian I must be obedient to those in authority.

According to the will of God, the Bible, women have many opportunities and obligations in the Lord's service. However, Christian women will not exercise authority over men, because God has forbidden this. "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Tim. 2:12).

## HOMOSEXUAL LIFESTYLE?

*Mr. Barber, I have heard you speak in a condemning way about a homosexual lifestyle. Do you think we should hate this type of person or love them?*

I trust you have heard me in respect to the sin of sodomy. I Corinthians 6:9, 10 tells us that "abusers of themselves with mankind . . ." shall not "inherit the kingdom of God." The same passage in the New English Bible says, "Make no mistake . . . none who are guilty . . . of

homosexual perversion . . . will possess the kingdom of God.” As we can see from the Bible, *homosexual lifestyle* is a long pronunciation of the word *sin*.

But what should the Christian’s attitude be toward those who practice this sin? Certainly it should be one of love. We are to love our neighbor (Matt. 22:39) and even our enemy (Matt. 5:43-48).

However, Christ-like love does not mean encouraging a person in sin.

When we love a person as Christ does, we will help him to change what is wrong in his life. Jesus said, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17). Jesus came to call sinners. He came to call sinners to *repentance*, which is a change of mind, brought about by godly sorrow, resulting in a *change of life*.

No. We should not hate the homosexual. We should love that person enough to help and encourage him or her to repent of sin and obey Jesus.

## OVERCOMING WORRY

*Mr. Barber, I worry too much. Does the Bible have anything to say about this problem? What can I do to overcome it?*

God certainly speaks to us through His word about all our problems. He will help us with every need (Phil. 4:19). Here are some positive steps in overcoming worry.

**OBEY GOD AND TRUST HIM TO KEEP HIS PROMISES.** “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). God will not go back on His word. He has not promised to give us all our wants, but He has said that our needs will be supplied.

**BECOME ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN HELPING OTHER PEOPLE.** Worry is basically an outgrowth of self-pity. When we look for ways to help someone else, our minds are rested from our own difficulties and we learn that others have problems also. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

**COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS.** Happiness comes as much from wanting what we have as in having what we want. It is said that often we do not appreciate what we have until we lose it. Wouldn't it be better to stop and thank God for our blessings and enjoy them every day? “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace

of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6, 7).

## INCREASING SELF-CONFIDENCE

*Mr. Barber, I am severely lacking in self-confidence. I am unsure of my ability to accomplish anything worthwhile. What can I do about this?*

No doubt all of us would like to increase that characteristic. Realizing our true nature and God’s concern for us will surely help.

### GOD CREATED ME

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:27). God did a good job in his creation. He did a good job when he created you and me.

### GOD LOVES ME

“For 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). God thought enough of you to send His Son to die for you.

### GOD IS AWARE OF ME

“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground



without your Father. But the very hairs on your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:29-31). God knows that YOU exist and what your needs are.

## CAN A CHRISTIAN FALL?

*Mr. Barber, I have always heard that it is impossible for a child of God to sin and be lost. What do you think?*

I appreciate this good question. However, since what I think is unimportant, let's see what the Bible says.

If it were impossible for a Christian to so sin as to be lost, then many warnings and admonitions in the Bible are useless. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Pet. 1:10). "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12). If the saved people to whom Peter and Paul were writing couldn't fall, why would they be moved by the Holy Spirit to warn so strongly against it?

We are told in II Pet. 2:20-22 that those who have known the way of righteousness and

turn from it, are in a worse state than before they had come to the Lord.

Finally, we read of some people who had fallen from grace. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). A person cannot fall from a position where they have never been. These people had fallen from grace. If they did, we could.

Let us, however, trust and obey the Lord that we may "make our calling and election sure."

## TOO SINFUL?

*Mr. Barber, I have been very wicked. I would like to be a Christian, but I wonder if Jesus will forgive some of the sins I have committed?*

Let me encourage you to read your Bible to learn more about Jesus. As you become acquainted with Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you will find that He was forgiving to those who trusted and obeyed Him.

The Lord described His mission on earth to Zacchaeus when He said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

When Jesus was criticized for eating with publicans and sinners, he replied, "They that

are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17).

Paul, who had experienced this mercy in his own life, stated, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (I Tim. 1:15).

If you and I do not receive forgiveness of our sins, the problem is not in His willingness to forgive, but in our refusal to submit to His commandments. Jesus came to save sinners — even the chief of sinners — but he will not extend forgiveness to those who do not want it.

## LEARNING GOD’S WILL

*Mr. Barber, I want to know and do God’s will in my life, but I can’t seem to find it. What can I do?*

First, in finding God’s will, we should go to the right source, His word, the Bible. Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

Second, we need to examine our desire. Sometimes what we think is a deep desire is just an idle wish. An excellent description of this desire is found in Prov. 2:3-5. “Yea, if thou

criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.”

Third, we should have a regular, systematic program of Bible study. If you do not already have a good one, I suggest you write us and request a free Bible correspondence course.

Fourth, as we seek God’s will, we should pray for wisdom. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

Fifth, when we learn God’s will in a given area, we should obey it. “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22).

## **RAPTURE AND THE 1,000 YEAR REIGN**

*Mr. Barber, when will the rapture occur and Jesus set up His kingdom on earth for 1,000 years?*

The word *rapture* is not in the Bible. Neither does the Bible teach that Jesus is coming back to the earth to reign for 1,000 years.

## HIS KINGDOM IS ALREADY HERE

The Lord's kingdom had already been established and was in existence when Paul wrote to the Colossians in A. D. 64. He was giving thanks to God, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13).

## NOTHING IN THE BIBLE SAYS THAT JESUS WILL EVER SET FOOT ON THE EARTH AGAIN

When Jesus comes from heaven to receive the faithful, the Bible teaches we will meet Him in the air and stay there — not return to the earth 1,000 years. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we *ever* be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:17).

## THERE WILL BE NO EARTH ON WHICH TO ESTABLISH A KINGDOM

The Bible states that when Jesus comes from heaven, the earth will be destroyed. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt

with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3:10).

## ARE YOU REVEREND?

*Mr. Barber, I notice that you never have the Reverend connected with your name. Is there a reason for this?*

Two scriptures come to my mind in connection with this question. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (I Pet. 4:11). We should speak and act with the realization that God is the one who is to receive glory — not man.

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). We cannot do any thing in the name of Jesus or by His authority that He has not commanded or authorized.

With these two verses in mind, let us look at the only time the word *reverend* is used in the King James translation. "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his

covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name” (Psa. 111:9). Here the word describes the Lord.

Jesus spoke of religious titles in Matt. 23: 8-10. “But be ye not called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.” Did you ever read in the Bible of *Reverend* Paul or *Father* Peter? If men did not find these titles in the Bible, where did they get them?

## RAISING CHILDREN

*Mr. Barber, what can I do to guide my children in the right way? It almost seems hopeless with so many bad influences today.*

You do well to be concerned about your children. It is true that there are many negative influences on the home. However, I am convinced that we have no more disregard for God and His way today than when the Bible was written. About every sin in the book is mentioned in Rom. 1:21-32. For two principles that will help in guiding children, notice Deut. 6:6, 7.

## LIVE RIGHT

“And these words, which I command thee

this day shall be in thine heart" (Deut. 6:6). If living for Jesus is not important to me, it probably will not seem important to my children. The old admonition, "Don't do as I do; but do as I say," doesn't impress anyone in the right way.

## TEACH CONTINUOUSLY

Moses continues in Deut. 6:7 by saying that the words which are in our heart must literally be engraved on the hearts of our children. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." We must recognize that God's truth touches every aspect of our life. We should relate this to our children daily.

## MEEKNESS

*Mr. Barber, please explain Matthew 5:5.*

## BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

Today the word *meek* brings to people's minds the idea of being weak, afraid, and cowardly. However, this is not the meaning in the



beatitudes. A meek person is one who has the humility to know his own weakness and need. Therefore, one who can know his need to learn more of God's will and improve defects in his life and who also has learned to control his impulses, passion and strength will be one who will be blessed by God.

## FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH

This expression is used to denote any great blessing. It is true that selfish, arrogant people may own much but possess little. Those who put treasures here first in their life are often ruled and possessed by their possessions. Those who really enjoy this earth are the ones who hold its treasures lightly and who, ranking them inferior to spiritual blessings, are not burdened by a fear of losing material things. The meek will enjoy this earth more than others and finally will gain victory over the earth by receiving eternal life in heaven (Mark 10:28-31; Col. 1:5).

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16:32).

## THANKFUL FOR DIVISION?

*Mr. Barber, don't you think it is good for*

*us to have all the different religious groups, teaching different doctrines, so we can choose what we like?*

Since what I think is not really important, let's read what Jesus said. "Neither pray I for these alone but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20, 21).

Unity based upon the teaching of Jesus is not unity in diversity. Paul described the unity that is to exist among Christ's followers in I Cor. 1:10, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Paul did not thank God for all the divisions in the church at Corinth.

The same apostle wrote further concerning the unity in the body of Christ in Eph. 4:1-6. He said, that there is (1) one body, (2) one Spirit, (3) one hope, (4) one Lord, (5) one faith, (6) one baptism, (7) one God.

When we recognize this God-ordained unity and submit to God's one book, the Bible, we will all be united in Christ.

## GUARDING OUR SPEECH

*Mr. Barber, I know it is a sin to lie and gossip. But how can I know when and what I should say?*

We do well to be concerned about our tongue since James states that it "is a fire, a world of iniquity" (James 3:6). Consider some principles that will help.

What we say must be true (Eph. 4:25)

What we say must come from a loving heart (I Cor. 13:1).

The Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12) should guide our speech. The careless man never thinks about what he has said; the outstanding man thinks carefully about what he is going to say.

We should speak when and only when good can be accomplished. In our prayers, we can ask for God's wisdom as we guard our words as David did in Psa. 141:3. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

Our speech should not only be free of cursing, swearing, gossip, and other forms of evil speaking, but it should also serve in a positive way to teach, encourage, or help others. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).

## WHAT IS SIN?

*Mr. Barber, I am confused. Some things that are called sin by some teachers and preachers are called a sickness by others. Still a different person says that sin does not exist today. Which one should I listen to?*

Your problem is a common one today. Men have many different opinions. They disagree with each other.

However, God does not change. His word is truth (John 17:17). We can find the answer to your question in the Bible.

*Sin is breaking God's law.* "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). Therefore, according to God's word, the Bible, such acts as murder, stealing, adultery, gossip, lying, and adding to God's word, are sins.

*Sin is not doing what God commands.* "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). In view of this statement, not worshipping God, not loving one's neighbor, not obeying the gospel, and taking from God's word, would also be sins. When God gives a command, and we refuse to obey it, we are showing our disrespect and rebellion against God.

Since sin separates a soul from God (Isa.

59:1, 2), and all sin (Rom. 3:23), we should be concerned about how to have it removed.

The people who believed in Jesus were told in Acts 2:38, "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."

## MUST I WORSHIP?

*Mr. Barber, someone asked me if a Christian has to attend the public worship services to be pleasing to God. I didn't know what to say. Please comment.*

I have never met a person completely committed to the Lord who didn't want to worship God. Jesus promised in Matt. 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." We want to be close to people we love.

The importance of the assembly is contained in a command in Heb. 10:25. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." We cannot worship with other Christians if we are not where they assemble.

The seriousness of this sin of neglect (James 4:17), is seen in the next verse. "For if

we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin" (Heb. 10:26).

The attitude of the faithful child of God is one of gratitude that he has the opportunity to praise God (Psa. 122:1). He desires to do the will of God because of the love of Christ for him and his love for Christ (II Cor. 5:14).

When a man often asks, "Do I have to go home to be with my wife and children?", there is something wrong with his relationship to his family.

When a person constantly asks, "Do I have to go to worship God?", there is something wrong with his relationship to the Lord.

## PORNOGRAPHY

*Mr. Barber, why should people in Dalton be so concerned about books that are sold in stores? What harm can a little ink on paper do?*

I assume that you are asking about pornography which is openly displayed in some stores.

I am concerned about what people read because what they see and read helps determine what they think. What we think determines what we do. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). "Keep thy heart with all diligence;

for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt. 15:19).

On the other hand, good things come from good thoughts. Our minds are fertile fields. They will reproduce what is planted there. Therefore, we should be concerned what we, our children, and others watch and read.

If someone should put sugar in our gas tank on our car, we would be mad. We love our cars. We have laws to demand that a restaurant sell only pure food and inspectors enforce these standards of cleanliness. We love our bodies. However, if we let our children poison their minds with ungodly books and movies, can we truly say that we love their minds and souls?

## ARE BABIES SINNERS?

*Mr. Barber, some one told me that a baby was a sinner and needed to be baptized. Does the Bible teach this?*

No.

This is one of the points of Calvinism that has been accepted by many religious groups today without searching the Bible to see if it is true.

First, let us see what sin is. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin

is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). Sin is an act of rebellion against the law of God. It is not an inherited characteristic like brown eyes and black hair. A baby does not have the ability to know and understand God's will and therefore cannot disobey it.

Second, notice a plain statement on this subject in the Bible. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20). This verse teaches individual responsibility, and accountability before God. If a baby cannot get the sin of his father, how could he go back hundreds of generations and inherit the sin of Adam?

## WHEN WILL CHRIST COME?

*Mr. Barber, I hear a lot of people say that Christ is coming soon. When will it be?*

I have no idea; Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36). One of the favorite sports of some religious prophets for many years has been setting the time of the second coming of Christ. So far, they have a perfect score. They have been wrong



100 percent of the time!

Later in the same chapter, Jesus told His disciples, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:44). Jesus promised His return at a time when even His followers were not expecting Him.

Another description of the coming of Christ is as a thief. "For ourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5:2). How will Christ come as a thief? Certainly not in dishonesty to steal and to plunder. Rather His coming will be unannounced and unexpected. A robber does not even give an approximate date and time of arrival.

However, the important thing is not when the Lord is coming. Matthew 25 teaches us that we should make adequate preparation (Matt. 25:1-13), use all our abilities at every opportunity (Matt. 25:14-30); and show concern for others (Matt. 25:31-46). Those who obey Jesus are ready all the time. "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 25:13).

## WHAT CAN I DO?

*Mr. Barber, a person who is supposed to be a Christian has done me wrong. I would like for*

*everything to be right between us, but this person has made no apology. What can I do since I am not the one who sinned?*

Certainly the person who sins against another has a responsibility to make things right. Jesus said, "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:23, 24).

However, the one who has been offended also has an equal obligation to restore good relations. "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matt. 18:15, 16).

Perhaps the person who has offended you is not aware of it. It may be that the person is ashamed of his or her actions and would like to apologize but is afraid of how you might react. In any case, when you follow Jesus' instructions, you can know that you have done what you can to restore good feelings between you and your friend.

