

The Gospel Preceptor

Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Psa 119:104

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Phylactery Religion

Jerry C. Brewer

In His scathing denunciation of the Pharisees, Jesus said, “But all of their works they do to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments...” (Matt. 23:5). To publicly display their religion, the Pharisees utilized phylacteries which were boxes with straps attached in which they placed Old Testament scriptures and wore them on their heads as head bands. Their practice was derived from Deuteronomy 6:8 where—in figurative language—God told the Israelites that His statutes should be constantly studied and remembered. “And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.” The wearing of phylacteries in Jesus’ day was a formalistic distortion of the figurative language of Deuteronomy 6:8 and was condemned by Jesus. It was hypocritical because those who wore phylacteries majored in finding “loopholes” in the Law of Moses to justify their own ideas of religion, rather than heeding the first commandment to love and serve God with all the heart (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 22:34-40). That kind of “phylactery religion” is alive, well, and flourishing in our time.

In our modern world, Pharisaical “phylactery religion” is the order of the day. It’s easier to put up a sign, wear a T-shirt with a religious slogan, or wear religious jewelry than it is to practice Christianity, pure and undefiled (Jas. 1:27).

When one becomes a Christian, his outward appearance is not altered. It is not an outward, but an inward change which takes place in conversion and that change is seen in the way that person lives.

Phylactery religion is contrary to every principle of service to God and is severely condemned in Matthew 23. But the denominational industry has embraced the Madison Avenue approach to religion which fits nicely with the Pharisees’ brand. The religious world rejects simple gospel preaching (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Tim. 2:1-4), substituting slogans and cute sayings. But James didn’t say, “show me thy faith without thy T-shirts, and I will show thee my faith by my T-shirts.” Read his words again: “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works” (Jas. 2:18). True faith is not manifested in clothes with slogans, jewelry, or cute sayings but in works of righteousness. That kind of faith is in the depth of one’s soul and can be seen in his life.

When Jesus returns for judgment, He won’t ask, “How many signs did you put up about me?” or “What do you have written on your clothes, or on signs on the church building?” or, “How many crosses are displayed in your house?” He will judge the world by His word (John 12:48) and every man shall give account for his **life**—not his signs, slogans, jewelry, or clothing (2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 25:31-46).

Phylactery religion is superficial, formalistic, Pharisaical, and vain. Christ neither needs nor wants our advertising campaigns. He wants our hearts and lives. The Bible teaches that the Christian is to be known by his manner of life, **not** by what he wears or displays in his house.

“...Through the Night with a Light From Above”

Lee Moses

On the evening following the Islamic attacks upon the United States on September 11, 2001, members of Congress assembled on the steps of the Capitol building to sing a rousing rendition of *God Bless America*.

The lyrics of this beloved song are as follows:

God bless America, land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the light from above
From the mountains to the prairies
To the oceans white with foam
God bless America, my home sweet home

By singing this song following the 9/11 attacks, our nation’s politicians for a short time set aside their political differences to show unity and strength, and particularly by saying they would seek that unity and strength from God. Although the attacks brought about a dark time, the United States would make it “through the night with a light from above.”

Once again, the U.S.A. is facing dark times. However, this time there is little unity to be found among our nation’s leaders or populace. We are at a verbal and ideological war with ourselves. There seems to be little “light” to be found to guide America “through the night.”

However, the “light” of which Irving Berlin wrote shines as bright as ever. The problem is our nation largely fails to see it. Why? If we look for guidance at all, we look to the wrong places. We look to “experts” who have been indoctrinated in secularism and Marxism. We look to whomever can throw the biggest temper tantrum, and assume that their anger proves the justness of their cause. We look to Washington, D.C.; we look to Seattle; we look to Harvard; we look to Minneapolis; we look to San Francisco.

But notice from where the light comes—“from above.” There is a Divine source of light and guidance to all who will look, and it is God’s word (Psa. 119:105, 130; 2 Pet. 1:19). Irving Berlin’s original lyrics had read, “Stand beside her and guide her **to the right** with a light from above.” “Through the night” and “to the right” are virtually synonymous—we will never make it through the night if we fail to move to the Right—as in, that which is right and true, God’s perfect standard. Too many Americans simply fail to lift up their eyes to find that light from above.

The Psalmist warns, “The wicked shall be turned back unto Sheol, Even all the nations that forget God” (Psa. 9:17, ASV). May America, indeed, be guided “through the night with a light from above.”

A Strange Criterion for Doctrine

Dub McClish

Several years ago I attended a debate on the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. In the debate one of the antagonists foolishly contended that *adultery* merely means, “breaking the marriage covenant,” rather than sexual infidelity. Besides the fact that this assertion utterly denies the meaning of the word *adultery*, the consequence of this doctrine allows (and encourages) couples who are living in adulterous marriages to continue to do so, under the impression that God is pleased with their behavior. Those thus deluded, thereby continuing their illicit relationships, will face the Lord in Judgment as impenitent adulterers. Jesus’ words on this subject stand firm: “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery” (Mat. 19:9).

A preacher friend whom I had not seen in several years was also at the debate. As we visited during an intermission, he indicated his agreement with the brother in the

debate who was advocating the aforementioned erroneous and spiritually fatal position. He explained that he had adopted this view because there are so many people in the world who have been divorced and who are in second, third, or fourth marriages. He “reasoned” that we will soon run out of people to whom we can teach the Gospel if we do not adopt a more liberal view of Jesus’ teaching than that which brethren at one time taught (correctly so) almost universally.

I immediately responded that the immoral condition of society is hardly the right criterion for determining Truth and error. Although he had just given this as the reason for his liberal view, he admitted the truth of what I said. However, he then began to try to blame what he called our “traditional view” (read “correct view”) of Matthew 19:9 and related passages on the decision of some ancient church council, parroting one of the “arguments” of the false teacher participating in the debate. This brother indeed evinced a strange criterion for determining doctrine.

I have long suspected that the departure in recent years of so many from what false teachers enjoy calling the “traditional view” on divorce and remarriage has been due more to emotional factors than to any others. The preacher friend mentioned above actually admitted that raw emotion (sympathy for adulterers) had led him to exchange the Truth for error on this subject. The attempts of such folk, though mighty and loud, to credit their newfound doctrine to scholarship or to only “recently discovered” information, have been vain.

We should avoid sweeping generalizations and motive judgments. However, it seems more than mere coincidence that at least some brethren did not abandon the “traditional view” (in favor of almost any other view, regardless of its absurdity), until they themselves, a family member, or a dear friend became involved in an unscriptural marriage or wished to do so.

We should all genuinely sympathize with those who have found themselves in adulterous marriages or who have loved ones who are thus situated. We also sympathize with those who have been led to believe that their marriages are pure when they are not. However, I have little sympathy or patience for those who have had a part in inventing or propagating two dozen or more “loopholes” in an effort to circumvent the plain teaching of Matthew 19:9 on this issue. Some of them are modern counterparts of the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day, of whom He said: “Woe unto you,...for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves” (Mat. 23:15).

The subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage is not the only one concerning which some have determined their convictions or behavior on the basis of emotional rather than rational and Scriptural factors. In 1985 a “Unity Forum” involving some of our brethren and men from the Independent Christian Church (ICC) convened in Tulsa, Oklahoma, hosted by the Garnett Road Church of Christ. One of the ICC men stated on that occasion that his brethren do not accept the argument against instrumental music in worship that is based upon Leviticus 10:1–2:

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took each of them his censer, and put fire therein, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them. And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah.

The “argument” to which the ICC men object is that God is just as displeased with “strange music” today as he was with “strange fire” in their day, and for the same reason—it is unauthorized. God said as much about instrumental music in New Testament worship as He did about Nadab and Abihu’s fire—nothing whatsoever in both cases. Thus if one is unauthorized, both are.

It is not hard to understand why the ICC folk do not accept this argument and the principle behind it. If I advocated using instruments in worship and was determined to justify them, I would likewise reject that argument. The preacher at the host congregation (one claiming to be one of us, mind you), responded to the ICC men that he would no longer use Leviticus 10:1–2 in discussing with them the use of instruments in worship, since they do not accept the obvious application of this

passage. Such is not only a strange and sorry basis for deciding one's doctrine—it is a damnable basis.

Let us suppose that armed robbery becomes so prevalent in society that we have difficulty finding someone to teach who is not guilty of such behavior. Shall we change the command of Jesus, "Repent or perish" (Luke 13:3), to accommodate this sin? If someone in my immediate family becomes an inveterate liar, shall I then decide that lying is not really lying? May I redefine the term, and put the Word of God through all sorts of torture so as to come up with one or more loopholes that will allow him to go right on lying, all the while believing that God is pleased? If homosexual behavior ever becomes as common as its advocates want it to be, in order to be consistent with the flawed rationalizations of the men cited above, they will have to abandon God's attitude toward it (as various denominations have already done).

The irrational positions of the two preachers I have quoted above is not one centimeter behind that of most denominational preachers and their refusal to preach the Truth on Matthew 16:18, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, and a host of other passages. The Benny Hinns, the Billy and Franklin Grahams, and others of their kind refuse to preach the truths declared in these passages because they know they would be completely out of step with ninety-nine percent of the world's adult populace that professes belief in God, Christ, and the Bible. Shall we allow the prevalence of doctrinal error to influence us to cease preaching on the one church of Christ and its uniqueness (as the aforementioned brother thought we should do regarding Mat. 19:9)?

The Graham types also know that most sinners would not accept the truths of the New Testament concerning those things which sinners must do in order to be saved, particularly regarding baptism. They would immediately lose their audiences if they dared preach the Bible Truth on this subject (which would translate into severe loss of revenue, of course).

Most denominational preachers are more consistent than the Tulsa preacher cited above (the one who promised not to use Lev. 10:1–2 anymore). They seem to have no problem casting aside almost any Biblical passage that gets in their way of drawing the largest crowds or the most dollars. If the Tulsa preacher is going to cease teaching the Truth found in one passage because some reject it, he may as well cease using any other passages that contain Truths which some reject. In fact, to be consistent, he **should** do so.

Like Graham and his ilk, this Tulsa preacher should have immediately ceased quoting Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38 because the vast majority of "believers" reject their content regarding baptism. He further should have abandoned citing/quoting Genesis 1–2 as the authentic explanation of origins because atheists, humanists, and the heathen reject the creation account. He should never again quote John 14:6, setting forth the Lord Jesus as the only access to God because both Jews and Muslims reject Jesus as the only Savior. As we can see, there would soon be no passage that one can use if one travels this road to its logical end. The Bible thereby becomes useless.

When one allows anything besides the Word of God to determine one's doctrines and practice in religion and one's behavior, he has doomed himself ultimately to error and damnation if he does not turn back. There is but one source of Truth for the soul and spirit of man: Jesus said to His Father, "Thy word is Truth" (John 17:17). There will be but one standard of Judgment in the Last Day for all who have lived this side of Calvary. Jesus said: "The word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

How tragic it has been (and continues to be) to observe some who were once among us, some of whom formerly strongly contended for the faith, but who have allowed emotional responses to the sinful practices of men to dictate their doctrine and morals. They can never be a blessing to sinners, for they provide only disastrous deceptions that give false hopes. Neither sinners nor the prevalence of a given sin must ever be allowed to determine doctrine or behavior. Rather, we must ever determine the identity of sinners—and sin—by the unalterable doctrine of Christ, and we must ever call them up to its level by faithfully living and proclaiming it.

“Once Saved, Always Saved”

Jess Whitlock

Years ago I met P.D. Ballard, a Baptist preacher, in public debate. He affirmed the proposition that, "The Scriptures teach that a born again child of God, one redeemed by the blood of Christ, cannot sin and be lost in hell." Of course, I had signed to deny his Baptist doctrine.

The Bible account of Acts chapter 8 related that Simon the sorcerer was a child of God's who so sinned that he was in a lost state. "Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done" (Acts 8:13). However, Peter, a Holy Spirit inspired apostle, said that Simon had a heart "not right in the sight of God" (Acts 8:21), and that Simon was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:23). Recall that between these two statements (about Simon) Peter warned, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22).

My opponent argued that Simon was never really saved. Advocates of the "once saved, always saved" error, contend that Simon really did not believe. They contend that if he had been saved, he could not have been in a lost state again! This is a good time to have them explain Peter's language:

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

But, they never succeed against Peter in either instance, for Peter's argument is to this day unanswered and unanswerable.

Christ stated: "He that believeth (Greek, *pisteusas*) and is baptized (Greek, *baptistheis*) shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Jesus Christ stated that the one who believes and is baptized shall be "saved." Now, turn to Acts 8:13 and note that Simon the sorcerer "believed" and was "baptized." While there is a difference in the tense of the Greek verb *believe*, the words are identical. The Holy Spirit used the words of Jesus in Acts 8:13 to tell us what Simon did. He does **not** tell us that Simon "pretended to believe." What did Jesus say the condition of a man would be who "believed" and was "baptized"? Jesus said that person would be **saved**. After having been saved by his obedience to the teaching of Christ, Simon so sinned as to be in a lost condition. Peter, inspired of the Holy Spirit, so affirmed in Acts 8:21ff.

Does the Bible teach that a person can so sin, after having been saved, to then be lost in God's sight? It certainly does. Simon is only one example of many. Therefore, the man-made doctrine of the eternal security of the believer is false. The Bible **does not teach** the impossibility of apostasy, but the **possibility** of apostasy.

“And These Signs Shall Follow Them That Believe”—How?

Nana Yaw Aidoo

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. (Mark 16:17-18).

I believe this text just like every other text in the Bible. And I have no doubt in my mind that "them that believe" in the 17th verse is a reference to those who believe in

the 16th verse and not to the apostles alone as some erroneously claim. That men other than the apostles did the things mentioned in the text (see Acts 8:5-7), proves that the gifts in Mark 16:17-18, weren't limited to the apostles alone.