## WHICH COMES FIRST?

*Mr. Barber, in your opinion, is a person saved and then baptized to join the church or must one be baptized in order to be saved?*

Rather than giving my opinion, let us see what the Bible says. I'm sure we realize that before a person can be baptized scripturally, he must have faith (Heb. 11:6), repent of all sins (Luke 13:3), and confess his faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10).

Now what part does baptism play in God's plan of salvation? I only know of five verses where baptism and salvation, or words meaning the same thing, are used. Let us notice them.

### Mark 16:16

Which did Jesus place first here, baptism or salvation?

### Acts 2:38

Did Peter by inspiration put remission of sins before baptism or baptism before remission of sins?

### Acts 22:16

Is baptism or washing away sins first in this verse?

### Romans 6:4

Does newness of life come before baptism or does newness of life follow being baptized into the death of Christ?

## I Peter 3:21

What does baptism do? What does the Bible say?

### LOVE ENEMIES?

*Mr. Barber, didn't Jesus say that we are to love our enemies? I just cannot bring myself to love people who mistreat me and my family. What should I do?*

Yes. Jesus said in Matt. 5:43, 44, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." This is indeed often a difficult command to obey.

However, we must realize that we can dislike — even hate — a person's actions and love him as a person.

Have your children ever done anything that you did not like? Do you love your children?

Does your husband ever do something that annoys you, that you did not approve of? Do you love your husband?

Do you remember speaking an unkind word or doing an act that afterwards you detested? Do you love yourself?

What we are doing in each of these cases is separating the action from the person. We can dislike — yes hate — something that we do and love ourselves. We can disapprove of actions that are not only annoying but also sinful in our friends and relatives and still love them while helping them to overcome their wrong actions and attitudes. And by the grace of God we can learn to appreciate the personal worth of our enemies and love them even though we are being harmed by them.

## WHAT ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT?

*Mr. Barber, I have heard a lot about the Holy Spirit, but I don't understand it. Is this just an attitude or a feeling, or what?*

The question you ask interests many. There are a number of false views about the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost as He is usually referred to in the King James Version of the Bible.

Some believe the Holy Spirit is simply a divine influence or an impersonal force, others think of Him as a group attitude such as “school spirit.” Another person might refer to the Holy Spirit as an “It” that you “get” or “feel.”

However, the Bible clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit is a Person, a member of the Godhead, the God Family, made up of God the Father (John 20:17), God the Son (Heb. 1:8), and God the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3, 4).

Actions are assigned to the Holy Spirit in the Bible that only a person can perform. He is said to speak (I Tim. 4:1), teach (John 14:26), give responsibility (Acts 20:28), guide, speak, show (John 16:13), and invite (Rev. 22:17).

Further, we are told in God's word, the Bible, that the Holy Spirit can be treated as a person. He can be blasphemed (Mark 3:29), treated despitefully, insulted (Heb. 10:29), tempted (Acts 5:9), lied to (Acts 5:3), and grieved (Eph. 4:30).

These are descriptions of a personality. One could not lie to an impersonal force such as electricity. "School spirit" cannot teach, guide, and speak. The Holy Spirit is a member of the Godhead, the God Family with the Father and Jesus the Son.

## IS THERE A HEAVEN?

*Mr. Barber, recently some people came to my door to talk about religion. They said that they had no plans to go to heaven but were going*

*to live on earth forever. What do you think? Do we have a hope of going to heaven?*

If the people said they had no hope of heaven, they probably knew what they were talking about.

Since my thoughts will not judge us (John 12:48), let us examine these ideas in the light of the Bible.

In view of II Pet. 3:10, I would not want all my hopes and treasures on this earth. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." After the day of the Lord, this earth will not be suitable for living.

However, we do have assurance of a place prepared for those who serve God. Paul thanked God "for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven" (Col. 1:5). Peter described our lively hope as "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Pet. 1:4). In view of God's word, I have a hope of heaven.

Some plan to live on this earth forever. Others plan for 1,000 years. In both cases their mind and affection is in the wrong place. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which

are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1, 2).

## FORGIVE AGAIN?

*Mr. Barber, recently a friend of mine did me wrong in the same way for the third time. I forgave her the first two times, and she has asked me to forgive her again. How many times do I have to do this?*

First, let me observe that you have not forgiven your friend at all. A characteristic of love is that it "thinketh no evil," or as another translation says, "Love keeps no score of wrongs" (I Cor. 13:5). When a person forgives another, the offence is never brought up again. It appears to me from your brief statement that you are keeping score in your relationship with your friend and according to your books, it is 3-0 in your favor.

Let's see what Jesus said about the number of times to forgive. "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:3, 4). When Peter



asked the Lord if he should forgive a brother seven times, Jesus replied, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22).

Another principle is that we must forgive as long as we need to be forgiven. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14, 15). Only a person with no faults can afford the luxury of not being forgiving.

## JOIN ANOTHER CHURCH?

*Mr. Barber, I am becoming more unhappy with my church. Would you recommend that I join another church?*

Since you are unhappy in your present situation, it would be a good time to think seriously about your relationship to God and to consider the Lord's church that we read about in the Bible.

The church that the Lord promised to build (Matt. 16:18) and that came into being in Acts 2 was not one that men could join. There was only one established by the Lord, which was known as His body (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18, 24; Eph. 4:4-6). Have you ever looked for the

names, creeds and practices of denominations in the Bible?

An interesting statement is found in Acts 2:47: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." People were added to the Lord's church at the time of their salvation. They did not join it.

When Peter was asked the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?", he replied, "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 2:37, 38). How and when did these people become members of the church? Peter continued preaching, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:40, 41).

## GOD SEES

*Mr. Barber, does the Bible really say that God can see everything? This scares me.*

Yes, we are told in many verses that God sees and knows all. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3). However, this is no cause to fear

when we are God's children and are doing His will.

If we choose to do evil, God knows that. Distance, covering, or darkness will not conceal anything from God (Psa. 139:1-17). We are also told, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:14).

But on the other hand, this is a most comforting thought to Christians living faithfully. God sees and knows all in their lives too. He is protecting and blessing them. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (II Chron. 16:9).

God is always listening to the prayers of His children. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (I Pet. 3:12).

The Lord is with those who are doing His work of telling others of the good news of Jesus. He is with them "always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

## IS ANY WORSHIP OK?

*Mr. Barber, isn't it true that God is pleased*

*with our worship as long as we are sincere?*

To find out what God accepts, we must look into His word, the Bible. Jesus stated God's requirements for worship in John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." We must have the right attitude and do what God says do the way God says do it — spirit and truth.

The right spirit would be in sincerity and with the proper understanding and appreciation of God. Worshipping according to truth is worshipping according to God's word (John 17:17).

But what about changing this plan presented by Jesus? Is God pleased? Again Jesus said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). Webster's dictionary gives as synonyms for vain, "idle, worthless, fruitless, unsuccessful." Certainly this kind of worship — that is, doing what man commands — does not please God.

Paul found people in Athens hundreds of years ago who evidently were sincere but not worshipping God in the right way. They were worshipping in ignorance (Acts 17:23). What did this apostle tell them? "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). They needed to repent of the wrong kind of worship.

Jesus told a woman in Samaria, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:23). God is still looking for true worshippers.

## CAN'T YOU FACE THE MUSIC?

*Mr. Barber, I have noticed that churches of Christ do not have a piano or organ with the singing. Why?*

This is usually one of the first things a visitor notices in the worship of the Lord's church. There are reasons for this.

When God gives a specific command, everything else is eliminated. When Jesus gave His disciples the Lord's supper, He used unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine (Luke 22:1-20). Most people would consider chocolate milk and potato chips on the Lord's table as a violation of the teaching of the New Testament.

We recognize that a specific command excludes other things. When I hire a decorator to paint my bedroom white, he has disobeyed me when he adds green and orange stripes to the ceiling. Although I did not tell him not to put green and orange stripes on the ceiling, that

was understood when I specifically told him to paint the room white.

God's word commands, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). That is God's command through His word. If we choose to add to this part of the worship by playing a piano, organ, or any other instrument, we have gone beyond God's specific command. The last chapter of the Bible contains this warning: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18). How would you like green and orange stripes on your ceiling when you told the man to paint it white?

## WHERE CAN I FIND IT?

*Mr. Barber, where does the Bible say, "Every generation shall grow weaker and wiser?"*

I have looked in my Bible concordance and have not been able to find this quotation.

This statement is one of many "chimney-corner" scripture-sayings that we have always heard that the Bible makes, but are not in the Bible at all. These are usually preceded by the

phrase, "You know, the Good book says . . ."  
Some additional "chimney-corner" scriptures that are actually not in the Bible are: "Cleanliness is next to godliness", "Once in grace, always in grace", "Let your conscience be your guide", "What is to be, will be", "Charity begins at home", "Every tub is going to sit on its own bottom", and, "He that sitteth on a red hot stove shall rise again."

We must always be sure that the Bible teaches a certain idea before we believe it. The people who lived in the town of Berea "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). We need to imitate that attitude.

I would highly recommend that every person who really wants to study the Bible get a good concordance. This book lists the passages where a particular word is found. Then, if we know a word in a scripture, we can look in the concordance and find the place in the Bible where it is found. *Cruden's Complete Concordance* by Alexander Cruden is a good one and can be bought at most book stores.

## BE BAPTIZED AGAIN

*Mr. Barber, from a study of the Bible, I*

*realize that I was not baptized for the right reason. I was baptized the first time to join a church. What should I do?*

You are correct that baptism is not designed to help a person "join a church." The term, "joining the church," is not found in the Bible.

Baptism is "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), to "wash away sins" (Acts 22:16), to put a person into Christ (Rom. 6:3, 4; Gal. 3:27).

Now to answer your question, please read Acts 19:1-5. Paul met twelve men who knew only of the baptism of John. He explained that John was preparing people to believe on Christ who was to follow. Therefore, the baptism of John the Baptist was no longer acceptable to God. "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5).

Any time we realize that we have not properly obeyed God, we should repent of the transgression or failure to obey and then do what is right.

## ASSURANCE

*Mr. Barber, I know that the Bible teaches that a child of God can sin and fall from grace. Does this mean that we can never know if we are saved or lost?*



You are correct that the Bible teaches that a person can fall from a right relationship with God into sin (I Cor. 10:12; II Pet. 1:10; II Pet. 2:20, 22; Heb. 6:4-6; Gal. 5:4).

However, this does not have to happen. A Christian can remain faithful to the Lord. This person has assurance of the blessings of the Lord.

John states one of the purposes of his first letter when he says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (I John 5:13).

Every faithful child of God ought to have the confidence of Peter when he said, "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15:11).

But how does this knowledge and positive assurance of our salvation come? "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (I John 2:3-5).

It is as simple as this: when we obey God, He will keep His word and bless us.

## DID CHRIST DIE FOR ME?

*Mr. Barber, is it true that Christ died for only a few people? If that is true, then some cannot be saved.*

You are correct that if Christ died for only a select number, many cannot be saved because “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22).

However, Christ’s death was not limited to only a certain few. We are familiar with John 3: 16 which reads, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The world is the object of God’s love and whosoever indicates the ones who will benefit from His love — those who will accept it.

John further emphasized this fact when he said, “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (I John 2:2). The next verse states the ones who will be blessed by Christ’s sacrifice: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (I John 2:3).

Perhaps the clearest verse relating to your question is Heb. 2:9. “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for

every man.” That doesn’t leave anyone out does it? God leaves the choice to each person. God has prepared heaven and the water of life for “whosoever will” (Rev. 22:17). Hell is for whosoever won’t (Rev. 20:15; 21:27).

## GET RELIGION?

*Mr. Barber, I have been trying for some time to get religion. I just can’t get that feeling. Do you have any suggestions?*

Yes. Quit trying to get religion. Study God’s word and obey His teaching.

The expression “get religion” is not found anywhere in the Bible. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). Therefore we see that true religion is something one does, not a feeling that a person gets.

However, a person who is obeying the Lord does feel right. After the man from Ethiopia had heard Philip preach Jesus, he confessed his faith in the Lord and was baptized. He then went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:35-39).

The man who kept the prison in Philippi was also one who rejoiced. But it was after he had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, washed the

stripes of Paul and Silas who had been beaten, and was baptized (Acts 16:30-34).

In each case in the Bible where the people rejoiced, they felt right because they knew they had done right. They nowhere stated that they knew they were right because they felt right. There is a world of difference in these two attitudes — the difference between truth and error!

Don't try to "get religion." Study the Bible. Obey God's will. You will then know that you know Him (I John 2:3-5).

## CAN I KNOW?

*Mr. Barber, I want to do God's will, but there are some who say that we cannot be for sure about what the Bible teaches. Would you please comment?*

The idea that we cannot know God's will is a very common one today. Some would even doubt that we can know anything. In fact, a few supposedly know that we cannot know the truth. That sounds like a complicated contradiction doesn't it?

Let's see what the Bible says. I believe it will be clearer than what man says.

Jesus stated, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Jesus knew that we could know the truth.

But what is truth? "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The Bible then is our source of truth.

Can we understand God's word and will? "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). Surely God has not commanded us to do something that is impossible. Therefore we can understand the Lord's will.

We can know God's will. We can understand it.

We can know that we are saved and right with God when we are obeying His will. "And hereby we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments" (I John 2:3).

## WHY CAN'T I PRAY?

*Mr. Barber, I seem to be having trouble praying. What could be the problem?*

I assume that you know what the Bible teaches about prayer: that we pray to God through Christ, in faith, according to His will.

The Bible also teaches that we must have right relationships for our prayers to be effective.

We must be right with God for prayers to be answered. "For the eyes of the Lord are over

the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (I Pet. 3:12). It would be inconsistent to ask God to bless us while we are rebelling against His will.

Every attempt must be made to be at peace with others. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee: Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:23, 24). Sin prevents acceptable worship to God (I Sam. 15:25, 30).

There must be a relationship of love and respect in the home for our prayers to be answered. "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (I Pet. 3:7). I could not curse my wife, then bless God in prayer and expect that prayer to be heard.

## IS THE HOLY SPIRIT CONFUSED?

*Mr. Barber, I hear many people claiming to be baptized in and guided by the Holy Ghost. But many of these people teach things that are*

*opposite to each other. Is the Holy Ghost confused? Does He make men teach different things?*

Your question is one which should be carefully considered by everyone.

No. The Holy Spirit, or Holy Ghost, does not say one thing and then say the very opposite. Jesus told His apostles, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself: but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come" (John 16:13). Here Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth. Truth does not contradict itself. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is not responsible for the confusion in the religious world today.

The Holy Spirit has given us God's will for us today in the Bible (II Tim. 3:16, 17; II Pet. 1:20, 21). That is the standard that we should follow in our lives and the standard by which we will be judged (II John 9; John 12:48).

### **"EVERYTHING IS WRONG"**

*Mr. Barber, recently so many things have happened to me that are bad. I get so discouraged. Is there any hope?*

Yes. When a person believes God, obeys

His word, and trusts His promises there is always hope.

One of the most precious promises in the Bible is Rom. 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

My wife is a very good cook and makes delicious cakes. In addition to milk and sugar, she will mix flour, raw eggs, baking soda, and vegetable shortening – which by themselves are distasteful. However, they all work together for a delicious dessert.

God is able to mix distasteful events and circumstances into our life to mold beautiful character and present outstanding opportunities.

This correct combination is brought into the lives of special people: "To them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

How can I know if I truly love God? We can know because it is primarily an observable fact and not a feeling. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). "If a man love me he will keep my words" (John 14:23).

When we trust and obey God, everything eventually is for our benefit.

Also, I would suggest that you talk to someone who is concerned and who will listen.



## IS IT FIXED?

*Mr. Barber, I believe God has already fixed everything we do, every word we speak, and whether we are saved or lost. Why do you preach and teach that people ought to obey God to be saved?*

Why did you ask the question? If what you say is true, God has already programmed my response and anything that you or I do will make no difference in our life here or in the hereafter.

I encourage everyone to obey God because the Bible teaches that man has the freedom to choose. Elijah persuaded the Israelites in his day to make a choice by these words: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (I Kings 18:21).

Joshua demanded that his people make a choice, saying, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

Could these people make a choice? Or were these men of God mocking and joking with them?

I teach men to obey God because Jesus said that this was necessary for those who want to enter the Kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21). Jesus is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8, 9).

Will you believe the Bible, the word of God? The choice is yours!!!

## WHY THE JUDGMENT?

*Mr. Barber, the Bible seems to teach that a person's destiny is determined at death. If this is true, what is the purpose of Judgment Day?*

You are correct that death ends the period of our preparation. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

Judgment day will not be a courtroom trial. Our life on earth is our trial, testing and proving.

God has been generous to give to the Christian the best advocate ever in the person of His Son. "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1). Jesus, who pleads our cause before the Father, has never lost a case when the person will follow His

counsel. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments (I John 2:3).

The day of judgment then is a time God has set aside when Jesus will hand down the reward of heaven to the righteous and the punishment of hell to those who reject Him.

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).

## WHAT ABOUT SPRINKLING?

*Mr. Barber, why do you teach that baptism is putting someone completely under water and not sprinkling or pouring water over them?*

I teach that baptism is immersion because that is the meaning of the word as it was used by Jesus and His apostles.

Sprinkling and pouring do not fit the description and demands of the scriptures concerning baptism.

"And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water

there: and they came, and were baptized” (John 3:23). Sprinkling and pouring do not require “much water.”

“And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38, 39). A burial in water requires going down into the water and coming up out of the water. Sprinkling and pouring do not.

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). Sprinkling and pouring are not likenesses of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Immersion is.

We should also note that scriptural baptism must be preceded by faith, repentance and confession (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:10). Baptism is followed by living the Christ-like life (Rom. 6:4; II Cor. 5:17).

## **EVERYBODY’S DOING IT!!!**

*Mr. Barber, I am a young person and want*

*to do right, but it seems that no one else wants to live for the Lord. I am discouraged. What can I do?*

You are to be commended for your desire to live for the Lord. This is certainly necessary. Cultivate and increase that desire for Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

As we read the Bible, we recognize that those who serve God are always in the minority. Noah and his family were the only ones in the world who were saved from the flood.

Of the 603,550 Israelite warriors in the wilderness after leaving Egypt, only two, Joshua and Caleb, went into the land of Canaan.

Knowing the difficulty of living the dedicated life and the pull of people around us, God tells us in His word, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Exod. 23:2).

Do not become discouraged. Disappointed? Yes. Discouraged? No!!! That is a wrong reaction to adversity. Even if everyone else decides to go to hell, I want to go to heaven. I'm sure you have this same desire.

Never give in to group pressure. The majority is rarely right in leading us to God. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and

many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14).

## LET MY CHILDREN DECIDE?

*Mr. Barber, we have friends who do not give their children any religious instruction. They said their parents made them go to Sunday school when they were young and later they resented the church. I have always thought we should teach our children about God and His word, the Bible. Our friends say they are going to let their children make their own decisions when they are adults. What do you think?*

Do your friends follow this same reasoning in other areas? Will they let children decide about getting an education when they are adults? They might turn against schools if they are forced to go as children.

Do they encourage their children to brush their teeth? What if they grow up to resent dentists?

When the children are sick, do they let them decide not to take much-needed medicine if they don't like the taste? They might develop a rebellious attitude toward doctors.

In the spring, do they let their garden decide if it wants to grow weeds or flowers and vegetables?

Do they love their children's bodies and minds and their gardens more than the souls of their children?

"And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). I cannot improve on this inspired advice.

## WAS PETER POPE?

*Mr. Barber, in recent weeks I have heard and read much about Peter being the first pope. But I have been reading my Bible and I cannot find any reference to Peter being a pope. Can you help?*

You have already read everything the Bible says about Peter being the pope — nothing! The words *pope* and *papacy* are not found in the Bible. The idea of this office originated much later than the first century after Christ. Therefore Christ's church which is described in the Bible had no one in this position.

Peter was an apostle (Matt. 10:2) and a

preacher (Acts 2-5) but never claimed or received superior authority over the apostles.

Peter, according to today's qualifications, could not have been pope. He was married (Matt. 8:14). He was rebuked by Paul "because he was to be blamed" (Gal. 2:11). This shows he certainly was not infallible. When people fell down at his feet to worship him, he said, "Stand up; I myself also am a man" (Acts 10:26).

Jesus is the foundation of His church (I Cor. 3:11). Jesus is the head of His church (Col. 1:18). No normal body has two heads.

The scriptures, which are inspired of God, give us instruction in righteousness and completely furnish us to all good works (II Tim. 3:16, 17). Since the office of pope and the appointment of popes is not mentioned in the Bible, who started the idea — God or man?

## CHRIST CAN HELP

*Mr. Barber, I am a Christian and know I should be active in the Lord's work. However, I feel so inadequate and afraid. Is there anything that would help?*

Yes. More faith in Christ and effective training in a specific area of service.

My favorite verse in the Bible is Phil. 4:13:



“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” I love the truth in this verse because it tells me that the Lord will help me do anything God wants me to do.

Through Christ, I (and you) can:

1. Know God’s will (Heb. 1:1, 2; I Cor. 14:37).
2. Be happy and content (Phil. 4:4; Matt. 5:1-12).
3. Overcome temptation, trial and sorrow (I Cor. 10:13; I Pet. 5:6, 7).
4. Bring others to Christ (Matt. 28:19, 20).
5. Restore erring brethren (Rom. 1:16; Gal. 6:1).
6. Go to heaven (John 14:1-6).

All these things can be accomplished! I cannot do them through my own power and wisdom, but “through Christ which strengtheneth me.” “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph. 3:20).

## CALL NO MAN FATHER

*Mr. Barber, I have read in the Bible where the word, “father” is used for God and for a person’s ancestors. Does the Bible say anything about this word as a religious title?*

Yes.

Jesus said, "And call no man your father, upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Matt. 23:9).

The Lord was speaking to the multitude and to His disciples. He was teaching them to accept no title that would elevate one above another. "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your master, even Christ and all ye are brethren. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ" (Matt. 23:8, 10).

The religious title, *Father*, is not approved in the sacred Scriptures, but was introduced after the Scriptures were complete.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16, 17).

Jesus said, "Call no man your father upon the earth" (Matt. 23:9). The religious title, *Father*, was not introduced until after Jesus lived on earth and the Scriptures were complete. The Scriptures perfectly furnish us in all things that are right and good.

When the religious title, *Father*, was introduced, did it originate with God or man? For a more complete explanation of God's will on this subject or any other, read your Bible, God's word.

## IS IT WRONG TO CRY?

*Mr. Barber, recently some one very close to me died. A friend told me that I shouldn't be sorrowful since I was a Christian. Is it wrong for a Christian to cry?*

No.

When Peter came to the house where Dorcas had died, "all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them" (Acts 9:39).

In fact, we are commanded to cry in showing our concern for others who are in sorrow. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15).

Certainly we should remember the promises and comfort of God. Our sorrow and weeping will be different from the complete despair of one who does not have faith in God and His providence. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (I Thess. 4:13).

Crying is an emotional valve that God has given us to release our sorrow.

Times of sorrow in facing death are valuable in helping us to determine what is really important in life. "It is better to go to the house

of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart" (Eccl. 7:2).

The shortest verse in our Bible tells us much about Jesus, our example, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35).

## WHAT ABOUT REVEREND?

*Mr. Barber, I read your article on calling a man of the church "father." What about calling a preacher "reverend" or "pastor?"*

The same principle that Jesus taught would apply to any title that would give one man in Christ's body preeminence over another.

Jesus said, "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called master: for one is your Master, even Christ" (Matt. 23:8-10).

The word *reverend* is used only one time in the King James Version of the Bible. "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name" (Psa. 111:9). The word *reverend* refers to God in this passage.

The word *pastor* is found only once in the

Bible (Eph. 4:11). In the Lord's church in the New Testament, this was the same office that is sometimes described by the words *elder* or *bishop*. There was always more than one man in this office in a local congregation (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23). Therefore, in the Bible, we have no mention of any preacher, or any other man, being *the pastor* of a congregation. The men appointed to this work of pastor, elder, or bishop had to meet certain qualifications listed in I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

Since we find no reference to *The Reverend John* or *The Reverend Paul* in the Bible, God's word, we know that this practice must have originated somewhere other than in the mind of God.

## I NEED FAITH

*Mr. Barber, I believe in Jesus, but I wish my faith could be stronger. What will help my faith to grow?*

## WHAT IS FAITH?

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Faith or belief is the confidence

and assurance of the existence of things or persons which we have never seen with our eyes, touched with our hands, or heard with our ears. I believe that George Washington was the first President of the United States. I never met him, but I accept the evidence that has been given.

## HOW DO I GET FAITH?

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God: and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30, 31). Since this is the way to get faith, read God’s word, the Bible. I believe in Jesus because of reliable evidence.

## SO WHAT?

“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:24). “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26). Faith in Jesus without obeying His will is dead. Obey God’s will as you learn it.

## I AM AFRAID

*Mr. Barber, I know I should talk to others about their soul and share Christ with them, but I am afraid. Is this a sin? The Bible says that God doesn't give us fear.*

You probably have in mind II Tim. 1:7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." God does not want us to have such a fear of men and what they will say or do that we will not obey Him.

However we are to fear God. This is a command. "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13). The respect and reverence for God which prompts us to obey Him is right.

Many times we confuse "stage fright" or "nervousness" with sinful fear. But this is not necessarily the case. A certain amount of anxiety accompanied by physical symptoms of a rapid heart beat, knocking knees, and dryness in the throat when we are in a stressful situation is normal.

If I want to determine whether I was controlled by the fear of God or the fear of man at a certain time, I should not ask, "How did I feel?", but rather, "What did I do?" Brave people often feel frightened but do their duty

in the face of danger. We do not say that they were cowards because they felt afraid. We commend them because they acted with courage.

We must ask, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

## WHAT IS GODLY SORROW?

*Mr. Barber, what is the difference in godly sorrow and worldly sorrow in II Cor. 7:10?*

II Cor. 7:10 reads, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

Worldly sorrow is regretting getting caught in sin or sorrow that one is suffering the consequences of sin.

Godly sorrow is sorrow for sin, it is regretting what sin does to oneself, to others, and to God.

This genuine sorrow over sin leads to repentance which is a change of attitude toward sin and results in a change of life. John the Baptist preached, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8).

The prodigal son is a good example of a



person who had godly sorrow that led to repentance. "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father" (Luke 15:17-20).

This man had a change of mind, brought about by godly sorrow, resulting in a change of life.

## HOW MUCH WATER?

*Mr. Barber, I know that you teach that a person must be completely covered in baptism while others say that a small amount sprinkled on the head will do. Do you really think that more water will help?*

Your question is one which many ask and I appreciate your interest.

I *personally* do not think that the difference is in the water. I do not think water would be any better than orange juice.

However, what I think does not affect the will of God. We will be judged by the words of Jesus, not Jerrie Barber (John 12:48).

Let us see what God has to say about the form and element of baptism. Does the Bible describe what is required in this act of obedience?

“And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized” (John 3:23). Which requires “much water,” sprinkling or immersion?

“And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38, 39). Is this done when one is sprinkled?

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death” (Rom. 6:4). Would a person be buried who only had a handful of dirt sprinkled on him? Is sprinkling a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus?

## CAN I UNDERSTAND?

*Mr. Barber, I would like to know more of God's will, but I have been told that it is no use. Can I ever understand God's word, even if I read it?*

Yes.

God has commanded us to understand His will. "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). God would not be so cruel as to command the impossible.

We are to obey God which implies that we can understand what to obey. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3). If you could not understand God's will, you could not show your love for Him by keeping His commandments.

The command to study suggests understanding. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). What would be the use of study if one could not understand the word?

Paul wrote in Eph. 3:4, "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ."

## WHAT ABOUT COUNTRY HAM?

*Mr. Barber, I have been told that it is a sin to eat certain animals such as hogs and catfish. Some passages seem to say this, but others teach otherwise. I am confused. What is right?*

It is true that under the Old Testament God commanded His people not to eat certain meats. In Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, the laws about clean and unclean animals are given.

In that law, since the hog was an unclean animal, it was wrong for them to eat bacon, pork sausages and country ham. The catfish was an unclean animal also.

However, we are no longer under that law. The Old Testament has been abolished, nailed to the cross, taken away (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Heb. 10:9).

Peter had difficulty understanding this and refused the animals he saw in a vision (Acts 10:9-14). However, the voice in the vision said, "What God hath cleansed that call not thou common" (Acts 10:15).

Now that we are under another law, the New Testament, these regulations do not apply to us today.

In fact we are told that a command to abstain from meats is a doctrine of devils (I Tim. 4:1-3).

"For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (I Tim. 4:4, 5).

May we be thankful for all God's blessings — including country ham and catfish.

## I'M GETTING OLD

*Mr. Barber, I'm getting older and often I feel depressed about my age. I would like some good thoughts, if you have any, to replace my fears.*

Your concern is one which we all should have: a better attitude toward aging. May I make three suggestions?

*We should appreciate people, not ages.* Both youth and age bring opportunities and advantages. "The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the grey head" (Prov. 20:29). Every soul is worth more than all the world in the eyes of Jesus, regardless of age (Matt. 16:26).

*We should realize that we are becoming the person we will be.* If advanced age is to bring wisdom, pleasant memories, and happiness in God's service, we must think right and do right — NOW! "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). A life spent in a right relationship with God brings hope and happiness at the end (II Tim. 4:7, 8).

*We should live today, content.* Wisdom tells us that we should not dwell on the "good old days" (Eccl. 7:10). Living entirely in the future robs us of today's opportunities (Matt. 6:34). Learning the lesson of contentment is

most valuable. "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

My wish to you is that of a little boy who wrote a doctor. When he had said what he wanted to say, he concluded the letter by writing, "I hope you live all your life."