However, the mere fact that Christ made such a statement and also the fact that the signs were not limited to the apostles alone, do not mean the signs follow believers today. Evidently, Jesus Christ stated something that would be the portion of believers during that period when the apostles would carry the Gospel to the world. What many fail to realize however is that, He did not state **how** the signs would follow believers. In order to know the **how** there is only one proper way to go about it and that is to allow the fulfilment of the "Great Commission" in the book of Acts to be its own inspired commentary. By so doing, we will realize that the **how**, or the means by which these signs followed those who believed, was the laying on of the hands by an apostle on those who had believed.

In the book of Acts, we see that many believed the gospel preached by the apostles and yet, until the apostles laid hands on them (i.e the believers), only the apostles are said to have worked or had the ability to work miracles, signs and wonders. (see Acts 2:43; 5:12). Not until Acts 6, when the apostles laid hands on some believers, is it written that any man other than an apostle, worked a miracle, sign or wonder (Acts 6:8). Therefore, unless Jesus Christ lied—an impossibility (cf. Titus 1:2)—then the only conclusion is that the signs of Mark 16:17-18 followed those who had believed, only when an apostle laid hands on them. Thankfully, that is also the inspired conclusion. Let us note one such inspired text.

Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). **Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given,** he offered them money (Acts 8:14-18, Emph. NYA).

Surely, no one can misunderstand this text. Notice that the Samaritans upon becoming believers, didn't immediately receive miraculous ability (i.e. the Holy Ghost). Notice also that Philip couldn't impart such an ability to the Samaritans because he wasn't an apostle and, thus, apostles had to be brought in from Jerusalem so the new believers could receive miraculous ability. Friends, this was the means by which signs followed believers. Other passages for consideration are Acts 19:1-6; Romans 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:6).

Since there are no apostles living today (that's right!), based on the qualifications in Acts 1:20-22 and Acts 10:39-41, these signs no longer follow those who believe. There has to be an apostle present to lay hands on the believer for the signs to follow him. Thus, when the last apostle died and the last man with these gifts died, the gifts vanished from the face of the earth.

By studying Scripture in its context, rightly dividing the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15), combining the entirety of God's Word on this (and any) issue (Psa. 119:160) and allowing the Bible to be its own interpreter, we can, and will, arrive at the right interpretation as touching Mark 16:17-18.

The Church

Foy E. Wallace, Sr.

In these days of countless institutions, some worthy and some unworthy, it is necessary to repeatedly emphasize the importance of the church, lest the world forget its existence and its own members forsake its ranks in their patronage of the more popular human organizations by which we are surrounded. There are said to be more than two hundred religious bodies in our land, claiming to be churches and asserting the right of their existence. Among these institutions of men the true church must be identified.—

the difference between the human and the divine must be maintained. Such is the object and task of the present effort. Our aim is to present the general marks and characteristics of the Bible church; (1) what it is; (2) its unity; (3) identity; and (4) its paramount work in the world.

What is the Church?

First of, all, it is the spiritual body of Christ. He is its head and we are its members. The relationship between us—between Christ and the church—is that which exists between husband and wife. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church” (Eph. 5:23). The church is subject to Christ as the wife is subject to her husband (v. 24). And Christ is not only head of the church, but also head “over all things to the church,” which means that we must have authority from Christ for every act of worship rendered and deed of service performed in His church. Here we see the unity of the church in beautiful figures. The expressions, “the body” and “one body” occur in the New Testament not less than 30 times and in 1 Cor.12:20 it reads “but one body”—that is “but one church.” Every time the Bible affirms that Christ has only one body it also declares that He has only one church—for the church is his body (Eph. 1:22). Yet many people, and even some sentimental church members, become highly insulted and deeply offended if the preacher ventures to assert it from the pulpit. Paul said it about 30 times in the New Testament and his argument summed up is as follows; One head and one body; one husband and one wife; one Christ and one church. As well ask me what Christ I believe in as to inquire what church I belong to.

Next, the church is a kingdom—the kingdom of Christ. Jesus said to his disciples, “I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom” (Luke 22:29-30). Also in Heb. 12:28 we read: “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” Also in 1 Thess. 2:12 : “Ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom.” Jesus appointed us a kingdom and Paul assures us that we have received it. He also told the Colossians that they were in it: “And hath translated us into the kingdom, of his dear son” (Col. 1:13). The kingdom here undoubtedly refers to the church, for the Lord so understood it when in Matt. 16:18 he said to Peter: “Upon this rock I will build my church—and I give unto you the keys of the kingdom.” They are one and the same. Christ is head of the church and we are members; He is king of the Kingdom and we are subjects. “Will build” in Matt. 16:18 is future tense and “hath translated” in Col. 1:13, is past tense. If the language of Christ in Matthew 16 proves the establishment of church and kingdom was then future, by the same law of grammar the language of Paul in Col. 1:13 proves its establishment is now past and the excitement of some brethren over the future millennial kingdom, and reign of Christ on earth is only wild speculation and groundless assertion.

That Christ is now in His kingdom and reigning on David’s throne is plainly taught by Peter in Acts 2:30. The throne of David is now in heaven and the reign of Christ is spiritual and heavenly. Briefly stated, the throne of David has been transferred from earth to heaven and transformed from temporal to spiritual. Christ reigns now by appointment from the Father as He plainly told his disciples: “I appoint unto you a kingdom as my father hath appointed unto me” (Luke 22:29). At His second coming He will surrender this appointment and deliver His kingdom to God, the Father, and with us be subject unto Him throughout all eternity (1 Cor. 15:20-24). Now, that will not be the millennial reign of Christ, as some suppose, for His reign is then **ending**, not beginning. It will be heaven when, as Peter tells us, we shall have “abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom.” The kingdom idea then is but the **government** feature of the church—it began with the church and will end at the coming of Christ, so far as its present state, is concerned.

The church, then, being a kingdom is not a democracy and cannot be subject to the legislation of men. It is an absolute mon-archy with Christ as its king and the New Testament its constitution. It suggests incidentally that the growing sentiment and modern tendency to yield to the majority is not a Scriptural procedure in the church. Neither majority nor minority rule is the divine order. The New Testament being our di-

vine constitution it is our sole guide in all things pertaining to the work and worship, of the church, and its plain teachings cannot be vetoed by the vote of the majority nor the wishes of the minority. We should let it settle every question that we may “all speak the same thing and be joined together in the same mind and the same judgment” (1Co_1:10).

Last on this point, the church is the family of God. “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named” (Eph. 3:14-15). A few questions are here in point. First: Are all of God’s children in his family? The answer is evident. God does not have children out of his family—they are all in the family, otherwise Paul avers they would be “bastards and not sons” (Heb. 12:8). God’s family is the church (1 Tim. 3:16). All of God’s children are in his family. Therefore, all of God’s children are in the church.

Second: Are all Christians, children of God? Again the answer is plain. All Christians must be children of God. But all of God’s children are in his family—the church. Therefore, all Christians are in the church. There is not a Christian on earth out of the church.

Third: Can one be saved without being a Christian? If yes, then what advantage is it to be a Christian since we would reach, all the benefits of the blood of Christ without it? Here again the answer is inevitable. One cannot be saved without becoming a Christian. All Christians are in the church. Therefore, one cannot be saved out of the church. There is not a saved person on earth out of the church. If here someone inquires concerning the infant who cannot belong to the church we merely remind you that the term “saved” can be applied only to that which is, or has been, “lost.” The infant is not lost and its condition is expressed in the word “safe” rather than “saved.” Reaching years of ability and responsibility, sin separates from God. This brings accountability. That condition is expressed in the word “lost” and only in the church can we then be saved. The relationship existing between Christ and the church is further proof that salvation is in the church. Christ and the church are one, as husband and wife are one (Eph. 5:31). This being true we cannot be in Christ and out of the church—they are one. Salvation is in Christ. “For in none other is there salvation” (Acts 4:12). Again, “there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). Since salvation is in Christ, and Christ and the church are one, it follows that salvation is in the church, for if they be one how can we be in the one and out of the other? In summing these points up we find that the church is the body of Christ and we are fellow-members; it is the kingdom of Christ and we are fellow-citizens and it is the family of God and we are fellow-heirs.

Now Give Attention to the Identity of the Church.

How can we find the true church in the world today? Out of the many churches in the world, which church is right? Here we shall deal with its characteristics, for the question cannot be settled by arbitrary methods or answers. We must identify the church in the same manner we identify anything that is lost. If you were seeking to recover a stray horse or stolen car you would describe the thing lost, and the thing found must measure up to the description in every particular, otherwise there would be no identification. You will observe in this connection the difference between similarity and identity. Sheep and goats are similar but not identical, and in the judgment “sheep” will stand on the right and “goats” on the left. So there is similarity between many institutions of the world and the church. Indeed, it is doubtful if one could be found that is not in some point or characteristic like unto the church. In order then to find the Bible church in the world today we must know the description and compare the characteristics given in the New Testament and when you find a body of people who teach and practice accordingly you have found the true church. We now submit to you some points of identity—Scriptural marks by which we can be guided in the search.

We must be Scriptural in organization. God has ordained that Christians in certain localities shall band themselves together for the purpose of worship and service. This divine arrangement calls for organization, hence, Paul commanded Titus to “set in order the things that are lacking” at Crete and “ordain elders in every place” (Titus 1:5). Paul also, while on his missionary journeys in like manner “appointed elders in every

church” (Acts 14:26). Then, in addition to elders we find there were deacons in the church. Also there were evangelists, but New Testament preachers were not pastors—they were evangelists. The word “pastors” occurs in the New Testament but once and is plural—not singular. The elders are the pastors and God has ordained that there should be a plurality in every church—not plurality of churches under one elder, but a plurality of elders in every church. The growing tendency to appoint “leaders” to take the place of elders and to make “pastors” out of preachers is not the New Testament plan and should be discouraged. The simple organization of the New Testament church then is, briefly stated, elders to rule; deacons to serve and evangelists to preach.

We must be Scriptural in doctrine. We mean by this that whatever it took to make Christians in New Testament times it takes to make Christians now. In the second chapter of Acts these conditions are plainly set forth. Here, the first gospel sermon is preached. Here Jesus Christ is first proclaimed to the world the Son of God and the Savior of men; the Holy Ghost begins His mission of converting the world, and the law of pardon announced unto all men for all time. Thousands hear the word and are pricked in their hearts. With deep conviction they throw themselves at the feet of the King’s ambassador and cry, “What shall we do?” The answer comes, “Repent and be baptized...for the remission of your sins.” They were at once ready to act and “gladly received the word” and were baptized (verse 41), and the Lord “added to the church daily those that should be saved” (verse 47). Thus the plan of salvation was first put into operation and it must be the same as then. Faith, repentance and baptism are conditions of pardon, equally related, joined together with the copulative *and*. May we not suggest that what the Holy Spirit joins together let no preacher put asunder?

We must be Scriptural in worship. If to be unscriptural in doctrine will destroy identity of the church then to be unscriptural in worship will do the same. Doctrine is no more important than worship and the way most people complain at “doctrinal sermons” one would think it far less important. If we are not permitted to decide our own terms of salvation neither are we privileged to determine our own items of worship. We are commanded by Paul to “keep the ordinances as I have delivered them to you” (1 Cor. 11:2). In our worship then we can practice only those things delivered by inspiration. This includes such items as prayer, Lord’s Supper, singing, etc. But we find neither leaching nor example for burning incense, the use of holy water, or the playing of mechanical instruments of music. These practices have not been “delivered unto us” and cannot be adopted by those who are seeking to be identical with the New Testament church. After exhorting the Corinthian church to “keep the ordinances as delivered” he carries that same principle on in writing the Philippians in these words: “Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do.” According to this text we can practice in our worship only those things which we have either learned and received or heard and seen in Paul. Did we learn the use of instrumental music from Paul? Did we receive that practice from Paul? Did we hear from Paul of its use in New Testament churches? Have we seen in him the practice of such? Unless there is some other book than the New Testament revealing Paul’s teaching and practices we must answer the questions with an emphatic **no**, and therefore must not “do” those things. To do anything in the absence of New Testament authority and example is but to destroy identity in worship and those who engage in the practice disregard the word of God and have ceased to be the church of, Christ.

We must be Scriptural in name. The apostle urges Timothy to “hold fast the form of sound words,” that is, “Bible things by Bible names.” We have too much of the language of Ashdod (Neh. 13:23-24) in our speech today. The Jews corrupted the pure speech of Canaan by using “half the speech of Ashdod.” So today we see the tendency to speak the language of the denominations—calling our preachers “Reverend,” “Doctor” and “Pastor” and referring to our Lord’s day teaching as the “Sunday School.” These tendencies should be avoided. Bible speech should be maintained. The church uses methods of teaching and work, but is not the Methodist church. It practices baptism, but is not the Baptist church, it teaches the Word of God to young and old, respecting the classes nature has made in age and ability, but is not affiliated with, and has neither part nor lot in the modern, international and interdenominational organi-

zation universally called the “Sunday School.” Paul exhorts us to “hold fast the form of sound words” and to “speak the same thing,” We can do this only to the extent that we employ the pure speech of the Bible. The, power of unity in speech is demonstrated in Genesis 11, at the tower of Babel. There a united language became the power of an apostate and idolatrous union which God had to break up in confusion of tongues. Even so today the pure speech of the Bible will become a bond of union among Christians that will triumph over error and eventually bring unity out of confusion. Let us “speak the same thing and be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment,” holding fast the “pattern of sound words,” thus showing to the world the superiority of Bible names over the human. In so doing we will have taken a long step toward that Christian unity for which we have so long striven and so earnestly prayed.

The Mission of the Church in the World

It has a well-defined work to accomplish. The church is, indeed, a living, working, perfectly framed organism, complete and perfect for every good work. The divine arrangement, as already stated, is the local body with its elders and deacons. This organization is complete and perfect for the work of the Lord and in submitting to it (to those who have the rule over you), Paul tells us that we are “made perfect unto every good work” (Heb. 13:17-21), and in so doing we work that “which is pleasing in his sight.” The work of the church reaches out in three directions. There is the work of teaching; then the work of benevolence and last and greatest the work of sending the gospel.

It is the duty of every congregation to teach and edify its own members.

The divine arrangement of the local church is perfect for this work. Methods are necessary, but organizations are not. A protracted meeting is a method employed by the church in teaching the gospel to the world. Likewise Bible classes on Lord’s day is a method of imparting knowledge to the members of the body, and is the same in principle as a protracted meeting. They are merely methods of work. A protracted meeting is a Scriptural method of work, but a missionary society is neither Scriptural nor a method, but an institution. So, in like manner, class teaching is Scriptural, but class organizations are not. A method may grow into an organization and when it does so it ceases to be a method and is no longer the church at work, hut rather, another organization supplanting the church.

The church also has a benevolent mission in the world. We are commanded to “do good unto all men.” Here again the church in the simplicity of its divine organization, accommodates every humble disciple of the Lord seeking to “do good” rather than his own personal glory and selfish honor. We read in Acts 9:36 of Dorcas, a woman “full of good works.” We need many Dorcases in the church today, but we do not need any “Dorcas societies.” She was a humble disciple doing good. No group in the church should create funds apart from the church and operate through an arrangement of their own in doing the work of the church. Our benevolence should be done through the church, giving glory to Christ, for “to him be glory in the church” says Paul (Eph. 3:21). In the Jerusalem church there was “none that lacked” for we read that “distribution was made according as any man had need,” the funds being provided by the liberality of these Jerusalem Christians as they came and “laid their money at Peter’s feet” thus signifying that they placed the money in the treasury of the church. And the church at Antioch relieved the brethren in Judea in time of distress “sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:29). Thus may churches, through their elders, cooperate today in the work of the Lord.

But the work of benevolence is not the paramount work of the church. As miracles and physical healings of Christ and his apostles served to produce faith, so in our ministration of benevolence, providing the temporal needs of humanity, our aim should be to save their souls. Thus our benevolences become the medium through which to reach many with the saving message Sending the gospel to the lost of the earth is, therefore, the **supreme mission**—the paramount work—of the church.

Again, the simplicity of God’s divine organization meets every need. To the Thessalonian church Paul said, “From you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord in every place” (1 Thess. 1:8). And he thanked the Philippians for their fellowship in the “fur-

therance of the gospel” (Phlp. 1:5), for they sent “once and again” unto him at Thessalonica. The human way is to build gigantic human societies at the expense of the churches, squandering the Lord’s money in enormous sums, oiling the machinery and greasing the wheels of these unscriptural organizations. The divine way is far more simple and effective, Christians working through the church, and churches cooperating through the elders of a local congregation, where the work is being done (Acts 11:29). Thus the church becomes the grandest institution on the earth, in pristine beauty unfurling her banner in victory and acclaiming His glory “in the church throughout all ages.”

What Does the Church of Christ Teach?

Nathan Brewer

Nothing. The church of Christ doesn't teach a thing.

The **Bible** teaches plenty, but the church has no “official” positions. You might be surprised to learn that the church of Christ has no official statement of faith. No creed book. No catechism. No manual.

Sometimes, someone outside the church will say, “The church of Christ believes...” Or maybe someone will ask: “What does the church of Christ teach regarding...?”

This happens because various religious bodies **do** have official positions on doctrinal and moral matters. Some religious groups even convene annually to vote on their positions.

While I can't speak for every member of the church, or for every congregation that claims to be a church of Christ, it's my practice, and the practice of the members of the church where I worship to simply follow the Bible. Instead of asking what any church teaches or believes about something, it's better to find out what the **Bible teaches** about every subject.

Another reason I can't speak for any other congregation or any other individual is that the church of Christ has no official hierarchy.

Today, as in the first century when it was established, each congregation is independent. That means we don't answer to any other group of people. Locally, we answer to each other. The only remote person we answer to is Jesus Christ, the head of the church (Col. 1:18).

In our Bible classes and in our sermons where I worship, we emphasize the word of God. In our worship and in our teaching, we aim to follow the biblical pattern.

So, what does the church of Christ teach? The church of Christ teaches the **Bible**. And what do the members of the church of Christ believe? Hopefully, the members believe the **Bible**.

It's simple, yet revolutionary. It's as old as the church of Christ itself (see Acts 2), yet it seems like an innovation. No votes, no creed books, no statements of faith. Just follow the Bible.

Bible Conversion

Thomas Allen Robertson

In Matthew 18:3 Christ said, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Peter said, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). From these two passages one can plainly see that conversion is necessary if one is to be saved. But there is much confusion in the religious world as to what constitutes conversion. Various denominations have so clouded the question of conversion that many believe that they have been converted who have not truly submitted unto the will of God. But regardless of the confusion, the plain fact that one must be converted cannot be denied. So we turn to the word of God

to see how men were converted to Christ in the Bible. Whatever it took to turn men to God in the New Testament is still necessary to turn men to God today.

Steps of Conversion

As we turn to the New Testament we find that certain things are stated as being necessary to a man's salvation. These things were commanded by Christ and also by the apostles after they began to preach the gospel under the great commission.

1. The first basic step in conversion is that one must hear the gospel. Christ said,

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).

In this passage Christ states the impossibility of coming to him until drawn of the Father; then goes on to state that the drawing is done through hearing and learning. The apostle Paul makes the same point when he writes, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17) Thus the first step in conversion is hearing the gospel, because the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every creature that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16)

2. The next logical step is that one must have faith in Christ as the Son of God. As Christ reasoned with the unbelieving Jews He told them that they would die in their sins and then He told them why in these words: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). As the disciples went forth preaching the gospel of Christ they also emphasized the necessity of faith in Christ and in God. The Hebrews writer said, "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). And when the Ethiopian eunuch expressed his desire to be baptized into Christ by saying, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized" (Acts 8:36). Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest" (Acts 8:37). So we see that faith in God and in Christ as His Son is the second specifically commanded step in the salvation of man.

3. The third step on the road to obedience to God is that one must repent of past sins. Once one has heard the gospel of Christ and has come to believe that Christ is the Son of God he then is ready to repent, to change his mind regarding sin, to resolve in his heart to no longer walk in sin but to walk in the way of God. This Christ commanded as He preached among men when He told the Jews, "I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). In this passage Christ takes a physical incident and uses it to apply the spiritual fact that one must repent or perish. As the Apostle Paul stood in the midst of the heathenism and idolatry of the men of Athens he was stirred by their religious ignorance and declared,

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).

And in 2 Peter 3:9 Peter said that God is, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

4. The fourth step in conversion as commanded by Christ and repeated by the apostles is confession of faith in Christ as the Son of God. Christ said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33). And the Apostle Paul said, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10).

5. The fifth step in conversion and the one that, in connection with the others, finally puts one into Christ where he has the forgiveness of sins, is baptism. Christ commanded, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be

damned” (Mark 16:16). On the day of Pentecost when for the first time, repentance and remission of sins was preached in the name of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Peter told those who desired to be saved to, “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). Then in Galatians 3:26-27 Paul said, “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.” And Peter said, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21).

Thus we have seen that each of the steps in conversion—hearing, faith, repentance, confession, and baptism were specifically commanded by Christ, and repeated by the apostles when they went out to preach the gospel under the great commission.

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The Remission Of Sins

W.S. Boyett

The expression *remission of sins* is found eight times in the New Testament. With the exception of Rom. 3:25, every place it occurs is a literal translation of the exact words of the original. The usual word for *remission* is the Greek word *aphesis*, but in the passage in Romans, the Greek word is *paresis*. According to Trench, the two words differ from each other in that the former describes a forgiveness so complete,

...that unless he brings his sins back upon himself by new and further disobedience (Matt. 18:32, 34; 2 Pet. 1:9; 2:20) they shall not be imputed to him, or mentioned against him any more. The *paresis*, differing from this, is a benefit, but a very subordinate one; it is the present passing by of sin, the suspension of its punishment, the not shutting up of all ways of mercy against the sinner, the giving to him of space and help for repentance. If such repentance follows, then the *paresis* will lose itself in the *aphesis*, but if not, then the punishment, suspended, but not averted, in due time will arrive.

Sins Formerly Passed Over

During the many centuries prior to the advent of Christ into the world, God's extreme indignation against sin was not adequately revealed. These were the times when God suffered the nations to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16); they were the “times of ignorance which God winked at” (Acts 17:30). Sins committed during these ages were not forgiven; they could not be forgiven except through the propitiatory death of Christ on the cross. Hence the passage in Romans 3:25 does not and cannot refer to the forgiveness of sins to one under the new covenant; it refers rather to the passing over of the sins of the people under the previous covenants under the forbearance of God.

What is Remission?

When we stop to consider that this thing called “remission of sins” is so important that it could not be had save through the blood of Christ, we can understand how very serious a view God takes of it, and how seriously we ought to regard it. But what is remission? What do we mean by it? What happens when sins are remitted?

In his *Great Texts of the Bible*, James Hastings quotes a section from one of Bro. J. W. McGarvey's sermons on the subject of remission which, I believe, sets forth clearly what is meant:

Remission literally means to 'throw back', or 'throw away'; and the term is used simply because, when God forgives us our sins, he is contemplated as throwing them away, tossing them clear off, outside of all subsequent thought or concern in regard to them. There is another expression used in Scripture for the same thought, which is also figurative: "Repent and turn that your sins may be blotted out." Sins are contemplated in that expression as having been written down in some book of God's remembrance, as it were,

and God in forgiving them is figuratively represented as blotting out that writing. Blotting out with the ancients was a little more complete than it is, usually with us. When we write something down with ink, and blot it out, there still remains some marks to indicate that once there was writing there. If you write on a slate and rub it out, some marks are often left. The Ancients used a wax tablet. A sharp-pointed instrument made the marks in the wax, and when they wished to blot it out, they turned the flat end of the stylus and rubbed it over, and there was an absolute erasure of every mark that had been made. That is the figure, then, used by Peter for the forgiveness of sins—indicating that when God forgives sins, they are not only thrown away, as in the expression remission, but they are blotted out, the last trace of them being gone, and gone forever.

To Whom is Remission Promised?

We can say with assurance that the promise of remission is to all men. All men need it; for all of us “have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). The wicked or sinful person will go away into everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46). It is not to a select group of Jews, or to any other single race or nation, that the promise is given. But the promise comes to every mortal on this earth. Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach the message offering remission of sins, in his name, to all nations. He said, “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46-47). Wherever the Gospel of Christ is preached, remission of sins is offered.

But the remission is not promised unconditionally. While the promise is to be to the whole world, there are certain conditions that must be met, certain requirements that must be fulfilled. The first of these is faith. Peter stated in his sermon to Cornelius, “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

Some men assume that faith is the only condition of remission; that once a man has faith, remission is assured. Such an assumption is in error. If no other conditions had been mentioned, then we might indeed suppose that faith alone was enough. But such is not the case. There are other conditions which are definitely set forth. In other passages where remission of sins is promised, both repentance and baptism are listed as prerequisites. Luke says that John came “into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Luke 3:3). These conditions are also the same as those of the message of Christ's apostles. When Peter stood up on Pentecost, he said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).

Those who wish to eliminate baptism from the plan of salvation have advanced many false theories concerning Peter's words in this passage. They recognize that the words, as they are written down, very plainly make baptism one of the conditions of remission of sins and they have spared no effort to seek to destroy the force of the passage. Their most persistent attack has been on the word *for* in the verse. They have tried to make it retrospective rather than prospective, looking backward to the sins already forgiven rather than forward to the promise of forgiveness. They fail to understand that both repentance and baptism are governed by the word *for*. Whatever it means for one, it means for the other. Both repentance and baptism stand in the same relationship to remission of sins. If baptism is because of, then so also is repentance.

There is not a recognized lexicographer in the world that defines *eis* in Acts 2:38 (the Greek word from which we have *for*) as bearing the meaning “because of.” On the contrary, all of them, from Thayer on down, say plainly that the word means “in order to.” Of that there can be neither mistake or misunderstanding. God's word is clear and plain. Remission of sins is promised only to those believers in Christ who repent and are baptized.

"Concerning Them Which Are Asleep"

Fred E. Dennis

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. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

These are precious words to every true believer. They were written by an inspired Christian; they were written to Christians; and they were written about Christians "which are asleep." The very fact that the Lord would write about our dead as being asleep is very comforting. What is sweeter than to know that our loved ones and friends are asleep in Jesus? We may speak of death in a cold and harsh manner, even when Christians are involved in that death, but the Holy Spirit writes "concerning them which are asleep."

You will remember that when Jesus was talking about the death of one of His dear friends here on this earth he said: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John 11:11). When our loved ones and friends are taking physical rest in sleep, we can awake them out of sleep. When they are asleep in death, God can awake them out of that sleep. Blessed assurance!

God does not want us to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep. He wants us to know something about them. He does not say for us not to sorrow, but He does say, "Sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." What "others" could there be besides Christians? Of course, the "others" are those who are not Christians. The Christian has a different attitude toward death than those who are not Christians. He has hope even in death. What a terrible thing to die without any hope! My kind reader, that is exactly the condition of those who die out of Christ.

Do you recall the little 12-year-old daughter of Jairus? (Mark 5:21-44). She was dead. Jesus went to this home where the dreaded monster, Death, had invaded. He went into the house, taking Peter, James, and John, and the parents of the little girl. They all wept and bewailed her. But what did the Master say? "Weep not; she is not dead, 'but sleepeth.'" Of course, they knew she was still in death. Jesus put all out of the room, and then, taking the dead child by the hand, He said, "Maid, arise." And her spirit came again into her. She arose straightway. That is what death is. When the spirit goes out, we are dead. The Lord does not want us to be ignorant concerning this.