## WHAT ARE "OTHER TONGUES"?

*Mr. Barber, I hear people saying that they speak in tongues. I have read about "other tongues" in the Bible. What is this talking about?*

Some people have been taught that they should speak in "other tongues." However, what they do and what the apostles did are entirely two different things.

Those who speak in "tongues" today make sounds that are not a language. They are taught sounds that are usually learned from others who speak in "tongues."

On the other hand, the tongues mentioned in the Bible were disciples speaking in other languages which they had not studied.

It is said of the apostles in Acts 2:4, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit

gave them utterance.”

The explanation is given in verse six. The crowd was confused “because that every man heard them speak in his own language” (Acts 2:6).

The apostles were all from Galilee. The question in the mind of the multitude was, “And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?” (Acts 2:8).

The people from the different nations were amazed and said, “We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful work of God” (Acts 2:11).

The tongues, then, were languages which they could use but had never studied.

This gift, along with other supernatural powers, ended when the complete will of God was given (I Cor. 13:8-10).

## **WHEN WILL THE KINGDOM COME?**

*Mr. Barber, when can we expect the Lord's kingdom to be established on the earth?*

Jesus established His kingdom almost 2,000 years ago! Another kingdom will not be established on the earth by the Lord.

Notice a promise of Jesus in Mark 9:1, “Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of

death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.”

The statement of Jesus is clear. Some of those people in about the year A. D. 32 would not die until the kingdom would come.

I can only think of three possibilities concerning this statement:

1. Jesus made a statement that was not true.
2. Some of those people are still alive today and are over 2,000 years old.
3. Jesus knew whereof He spoke, and the kingdom was established within the lifetime of those who heard the promise.

I would reject the first possibility because the Bible teaches that Jesus is divine and cannot lie.

The second is incredible because we would notice people of that age.

The third is the truth. In the year 64 A.D. Paul was thanking God who “hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13). The kingdom, the church of Christ, was established on Pentecost day, 33 A.D. (Matt. 16:18, 19; Acts 2:1-47).



## WHAT HAVE I DONE?

*Mr. Barber, recently I have had sickness and other problems in my family. Some of my friends keep telling me that I have sinned and that God is trying to tell me something. If I have done wrong, I want to know it and correct it, but I can't think of sins that I have not repented of and that would cause these things to happen. What should I do?*

Certainly self-examination is in order to be sure we are doing God's will (II Cor. 13:5; Psa. 139:23, 24). When we become aware of sin in our lives, we should correct it immediately, according to the will of God (Acts 17:30; 22:16; I John 1:9).

However, every time a problem or adversity arises in one's life, he is not being told by God of his sin.

Job, in the Old Testament, was a perfect and upright man, one who feared God. Loss of possessions, death of his children, and sickness came into his life. But it can be seen it was not true that much adversity came because of much sin. Incidentally, he had three "friends" who tried to persuade him that sin was the cause of his troubles. But they were later rebuked by the Lord (Job 42:7).

When Jesus healed a certain blind man, His

disciples supposed that sin was the cause. However, Jesus replied, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents" (John 9:3).

God permits us to live in a world where we suffer disease and death along with others. Therefore, we chose to serve God because it is right and not just for a quick way out of trouble.

## FAITH ONLY?

*Mr. Barber, the creed in my church states that we are saved by faith alone without any obedience at all. From some of the things I read in the Bible, I sometimes wonder if this is true. What does the Bible say?*

You are certainly wise to honestly evaluate a creed written by men. This has brought much misunderstanding of God's will and division in the religious world.

We are told in I Pet. 4:11, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." If everyone did that, we would have no human creeds and no divisions.

The Bible has much to say about the relationships of faith and works. Faith is absolutely essential to please God (John 8:24; Heb. 11:6).

However, the faith that is pleasing to God

is not a dead faith. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17).

The faith that blesses is one which obeys the will of God. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision: but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6).

Your creed says that we are saved by faith only. The Bible says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24).

Your choice and mine is: will I accept God's word or man's word?

## LOSING SALVATION?

*Mr. Barber, I would like for you, if you could explain, "How you lose your salvation – How you get it back."*

This is a question that every child of God should be concerned about. This condition is called falling (II Pet. 1:10; I Cor. 10:12), or falling from grace (Gal. 5:4).

This loss of a right relationship with God happens when a follower of Christ:

1. Is overtaken in a fault (Gal. 6:1).
2. Errs from the truth (James 5:19, 20).

3. Turns from the holy commandment delivered unto them and is entangled in the world again and overcome (II Pet. 2:20-22).

The brother or sister in Christ who has become unfaithful is instructed in the Bible the proper way to get back in a right relationship with God.

*Confess the sins committed.* "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).

*Repent of all sins and pray to God for forgiveness.* "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22).

These commands are given to people who have already obeyed the gospel (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 8:5, 12, 13) but who have sinned since that time.

We should be thankful that the blood of Jesus is still available and can still cleanse even after we have rebelled against Him.

## WHERE IS THE POWER?

*Mr. Barber, I want to be a Christian and I keep waiting for the power. How can I get saved*

*if I don't have the power?*

First, let us determine what God's power to save is said to be. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

The gospel then is God's power to save. People are drawn to Christ by the teaching of God (John 6:44, 45). God calls through the gospel (II Thess. 2:14). The gospel is truly powerful (Heb. 4:12).

But what should we do with this power which God has given? We should hear God's word (Rom. 10:17). We should believe the message of Jesus (John 1:12). This gives us the power, that is, the ability or privilege to become a child of God.

We should obey the gospel. Those who refuse to obey the gospel "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thess. 1:7-9).

After a person believes in Jesus and repents of his sins, he is then to be buried with Christ by baptism into death (Rom. 6:3, 4). This puts one into Christ as he comes in contact with Christ's death where his blood was shed.

God has provided the power. It is available for us to read, believe and obey. The choice is ours.

## ABORTION — IS IT WRONG?

*Mr. Barber, I have been considering an abortion, but I don't want to do anything wrong. What does the Bible say about abortion?*

The word *abortion* is not found in the Bible. However, we are told, "Thou shalt not kill" (Rom. 13:9). The question then is, "When does human life begin?"

The first two chapters of the gospel recorded by Luke gives an insight of the mind of God on this question.

Mary had come to visit her cousin, Elisabeth. "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb" (Luke 1:41). "For, lo as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy" (Luke 1:44).

In both these passages, he who was in the womb of Elisabeth was called a *babe*.

In Luke, chapter two, we read of the birth of Jesus and the visiting shepherds. "And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger" (Luke 2:16).

According to God's word, a person is a *babe* both before birth, while he is still in the womb, and after birth as well. With that being true, abortion is wrong because it is the taking of the life of an innocent human being.

## IS IT WRONG TO MARRY?

*Mr. Barber, some religions don't permit their leaders to marry. Is there something wrong with wanting to get married?*

First, let us notice that because of sin on the part of one or both partners in a marriage, it would be sinful for one or both to marry again (Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:9).

However, whether an eligible person wants to get married or to refrain from it is a freedom given by God.

Paul, who chose not to be married, had the right. "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (I Cor. 9:5).

Since the writing of the New Testament, men have changed God's word in many ways. They now allow things which God has condemned. They sometimes forbid things which God has allowed. Such is wrong (Rev. 22:18, 19; II Tim. 2:2).

This has happened according to the prophecy of scripture concerning an apostasy.

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (I Tim. 4:1-3).

If God in His word did not forbid marriage, where did the doctrine originate? What does the Bible say?

## CAPITAL PUNISHMENT?

*Mr. Barber, is it God's will that people be killed for certain crimes? What does the Bible say about capital punishment?*

From very early in God's dealing with man, He has authorized and commanded capital punishment for certain acts against God and man. God told Noah, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. 9:6).

After giving the law to the Jews, God governed His people by the Ten Commandments, the Old Testament. In these laws for that age, the death penalty was prescribed for adultery (Lev. 20:10), idolatry (Deut. 17:2-7), rape (Deut. 22:25), kidnapping (Ex. 21:16), as well as for murder (Lev. 24:17).

In reading these passages, we learn that God established procedures to determine the guilt.



In the New Testament, this same punishment is approved and is put in the hands of the rulers to execute wrath and to be a terror to evil doers.

When Paul, the apostle, was being tried he did not object to the death penalty in the event that he had committed a capital offense. "For if I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die" (Acts 25:11).

The duty of civil rulers is described in Rom. 13:4, "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

## WHICH WAY?

*Mr. Barber, I have often heard that there are many ways to heaven, and that it doesn't matter which way you take because they all lead to the same place. How many ways are there and what are they?*

This is a common statement. It is often made to try to explain the confusion, disagreement, and division that exists in the religious world. Some have even been heard to thank God

for all the many ways and denominations.

However, let us see what Jesus said. After telling His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them, Jesus said, "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know" (John 14:4). When Thomas replied that he did not know the place nor the way, Jesus added, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

How many ways did Jesus talk about? Who should know?

"But maybe the followers of Jesus were to preach many ways to get to Him," someone suggests.

What did Jesus tell His followers to preach to everyone?

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28: 19, 20).

"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).

## WHY THE MISUNDERSTANDING?

*Mr. Barber, I know that Jesus prayed for unity. But we see so much division in religion. What keeps us from understanding the Bible alike?*

You are correct that Jesus wants unity among His followers. He said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20, 21).

There are many reasons that this purpose of the Savior has not been accomplished. Lack of Bible study, tradition of men, and lack of commitment have all played a part.

However, I am convinced that a great number of religious people who either consciously or unconsciously follow human creeds has been the major source of confusion and division.

For example: a much-used creed book states: "Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort."

God, in His word, the Bible, said, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and

not by faith only" (James 2:24).

As long as men believe and follow the teaching of men instead of God, division will be present.

When all read and obey the will of God, we will all be one in Christ (I Cor. 1:10).

## MAKE HUSBAND A CHRISTIAN?

*Mr. Barber, I want so much for my husband to obey the Lord. What can I do to make him become a Christian?*

There is nothing you can do to *make* your husband or anyone else become a Christian.

Each person must make his or her own choice. Christ's invitation for salvation is to "whosoever will" (Matt. 11:28-30; Rev. 22:17). Those who choose to refuse God's grace are responsible for that choice and must live with the consequences.

However, we are told some things that will help influence your husband.

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear" (I Pet. 3:1, 2).

You are to respect your husband as your head and leader (Eph. 5:22-24). If you decide to disobey Christ on this point, why should your husband obey Him in respect to other commands? The only exception to this would be if your husband insisted that you disobey God. Our first loyalty is always to the Lord (Acts 5:29).

Godly living and absolute devotion to the will of God can be a powerful influence in your husband's life. When you have a Christ-like attitude even in difficult circumstances, he will notice.

I'm sure prayer is a daily part of your life in this concern. Ask God for wisdom in meeting this challenge in your life (James 1:5).

## WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

*Mr. Barber, I hear in sermons and read in my Bible that everyone needs to repent. I don't really know what that means. Is that just confessing your sins or what?*

You are correct that repentance is a universal command. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Repentance is made of of three elements:

*A change of mind.* One who repents changes his attitude toward sin. Instead of loving sin, he hates sin. Rather than running after sin, he runs from it. Rebuking sin replaces tolerating sin.

*Brought about by godly sorrow.* It is not only important for one to change his mind and life, but he must do it for the right reason. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (II Cor. 7:10). Worldly sorrow is no good. It is regretting that sins have been discovered or that one is suffering the consequences of sins. Godly sorrow is sorrow for sin because of what it does to me, my fellow man, and God.

*Resulting in a change of life.* Jesus illustrated repentance in Matt. 21:28-30. Repentance was seen in the son who at first refused to do his father's command but later obeyed rather than the son who spoke politely and did nothing.

The prodigal son demonstrates true repentance: "He came to himself" — a change of mind; "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee" — brought about by godly sorrow; "And he arose, and came to his father" — resulting in a change of life (Luke 15:17-20).

## HAS GOD CHANGED?

*Mr. Barber, I have heard you teach on the radio that God does not work miracles today. You must not know that God doesn't change. He is still the same God He always was. You need to change your teaching.*

You are correct that the Bible teaches that God does not change. God is still the same in nature and character that He has always been. "For I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).

However, these passages do not state and the Bible does not teach that God has dealt with man the same way in every age.

God made the first man from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7). The first woman came from the rib of man (Gen. 2:22). How does God bring people into being today?

Once in feeding His people, God sent bread from heaven and quails for them to eat (Ex. 16:1-36). Where do Christians get their groceries?

God doesn't expect me to build a boat longer than a football field. He has not commanded me to go to Jerusalem three times a year. You and I are not taught in the Bible to build an altar, kill a cow and burn it. All these

commands were given to people who lived in other ages.

It is important to know how to rightly divide the Bible: understand what commands and promises apply to us in the Christian age.

## MEMBER OF CHURCH?

*Mr. Barber, I think what is important is that a person is saved, not whether he is a member of the church. Why do you teach that a person should be a member of the church?*

The Bible teaches that God adds saved people to the church. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). If God adds people to the church when they are saved, where are the saved people?

We are also taught that the body of Christ and the church of Christ are the same thing (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18). Christ is going to save His body. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23). Who is going to be saved according to this verse?

Christ gave His life and blood for the church. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the



church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). How much did Christ think of the church? What did He pay for it? I cannot devalue that for which Christ paid so much.

The church is important to the Lord. It should be important to us. The church that the Lord loved and bought is the church we read about in the New Testament. We can be a member of it by obeying the will of God (I Cor. 12:13).

### BAPTIZED OR "NOT"?

*Mr. Barber, I get so confused about the subject of baptism. I don't know what to do. I would like your opinion to compare with others I have heard.*

My opinion is not important since I will not be the judge to tell your eternal destiny.

However, let us contrast what men have taught with what Jesus said. We know Jesus is right.

1. *He that believeth and is baptized shall NOT be saved.* (This is the belief of the athiest).
2. *He that believeth NOT and is baptized shall be saved.* (This is the teaching of

those who baptize babies who are not old enough to believe).

3. *He that believeth and is NOT baptized shall be saved.* (This is the doctrine of men who reject the Lord's command of baptism). They disregard the fact that when *baptism* and *salvation* (or a word or phrase meaning the same thing) are mentioned in the same verse of the Bible, *baptism* always comes before *salvation* (see Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:4; I Pet. 3:21).
4. *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."* (These are the words of Jesus in Mark 16:16).

Our choice today is as it has always been: shall we accept the words of Jesus, or what men think Jesus meant, or what men wish Jesus had said?

### WILL GOD CALL ME?

*Mr. Barber, I want to be a Christian, but God has never called me. How can I know if God will ever draw me to him? Will I ever be saved?*

God has been calling, but you have not answered.

People are called to God through the

gospel, the word of God. "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 2:14).

Faith is developed in the same way. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

The drawing power is the gospel. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:44, 45).