There is a resurrection of the dead. When the Christian dies, the ones who are left have suffered a great loss. Death to the Christian is gain. Jesus wept in sympathy at the grave of Lazarus. Thus do we at the graves of our friends. Heathens and others who know nothing of the resurrection make a great show of sorrow at the death of their friends. Christians have a hope. Those who are not Christians have no hope in the resurrection. They are without God and without hope in the world. What an awful thing to be living without God and without hope! (Eph. 2:12).

Every Christian believes that Jesus died and rose again. The fundamental facts of the gospel are that Jesus died for our sins; He was buried; and He arose the third day. (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Jesus was the first fruits from the dead. This shows the promise of the coming harvest when all Christians shall be raised from the dead.

We shall not all sleep (1 Cor. 15:51). There will be Christians on this old earth when Jesus comes again. The ones that are alive will not precede the ones who have fallen asleep. They will not go before the ones who have died. They will not hinder the dead. The dead in Christ will arise before any change takes place in the living Christians. The

dead will be raised before the change of the living takes place.

The Lord is now in heaven. When He comes, He will come from heaven. He will come with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. This shout is the shout to Christians. They will come from the tombs when this shout is given. Jesus said, “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).

H. Leo Boles wrote:

The Lord Jesus Christ will utter his voice, will call from above to his sleeping people, and they shall hear and obey the call and come forth in incorruptible and glorious bodies. At His command they shall rise. Round this planet shall that mighty shout ring, penetrating every grave, piercing even the ocean's depth, and it will stir into life and call out into the eternal fellowship of the Lord the whole vast host of the righteous dead.

False teachers have taught much falsehood concerning “the dead in Christ shall rise first.” It simply means that the living Christians shall not precede the ones who have fallen asleep in Christ. Then the ones who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.

You will please note that our meeting the Lord is to be in the air. If Jesus ever walks on this earth again, the Scriptures are silent concerning it. He is not coming to this earth to reign here. Jesus is preparing a place to receive his faithful ones.

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Cor. 15:49-58).

Are you ready for the change?

Religious—But Wrong

E.D. Green

It may seem odd to say that a man can be religious, and at the same time in deadly error; yet it is true. Paul set out to prove this very principle to the Athenians. “And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, and said, Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious...” (Acts 17:22). He then explained to them why they were wrong, though religious. Paul did not question their honesty, but he did question the authenticity of their religion. He did not charge them with being irreligious, but he did charge them with being religiously wrong. If this was true in Paul's day, (and it was) then certainly it is reasonable to say that it might be true of some men and women today.

There is a difference between questioning a man's religious activities and questioning his honesty. He can be honest in what he believes, and yet be honestly wrong. Many good people today feel that if they are religious and are honest in it, they are saved. Apparently the only qualifying factor with them is honesty. One must be honest in his re-

ligion, of course; but at the same time he must be honestly right. The only way one can be right religiously is by making certain that the things he believes and accepts are authorized by the Book, the Bible. One's honesty in religion need never be questioned until he has been taught the truth and has had opportunity of accepting it. If he then continues in error, he becomes dishonest religiously.

Religious People Warned

The fact that one can be religious, and at the same time wrong, is easily proven by studying a few cases of conversion as we find them recorded in the Bible. In nearly every case of conversion, we are impressed with the fact that those converted were religious people, but religiously wrong. When men and women accept the truth, they have to leave the religion under which they had been living, and accept the system of religion authorized in the New Testament. Merely being religious and honest were not enough. They had to have **truth** as well as religion and sincerity.

When John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, he found multitudes of religious people coming out to hear him preach. They were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. John sternly reproved them for their attitude, and warned them that their religion was not adequate; it was not enough. "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matt. 3:9). No one questions that these Jewish people were religious. In fact, religion was perhaps the dominant activity of their lives. The trouble with them was not that they were religious—but **religiously wrong**. If they were ever to be saved, they would have to give up the religion to which they were wedded so closely, and accept the religion authorized by Christ. The "kingdom of heaven" was at hand; no other religion would suffice.

The Lord leaves no doubt about the matter of religion when he says,

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

These people were religious enough, all right; but they were religiously wrong.

Apostolic Preaching

Nearly all the preaching of the apostles was done to people who were religious, but religiously wrong. Those to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost were religious people—"...devout men, from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5)—but they were wrong. When Philip went down to Samaria to preach, he found a people who were intensely religious, but they were in error. They were religious, but wrong (Acts 8:5-12). When he preached to the Ethiopian eunuch, he was teaching a man who had come perhaps a thousand miles to worship, a man who was reading the Bible, and who was completely honest and completely sincere—but who was religiously wrong (Acts 8:26-39). He was doing "the best he knew", but that was not enough; he had to obey the gospel. Lydia and her household were truly devout and God-fearing people; but they were religiously wrong (Acts 16:13-15).

Paul was surely a religious man during those years when he persecuted the church. He says he was "living in all good conscience" before God. He was religious, devout; zealous, conscientious, sincere, and truly thought he was serving God. But he was wrong. No one will even try to argue that he was right (Acts 9, 22, 26). Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, converted under Paul's preaching, was a man who was religious, but he was wrong (Acts 18:8). He had to follow Paul's example and become not only religious, but **religiously right**.

When Paul went down into Ephesus, he found twelve people there who had been baptized with John's baptism. They were religious, certainly, but religiously wrong. Paul baptized them in the name of the Lord (Acts 19:1-5). Many people seem to think that when they have been baptized, they are absolutely right religiously. It seems of little consequence to them to know why, or for what, or with what design they were bap-

tized. They have the feeling that because they have been put underneath the water, that is all God requires. But those twelve to whom Paul came did not argue that because they had been baptized they were all right. When they heard Paul's preaching, they submitted to the gospel and were baptized "in the name of Christ."

We must all have the same willingness and readiness to act in compliance with inspired truth if we ever hope to gain heaven. It is not enough for us to be religious, honest, and sincere; we must also be certain that we are living in obedience to the express commands of God. If we are doing anything not authorized by the Book, we must stop it at once, and take a stand for that which is written.

We had better be right **now** if we want to be right **then**—when we stand before the Lord in the great judgment.

The Larger the Investment, the Less the Interest

David Ray

As a sales associate for a new home builder, I get to assist lots of people in their search for a new home. This is usually the largest investment most people will ever make. As such, it's always strange to me when potential homebuyers express more interest in, and concern for, the smaller, more cosmetic parts of the house (e.g., paint color, size of pantry, space for TV, number of electrical and cable outlets) than for the more important factors (e.g., builder reputation, quality of construction, energy efficiency, length of warranty, etc.—matters they seem to have relatively little, if any, interest in at all).

Having also worked in the auto industry many years, the running joke was always that the customer's primary concern was not how well the car was built but how many cupholders it has! Today it seems that people are far more interested in their cell phones than they are their homes or cars.

So, it should be no surprise that the biggest investment of all, one's eternal home after this life, is the furthest thing from their minds. The average person has virtually no interest at all in his spiritual eternity. Atheism may account for much of this; but sadly, the reality is that most people are **practical** atheists, believing in the existence of God (even claiming to be Christians), but whose lives, decisions, and actions display the opposite. Consider Titus 1:15-16:

Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Notice that Paul is referring to the "unbelieving", but defines this not as atheism, but as those who "profess to know God; but in works they deny him." These unbelievers not only believe in God, but actually claim to know Him. When Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it as God instructed him (Num. 20:8, 11), God punished him, saying that "ye believed me not" (v. 12). There is a big difference in believing **in** God (i.e., His existence) and **believing** God, which clearly requires knowledge of, and obedience to, His will.

Most folks are going to be shocked in the end of time when their homes, cars, and cell phones will be "burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10ff) and they are required to "appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). For "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

As people go through the home buying process, do they consider that this is the largest earthly investment they'll make? As you live your life, do you recognize that the most important investment you'll ever make is in your soul and where you'll live eternally? "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

God's Love Declared, Depicted, Demonstrated

Ron Cosby

God's love for His enemies is the greatest story ever told. In this lesson we take a front row seat to hear from the Father. "God is love" (1 John 4:8). It is not simply that God loves but that He **is Love** itself. Love is not merely one of His attributes, but His very nature. He loves all men. Here are three ways in which He made His love known to mankind.

God's Love is Declared

David sings of the Lord's love: "Thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah, is in the heavens" (Psa. 36:5). "How precious is thy lovingkindness, O God!" (Psa. 36:7). If anybody knows how penetrating and priceless God's love is, it was David. He betrayed one of his soldiers by committing adultery with his wife. He lied. He went so far as to have his loyal soldier murdered on the battlefield. Yet, when he confessed his transgressions to God, God forgave him (Psa. 32:51).

He who knows the Father best is Jesus. He Who is the very image of the Father, declares the Father's love (John 3:16; 15:9). "Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love."

The Holy Spirit inspired these powerful heart-moving declarations. They fill our hearts and are dear to every forgiven child of God (Rom. 5:5).

God's Love is Depicted

Have you ever heard someone trying to suggest that you never see the love of God in the Bible until you get to the New Testament? Such suggestions show a faulty view of the Old Testament.

Entire Old Testament books help us to see the love of God. Out of God's history books, the book of Ruth serves as an example of God's redeeming love for those of us who are not His people. Turning to His poetry, the Song of Solomon depicts God's love. "Many waters cannot quench love, Neither can floods drown it: If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, He would utterly be contemned" (Song 8:7). Even the books of the prophets artfully portray the divine Husband's love. The entire book of Hosea is "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him" (Hos. 14:4).

Ezekiel 16 gives us a great allegory displaying God's love and it would profit the reader greatly to peruse the entire chapter. If John 3:16 is the golden text—and it is—then Ezekiel 16 is the golden allegory.

Relationships which Jehovah ordained for mankind bring out God's love: The friendship of David and Jonathan (cf John 15:13), the love of Jacob for Rachel (cf Eph 5:28). The love of a father for his son David and Absalom (2 Sam. 19:6). Such endearing relationships are in God's Holy Writ to convey His majestic love for us.

God's Love is Demonstrated

Some are all talk and no action. That is not God. He supports His talk with unmistakable action.

The Father demonstrated His love through that which He gave up. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Jesus summarized His earthly poverty, telling His listeners, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" ((Matt. 8:20). Giving up heaven says a lot. In Philippians 2:5-8, Paul reminds us of this sacrifice, saying,

Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself [of what? Deity? No. Heaven's glories.], taking

the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient *even* unto death, yea, the death of the cross.

Jesus demonstrated His love by dying for us (1 John 4:9-10; John 15:13; Rom. 5:8). This was not a circumstance imposed upon Jesus. It was His mission from the outset (Matt. 20:28; Luke 19:10). He willingly left heaven, was born of a virgin, reared in poverty and hardship, taught those who were against Him, and died a humbling, criminal's death. No one has matched this love.

The Savior demonstrated His love by saving us (Titus 3:3-6). God “poured out [His mercy] upon us richly, thru Jesus Christ our Saviour.” Someone told the story of two men who were trapped in a mine cave-in, and poisonous gas was escaping. One man had a wife and three children. He also had a gas mask, but his mask had been torn in the underground explosion and he would have perished apart from the act of the man who trapped with him. This second man took off his own mask and forced it on the man who survived, saying, “You have Mary and the children. They need you. I am alone and can go.”

Another said, “I asked Jesus, ‘How much do you love me?’ And Jesus said, ‘This much.’ Then He stretched out His arms and died” (Unknown). Jesus loves **you** so much that He went to the cross, stretched out His arms and died for each one of **your** sins. He loves unconditionally, selflessly, and wholeheartedly.

God’s love for His enemies and His children is the greatest story ever told, and Bible readers have a front row seat. Such a loving One demands our devotion.

Faith as Seen in Baptism

C.G. Caldwell, Jr.

It is almost needless to stress the importance of faith, inasmuch as the religious world generally agrees that faith is prerequisite to salvation. The Scriptures speak plainly on the subject: “Without faith it is impossible to please him,” “by grace are ye saved through faith,” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” These passages could be multiplied endlessly, but since we are all agreed that faith is indispensable to salvation, let us see if we can determine what is meant by *faith* as used in the New Testament writings,

Faith and Obedience

There is a light, flimsy sentiment that somebody (not inspiration!) started in the world which teaches that mere mental assent to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world is sufficient to save from spiritual death. Jesus anticipated this doctrine of man and said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). Mere mental assent to the being of God and His Son is not sufficient. Surely, one is foolish indeed to claim faith in Christ and at the same time deny what the Lord said in regard to the necessity of doing that which the Father commands. To have faith means that one not only recognizes that Christ is God's Son, but he does what God says do.

Moses, on one occasion, was charged by God with not believing in Him. God had commanded Moses to speak to a rock, and had promised that when he had done this, water would come forth from the rock. Instead of doing what God commanded, Moses struck the rock, and thus invoked God's displeasure. God said, “Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them” (Num. 20:12). Moses believed that God existed; he further believed that God would supply water from the rock. But he did not believe God to the extent of obedience. Therefore, God said, “Ye believed me not.”

In the Bible the words *believe* and *obey* are sometimes used interchangeably. For example, we read, “He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life, but he that obeyeth not

the Son shall not see life” (John 3:36). Whether we **have**, or **see**, eternal life depends on our believing (obeying) the Son of God. One who does not believe in the Lord enough to do what he says, does not believe in him in a true Bible sense—or to the saving of his soul.