Read God's word to build your faith (John 20:30, 31).

Study the examples of people obeying God to have their sins forgiven and obey those same commands (Acts 2:36-41; 8:35-39; 16:30-34; 22:16).

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

God is calling you through his word.

Will you obey him?

Will you be saved?

## WHAT ABOUT THE REVELATION?

*Mr. Barber, I have read the book of Revelation many times and still cannot understand it. Are there any messages in it that would be helpful in living for Jesus today?*

Certainly Revelation is a difficult book. I do not claim to know the meaning of every symbol in the last book of the Bible.

However, there is a great message for Christians today. When this book was written, God's people were being robbed, persecuted, and killed because of their faith.

Revelation was written to encourage the followers of Christ to be faithful under all circumstances, even if it meant death (Rev. 2:10). Great promises are given to those who overcome and are faithful to Christ (Rev. 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:25-28; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21).

Basically, we see in this book a conflict between good and evil.

The Lamb (Jesus) is being attacked by the beast. This beast has seven heads and ten horns. The ten horns are ten kings.

With this in mind, notice the scripture that summarizes the book: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings;

and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Rev. 17:14). This tells us that in the end, those who belong to Jesus are going to be victorious over sin and Satan.

The message of Revelation is, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

## WHAT’S WRONG WITH PORNOGRAPHY?

*Mr. Barber, with all the talk about pornography, HBO, and censorship, I get confused. I certainly don’t want to take away anyone’s rights, but shouldn’t we be concerned about what we read, see, and do?*

We certainly should!!!

The Bible constantly reminds us that we become what we think about.

“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7a).

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).

If I sow thistle seed in my garden, I should not be disappointed that there will be no Big Boy tomatoes on the plants — I planted the wrong seeds for a tomato crop. Likewise, if we choose to plant in our minds violence, obscenity, adultery, and perversion, we should not be surprised

when we reap a bumper crop of the same things in our community. After all, that's what we planted.

The Christian has the solution as to what he plants in his mind. The qualities are given in Phil. 4:8: "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

It is unfortunate that some see the need for regulations that prohibit the pollution of our rivers, air, and food, but want no control on mind pollution.

## IS THE LORD'S SUPPER INTOXICATING?

*Mr. Barber, since Christ used wine in the Lord's Supper, is it alright for Christians to drink intoxicating drinks?*

In the first place, I cannot find where the Bible uses the word *wine* in connection with the Lord's Supper. Jesus said, "For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come" (Luke 22:18). It is also called *fruit of the vine* in Matt. 26:29 and Mark 14:25.

In the second place, the word *wine* in the Bible does not give any information as to the alcoholic content of a beverage. In fact, grape juice that is still in the garden and still attached to the vine is referred to as *wine*. "Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster . . ." (Isa. 65:8). Therefore, if the word *wine* were used in connection with the Lord's Supper, this would not give evidence that it would be intoxicating.

No, Jesus did not encourage drinking in giving us the Lord's Supper or anywhere else in the Bible.

A so-called Christian will find great difficulty in discouraging his children or others from abusing drugs or being caught in the grip of drunkenness with a can of beer or a glass of whiskey in his hand.

The follower of Christ is one who is concerned about his or her influence and how to build up and strengthen others, not providing a stumbling block in the way of another. "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and the things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom. 14:19).

## NEW REVELATION?

*Mr. Barber, recently in a national magazine,*

*I read where God had given a new revelation. The article said that God had told someone that blacks could now be priests in the church. Why did God take so long after the church was established to decide that?*

The problem is not with God taking a long time to decide but with man not understanding and obeying what is clearly God's word.

God has already given us in His word, the Bible, "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Pet. 1:3). The scriptures will completely furnish and equip a person for every good work (II Tim. 3:16, 17). If all has already been provided, do we need additional revelations from God today? What does the Bible say?

Every person who has been born into the family of God is a priest and can worship God acceptably (I Pet. 2:5, 9). None is excluded in the Bible. If an organization decides to prohibit certain members from enjoying God-given blessings and privileges, who is head and leader of that organization, Jesus or some man?

God is no respecter of persons according to worldly position (Eph. 6:9), according to race (Acts 10:34, 35), nor in regard to judgment (I Pet. 1:17).

If an individual or some group has failed to recognize and respect this principle, let that person or persons repent and resolve to follow



God's teaching. Let us never blame God for our sins. Read James 1:13 through James 2:12, God is not guilty!!!

## AM I RESPONSIBLE?

*Mr. Barber, often I hear preachers pleading with people to obey God, to get right with the Lord, but I've always heard that what is to be will be. If God already has fixed my every thought and action, what choice do I have?*

"What is to be, will be," is not found in the Bible. Since the days of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, God has given man his will. Blessings follow those who obey and punishment is the result of disobedience. God has always given man the freedom of choice — to obey or to disobey.

We are continually reminded of our accountability. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). For a person to be held accountable, he must be given the freedom to make his own choices. It would be unfair for a parent to push his child into a mud puddle, then punish that child for getting dirty. This would be parallel with God holding man responsible for his actions, but making man do those actions.

The commands to us in the Bible indicate the choices we have. Jesus said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Do I have a choice as to whether I will repent or not? Certainly I have.

Again, Jesus taught, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, any many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14).

We should serve God but the choice belongs to each individual!

### CAN'T DRINK? ARE YOU SURE?

*Mr. Barber, recently in an article, you stated that a Christian shouldn't drink — even in small amounts. Obviously you hadn't read I Tim. 5:23 where Paul commands Timothy to drink. How can you teach people it is a sin — if you believe what Paul wrote?*

I believe what Paul wrote because "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Tim. 3:16).

I Tim. 5:23 is one of the strongest passages in the Bible teaching Christians AGAINST social drinking. The verse reads as follows:

**“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.”**

Does this statement teach that Timothy was one who often had “one for the road?” But more than this, are the drinking habits of many today authorized by I Tim. 5:23? Let’s ask a couple of questions:

1. Does “a little wine” mean the same thing as a six pack of beer, a couple of martinis, or a shot of vodka or bourbon?
2. Does “for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities” equal “a drink or two to relax, or to enjoy the party, or to loosen up a bit?”

No. Paul was telling Timothy to do something he was not in the habit of doing. If Timothy had already been a “social drinker”, if Timothy had been in the habit of having a nip or two a day, Paul’s medical advice would have been unnecessary. Since we have effective medicines, stomach relief is not spelled B-E-E-R or W-H-I-S-K-E-Y.

“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Prov. 20:1).

## WHAT ABOUT THE SOUL?

*Mr. Barber, some people came to my door to talk about the Bible. They said that when a person died, that was it, that there is no part of man that continues to live. What does the Bible say?*

Read Luke 16:19-31. This is the account of the rich man and Lazarus. This illustrates what is said in Eccl. 12:7: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Notice the experience of these two men after physical death.

They are conscious. Both men are able to know of their existence and conditions surrounding that existence.

They are able to recognize those whom they knew in the flesh and become acquainted with others. The rich man knew Lazarus and somehow knew Abraham.

Memory was present. The rich man was told, "Son, remember that thou in the lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented" (Luke 16:25). He also recalled the fact that he had five brothers and that they were living lives leading to torment unless they changed.

This teaching of Jesus shows that a part of man lives on after the spirit departs from the body.

There is a difference in the body and soul. Jesus said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

### DID THEY REPENT?

*Mr. Barber, some time ago a friend wronged me. He said that he was sorry and wanted me to forgive him. I know I am to forgive others but how do I know whether he was really sincere or if he was just saying that?*

You are correct that you should forgive your friend. Jesus said, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not man their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14, 15).

In a parable, Jesus told of a man who was forgiven a fifteen million dollar debt by his master. Later when he met a fellowservant who owed him \$15.00, he would not even give him time to pay it. When the master heard what had happened, he had the servant who had been

forgiven the huge debt punished because he would not forgive his fellow servant. Then Jesus added, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matt. 18:35).

These passages teach that if I am to be forgiven, I must forgive others. But now to your question. How do we know when a person is sincere when he repents?

Thankfully God does not require us to know the hearts of others. Jesus tells us what to do. "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:3, 4).

If he says, "I repent," forgive him. Let Jesus judge his heart. We don't have to do that.

## CAN WE BE FORGIVEN?

*Mr. Barber, in Heb. 10:26, it says if a person sins wilfully, he can't be saved. Doesn't everyone sin when they know better? Can anyone ever be saved if this is true?*

Heb. 10:26 reads, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."

Jesus is the one and only sacrifice for sins that we have (II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 9:26-28).

Jesus' blood was shed for all men (I John 2:1, 2; Heb. 2:9).

However, the blood of Jesus is applied only to those who obey Him. "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9).

The wilful sin mentioned in Heb. 10:26 is a continuous state or attitude. Literally it is saying that if a person keeps on sinning and keeps on sinning without repenting and turning to Jesus and obeying Him, that person cannot be saved.

Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to those who obey Him. But a person who keeps on in wilful sin is not obeying Him. Therefore, a person who lives and dies in wilful sin cannot be saved.

Jesus' death was the only sacrifice that can take away sins. But the wilful sinner rejects the sacrifice of Jesus in failing to obey Him. Therefore, there is no sacrifice left to be offered for sin.

## DEGREES OF PUNISHMENT?

*Mr. Barber, does the Bible teach degrees of punishment in Hell?*

It is my understanding of a number of passages in the Bible that there will be degrees of punishment.

For instance, we read in Jude 7 that Sodom and Gomorrah are suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. However, Jesus told Capernaum, "But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matt. 11:24). Although Sodom was suffering eternal fire, it would fare better in judgment than Capernaum.

A similar statement is made about a city that would not receive the apostles as they were preaching in Matt. 10:15.

A greater responsibility is given to us under the New Testament of Christ throughout the book of Hebrews. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven" (Heb. 12:25). A greater punishment is mentioned for those who reject Jesus in Heb. 10:28, 29.

Luke 12 is one of the clearest passages that deals with this subject. The servant that knew his



lord's will, but didn't do it shall be beaten with many stripes (Luke 12:47). This servant who didn't know his lord's will and did commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes (Luke 12:48).

We can be sure of this:

1. The Bible teaches punishment for the disobedient (Matt. 25:30).
2. Greater opportunity brings greater responsibility (Luke 12:48).
3. Hell will be terrible, regardless of the degrees.

## SOMEBODY OFFENDED ME

*Mr. Barber, I know I am not faithful to the Lord, and this is wrong. However, where I went to church somebody hurt my feelings. Don't you think that they should make things right with me?*

Since what I think doesn't make the difference in one's relationship with God, let's see what Jesus said. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and

offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:23, 24). Yes, Jesus says that one who has sinned against a brother has a responsibility to go to the offended party.

However, Jesus said something else. "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matt. 18:15). The one who has been offended also has an equal responsibility.

Have you done this? Have you taken other steps taught in Matt. 18:15-17?

You state that you are not faithful to the Lord. How do you think He feels about this? What should you do about your unfaithfulness?

What if you continue to refuse to obey the Lord? "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

No one can stand between you and the Lord unless you allow him to.

## **DOES GOD HEAR SINNER'S PRAYER?**

*Mr. Barber, once I heard someone say that God doesn't hear a sinner's prayer. Does the Bible teach that? If so, where?*

We need to define terms in order to answer the question adequately.

Certainly a child of God who sins can pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22; I John 1:9).

On the other hand, one who is in sin and will not repent and obey God cannot expect to receive forgiveness just by asking God.

Perhaps the scripture the person had in mind was John 9:31. "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." This man in John 9 probably received his idea of prayer from Old Testament passages such as Prov. 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."

Prayer without obedience is like begging a doctor to heal you while refusing to take the medicine he prescribes. It is useless.

Peter further states this principle in I Pet. 3:12, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

Obedience to God is necessary for us to be blessed by God as He would like to bless us. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:22).

## **"I CAN'T STAND IT!"**

*Mr. Barber, I am under severe temptation. I don't know if I will be able to hold out. Will God blame me if I have more on me than I can stand?*

Our relationship to God is based on trust in Him and His word. We know that God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18). God has promised that we will not have more in our life than we are able to bear. We must believe that He will see to that as we trust Him.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13).

We are told that God will not allow more temptation to be put on us than we can stand.

Again we are assured, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (II Pet. 2:9).

When we pray, we should ask God to help in temptation. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13). Again, we must trust our heavenly Father to answer that prayer. "The

righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles" (Psa. 34:17).

Knowing that God has my best interest in mind and that He will bless me when I follow Him in His word, I know that He will not allow more temptation to come upon me than I with His help can stand. I want to pray to Him each day for help in temptation, knowing that He will strengthen me.

## GOSSIPING FRIEND

*Mr. Barber, I have a friend who is always saying bad and unkind things about others. I know this is not right. But what can I do to correct this?*

You are correct that this is a sinful practice. "An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire. A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends" (Prov. 16:27, 28). But what can you do?

1. Ask your friend to join you in a prayer for that person that is being spoken against. Assume that your friend is genuinely interested in the well-being of the person being discussed until you would have to believe otherwise. Go to God

in prayer on behalf of the person in question.

2. Invite your friend to visit with the one being discussed in order to help them with the problem. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

3. If your friend will not do either or both of the above things to help the person in question, don't listen to gossip!!! "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips" (Prov. 20:19). There would be no gossiping tongues if there were no gossiping ears! If nothing positive comes from a conversation about another person, the conversation should be stopped.

## WHAT ABOUT THE RAPTURE?

*Mr. Barber, what does the Bible say about the rapture?*

Nothing.

## ONCE A WEEK?

*Mr. Barber, I take my children to church once a week. Do you think that this is enough religious teaching for them to be good Christians when they grow up?*

You don't say how much teaching and training your children get in addition to what they receive in the public services. If this one hour is all, this certainly is not adequate according to how God instructs us to train children.

Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

There are three levels of instruction: telling, teaching, and training. Telling is just relating information without knowing whether the other person understands and remembers or not.

Teaching is being assured that the learner has absorbed the information. However, the principles may not be put into practice.

Training is telling, teaching and showing the person how to do something. Then the person is supervised as he does the new job or skill with additional help given when needed.

Training a child is a full-time responsibility. One hour a week cannot mold Christ-like personality. Moses taught, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:6, 7).

## CAN I BE LOST?

*Mr. Barber, the church where I go teaches that a child of God cannot be lost no matter what he does. I find this hard to believe. What does your church teach?*

Let us see what God teaches in his word. This is the standard that will judge us in the last day (John 12:48).

Can a child of God commit adultery? Could a child of God hate another person and have wrath and strife in his heart against that person?

If a child of God chose to point a loaded gun at the head of someone else and pulled the trigger causing the lead to enter the brain of the innocent person, would that be murder?

When a man or woman who has been saved drinks a great amount of alcohol, will that result in a condition called drunkenness?

If a child of God has the ability to commit any one of these acts or any other acts which are



sinful, a child of God could be lost because “they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5: 19-21).

A child of God can fall because there are warnings for him to be careful not to fall (I Cor. 10:12; II Pet. 1:10).

A person once saved can go back into the world and be polluted by sin. This second state of sinfulness is worse than his relationship to God before he became a Christian (II Pet. 2:20-22).

Someone who has enjoyed the blessings of grace can fall from grace (Gal. 5:4).

However, the good news is that a Christian doesn't have to fall (I John 1:7), and we can be forgiven when we do (I John 1:9).

## MAY I MARRY?

*Mr. Barber, I have never been married, but I am thinking about it. The person I am thinking about marrying has been married before. How can I know if it is alright or not?*

Let me make two observations.

First, you are to be commended for your concern. It is clear that many people are unconcerned about God's will.

Second, it is very difficult to answer such an involved question with few details and little

space. I would be happy to talk to you and/or your prospective partner.

Everything that we do should be done by the authority of Jesus (Col. 3:17). We learn what the Lord authorizes in His Word (II Tim. 3: 16, 17).

Therefore, in your case, you should look for a marriage partner in one of the following three groups:

*A single person* - One who has never been married.

*A person whose mate has died* (I Cor. 7: 8, 9). Paul through inspiration states that these people are approved by the Lord when they marry.

*A faithful divorcer* (Matt. 19:9). This is a person who has tried to the best of his or her ability to have a good marriage and the original partner refused to be faithful to the marriage vows. That faithful person then, has a right to marry another eligible person. That is in contrast to an innocent (or guilty) divorcee, that is, one who has been divorced as discussed by Christ in Matt. 5:31, 32.

I would be glad to talk with you further about this question.

## WOMEN PRIESTS?

*Mr. Barber, I have listened to the discussions recently on women being priests. I feel that everyone should be able to serve God, but I know that there are limitations put on women in the Bible. I just don't know what to think.*

The answer to your question depends on what church you are talking about. A church started by men can have any rules that men want to make as long as they are not illegal.

However, if we want to restore the church we read about in the New Testament, we must "speak as the oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11).

In the Bible, we learn that all Christians are priests (I Pet. 2:5, 9). This is encouraging. No man stands between me and God. I, or any other Christian, can pray to God, study the Bible and understand it, or do anything that is necessary to my right relationship to God.

Although in most man-made religious organizations there is a clergy and laity, Jesus did not teach this. "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your Father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Matt. 23:8, 9).

You are correct that women are not to have dominion or authority over the man (I Tim.

2:11, 12). However, this is not an inferior position, just a different role. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-28).

## RAPTURE IN I THESSALONIANS

*Mr. Barber, some time ago you said in your article that the Bible didn't say anything about the rapture. What about I Thess. 4:16 where it says, "the dead in Christ shall rise first?"*

I would make two observations on the passage in I Thessalonians.

First, the people caught up with the Lord in this scripture are going to stay too long for the rapture. When they meet the Lord in the air, they aren't coming back: "and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:17). The rapture theory has the people coming back in seven years to live on the earth for 1,000 years.

Second, notice what is being compared. What two groups are being discussed? Is it the dead in Christ and the dead who belong to Satan? Or is it the dead in Christ and those who are still

alive who belong to Christ? "The dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord in the air" (I Thess. 4:16, 17).

To learn the timetable of the resurrection of the righteous dead and the wicked dead, we should find a passage where both are discussed. Jesus helps us in John 5:28, 29. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." According to the Lord, everybody will be raised at the same time.

## BIBLE FOR TODAY?

*Mr. Barber, I believe the Bible, but I was talking recently with a person who asked me something I didn't know how to answer. This person said that the Bible was just what those people were told to do by God but that it didn't apply to us. How do we know that we are to obey what is written in the Bible today?*

The teaching of Jesus is to last forever,

even after heaven and earth are destroyed. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

This included not only direct quotations from the lips of Jesus, but also His word and will as taught by the apostles and other inspired men. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (I Pet. 1:24-25).

Since the writers of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit, their teaching is from the Lord. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (I Cor. 14:37).

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

God's word is truth (John 17:17).

It is the truth that makes men free (John 8:32).

The truth, the gospel the words of Jesus will last for ever (Matt. 24:35; I Pet. 1:24, 25).

Therefore, to be blessed by God today and go to heaven when we die, we must obey the truth, as found in the Bible.

## TO FEAR OR NOT TO FEAR

*Dear Mr. Barber, I am confused about the word "fear" in the Bible. I read where it is wrong and then in another place I read where we are to fear God. Which is right?*

Your question shows a good recognition of the two kinds of fear mentioned in the Bible: the fear of God and the fear of man.

The fear of God is commanded and encouraged. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13). This fear includes both the idea of reverence and also the power of God to condemn and punish the disobedient. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28, 29).

The second kind of fear is the fear of man. This is wrong when it causes man to disobey God's will. This fear will cause a person to be lost (Rev. 21:8). Those who served Christ in the days when the Bible was written often had reason to believe that they would suffer loss of property, physical harm, and even death.

This fear is related to little faith. Jesus asked the disciples, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of

little faith?" (Matt. 8:26).

Fear prevented some from speaking up for Jesus. The parents of the blind man healed by Jesus would not tell others "because they feared the Jews" (John 9:22).

How do I know which fear controls my life? I know and Jesus knows by what I do. "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

## COMMUNISM IN THE BIBLE?

*Mr. Barber, Christians are often critical of communism. But the Bible says "all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:44, 45). Why isn't this practiced today?*

Your question is often asked by Bible students.

Let us notice some differences in atheistic communism and what the Jerusalem church practiced.

1. The Jerusalem church was founded on faith in Christ.

2. The people acknowledged the Fatherhood of God, not the state.



3. The disciples had a spiritual and a heavenly goal.

4. The church was not an organization for production, but for relief.

5. This was a temporary measure.

6. It was not compulsory. It was a voluntary arrangement (Acts 5:1-4).

7. This was an affair of the church and not of the government.

8. No one was killed and his property confiscated.

9. It was not an effort to place all people on a common financial level.

10. The churches outside of Jerusalem did not practice this (Acts 11:27-30; I Cor. 16:1,2).

Paul's later instructions to the rich was not to sell everything they had but to be faithful to God and use what they had to His glory (I Tim. 6:17-19).

## **GRACE AND/OR WORKS?**

*Mr. Barber, I cannot understand a seeming contradiction in the Bible. It says that salvation is a gift. Then in other places we are given commands that must be obeyed to be saved. Please explain.*

Perhaps two of the verses you speak of are the following: In Rom. 6:23 we are told, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." On the other hand, James 2:24 states, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

The key to understanding this is that the receiving of many gifts and the enjoyment of gifts is dependent upon the cooperation of the receiver. A book may be given to me with no strings attached, but I must read it to get the benefit from it.

I knew two parents who wanted to give their son a college education. They provided him with tuition, books, room, board, clothes, car, gasoline, and spending money. However, he never received the intended gift. A college degree depends upon passing prescribed courses. Passing courses depends upon attending classes, completing assignments, and successfully taking the tests. The son did not receive his gift because he did not do his part.

A Bible example is found in Joshua 6. God told Joshua that He had given him Jericho (Josh. 6:2). However, He told Joshua what he and the men of Israel must do to receive the gift (Josh. 6:3-20). "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days" (Heb. 11:30).

## PRAY THROUGH?

*Mr. Barber, I notice in your articles you never tell a sinner to pray through for salvation. Why don't you ever include this in telling someone what to do to be saved?*

God's instructions on prayer are directed to those who are already serving him. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). "And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:22).

Those who know God's will and refuse to do it are not promised blessings when they pray. "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth" (John 9:31). "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (I Pet. 3:12).

One who would pray without obeying the Lord is like a person who would beg the doctor to cure him of an illness but who would refuse to take the medicine which the doctor had prescribed.

I want to tell people today to do what

people in the Bible were told to do to be saved. In Acts 2:37, the question was asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "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).

## HOW MANY BAPTISMS?

*Mr. Barber, the only baptism I ever see you write about is water baptism. Aren't there others?*

Yes. There are six baptisms mentioned in the Bible.

1. The Israelites were baptized in the cloud and in the sea (I Cor. 10:1, 2).

2. John baptized people in preparation for the coming of Jesus (Matt. 3:1-11).

3. The apostles and the house of Cornelius were baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14; 11:15-17).

4. The baptism of suffering came to Jesus and His disciples (Matt. 20:22, 23).

5. The baptism of fire is to burn up the wicked with unquenchable fire (Matt. 3:11, 12).

6. The baptism of the Great Commission

was given by Jesus to be preached to every creature (Mark 16:15, 16). This is that baptism that is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

This baptism is in water (Acts 8:35-39).

This baptism is a burial (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

This is the baptism that is to be obeyed today by those who want to be saved, to receive remission of sins.

This is the only baptism in effect today. Ephesians 4:5 states that there is "one baptism." The baptism of the Israelites, John, and suffering are past. Holy Ghost baptism for the apostles was in A. D. 33 and for Cornelius in A. D. 44. Fire is yet to come. Therefore, the baptism of the Great Commission was the one mentioned by Paul when he wrote Ephesians in A. D. 64.

## OBEY THE GOSPEL?

*Mr. Barber, I have heard you speak of obeying the gospel. What do you mean by this?*

First, Paul defines the gospel in I Cor. 15: 1-4 as the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Second, he shows concern about this when he writes, "But they have not all obeyed the gospel" (Rom. 10:16). Again, we are told that Jesus is coming "In flaming fire taking vengeance

on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 1:8). It is important to obey the gospel.

But how can a person obey the gospel? The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ are facts. However, one cannot obey facts. A person may believe or disbelieve facts, but he cannot obey facts.

Romans 6:17, 18 helps our understanding of this phrase. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Here, we are told that they obeyed a form of teaching. What would be a form of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ?

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3, 4). That is obeying the gospel.

## **BELIEVE OLD TESTAMENT?**

*Mr. Barber, I've heard it said that you do*

*not believe the Old Testament. I don't see how you could doubt it if you believe the New Testament. Please explain.*

Thank you for this question and the opportunity to explain a misunderstanding that some people have.

I believe the whole Bible. The Old Testament was given when "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Pet. 1:20, 21). "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Tim. 3:16, 17).

The Old Testament scriptures are helpful to us today for our learning, patience, comfort, hope and admonition (Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:11).

However, we are not to obey every command today that was given to people in the Old Testament. God does not expect me, or any other person, to build a boat longer than a football field, make three trips to Jerusalem each year, or build an altar of twelve stones, kill a cow and burn it in order to please Him. These were some commands that were given to His people in the Old Testament.

We live under the New Testament of Christ today. The Old Law was fulfilled, then abolished, blotted out, taken out of the way, and nailed to the cross (Matt. 5:17, 18; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:6, 7; 10:9).

Christ has given us His new will (Heb. 9: 15-17). A person's inheritance is distributed according to his last will and testament. To receive His spiritual blessings today, we comply with the terms of the new will of Christ.

## JESUS TEMPTED?

*Mr. Barber, the Bible says that Jesus was tempted like we are. In what way did this happen? What does this mean?*

The passage that states this is Heb. 4:15: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

We are tempted to sin through three avenues. These are listed in I John 2:16: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The devil makes his appeal in one or more of these ways when we are enticed to sin.

Eve was approached in all three ways in the garden of Eden. The tree was good for food — lust of the flesh. It was pleasant to the eyes — lust of the eyes. It was a tree to be desired to make one wise — the pride or vainglory of life (Gen. 3:6).



Immediately after Jesus was baptized of John in the Jordan river, He was tempted of the devil (Matt. 4:1-11).

The devil told Jesus to make bread out of stones — lust of the flesh.

The appeal was made to Jesus to jump from the temple without injury — pride of life.

All the kingdoms of the world were promised to Jesus if He would worship the devil. This temptation came after Jesus was shown the kingdoms of the world from a high mountain — lust of the eyes.

As we can see, Jesus was tempted in every way that we are tempted, but He did not sin. He encourages us to overcome temptation.

## SALVATION BY FAITH?

*Mr. Barber, I know that salvation comes by faith. Since this is true, how can man be expected to do any thing. It seems this would do away with faith?*

Certainly faith is essential for man to be in a right relationship with God. Many passages teach this (John 3:16, 36; Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8, 9).

The question must be, Does faith bring salvation at the point a person trusts God or

when that faith moves him to do what God commands?

What kind of faith saves? The Bible mentions more than one kind of faith. There is *little* faith (Matt. 6:30). James writes of a *dead* faith (James 2:17, 20, 26). We also read of a *working* faith (James 2:24; Gal. 5:6). Faith that blesses and saves is the faith that obeys (James 2:21-25).

Salvation comes by faith plus something. In Acts 11:21, we are told that "a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." What did they do when they turned unto the Lord? Faith is necessary for a person to come to God (Heb. 11:6). What if a person believes in God and His Son Jesus Christ, but does not come to God? Can a person be saved away from God? How does a person come to God after he believes?

Could a person believe in Jesus and refuse to repent of his sins and be saved? (Luke 13:3). Will God bless those who believe on Jesus but are ashamed to confess Him? (John 12:42, 43; Rom. 10:10). Why would a person who really believes in Jesus and His word not want to obey His command to be baptized? (Mark 16:16).

## UNPARDONABLE SIN?

*Mr. Barber, what is the unpardonable sin?*

Jesus said, "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither, in the world to come" (Matt. 12:31, 32).

Jesus had just healed a man with an unclean spirit (Matt. 12:22).

The people were amazed and came to the correct conclusion that he was the son of David (Matt. 12:23). This was the purpose of the miracles that Jesus did: to show that He was the Son of God (John 20:30, 31).

However, the Pharisees said, "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils" (Matt. 12:24). In failing to give the honor and glory to the Holy Spirit of God by whom Jesus performed His miracles, they had blasphemed the Holy Ghost. Because of this, Jesus said there would be no forgiveness.

Therefore, the sin which shall not be forgiven is the Pharisees giving the praise, honor and glory to Beelzebub instead of to the Holy Spirit Who had enabled Jesus to perform this miracle.

## STUDY OLD TESTAMENT?

*Mr. Barber, I know that since Jesus died for us, we no longer live under the Old Testament. Is it still the word of God and should we still read and study it?*

You are correct that we no longer keep the Old Testament. Two wills (testaments) cannot be in effect at the same time from the same person. When Jesus died on the cross, the New Testament was sealed (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 9: 15-17).

However, the Old Testament is still the word of God, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Tim. 3:16). "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Pet. 1:21).

We are given a number of reasons for studying the Old Testament. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

We learn to have faith in the supernatural nature of the Bible by reading the prophecies of the Old Testament and seeing them fulfilled in the new.

Our patience is increased by reading of the trials of Job.

Comfort and hope comes to us from many of the Psalms.

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (I Cor. 10:11). We are motivated to righteous living by seeing how God dealt with men in the past.