Faith and Baptism

The Lord commands that men be baptized. He said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). In all Christendom baptism is the most troublesome doctrine. It is regarded by nearly all man-made churches as the “Great-Non-Essential.” There are men who would actually die to retain it in their creeds as a non-essential, and yet declare that it is of no value to the saving of the soul. They claim to believe in Christ, but do they? Can one truly believe in Christ and at the same time deny what Christ said? What some of our religious friends call faith is actually a lack of it—just plain, unadulterated unbelief! Is it faith or a lack of faith that causes a man to refuse to do what God commands ?

Baptism is so designed as to test our faith. Why? Because it seems foolish and is despised by the world; Someone says, “I just can't see any sense in it. If the saving of the soul is a spiritual consideration—and it is—what is there about burying the physical body in water that will tend toward the washing away of sins? I can't understand it!” On the ground of not being understood, it is rejected. Such an attitude is purely the product of Modernism. *Modernism* is that philosophy which rejects the authority of the Bible and substitutes in its stead man's intellect.

Faith and Understanding

Modernism demands a **reason** for everything that is done. Yet we are surrounded on every hand by things we do not understand. No one rejects these things simply because they are not understood. What would you think of the man who says; “I just can't understand the idea of radio, therefore I will not listen to a radio”? A man would be unreasonable and lacking in gray matter to insist that the thing be thoroughly understood before he would accept it.

Yet this is the very logic (?) some apply to the matter of baptism. They say, “I can't understand all of the how or why of sins being washed away in baptism, therefore I hold baptism to be non-essential!” Paul said, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). When I am confronted with the command from God's book to do that, the reason for which is “not seen” by me, my faith compels me to obey.

What would be the caliber of my faith if I refused or failed to submit to the plain teaching of God's word? Paul said, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Christ said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Peter said that baptism is “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). These statements are plain and positive. There may be mystery in the reason why God ordered baptism but there is certainly no mystery concerning the fact that He did order it.

The man who refuses to accept the facts contained in the Book of God because there is mystery involved, is a man who refuses to be guided by facts and who has such an inflated view of the powers of his own mind that he concludes that whatever he cannot fully understand and explain simply is not so. Paul said, “We walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). It is when reason rebels or falls short that faith accepts and causes us to do what God says.

Baptism is the only thing in the Bible that has the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit connected directly with it. Let us not, then, **minimize** it by calling it a “non-essential” and thus separate it from faith in the gospel.

Editor's Travels and Writings

August kept us busy traveling and preaching. On Sunday, Aug. 2, we preached at Willow, Okla. that morning and at Yukon, Okla. that evening. We remained at Willow on

Aug. 9, then preached there on Sunday morning Aug. 16 and again at Yukon that evening. August 23, we were at Willow and at Chillicothe, Texas Aug. 30.

Requests continue to come in for our latest book, *“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy* and we are grateful for them all. The book is in its Fourth Printing and is mailed **free of charge** to anyone who requests it. The **postage is also free**.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

What did Paul mean in Romans 11:26 when he wrote, “And so all Israel shall be saved...”?

Thanks for your interesting question. Interesting because you are seeking the truth and because the religious world in general does not know the meaning. Next, it is interesting because of the recent agreement between Israel and a couple of other nations which, to many, began a situation where they think the anti-Christ has now come.

It is also true, as we will show, that religious people want to believe that every Jew will be saved when Christ comes to set up His kingdom and reign on His throne in Jerusalem. Some believe that Queen Elizabeth is reigning on that throne, keeping it warm for Christ at His coming, as some will say, to reign a thousand years before the end of time comes. Now I know that “keeping it warm” are my words and not theirs, but equal about the same and how the Queen has it only temporarily—till Christ comes.

Paul wrote these words, “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob”. We will answer the part of the question sent to us for this issue of the paper.

We now give proof of what great religious writers say about this verse.

And so all Israel shall be saved--To understand this great statement, as some still do, merely of such a gradual inbringing of individual Jews, that there shall at length remain none in unbelief, is to do manifest violence both to it and to the whole context. It can only mean the ultimate ingathering of Israel as a nation, in contrast with the present “remnant.” (So THOLUCK, MEYER, DE WETTE, PHILIPPI, ALFORD, HODGE). Three confirmations of this now follow; two from the prophets, and a third from the Abrahamic covenant itself... (*Jamesion-Faucett-Brown Commentary on Romans*).

All Israel. All the Jews. It was a maxim among the Jews, that “every Israelite should have part in the future age.” (Grotius.) The apostle applies that maxim to his own purpose; and declares the sense in which it would be true. He does not mean to say that every Jew of every age would be saved; for he had proved that a large portion of them would be, in his time, rejected and lost. But the time would come when, as a people, they would be recovered; when the nation would turn to God; and when it could be said of them, that, as a nation, they were restored to the Divine favour. It is not clear that he means that even then every individual of them would be saved, but the body of them; the great mass of the nation would be. Nor is it said when this would be. This is one of the things which “the Father hath put in his own power,” Ac 1:7. He has given us the assurance that it shall be done to encourage us in our efforts to save them; and he has concealed the time when it shall be, lest we should relax our efforts, or feel that no exertions were needed to accomplish what must take place at a fixed time.

Shall be saved. Shall be recovered from their rejection; be restored to the Divine favour; become followers of the Messiah, and thus be saved as all other Christians are (Albert Barnes, *New Testament Commentary*).

“And so all Israel shall be saved] - Shall be brought into the way of salvation, by acknowledging the Messiah; for the word certainly does not mean eternal glory; for no man can conceive that a time will ever come in which every Jew then living, shall be taken to the kingdom of glory. The term saved, as applied to the Israelites in different parts of the Scripture, signifies no more than their being gathered out of the nations of the world, separated to God, and possessed of the high privilege of being his peculiar people. And we know that this is the meaning of the term, by finding it applied to the body of the Israelites when this alone was the sum of their state.

“As it is written] - The apostle supports what he advances on this head by a quotation from Scripture, which, in the main, is taken from Isa 59:20: The Deliverer shall come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. Now this cannot be understood of the manifestation of Christ among the Jews; or of the multitudes which were converted before, at, and for some time after, the day of pentecost; for these times were all past when the apostle wrote this epistle, which was probably about the 57th or 58th year of our Lord; and, as no remarkable conversion of that people has since taken place, therefore the fulfilment of this prophecy is yet to take place. In what manner Christ is to come out of Zion, and in what way or by what means he is to turn away transgression from Jacob, we cannot tell; and to attempt to conjecture, when the time, occasion, means, &c., are all in mystery, would be more than reprehensible” (*Adam Clarke’s Commentary*).

Men that I studied under in so-called Christian colleges, some of renown, taught us “context,” “context,” context.” The late brother Guy N. Woods said at least yearly in the Open Forum that a “passage taken out its context was only a pretext.” All these notable men, Dixon, Bales, and R. Turner, Sr. held that same view of the Scriptures and it has proven itself right or correct every time. Therefore, let’s look at the context of Romans 11 since it does **not** teach what the so-called scholars aver that it does.

Paul was not teaching that every Jew had become a castaway—fallen. Had he done so, he himself would be lost since he was also a Jew among them all of some repute (cf. vs. 1). God had not—and does not—cast away those that lived under other covenants. The patriarchs were not called Jews of note. Those will be judged by the law they lived under. I am not going to be judged as a law breaker in Mexico because I do not live in there and, thus, not subject to their law but I will be judged by the law in America (cf. Rom. 13). If I go to Mexico I will be subject to their laws. Therefore, some religionist has Paul saying something that he did not say anywhere in Holy Writ.

The people who God “foreknew” in verse 2 is simply talking about those who were obedient to the law they lived under in their lifetime. Neither is Paul talking about Jews who had obeyed the saving Gospel of the New Testament. If that were the case not one single apostle would be saved, for they were all Jews.

The fact remains that those in the New Testament era rejected Christ, His church, Kingship, and His Lordship over all mankind. To the Jews in Jesus day, He betrayed God and especially the Law of Moses. Here is what Roman 11 is teaching and what happened to the Jews; “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18). Those words were said of the household of Cornelius by the apostle Peter. The Jews as a whole believed that they were better than anyone else and were very jealous of the Gentiles and thought the Word of God was too good for such lowly people—not fit subjects of God’s love, mercy, grace and pardon.

The Jews were provoked to anger or jealousy when Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch of Pisidia and had already experienced the hardness of the hearts of the Jews Of that, Luke wrote,

But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but

seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13: 45,46 in particular verse 46).

Thus, by Inspiration, Paul tells exactly what happened among the Jewish people in general but **not** all—**every Jew**.

While the Jews wanted to hang onto Abraham as their father, they forgot that it was said of him, “And in thy seed shall **all** the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen. 22:18). They chose to ignore that the apostles were told to go into **all** the world (Mark 16:15) to **every** creature, to **every** nation (Matt. 28:19) and preach the Gospel to **all** mankind. This, of course, meant Gentiles as well as Jews (all emph. HDD).

Paul is demonstrating that through the downfall of the Jews, the Gospel was then preached where it had never gone before and that is to the Gentile people. As already seen, the Jews were filled with envy, blasphemed, meaning to speak against the Lord and the Word of truth, and all it represents. The Lord did not force this on their preconceived hearts for they misunderstood the meaning of the Law of Moses whose design was to lead man to the Gospel of Christ—the new covenant—the spiritual kingdom the church (cf. Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-11) and the law removed—fulfilled (Col. 2:14).

You see, they wanted a king on a throne in Jerusalem and that was not the purpose of the Gospel of Christ. He would be/is a spiritual King over a spiritual kingdom—the church. Thus, they wanted exactly what some want to today, and that is a king sitting on a throne in Jerusalem for a thousand years. They were so adamant about this that Jesus foretold the destruction of Jerusalem in Matt. 24, Mark. 13, Luke 17, etc.

Paul used the grafting process to teach that the Jews could be grafted back in to the real tree if they would come back to the truth that they deserted. Please remember that Romans was written some twenty odd years after the church was established in Jerusalem in Acts 2. Undoubtedly, some of them had obeyed the Gospel but turned away in bitterness to the truth. They, in order to be saved, would have to confess their sins and pray for forgiveness (1 John 1:7-10). And this is the grafting that Paul is speaking of here in Romans 11.

So, we see that not every Jew turned away. Not every Jew will be saved unless they obey the truth. All of Israel, or any other people, will be saved if they are baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and live a faithful life (1 Cor. 15:58). They are the only saved ones regardless of race or nation.

Thanks for your questions.

Brother Davidson answers readers' questions in this column each month. If you have Bible questions, you may email them to him at harrelld@charter.net

Almost Persuaded (Acts 26)

Kent Bailey

New Testament Christianity is brought into one's life by the element of persuasion. By that, we refer to the element of argumentation, expostulation or entreaty to a course of action. In Acts chapter 26 Paul makes a defense of the Gospel system, serving as an example of the great and fundamental truth that it is the power of God unto salvation. The purpose of Paul's defense was not that of saving his own life, but rather to persuade Agrippa of **his** need of salvation.

As we examine the text, we find that Paul discussed his background, including his persecution of Christians, his conversion to the truth, and his commission from Christ to preach the Gospel. In this account, Paul discussed his obedience to that commission as well as his arrest in the temple. Within this specific defense, Paul argued that he had preached nothing other than what the Old Testament prophets had spoken. Finally, Paul appealed to Agrippa to acknowledge his belief in the prophets. Because of his acceptance of what the prophets had stated, Agrippa should have been willing to obey the conditions of the gospel and become a New Testament Christian, a member of the

church of the Lord. However, the text indicates that Agrippa avoided making such a commitment.

There are three fundamental truths affirmed in Acts chapter 26. In the context of this study we note:

The Possibility of Persuasion (26:1-3)

The truth of God has within itself the power to disturb individuals by convicting them of their personal sins. That was illustrated by Paul's preaching to Felix (Acts 24:24-25). According to the historian Josephus, Drusilla was a daughter of Herod Agrippa, whose persecution of the apostles of Christ wrought great havoc to the church of our Lord. She was not only from a notorious family, but also was considered a woman of remarkable beauty as well as being the lawful wife of Azizus, King of Emesa. History attests to the fact that she was living in the sin of adultery with Felix. Concerning Felix, historical records indicate that he exercised authority with virtually every type of cruelty and lust imaginable. Upon hearing Paul's preaching dealing with righteousness temperance and judgment he was filled with fear and dread regarding God's punishment concerning sin.

In every account of conversion as recorded in the book of Acts one will note that the preaching of the Gospel brought about conviction of sin within the lives of the hearers. Such conviction resulted in persuasion in bringing individuals to a point in life where they obeyed the Gospel of Christ, or else they rejected it. The truth of the Gospel of Christ is so designed by God as to not be neutral. It is on the cutting edge. Because of the nature of objective truth (which exists separate and apart from the human mind), accountable humanity does indeed have the ability to reason correctly regarding such revealed truth and be persuaded to obey that truth, which brings freedom from sin (John 8:32-36; Rom. 6:16-18).

The Necessity of Conversion (26:4-20)

By the term *conversion* we refer to a turning or change. In understanding the consequences of sin one thus understands the need for all accountable individuals to be turned, or changed, from a lost state of alienation from God in sin to a saved state coming into the fellowship of Christ by obedience to His saving gospel. That requires more than sincerity in what one believes, or in how one lives. It requires more than simply being religious. Not all religions are of divine origin. As a matter of fact Christ only has **one acceptable religion** which is his church (Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 2:47; Col. 1:13-18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23). That requires more than to simply **claim** to follow Christ. One must obey from the heart the **form** of doctrine as set forth in Romans 6:3-18. All accountable individuals outside of Christ are lost (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; John 14:6)

Upon becoming guilty of sin and being alienated from God, one stands in need of New Testament conversion to be in a saved condition. There are four changes when one converts to truth:

- Faith changes one's trust (John 1:12; 8:24).
- Repentance changes one's mind (Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10).
- Confession changes one's allegiance (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37).
- Baptism changes one's condition or state (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:13-14; 1 Pet. 3:21).