## HOPE FOR CHILDREN?

*Mr. Barber, our world seems so evil. I am so concerned about my children. I sometimes think that there is no hope in raising them right and feel like giving up. Can we really overcome all the bad things that are going on?*

There is much evil in the world. We do well to be concerned about our children.

I'm glad the Bible speaks to all our needs, including this one. “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). This encourages me. I know of no commands that God has given to us that cannot be obeyed. This was written when the world was very evil also. It is possible to influence our children in the right way.

One lady tells of how a few hours after

her first son was born, the doctor said to her, "I came back to tell you that I never deliver any bad babies. This baby is a good baby today, and whatever goes into him that is undesirable, that is unsocial, that might make his life a life of regret, will get into him after today. Keep that in mind, and bring him up right!"

Certainly we do not always know every decision that we should make in raising our children. However, we live in a world of causes and effects. When we do right things, right results will follow. God's word tells us what is right, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

## JOSEPH'S COAT?

*Dear Mr. Barber, what did Joseph's coat of many colors mean?*

In Gen. 37:3, we are told, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colors."

We are told by some who comment on the word used for coat in this verse that it was a tunic reaching to the ankles, and with sleeves reaching to the wrists and commonly worn by

boys and girls of the upper ranks. Still others say that it is a coat of pieces, a variegated garment, a coat of many colors.

It has been supposed that Jacob's object in conferring this distinction on Joseph was to mark him out as the heir to whom the forfeited birthright of Reuben was to be transferred. However, Moses only mentions it as a token of affection, such as was customary in those times for princes to bestow upon their subjects, and parents on their children.

We can see the effect that this act of favoritism had on the brothers of Joseph. "And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him" (Gen. 37:4).

This action, along with the dreams that Joseph had, resulted in his being sold by his brothers, because of the hatred developed against him (Gen. 37:8, 18-28).

## HELP EVERYBODY?

*Mr. Barber, how come people who call themselves Christians will not help people who ask them to? I thought Christians were supposed to help everybody.*

Christians are to be concerned about the

needs of other people.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). According to the Bible, religion is something you do, not something you get.

Those who were invited into eternal life by Jesus were those who had helped the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and in prison (Matt. 25:34-46).

One of the reasons that the Christian works is to be able to share with those in need. “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28).

But why do Christians not help everybody who asks?

One reason, no doubt is that those who profess to follow Christ do not always do His will.

However, another reason is that followers of the Lord are forbidden to give to certain people! “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (II Thess. 3:10). Those who cannot work should be helped with their needs. Those who can work should.



## HOW TO PRAY

*Dear Mr. Barber, I find it difficult to pray. I don't know what to say. I seem to be saying the same thing over and over. Could you give some suggestions?*

First, we must maintain a right relationship to God. Prayer is not designed to cover up a rebellious heart. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (I Pet. 3:12).

Second, we will want to include the following things in our prayers from time to time:

*Adoration* — praise to God, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matt. 6:9). "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth" (Psa. 8:9).

*Confession* — facing and admitting the reality of sin when we commit it (I John 1:9). "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Psa. 51:3, 4).

*Thanksgiving* — expressing to God the gratitude that we have for all His blessings (Col. 3:17; I Thess. 5:18).

*Intercession* — asking God for blessings for other people (II Thess. 3:1, 2; I Tim. 2:1, 2; James 5:16).

*Supplication* — asking God for blessings that we need, such as forgiveness of sin, food, health, and wisdom (Matt. 6:11-13; James 1:5).

### THREE WISE MEN

*Dear Mr. Barber, I have always heard about the three wise men who came to the manger to see Jesus when He was born. I have been looking for the place in the Bible where the number is given and I haven't been able to find it. Would you please help?*

In Matt. 2:1, we are told: “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.”

This is all that is said about the number of the wise men who came to see Jesus. In fact, all that is said about the wise men in the Bible is found in Matt. 2:1-16.

Also, it is interesting that nothing is said about the wise men coming to the manger. They are often pictured with the shepherds shortly after Jesus was born. However, they came “into the house” (Matt. 2:11).

No doubt quite a span of time had passed from the night Jesus was born until the wise men arrived. They had seen the star, came to Herod,

learned of the chief priests and scribes where Jesus was to be born, and then came to Bethlehem to the house where Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were at this time.

Thank you for your question. Let us ask one or two more in connection with it:

Where does the Bible say that Jesus was born on December 25?

Where are we told to celebrate the birth of Jesus? We are told to remember His death by partaking of the Lord's supper (I Cor. 11:23-28; Acts 20:7). This is where the power of the gospel is found — in the blood of Jesus (I Cor. 1:18).

## DOES GOD CHANGE?

*Mr. Barber, I have heard you say that you do not believe that God still works the same miracles that He did in the Bible. How can you say that when the Bible says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever? Do you believe this?*

I certainly believe this verse (Heb. 13:8) in the Bible. Also, Malachi 3:6 teaches the same thing. "For I am the Lord, I change not." God is as powerful as He has always been.

However, there is a difference in what God *can* do and what God *chooses* to do (Isa. 59:

1-2). That principle is true in the subject you asked about.

God created man from dust (Gen. 2:7). How do people come into being today?

God made Eve from one of Adam's ribs (Gen. 2:21-23). This same process is not still part of God's plan. The woman who became my wife had been living twenty years before I met her.

Israel went through the Red Sea on dry ground when they left Egypt, after God divided the waters (Exodus 14:21, 22). The Israelites crossed Jordan on dry ground when they went into the promised land even though it was at flood stage (Josh. 3:14-17). How do we cross rivers today?

God fed His people with manna for forty years in the wilderness. Where do we get our bread?

God is still as strong as He ever was, but He has chosen to work different ways.

## DAUGHTER IN HELL

*Dear Mr. Barber, I had a child to die when she was small. Her father and I were not Christians. A preacher visited me after the funeral and told me that she had gone to hell because we were*

*not Christians. Is there anything I can do now?*

There is nothing anyone can do for another after that person has died. "And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

However, you do not need to do anything for your child, even if it were possible. Children who are not old enough to choose the right and refuse the wrong are safe.

Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). Jesus was not telling us to become like sinners.

When David's infant son died he said, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (II Sam. 12:23). David was not going to torment.

Children do not become guilty of sin because of the sin of their parents. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20).

Your daughter is safe. However, you need to be a Christian so you will be with your daughter. Obey the gospel of Jesus and receive forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:37-41).

## LAST DAYS

*Dear Mr. Barber, do you believe that we are living in the last days? How long do you think it will be to the end?*

Yes. We are definitely living in the last days. The signs that were seen on the day of Pentecost were evidences of the last days. Peter said, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh . . ." (Acts 2:16, 17). This man, inspired by the Spirit of God, said that he and those who were listening to him were in the last days.

The writer to the Hebrews was in the last days. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son" (Heb. 1:1, 2).

From these statements we can see that we have been living in the age known as the last days for over nineteen hundred years.

Now let us notice the second question: How long will it be to the end?

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (II Pet. 3:10). How will the coming of the Lord be like a thief? Certainly Jesus will not come as a dishonest person, taking

that which belongs to another. The way in which the coming of the Lord will be like a thief is that His coming will be unexpected. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36).

How long will it be to the end? I don't know.

## WHERE CAN I GET FAITH?

*Mr. Barber, I believe in God, but I don't have enough faith. I want to be saved. I have prayed and prayed for God to give me faith, but I can't seem to get it. How can I get faith?*

Your question is certainly important. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Faith is knowledge that we have of something we have not seen, produced by adequate evidence.

God gives us faith. However, He does this in the way that He has promised. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

The faith that a person has in Jesus comes from the evidence presented in the Bible by inspired writers. "And many other signs truly did

Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31).

The only reliable knowledge of Jesus — concerning His birth, teaching, miracles, death and resurrection — is what has been written in the Bible. Therefore, to get faith, read the Bible and accept the evidence that is given.

We must develop a saving faith: one that responds to God's grace in obedience. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26).

## WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THINKING?

*Mr. Barber, I seem to constantly dwell on bad thoughts. I know that this is not good. But I can't help it. It is depressing. I don't know what to do. Please comment.*

God made us. He knows how we function. God tells us that we can and should control our thoughts.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever



things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

God does not command us to do things that we cannot do.

To improve our thinking, we need to eliminate sources of bad thoughts. Our mind is a fertile field. It will reproduce what we plant in it. It does not care what we plant in it, but it will bring an abundant harvest of the seed that is planted.

Good seeds bring good fruits.

Bad seeds produce bad crops.

Nothing produces nothing.

Evil influences in the form of evil TV programs, books, and conversations can be eliminated.

These should be replaced by reading the Bible and other good books, and talking with people who will help us.

Be patient. We have developed habits of thought over a number of years. It will take time to improve.

## IS THE BIBLE FOR TODAY?

*Dear Mr. Barber, I have always believed the*

*Bible. But I have a friend who says that the Bible is not for us today. He said that it is only a record of the religion of people who lived a long time ago. He says things have changed so much that it doesn't apply to us. What do you say?*

Your friend has an idea that is held by many people today. One man said that a book written when men traveled six miles an hour on a donkey could not apply to men who travel 600 miles an hour in a jet.

However, man's basic nature and problems remain the same. A man can hate his wife flying in a jet 600 miles an hour just as much as another man riding a donkey at six miles an hour.

The Bible still applies to us today because it deals with the problem of sin. Although some call it sickness, sin is a fact in our world. The Bible tells us what sin is. In the Bible we are told of God's grace and His desire to save people from sin. God tells us in His word what to do to have sin removed (Acts 2:37-41; 22:16).

The Bible is for man today because it gives true purpose to life. Man cannot, like an animal, eat, drink, and lie down to contentment. He must have a purpose. This is given in the Bible (Eccl. 12:13, 14; I Cor. 15:19).

The Bible is needed today because it places an emphasis and gives worth to the individual.

God knows and is concerned with each person (Matt. 10:29, 30; 16:26).

God's word, the Bible, is permanent. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

## CAIN'S WIFE

*Dear Mr. Barber, I have always wondered about Cain's wife. If Adam and Eve were the only people God created, where did Cain find a wife?*

The following verses are the only ones that I know of that have to do with Cain's wife:

"And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living" (Gen. 3:20).

"And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch . . ." (Gen. 4:17).

"And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters" (Gen. 5:4).

This is what the Bible says. This may leave questions unanswered in the minds of some people. However, the Bible is not a book to answer every interesting question that we might ask. It is the revelation of God's plan of redemption.

Many thought-provoking questions have been presented through the years: Where did the races originate? Did the wall of Jericho fall in or out? Where did Jesus get His clothes when He rose from the dead? What was Paul's thorn in the flesh?

But our relationship with God does not depend upon the answers to these questions. The Bible answers the question, "What must I do to be saved?" That is important. That is given (Acts 2:37-41; 16:30-34). We must be concerned about that.

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29).

## AFTER DIVORCE

*Mr. Barber, my ex-husband and I were divorced recently after nearly 8 years of marriage. I was abused and mistreated. I am very hurt. What can the Lord do to make this go away?*

You are certainly going through a painful time. Divorce is usually accompanied by emotions of grief, guilt, and anxiety. There are some things that will help.

1. *Understand what is happening.* There has been failure in your marriage. Your role has changed. However, some things need to be forgotten and the future should be faced with hope (Phil. 3:13, 14).

2. *Express your emotions in some way.* Do not be ashamed by grief and tears. Find someone who will listen with compassion.

3. *Keep up normal activities.* Many divorced persons pull into a shell. However, life needs to go on. There are many ways you can be of help to other people.

4. *Establish a new routine.* Keep up normal activities but don't continue to try to be married. Explore new interests, hobbies, and opportunities for service to others.

5. *Strengthen your relationship with God.* The assurance that you are an important person and that you are in a close relationship with Jesus is valuable indeed.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness: and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5, 6).

If I can be of help, please contact me.

## SAVED BY THE BLOOD?

*Mr. Barber, I have always thought that we were saved by the blood of Christ. If this is true, how can we say that other things are necessary?*

You are correct that we are saved by the blood of Christ. This is an important teaching of the Bible (I Pet. 1:18, 19; Col. 1:13, 14; Rev. 1:5).

To properly appreciate the blood of Christ, we will notice some things to which Christ's blood is closely connected.

*The New Testament.* Jesus said, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). To receive the inheritance, we must live according to the conditions of the will (Heb. 9:16, 17; John 8:32; II Tim. 3:16, 17).

*Baptism.* "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3). Christ shed His blood in His death. We are baptized into His death.

*The Church.* The church was purchased with the blood of Christ. Christ's blood flows within His body, the church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:22, 23).

*The Lord's Supper.* Jesus told His disciples, "This cup is the new testament in my

blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (I Cor. 11:25). The church in the New Testament met each Sunday to remember Christ's blood as they partook of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7).

*Daily Life.* The blood of Christ continues to cleanse the faithful Christian (I John 1:7).

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

## LOVE ENEMIES?

*Mr. Barber, one of Jesus' statements concerns me — when He said to love your enemies. I have a hard time feeling good about someone who tries to hurt me. What can I do about this?*

Your question points out that we have overworked one of our four-letter words: **love**. This word has been used to describe our feelings and/or actions toward ice cream, automobiles, relatives, baseball and God.

Someone mistakenly defined love as "a feeling that you feel when you feel that you're going to get a feeling that you never felt before." This is an incorrect understanding of love.

When Jesus tells us to love our enemies, He is telling us how to act toward them — not how to feel about them. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that

hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

We are tempted to act toward others as they act toward us. However, this does not follow the example or teaching of Jesus. When we choose to react to others, we are being controlled by the way that person chooses to act. But Jesus tells us to do right, regardless of what others may do.

Paul has the same instruction. "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12: 20, 21).

It is possible to love a person, according to the teaching of Jesus, and not like the way they act. My love then is determined not by how I feel, but by what I do.

## WHAT WILL BE RAISED?

*Dear Mr. Barber, when I read about the resurrection in the Bible, I get confused. Is this talking about the body or the spirit?*

Your question is one which has been considered by many people.

The word *resurrect* means "to restore to



life.” Therefore, whatever has been dead will be restored to life.

We are told that death occurs when the body is separated from the spirit. “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26). It is stated here that the body is dead, not the spirit. Since death is the separation of body and spirit, resurrection is the reuniting of the body and spirit.

Whatever goes into the grave will be raised. “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28, 29).

The body goes into the grave — not the spirit. “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7). Therefore, since the body has gone down into the grave to return to dust, the resurrection will be the raising of the body from the dust where it has been buried and reuniting it with the spirit which God has had in His keeping.

Our bodies will be raised.

## ARE JESUS AND GOD THE SAME?

*Mr. Barber, I read in the Bible that there is one God. But it sometimes seems that there are three — God, Jesus and the Holy Ghost. Would you please explain?*

The Bible speaks of the Godhead (Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:20). There are three members of the Godhead or God family, and all three are God. The Father is God (John 20:17). The Son (Jesus) is God (Heb. 1:8). The Holy Ghost is God (Acts 5:3, 4).