The Need for Action (26:24-29)

When the New Testament of Christ affirms the reality of Salvation from sin that requires action and/or activity. It necessitates humanity's obedience to conditions of pardon that have already been discussed. It also brings about the act and reality of forgiveness wherein God removes from his divine mind the record of one's sins. Forgiveness thus takes place not in the life of a sinner, but within the mind of God.

Agrippa did not argue against the truth. The record does not indicate that he denied the need for a Messiah. There is no indication that he denied the Deity of Christ, nor the work of Christ. Paul made a very significant observation when he stated,

For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

Because Agrippa believed the message of the prophets and, of necessity, believed in the Deity of Christ, that disproves the false doctrine of Salvation by faith only. To be saved one must be **completely persuaded** and obey from the heart the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 6:17-18).

“Saved And Sure Of Heaven”

Cled E. Wallace

There is immeasurable satisfaction in the personal conviction that one is saved and sure of heaven. Many think they are saved who are not, and the disappointment of a multitude who regard themselves as sure of heaven must be viewed as appalling. Jesus expresses a warning along this line:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

Human speculation cannot point the way to heaven, nor can human feeling or opinion carry reliable assurance that one is saved. Divine assurance is based on the promises of God and a man should heed the divine admonition to “be not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17).

It is important that the information revealed to guide an honest man into a state of blessed assurance should be both simple and clear. The New Testament is not disappointing in this respect. The Lord’s will is expressly stated in words that are immediately understandable by all who have any appetite for assurance:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned (Mark 16:15-16).

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-38).

There is nothing in this that all should not easily understand, and he who obeys has the promise of God that his sins are pardoned. He is saved. “Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, so that there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.” (Acts 3:19) It must be clear that a sinner thus forgiven is saved only from his **past** sins.

It is both unscriptural and unthinkable that this pardon absolves him from the guilt and the consequences of sins he may commit subsequent to his baptism into Christ. Provisions, both ample and divine, are made to insure the Christian’s entry into heaven but these provisions are conditional and call for cooperation on his part. The apostle John has something to say about this:

If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:6-7).

My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also

for the whole world. And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments (1 John 2:1-3).

The Christian must walk in the blood-sealed commandments of the Lord or else sin will conquer him and keep him out of heaven. As an aid, he has constant and instant access to a throne of grace through Jesus our Advocate. It was to Christians Paul wrote: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:12). "So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh: for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:12-13).

There are some strange and harmful ideas afloat regarding the sins that Christians commit. A Dr. Pettingill has a "Bible Questions Answered" column in a Chattanooga, daily paper. A querist approached the doctor with a hypothetical question on divorce and declared that "the Scripture says that she commits adultery. Will that be a sin and keep her from being saved and going to Heaven at the end of time?" The doctor's answer will bear some looking into. He says in part: "The question of 'being saved and going to Heaven at the end of time' is not settled by such considerations. Every one who is born again is saved and is sure of Heaven."

That is, if I understand the matter, his contention is that if one has been "born again" and "is saved" and commits adultery he "is sure of Heaven" anyhow. I take it that "such considerations" would not be limited to adultery. There are other sins besides adultery, a long list of them. If "Every one who is born again is saved and is sure of Heaven," even though he commits adultery, why should he not be equally "sure of Heaven" even if he commits some or all of the other sins catalogued in the scriptures? This certainly gives a saved man plenty of latitude in the way of sin. The doctor must have sensed that this needed some sort of qualification so he remarked that "God will doubtless deal with them in chastening. 'For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.'" Incidentally, his use of this text is a perversion of it. The implication is that a Christian suffers the consequences of his sins only in this life. Doesn't a sinner suffer the same consequences for the same sins in this life? Is he also chastened of the Lord?

It is well enough that we examine the scriptures on this matter of sin and its consequences as it affects the Christian. Paul wrote to Christians and sounded this warning:

Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers; nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them (Eph. 5:5-7).

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." And we are blandly told that if a Christian does such things his "going to Heaven at the end of time is not settled by such considerations." "But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." (Rev. 21:8).

It seems to me that a man is pretty badly mixed up where his understanding ought to be, if he thinks that such sins will cause a sinner to go to hell forever, but cannot keep "one who is born again" out of heaven. "One who is born again" has committed himself to the will of God and vowed that he will accept divine leadership. He reneges on his vows, turns back to sin, and "is sure of Heaven" anyhow! The Bible does not teach it.

Besides, if I read my New Testament aright, a man who chooses to remain out of Christ

and rejects the gospel, will fail to reach heaven even if he never commits adultery and keeps the rest of the Ten Commandments. “Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things have passed away: behold, they are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). This new creature can be tempted, he can sin, he can fall from grace, “and is sure” to miss heaven unless he walks in the light with Christ. When a man becomes a Christian God does not grant him the indulgence for the sins he may afterward commit, implied in the theory of the impossibility of apostasy. He is on the other hand warned against falling, given a course in prevention, and told how to get back in case he does fall. Better listen to God and turn down the theories of men.

What Must I do to be Saved?

Believe – John 8:24; Acts 16:31; Heb. 11:6.

Repent – Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30-31.

Confess faith in Christ – Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:37.

Be baptized – Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38.

Catholics Hit Jackpot With Purgatory

Franklin T. Puckett

Of all false doctrines originated by men, devils, or fallen angels, none has proved more lucrative financially to its originators than the Catholic doctrine of purgatory.

The Christian's attitude toward the doctrines of men is set forth by the Apostle John when he exhorts Christians to “prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). He also said, “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 10-11). We are going to have enough sins of our own to answer for, without having to answer for somebody else's. The Christian cannot flirt with error, nor fraternize with those denominationalists who espouse error. He must take a definite stand for the truth and must wage aggressive warfare against all those who “do not the truth.”

Development of Apostasy

In apostolic times there were false teachers, even as there are today. New Testament writers prophesied of a departure from the doctrine of God. Paul said,

Take heed unto yourselves...for I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them (Acts 20:28-30).

It was also Paul who warned, “But the Spirit saith expressly that in latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

This “mystery of iniquity” (2 Thess. 2:3-8) was already at work when Paul wrote. In the early history of the church we see a radical change taking place in church government during the first five or six centuries. The autonomy of the local congregation was being destroyed; and hierarchy was arising, which would finally reach fruition when Boniface III was crowned as the “vicar of Christ” on earth about the year 607 A. D.

Dating of False Doctrines

As early as the year 120 A.D. we find the doctrine of “holy water” being referred to. In the year 157 A.D. came the first mention of “penance” or the infliction of bodily punishment for the expiation of guilt. Then about 394 A.D. came the doctrine of the observance of “mass” with all its weird mummery and mystical ritualism. The doctrine of “extreme unction” or the special anointing of the dying came into being about 588 A.D.

It should hardly be necessary to add that the Bible has not one hint of any of these practices. They are utterly unknown to its pages.

Purgatory

The doctrine of purgatory (gradually developing during the 4th to the 6th centuries) teaches that all who die go immediately into an intermediate state called *purgatory* that they may have the sins and uncleanness of their earthly lives “burned out” to enable them to enter heaven.

The length of one's stay in purgatory is determined by the number of unforgiven sins he had when he died, and by the number of masses said for him by priests on the earth. The manual of the *Purgatorian Society* declares: “The practice of recommending to God the souls in purgatory that he may mitigate the great pains they suffer...is most pleasing to the Lord and most profitable to us.”

It is, indeed, most profitable to the Roman Catholic Church to have such a doctrine! During World War Two, the Catholic bishop of a Canadian diocese announced to the women in his congregation that if they would pay him the sum of \$40.00 he'd guarantee that their boys who might die on fields of battle would be spared the pains of purgatory, and would be taken immediately to heaven.

The Purgatorian Society manual further states, “For these blessed souls are his eternal spouses.” That means that these souls in purgatory—unfit for heaven because of their sins—are nevertheless the eternal spouses of God. And according to the manual, “they are most grateful to those who obtain their deliverance from prison or even a mitigation of their sufferings.” There is the added promise that when these souls in purgatory have finally expiated their sins and arrive in heaven, “they will be sure to remember all those who have prayed for them.” Thus the vicious scheme of Catholicism begins to be apparent: Let those on earth pay money to the priest to have masses said for their dead loved ones in purgatory; then once the Purgatorian punishment has been accomplished these souls will be taken to heaven and they, in turn, will intercede for their loved ones on the earth!

Saint Catherine of Bologna, a Catholic “saint” declared that she obtained many blessings by recourse to the souls in purgatory, blessings which the saints in heaven were not able to secure for her.

That this whole monstrous doctrine is designed solely to enrich the pockets of the priests is evident from this quotation from the Purgatorian Society manual: “High masses are offered daily for the living and the deceased members of the Society.” Fee for membership is only \$10.00 and the manual assures its readers that this fee will cover them completely with insurance for the perpetuation of masses for themselves and their beloved dead. “Many worry whether any masses will be said for them after death. Now is the time to settle this important affair yourself on very easy terms.”

Thus you have it in stark, grim outline. Go to heaven the easy way; escape hell for \$10.00; join the Purgatorian Society today. According to Catholic teaching this is undoubtedly the most lucrative and most profitable doctrine ever invented by men. It has helped Catholicism to become the richest and greatest single land-holder in all of Europe. It is sending millions of dollars into her treasuries each year from the gullible and has deceived people from every corner of the earth.

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“Itching Ears” and Their Ticklers

J.H. Childress

Perhaps no words of the apostle Paul are more widely quoted by faithful preachers than these, found in the 4th chapter of his second letter to Timothy:

I charge thee in the sight of God and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom, Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching (ASV).

After delivering this famous charge, the writer emphasizes the great need of preaching

the unadulterated and unchanged word by drawing a prophetic picture of future conditions:

For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. But be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill thy ministry.

It doesn't require unusual powers of observation to note such a condition in the world today. Not only are there multiplied millions whose ears constantly itch, but there are always teachers who are perfectly willing to scratch them! Saddest of all, these teachers who serve their own interests instead of the Lord, not only scratch the ears of those who deliberately prefer falsehood to the truth, but by smooth and fair speech deceive the innocent as well.

But this deplorable condition is not confined to our era. The heroic prophets of Old Testament times also encountered opposition from those who hated to listen to unpleasant truths. These men of God knew the bitterness of seeing their own people turn heeding ears to the false prophets of the land.

There is an incident, recorded in First Kings 22 and Second Chronicles 18, which fitly illustrates the principle of our text. At that time, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, made a visit of state to King Ahab, ruler of Israel. There had been three years of peace between Syria and Israel, kingdoms that were usually engaged in warfare. Nevertheless, king Ahab's breast rankled with the thought that Ramoth-Gilead, which he considered as rightfully belonging to him, was within the borders of Syria. Accordingly, he proposed to his brother monarch that they form an offensive alliance against the Syrians for the purpose of reclaiming the lost city. Jehoshaphat consented to Ahab's proposal with alacrity, declaring, "I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses."

Just as the Greeks of classic history eagerly consulted their famous oracles on such occasions, Jehoshaphat thought it prudent to call prophets into the royal presence for the purpose of learning what fate the future held in store. Ahab had 400 "kept" prophets, and these with one accord urged the kings to go up against the king of Syria. They promised a sure victory; according to them, Ramoth-Gilead was already restored to the dominion of Israel. Indeed, one of the 400, Zedekiah by name, had made horns of iron and dramatically illustrated just how his royal master would push the Syrians.

Despite the optimistic and vainglorious words of these spokesmen, Jehoshaphat felt uneasy. He asked, "Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?" Hear Ahab's reply: "There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

But Jehoshaphat insisted that Micaiah be sent for, and a messenger was dispatched to call him. Willing—as he thought—to do a kindly deed in Micaiah's behalf, the messenger made this suggestion: "Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth; let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good." Manfully, the Lord's prophet replied, "What the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak..."

When brought to the king, he was asked, "Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?" By way of mocking the unanimity of the 400, the prophet sarcastically replied, "Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king."

Fully understanding the ridicule which was being heaped upon the other prophets, the king urged Micaiah to declare what the Lord had said. Thus bidden, the man of God revealed the awfulness of the calamity which was soon to befall Israel: "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd..."

Turning to Jehoshaphat, his ally, Ahab bitterly cried, "Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?"

But why continue the story? The words of God, spoken by the mouth of Micaiah, came to pass. But the fulfillment of this prediction isn't our main concern at this time. We tell this in order to present a living example of a man with itching ears. Ahab's opposition to Micaiah wasn't based on any doubt as to Micaiah's being a true servant of Jehovah. The king simply opposed him because he told the truth, and the truth to Ahab was unpleasant. Fearing this truth, Ahab had created a corps of hired retainers-400 fawning false prophets to console him with flattering falsehoods.

Also, imagine the terrible laxity of the times which called forth these anxious words: "For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of Jehovah, that say...to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa. 30:9-10 ASV). And, we must add the heartbroken words of the weeping prophet: "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5:30-31. And in the next chapter, he arraigns those false prophets who cried out, "Peace, peace," when there was no peace. Such false cries of "peace" are Satan's opiates which deaden the conscience and induce spiritual slumber.

We find itching ears today in and out of the church. The popular preacher is too often he who attacks sin in general, but never mentions specific transgressions.

It is not at all strange that those who have remained stubbornly opposed to the gospel should find little or no pleasure in plain preaching, but it is extremely shocking to find members of the church of the living God with the same attitude.

Not many miles from my home town, a Gospel preacher announced as his subject, "What God Teaches About Adultery, Divorce And Remarriage." An elder with the spirit of Diotrophes forced him to change his subject because the elder's sons had violated God's law on divorce and remarriage and the elder upheld his sons.

Many an evangelist has been warned against preaching on giving by some solicitous brother who whispers, "The brethren here just won't stand for it." Many Gospel preachers have lost their support because they have fearlessly attacked sin in high places. Church members who have no love for the truth think they may soothe their wounded consciences by employing pleasant preachers.

Today we are paying too much attention to the **profits** and too little to the **prophets**. We have become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, and are irritated by the preacher who dares to disturb our peace of mind. We want our preachers, like our fortune tellers, to "guarantee satisfaction." In spiritual things, we have become like the big business executive who has a staff of loyal "yes men," and that's the kind of preachers we want.

The loyal man of God cannot afford to say "Yes" when God shouts "**No.**" John the Baptist was not popular in the king's palace (Matt. 14:1-12). Hurt by his own children in the Gospel, Paul reprovably asks, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). Let us beware when all men speak well of our preaching (Luke 6:26). To change, alter, or substitute something else for, the word of God is to incur the anathema of Heaven's King (Gal. 1:6-9). "We cannot but speak the things" which God has revealed in His holy word.

If the gospel—with its message to both saint and sinner—falls pleasantly upon your ears, you are to be congratulated as a lover of truth. There is only one thing more to be pitied than he who hath itching ears. That is the preacher who is willing to tickle those ears. He is the sorriest, most despicable business in the world, "for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

Denominations Bear Bitter Fruit

R.N. Moody

If there is a privilege from God that we should exercise with reverence and awe, it is prayer. If there is any religious exercise that should receive the profoundest respect

from mankind, it is when God's people bow before his throne in prayer. And if any prayer ever offered up should be respected, must assuredly it is that sublime petition recorded in John, chapter 17 which was uttered by Jesus on that awful night of his betrayal. After invoking the blessings of his Father on his apostles, he looked down the stream of time and made one earnest request for all subsequent believers.

It should fill our hearts with gratitude to know that, amid the trying experiences of that dreadful night, when he stood, as it were, in the shadow of the cross, in behalf of you and me and all other believers, he prayed the Father, saying,

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).

This prayer, coming as it did from the Son of God, must plainly express the will of his Father. All believers should respect it by "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). But how little it is respected! It is contended by almost all professed believers that division among religious people is not only allowable, but is a righteous thing, and he who would dare contend for the oneness of God's people is an uncharitable bigot!

Instead of the "one faith" of the early Christians based on the truth of Christianity, we have, as articles of faith, hundreds of human opinions based on the traditions of men. Instead of "one body" (Eph. 4:4) over which Christ is head (Eph. 1:22-23), we have numbers of humanly devised denominations, over which men preside and legislate. Instead of contending "for the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) and laboring to build and extend the "one body," preachers are devoting their time to building up their sectarian institutions. Thus they have generated confusion, strife, and division among the people, instead of the unity for which Jesus prayed.

These preachers pose as called and qualified by the Lord, and thus fasten themselves on the people as messengers from God. One goes forth claiming a divine call to the ministry. He preaches his peculiar doctrine and builds up his chosen church. Another follows closely after him, making the same claim to a call to the ministry. He preaches a different and antagonistic doctrine, and builds up a distinctly different institution. Thus one follows another until we have scores of men who claim to be called of God, yet preach doctrines so different and build up churches so distinct from each other that there is no fellowship between them. Thus they make the world believe that God calls and qualifies one man to preach one doctrine and another man to preach another doctrine, and on and on indefinitely, claiming that all these contradictory doctrines can be proven by the Bible.

It is apparent to any thinking person that such a state of affairs is a fruitful source of infidelity. If so many different and contradictory doctrines can be proven by the Bible, its claim to the truth cannot be maintained because of its self-contradictions. The most dangerous enemies the Bible has are those who claim to be its friends, yet insist that it justifies all this confusion and division.

In my 30 years' experience and observation as a preacher, I have found denominationalism to be the greatest hindrance to the cause of Christ. When a person has been committed to some denomination, his every effort is to justify its teaching and practice; and when Scripture is presented that shows his position to be wrong, his first effort is to explain it away. If he fails in this, as a last resort he will say, "Well, I just can't see it that way."

I have gone into many communities and labored hard for days to show people what the Bible requires them to do, reading the commission of the Saviour and the preaching of the apostles under it, which makes the plan of salvation so plain that no responsible person need fail to understand it. Yet few, if any, accepted it. In many instances it was the general concession that I preached the Bible, but owing to the denominational influence surrounding the people, they would not have the courage to obey what they admitted to be the truth.

Among the bitter fruits of denominationalism are divided families and neighborhoods, with the long train of evils that follow which include making infidels of men.

Justification by Faith

W.P. Risener

Soon after the flood, when mankind began once again to populate the earth, an example of how justification could be obtained by faith was given that will continue to inspire hope until the end of time. For every accountable soul becomes stained with sin, and without justification the sinner has no hope.

Abraham did not seek to earn his justification as a payment due for works performed, “For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3). If he could have done so, and had earned his justification apart from faith, he would have had grounds for boasting (Rom. 4:2), but God would have received no praise for mercy and love; for the justification would then have been reckoned as a payment justly due.

Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:5).

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace (Rom. 4:16).

That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:7-9).

Faith thus excludes boasting (Rom. 3:27), and the apostle refutes the Jewish contention that men are justified apart from faith by keeping the law.

But now the “salvation by faith only” advocate has blundered to the other extreme, and set forth the equally false doctrine that men are justified by faith alone, before works of obedience; thus seeking to exclude works from faith, just as the Judaizer sought to eliminate faith from works. They mistakenly classify one who works by faith, with the worker of Rom. 4:4, who worked apart from faith, and the case of Abraham does not help their cause at all.

All along his journey toward justification, faith was counted or imputed unto Abraham for righteousness. But was his a faith **alone**, or a faith with **works of obedience**? “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb. 11:8). Thus at the very beginning of his journey, faith combined with obedience to start him toward the land of promise. For many years he walked in humble obedience, being fully persuaded, that what God had promised, he was able also to perform. “And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:22). Finally, in perhaps the greatest trial of his faith, he was commanded to offer Isaac, his son, of whom it had been said, “in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Gen. 21:12). And having finally attained unto the justification, let us consider the kind of faith he had, which at different times was said to have been counted or imputed unto him for righteousness:

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness (Jas. 2:21-23).

Just as his faith was united with obedience at the beginning of his journey, so also is it here at his justification. Yet in both places it was “by faith.” “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac” (Heb. 11:17). Therefore, the same kind of faith which had been counted or imputed unto him for righteousness, brought him at last to justification, and the Scripture was fulfilled or completed, which saith, “Abraham believed God.”

The candid reader will thus observe that both faith and works are necessary to effect justification in the sight of God. Works without faith would give man grounds for boasting while eliminating God's mercy and love, and faith without works would actually eliminate faith; "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (Jas. 2:26). It is indeed a sorry spectacle to see a man who preaches that kind of faith masquerading as a champion of justification by faith. No, a live faith on the part of man unites together with God's mercy, grace, and love, to effect the justification of the soul of man.

It was also at this time that Abraham received the promise confirmed by the oath, that in his seed, Christ, all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 22:15-18; Gal. 3:16). "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:18).

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil (Heb. 6:13-19).

We therefore today, have the assurance of God's promise, backed by His oath, that in Christ all shall be blessed. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John 5:11). "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14).

By a living and active faith we repent of our sins, and confess before men that Jesus is the Christ. Then, though human wisdom may not understand why God willed it, our faith constrains us to obey the Master's word: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). For the servant is not greater than the Lord, and it is fitting that we be made perfect by obedience as was Christ. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9). "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3). Thus we attain unto the justification by a faith which has wrought with works of obedience to bring us into Christ.

Kind reader, accept God's word, confirmed by His oath, and be justified by the faith which works through obedience to bring you by baptism into Christ where the blessing is promised. Do not be deceived by the teachings of those who have filled the world with the false hope of justification by faith alone. "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (Jas. 2:20). 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...And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:26-27, 29).

Concerning Christ and His Church

J.P. Lusby

Christianity implies the church. There can be no Christianity without the church. No one has ever "found Christ" since the days of His flesh except through the church. It would be as easy to find a ruling, reigning, king without a kingdom as it would be to find Christ without the church. There can be no such king without a kingdom; there can be no Christianity without Christ. And there can be no finding of Christ without the church.

The Head of the Church

Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, is the head of the church. God raised Him from the dead,

...and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:20-23).

And he is the head of the body, the church who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence (Col. 1:18).

This Christ is seated, not in some man-made ecclesiasticism on earth, not in the Vatican at Rome, but at God's right hand in heaven. His power and dominion are limited not to this world, but include also that which is to come.

That is not all. Paul says, Christ...

...being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phlp. 2:7-10).

It is by Christ that God hath in these last days spoken unto us. He it is whom God hath "appointed heir of all things." It was by him that God "made the worlds"; He is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. All things are upheld by the word of His power; it was He who purged our sins, and is now, seated "on the right hand of the Majesty on high." He is by so much better than the angels as He hath "by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

Yet some people suggest that the church amounts to but little, and that men can be saved without it as easily as they can be within it! Some preachers teach that in spite of Christ's organic connection with the church, salvation is possible outside it just as quickly as it is inside it. They hold that, in reality, the church, bought by the Savior's blood, is non-essential!

The Church—God's Family

The church is the family of God. Paul said, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph. 3:14). There is one family (the church), some members of which are in heaven, some still on time's side of eternity. But whether over there or over here, there still is but one family; and God is the Father thereof.

It would be just as reasonable to claim that one can be a child of God and not belong to His family as to claim that one can be a Christian and not a member of the Lord's church. Paul wrote Timothy, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. 3:14-15).

Either one is a child of God, a member of His family, or one is a child of the devil, a citizen in his kingdom, there is no middle ground. If one is saved, he is a Christian, a child of God, a member of God's family, a citizen in the kingdom of Christ. If one stands with sins unforgiven, he is a member of the devil's family and a citizen in Satan's kingdom.

Obedying the Gospel

In order to become a child of God, to be translated from the kingdom of Satan into that of Christ, one must obey the gospel. Christ declared, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5) To enter the kingdom of God is to become a member of God's family; they are one and the same institution.

Consider the events of Pentecost. Peter stood preaching to the multitudes who had gathered there. He spoke as the Spirit gave him utterance, preaching the death, burial, resurrection, exaltation, and coronation of Christ. He calls David to witness concerning the resurrection of the Lord, “he (David) foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption.”

The Jews to whom Peter preached, believed and accepted his word. They cried out, “Men and brethren. what shall we do?” What shall we do for what? The answer Peter gave supplies the clue. He said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” They were obviously asking what they needed to do to have their sins forgiven. The record states, “They then that gladly received his word were baptized and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls.” (verse 41).

Whenever a man believes with all his heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, whenever he repents of all sins, resolving to turn away from them, whenever he is buried with his Lord in the waters of baptism, that man does then and there become a member of the church of Christ. In that selfsame act he becomes a Christian, a child of God, a citizen in God's kingdom, a member of God's family. He is by that act brought into covenant relationship with God; his past sins are remitted, and God adds him to the church. “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

Bible Teaching About Baptism

Gordon Wilson

The subject of baptism is a many sided one, and has been debated in all of its aspects perhaps more than any other religious topic. Yet, the teaching of the Bible on the question of baptism is so clear and simple that it cannot be misunderstood by anyone who reads it with an honest heart.

Bible baptism is not to be performed upon just anything or anybody. There are certain specific qualifications laid down which must be met. For one to be a proper subject of baptism he must be one who **believes** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. There is not a single case on record of an inspired man giving order that one should be baptized who did not have this faith. Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Examine the cases of conversion in the book of Acts and notice that they who were baptized believed first.

Repentance is necessary to prepare one for baptism. When a person is baptized, he obligates himself to a life of faithful service in the Lord's kingdom. So he must decide in advance if he is willing to so obligate himself and to put sin entirely out of his life. Repentance is not mere sorrow for sin, but is a strong determination that leads to reformation of life. Actually, one must determine to reform his life **before** he is a proper subject of baptism. Peter told his audience on Pentecost to “Repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38).

In Acts chapter 8 there is a case of a man who had heard the gospel preached. As a result he believed in Christ and was evidently penitent. He then requested baptism. The preacher, Philip, said, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” The penitent believer then confessed, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Then he was baptized. Here, Philip required this man to confess his faith in Christ, or to make it known by word of mouth. Romans 10:10 says, “for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

From all of the above we conclude that for one to be ready for baptism he must believe the gospel, repent of his sins, and confess his faith in Christ. Obviously this excludes infants, as well as others who are incapable of performing these actions. There is no example in God's word of infant baptism. No, this does not exclude infants from heaven. Infants are not responsible for obedience because they lack ability. Not being responsible, God will not hold them accountable. Babies are safe until they grow up and arrive at an age when they are able to comply in full with the requirements of God. Only then do they become accountable.

Now let us turn our attention to another side of the baptism controversy. In order for Bible baptism to take place there must be water in which to do the baptizing. No other element than water will do for this important action; no other element is allowed in the Bible.

John the baptist used water, in fact much water. (Mark 1:8, John 1:26.) This certainly proves that water is the element in which to baptize a person. In fact, it would be impossible to think of any other element which would serve as well. The very feasibility and practicality of water is sufficient to prove that is the proper element of baptism, for the Lord would not choose something that is not practical or feasible.

More important than any of the above, however, is the fact that the New Testament plainly teaches the importance of water. "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized? (Acts 10:47). "And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him" (Acts 8:38).