There are three distinct personalities in the God family. The Holy Spirit is not the Father (John 14:26). The Son is not the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38). The Son is not the Father (John 8:16).

Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Ghost (Spirit) are three separate personalities and are sometimes mentioned together. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." (II Cor. 13:14). Other passages where they are mentioned together are: Rom. 15:30 and Matt. 3:16, 17.

That they are separate Beings can be seen

from II John 9. A person who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. The word *both* refers to two persons or things. *Both* means "the two: the one and the other."

But how can they still be one? In marriage, God says that a man and woman become one, but they are two individuals (Eph. 5:31). Followers of Christ are to be one in mind, judgment, and teaching, but separate individuals (I Cor. 1:10).

### WILL GOD FORGIVE?

*Dear Mr. Barber, I have often thought about being a Christian. But I have lived a very bad life. I just don't know if God will forgive me of all that I have done. How much will God forgive?*

God has always been willing to forgive those who come to Him. In the Old Testament, He said, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18).

This same attitude of grace and mercy is characteristic of God today.

The grace of God has been made available to all. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11).

God wants all to come to repentance. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9).

Jesus invites all to come to Him. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

And this is not just a good idea. God has forgiven all kinds of sinners: murderers (Acts 2: 22-41), an enemy of Christ (Acts 9:1-19), a devout religious man (Acts 8:27-39), a good moral man (Acts 10:1-48), a non-believing jailor (Acts 16:30-34), and idolatrous, immoral, pagans (I Cor. 6:9-11). All obeyed the same gospel plan of salvation and were forgiven by the Lord.

The answer then is that God can and God will. The question is, will we let Him by obeying His will?

## WHAT ARE ELDERS?

*Mr. Barber, I read about elders in the Bible. I notice that you have men called elders at the Central Church of Christ. What do they do? How does someone get the job?*

Your question has to do with the organization of the church. Since our purpose is to

follow the Bible in what we do, let us go therefore to it for the answer.

The word *elder* literally means "older." This has to do with one of the qualifications which says that the person who serves in this office cannot be a new convert (I Tim. 3:6). Other words used to describe the same office are *bishop*, *pastor* and *shepherd*. The qualifications for the men who serve in this capacity are found in I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

The responsibilities of these men are:

1. To take care, rule, the local congregation where they serve (Acts 20:28; I Tim. 3:5; Heb. 13:7, 17).

2. To feed, tend, the flock of God, the local congregation, by seeing that the word of God is properly taught to each member (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2).

3. To lead by example as well as by direction (I Pet. 5:3).

4. To guard the church from false teachers (Acts 20:29-31; Titus 1:9-11).

According to the Bible, there are always two or more elders in the congregation (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). These men are selected by the congregation in view of the qualifications in the word of God.

## A CHRISTIAN NATION

*Dear Mr. Barber, I am concerned about our country. I don't believe you could call America a Christian nation today because of the crime and turning against God. Am I wrong in saying that we are not a Christian nation?*

No, you are not wrong.

I, too, am concerned about lawlessness and immorality in our country. Those who respect God and His word must realize our opportunity and responsibility to teach the truth to everyone by the most effective means that lives might be changed.

However, not only is America not a Christian nation today, it has never been a Christian nation according to the meaning of the word *Christian* in the Bible. The word *Christian* only refers to individuals — not countries. It is only used three times in the Bible.

“And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). A Christian is a follower and a learner of Christ.

“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). A Christian is one who has been persuaded to accept the truthfulness of the gospel and has chosen to obey that truth in his life.

“Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let

him not be ashamed but let him glorify God on this behalf" (I Pet. 4:16). A Christian is one who is willing to suffer for doing right and who is not ashamed to stand for the Lord.

The word *Christian* is used in the Bible to denote individuals who are faithful followers of Christ. We can better our life both now and in eternity by being Christ-like and teaching others to do the same. I am thankful we have the freedom to do that in America.

## WHAT ABOUT THE SABBATH?

*Dear Mr. Barber, will you please explain: Is Saturday the Sabbath, and if so, then why do so many Christians not keep it?*

Saturday is the Sabbath. However, the Sabbath was part of the Old Testament law which was given to the Israelites to be kept until Christ came. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). What happened to the law?

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24, 25).

What was the law? It was to bring us unto whom? Since Christ has come, are we still under a schoolmaster?

In Heb. 9:15, we read of the first testament and the new testament. "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth" (Heb. 9:16, 17).

When a man makes a new will, what happens to the first will? Can two wills (testaments) be in effect at the same time? Since Christ died, which will is binding today?

"Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second" (Heb. 10:9).

What did He do to the first will? What does the second will say?

"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread . . ." (Acts 20:7). "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store . . ." (I Cor. 16:2).

## **CAN I BELIEVE THE BIBLE TODAY?**

*Mr. Barber, I have always been taught to believe the Bible. But I have a lot of doubts. How can the Bible written a long time ago, help us today in this modern age?*

Your question is one asked by many and



should be answered.

We certainly made great advances in science and in the production of gadgets. However, man's basic needs are the same and are met by God's word, the Bible.

*The need to love and be loved.* We are loved (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8, 9). We should love others (Mark 12:30, 31; Matt. 5:43, 44).

*The need for inner peace.* Jesus gave us the solution to the problem of worry (Matt. 6:25-34). Prayer brings comfort and a peace that those who do not follow God's word never know (Phil. 4:4-7).

*The need to overcome fear.* The Bible deals with the fear of poverty (Psa. 23:1; 37:25). The fear of criticism is overcome when we accept the fact that the Christian will have some persecution (II Tim. 3:12; Luke 6:26; Matt. 5:10-12). We should seek the approval of God rather than men (Gal. 1:10). The fear of ill health and the fear of death are also discussed in the Bible (Rom. 8:28; Phil. 1:21; II Tim. 4:6-8).

*The need to know his identity.* The Bible tells man where he came from (Gen. 1:27). It reveals where we are: either in Christ or out (Eph. 1:3; Gal. 3:27), saved or lost (Rom. 6:23). It tells where we are going, depending on the road we are traveling (Matt. 7:13, 14).

## WHAT CAN I EAT?

*Dear Mr. Barber, will you please explain about clean and unclean food that is spoken of in the Bible, such as pork, etc. If it was unclean food then, is it not now?*

I want to thank this reader for the two questions that we have discussed last week and this week. The principle is the same for the keeping of the Sabbath and the eating of meats.

It is true that under the old law in Leviticus chapter 11, certain foods were declared unclean and were not to be eaten by God's people. Among the unclean animals would be rabbits, hogs and catfish.

However, we are not under that law today, since Christ has given us His new will (Heb. 9: 16, 17). He has abolished, blotten out the Old Testament (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14).

Some religious teachings today forbid the eating of some or all meats. But this is an indication of a departure from the truth of God and a doctrine of devils (I Tim. 4:1-3).

In this same chapter we read that meats are those things "which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by

the word of God and prayer” (I Tim. 4:3-5). How many creatures of God are good? How many are to be refused? Peter learned from the voice in a trance, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common” (Acts 10:9-16).

## WHAT ABOUT REMARRIAGE?

*Dear Mr. Barber, after several years of marriage, my husband left me. He left me after an affair with another woman whom he married. Are there any grounds for remarriage?*

I appreciate your concern for wanting to do what God instructs. Too many people disregard God’s will if they want to do a particular thing.

Jesus answers this question in Matt. 19:9: “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and who so marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”

The Lord had been questioned about divorce by the Pharisees. He had referred them to God’s original law of marriage: one man for one woman for life. “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh” (Matt. 19:5).

Moses allowed divorce for other reasons. Then Jesus gave His law.

According to Jesus, for a man or woman who is divorced to have the right to marry again, he or she:

1. Must have been faithful to the marriage commitment.

2. Must have put away a companion who had been guilty of sexual infidelity for the cause of fornication.

## PICTURE OF CHRIST

*Mr. Barber, I see many pictures that are supposed to be of Christ. Is there an authentic image of him so that we can know what he looked like?*

No, we have no picture of Christ. We only have the imagination of artists. There are so many different pictures, they could not all be correct.

No doubt, the so-called pictures of Christ often leave wrong impressions. He is usually pictured as a pale, effeminate, long-haired man.

But Jesus was a carpenter, an occupation which demands strength and skill (Mark 6:3). The hair style that is portrayed in so-called

pictures of Jesus is in conflict with what Paul wrote by inspiration in I Cor. 11:14.

We know very little about the physical appearance of Jesus.

Isaiah foretold: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa. 53:2).

We are encouraged in the Bible to live according to the will of God now so that in the future we will see Jesus and be like Him. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2).

No, we do not have a photograph of Jesus, but we have evidence that He was the Son of God. We can have life through His name (John 20:30, 31).

## WAS THE BIBLE MEANT FOR US?

*Dear Mr. Barber, a little while ago you said the Bible helped us today. Was this the purpose of the writers or is this something that men have said since it was written?*

God, in writing the Bible through inspired men, made it clear that truth was to be eternal.

Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

Peter tells us in the first chapter of his first letter that we are purified in obeying the truth and that we are born again "by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Pet. 1:22, 23). He then added, "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (I Pet. 1:24, 25).

The Bible was designed to meet the needs of man. And it works when properly applied. Mr. Smiley Blanton, a medical doctor, made the following observation:

"The other day a new patient noticed a Bible on my desk.

'Do you — a psychiatrist — read the Bible?' he asked.

"I not only read it," I told him, "I study it. It's the greatest textbook on human behavior ever put together. If people would absorb its message, a lot of us psychiatrists could close our offices and go fishing."

The Bible was given to tell of the abundant life (John 10:10). The truth in the Bible will judge us (John 12:48). The Bible is for us today.

## WHAT IS BLASPHEMY?

*Dear Mr. Barber, what is blasphemy?*

*Blasphemy* is defined by *Webster's Dictionary* as "the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God; the act of claiming the attributes of deity; irreverence toward something considered sacred."

The verb *to blaspheme* means "to rail, revile, speak evil."

Jesus was accused of this sin in Mark 2: 5-7. "When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" However, Jesus was not guilty since He was God and could forgive sins.

The people blasphemed against Jesus when He was on the cross. "And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, Save thyself, and come down from the cross" (Mark 15:29, 30).

On one occasion Jesus healed a man with a devil. The Pharisees said that Jesus did it by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. Jesus commented on their accusation: "Wherefore I say

unto you; All manner of sin and blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. 12:31, 32).

## WHO IS JESUS?

*Mr. Barber, could you explain who is Jesus Christ, God or His Son?*

First Jesus is Divine, that is, Jesus is God.

Jesus existed before He came to the earth, even before the world was created. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5).

Jesus participated in the creation. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Col. 1:16).

Jesus is called *God*. The angel told Joseph that "they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).



Second, when Jesus came in the flesh, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and is referred to as the Son of God. Mark begins his book by stating, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1).

Jesus is identified as the Son of God from heaven at His baptism. "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

Therefore, Jesus possesses Divinity. He is God. He also came in the flesh as the Son of God. The writer to the Hebrews records a declaration of the Father, "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Heb. 1:8).

## WHY ARE WE DIVIDED?

*Mr. Barber, why is it that we who follow Christ and the Bible are so divided? Is this the way God wants it to be?*

No. God does not want His people divided. Jesus prayed for unity in John 17:20-23. Paul commanded unity of speech, mind, and judgment in I Cor. 1:10. Paul begs for unity and peace in Eph. 4:1-6.

But why do we have division? When there is disagreement and dissention in religion, it is because one or both involved either does not

understand the will of God or because one or both understands and has decided not to obey it.

Following the will and word of men instead of God is what causes division. Notice some examples.

A book printed and circulated by a man over 100 years ago states concerning Christ, "And behold, he shall be born of Mary at Jerusalem." The Bible says, "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea" (Matt. 2:1). Which will we believe?

Another man-made book teaches, "Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." The Bible taught over 1,900 years ago and still teaches today, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). Which is right?

Why are these books written? Let me quote: "It has become increasingly evident that a manual on church government is needed to set forth and preserve our denominational practices and polity."

As long as men follow men instead of God, there will be religious division.

## TOO MUCH TEMPTATION

*Mr. Barber, I know I should not sin. But it*

*seems I have more temptation than most people. If I have more temptation than I can stand, will God blame me?*

Your's is a question that is faced by many people. God knew that we would need the answer to this problem. Notice the promises that he gives in I Cor. 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Let us observe the three needs in temptation that are supplied by the Lord.

*Encouragement.* Others have overcome, such as Job (James 5:11), and Jesus (Heb. 4:15). God cares and has promised to be with us (I Pet. 5:6, 7; Heb. 13:5, 6). There are blessings in temptation. We should look for them (Rom. 8:28; James 1:2-4). A reward awaits the ones who overcome (Matt. 5:10-12; James 1:12).

*Strength to withstand.* God provides an armor that will fully equip us for any struggle (Eph. 6:10-17). God's power is available and adequate (Eph. 3:20; Phil. 4:13).

*A way to escape.* God knows the way out. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation" (II Pet. 2:9). This way of deliverance is revealed in His word, the Bible.

Jesus answered every approach of the devil with scripture (Matt. 4:1-11). We then must be willing to take God's way. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:7, 8).

## HOW TO LOVE ENEMIES?

*Mr. Barber, Jesus told us to love our enemies. But there are some people I don't believe I can love. What can I do about this?*

Jesus does tell us to love our enemies. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:43, 44).

Paul adds, "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Rom. 12:20).

Often this command seems so difficult because we confuse loving and liking. We think we must feel warm and comfortable about and around those who have hurt us deeply. The Bible does not teach this. The love that we are

to have is a choice of how we will act toward others. This love says, "I will treat you as I would want you to treat me if you were in my place and I were in yours."

Jesus described it this way in Matt. 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

How am I supposed to feel when I am treating other people in this way? The Bible doesn't say. It tells us what to do.

To determine if I love my enemy (or anyone else), I do not ask, "How do I feel?", but, "Do I pray for him?" "Will I supply his needs as I would want someone to supply mine in the same situation?"

## HATE MY PARENTS

*Dear Mr. Barber, what did Jesus mean when He said that we should hate our parents? This doesn't seem right to me. I thought we are supposed to love everybody.*

Jesus made this statement in Luke 14:26: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Notice also the next verse:

“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27).

Jesus is here teaching a lesson on our commitment to Him. He must be the Lord (Master) of our lives. That is quite a decision for a person to make. It is called conversion in the Bible. It means that a person turns completely around and goes in the opposite direction.

The Lord says that a person should count the cost before making that decision. Nothing can stand in the way of one's service to Christ.

We cannot let our own desires take the place of the will of Christ. Other people are not to take the place of Christ. He must be first. This is what Jesus is talking about in this passage. We are to hate others in comparison to the love that we have for the Lord. Matt. 10:37 is a good commentary: “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

Jesus further states in Luke 14:33: “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”