Since water is the right element of baptism, Holy Spirit baptism for men today is excluded. If water is the element, then men are not to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. And in the Bible, the only case of Holy Spirit baptism was for the apostles alone. But the position is taken by some that men should be baptized in the Holy Spirit in addition to being baptized in water. To show this position to be false, we refer you to Paul's statement in Eph. 4:5 to the effect that there is "one baptism." Now, **one** does **not** mean two or more. If water baptism today is the right one, then Holy Spirit baptism is not, and vice versa. We have already taken the space to show water baptism to be right. The baptism authorized for us in the New Testament is administered by man. Who would deny this? But Holy Spirit baptism was administered by the Lord (Luke 24:49). Therefore, Holy Spirit baptism is not the baptism authorized for us in the New Testament. The only case of Spirit baptism was special and for the apostles alone.

We have now studied the subject of baptism so far to learn that there must be a proper candidate, a penitent believer; there must also be the proper element, water. Now let us turn our attention to the proper action involved in baptism.

Consider first the meaning of the verb "to baptize." It is a Greek word which has been transliterated. That is, the Greek figures have simply been changed to English letters, and the ending Anglicized. The word itself has not been translated. Since we are dealing with a Greek word, it is only fair that we go to the Greek lexicons to learn what the word means, just as we should go to a dictionary to learn the meaning of an English word.

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament is perhaps the most commonly used by preachers, and the most popularly accepted lexicon. Mr. Thayer says that *baptize* means "to immerse, to dip, to plunge, to submerge." Does it ever mean to sprinkle or pour? No, for there is a different Greek word denoting the action of sprinkling. Since the **how** is inherent in the word itself, it is needless to offer any arguments as to how baptism is to be performed. If sprinkling is baptism, then the element, water, is baptized instead of the candidate, since it is the water that is sprinkled and not the man. The same is true concerning pouring.

The examples of baptism in the New Testament indicate the action to be performed. "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." Does sprinkling or pouring require both persons to go into the water? Certainly not. Of course, it is true that one could have water sprinkled on his head while standing in water, but such would be mighty strange. It is also true that one could go into the water without then being immersed, but what would be the sense of it? Only immersion requires both persons to go into the water. This example is in harmony with what scholars say is the meaning of the word baptize. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him." (Col. 2:12). "Therefore we are buried with him in baptism" (Rom. 6:4). Anyone who knows the meaning of the word *bury* knows what baptism is. A burial and a resurrection must take place in the likeness of the burial and resurrection of Christ.

Now let us deal with baptism from the standpoint of its design or purpose. Peter told the Jews on Pentecost to "Repent and be baptized every one of you, for the remission

of sins.” There should be no dispute over what one is baptized for, since Peter plainly said to be baptized for the remission of sins. This is the design, or motive, that the sinner should have in being baptized, and since this is the commanded motive we cannot doubt that baptism will accomplish the remission of sins.

We have never taught that there is any efficacy in the water, per se. Indeed, if water itself were powerful to save, man would have discovered that fact long before Jesus ever came and died for us, and there would have been no need for the sacrifice which He made. There was no power in the water of the river Jordan when leprous Naaman was cleansed (2 Kings 5:1-15) but there was power in obedience to the commandments of God.

First Peter 3:21 teaches that the salvation of Noah through water was a type of the way baptism saves us. How did water save Noah and his family? If we learn this, then we shall know how baptism, in the antitype, now saves us. Water delivered the inhabitants of the ark from the sinful and impure antediluvian world, and translated them into the purity of a sinless world. So the Lord through baptism delivers the penitent believer from the power of darkness, and translates him into the kingdom of His dear Son. (Col. 1:13.)

If we could only persuade men to cease their quibbling and accept the plain teaching of the Bible on baptism, how wonderful it would be! Why will men not believe and accept the simple promise of Jesus, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. (Mark 16:16.)

Jesus the Physician

C.R. Nichol

Having created man, Jehovah pronounced him good—yea, very good. He was as good as Jehovah would have him as a created being. Man was not created a machine, inert, lifeless; he was created with the power of volition. Adam, the first man, sinned when there was no irresistible power forcing him to disobey Jehovah. His sin did not result in the loss of any of the faculties which he possessed by creation, nor did sin bring to him any new faculties. Sin is an element foreign to the nature of man; it is a disease which undermines and brings death. Because of sin, Adam was separated from Jehovah and the environments congenial to his continued existence, and he died.

The Sinner Sick

Viewing man in his lawless life, Jesus said, "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick...I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 9:10-13 ASV). In this, Jesus represents Himself as the Physician, man the patient, and sin the disease. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32 ASV).

Physical disease saps the vitality, mars the body, and incapacitates man for the proper exercise in the work to which he has set his hand, and often results in death to the physical body. The physician seeks to assist nature in throwing off the disease.

In his work, the physician expects, and must have, the cooperation of the sick man. Jesus came to "call" the sick man—the sinner. He can hear the call and has the power within himself to heed or to refuse. To what extent the physical body and the mind of man are reciprocal, none of us knows. We do know that when man is suffering from some organic lesion it is not enough for him to simply have faith in the physician; he will not be cured simply by "faith only" in the physician. If "faith only" in the physician does not cure one of physical sickness, neither will "faith only" cure one of spiritual sickness—sin.

The man in sin **can**, and **must**, obey the commandments of the Physician—Christ. "Repent ye therefore and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19 ASV). "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38 ASV).

Dead in Sins

Paul said to the Ephesians, “And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1 ASV). How is it that Jesus speaks of the man in sin being “sick” and in need of the physician, and Paul says he is “dead”? The dead man is not a subject for the physician, but for the undertaker. The sick man is not dead. Wherein is the harmony in the figure that the sinner is “sick” and that he is “dead”? If disease is not eradicated from the system, the result is certainly death. Paul viewed the certain result of sin—so certain are its results that he speaks of it as though it had wrought its end (death) and says they were “dead”; for while in sin they were under the sentence of death, and the execution of the sentence he contemplated, as is made plain by his statement that, “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

Freed From the Sentence

Jesus came to pardon man—to free him from the sentence of death; and to that end, He reveals in the gospel what men must do. “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:15-16 ASV). Every sin is a **past** sin, for man is not a sinner till he has practiced sin. We have not lived in the future; hence, man has no **future** sins. At some time in the future, you may sin and then become guilty. Man was not “sick” till he transgressed the law of God.

Though the physician may attend you through a continued spell of sickness, when you have recovered—when you are well—that is no guarantee that you will never be sick again. So when you have been pardoned of sins committed, that is no assurance that you cannot, or will not, commit sins again—that is no guarantee you will never be sick again, and again be sick—condemned.

Again, when one has suffered from a sickness, and is cured, the body is weakened and an easy prey to disease. The wise physician attempts to assist nature by giving you a tonic. When the Lord pardons your transgressions, He seeks to have you fortified against the recurrence of sin; He would keep you well, and with that in view you are exhorted,

In your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble (2 Pet. 1:5-10 ASV).

If you develop the traits of character enjoined, you will never fall. The statement is rhetorical: If you do not do the things commanded, you will certainly fall. “He that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins.” See the picture of the man who “lacketh these things”: Not only is he described as being a coward, ignorant, given to self-indulgence, unstable, profane, cruel, and filled with hate; but it is said that he sees only the things that are “near”—he cannot, by faith, see the gate of gold, wing ajar, for his entrance into the home of the soul; but he has “forgotten the cleansing from his old sins”—he relapses and is again sick. He becomes like the swine that was washed, returning to wallowing in the mire.

Do not persuade yourself that because you have been made well—saved from your sins—you are as safe as though you were in heaven, the door locked and the key thrown away. **If** you do as the Lord directs, you will never “fall”; but so certain as you fail to follow as He directs, then certain is it that you **will** “fall.”

“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy, Volume 2, Revised and Enlarged is now in preparation and should be ready for publication in the Fall. It will include a lot more material documenting the apostasy of mainstream churches of Christ and—like the first volume—will be **free of charge**

The Lord Hates Fellowship with Error

Nana Yaw Aidoo

“Because thou hast joined (“allied,” NKJV) thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken (“destroyed,” NKJV) thy works” (2 Chr. 20:37).

These were the words of God through Eliezer to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. What a sad commentary on an otherwise faithful king. It is written of Jehoshaphat that the Lord was with him because he walked in the former ways of his father David. (2 Chr. 17:3). And for twenty-five years as king, “he walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD.” (2 Chr. 20:32).

Why then did the Lord destroy the works of a king who did right in His sight? The text says **because** Jehoshaphat **allied** himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted very wickedly. (2 Chr. 20:35). Jehoshaphat partnered, fellowshiped and worked with one who was not in fellowship with God, in building ships to go to Tarshish. As a result of this unequal yoke with one who was not in fellowship with God, the Lord said to Jehoshaphat; “Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the LORD has destroyed your works.”

May we learn this lesson (Rom. 15:4), so that we do not destroy our good works on the day of reckoning through fellowship with error (cf. Neh. 6:1-3; Hos. 4:17; Psa. 1:1; Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 2:14-16).

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We Should be Willing to Change

F.B. Srygley

When we are wrong, we should change, but when we are right we should not change. That is one reason for life after we become Christians. It is a privilege and duty to change when we see that we are wrong. Repentance is simply a change in our way of living. It means a turning around. The one who never does wrong will not have to repent. But who is he, and where did he come from? We talk about a perfect human life, but it can only be found in the Christian who is perfectly forgiven.

Someone said, "It hurts me to see you change." Well, it will not hurt me to change, if I change from the wrong to the right. I cannot even defend myself when I see that I am wrong and will not change.

My friends may condemn me for changing, but the Lord will not, if I change to the right when I am wrong. It injures me to be wrong and refuse to change, but it cannot injure me to change when I am wrong.

Serving Our God

Jerry C. Brewer

God is a jealous God. He demands devotion to Him with all the heart, soul, and mind of man. He knows one cannot love Him and serve another god, whether it be an idol of stone or wood or sports or recreation or family or money or fleshly lusts.

Jesus said one cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24; 12:30). He further said that one cannot be His servant who is not willing to forsake all (Matt. 16:24-25). May we today echo Joshua's words of devotion: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15).

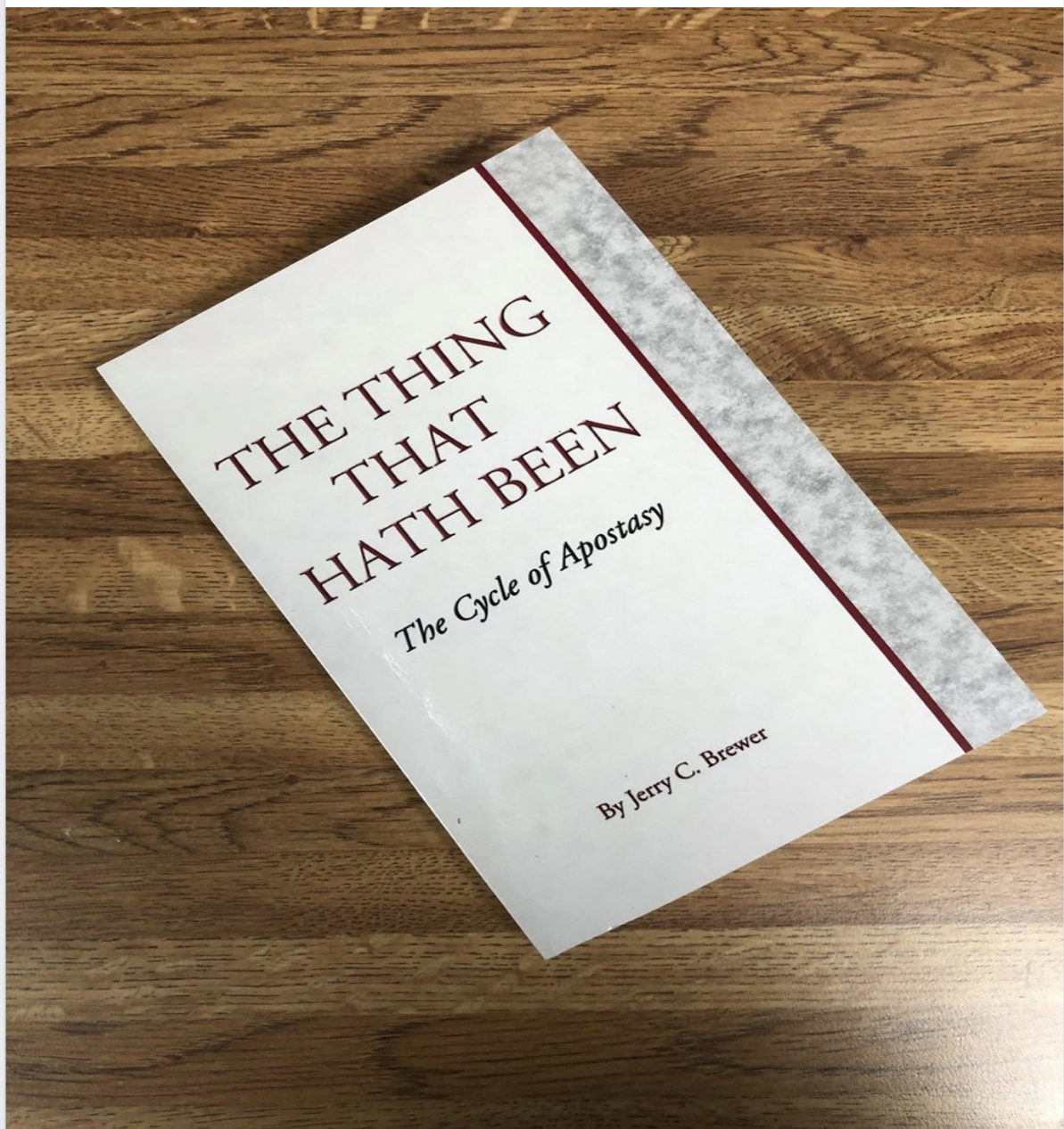
“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy



Dub McClish

April 18 at 1:24 PM

The Thing That Hath Been is the latest book from the pen of our brother, Jerry Brewer. Subtitled, *The Cycle of Apostasy*, it is a blockbuster of 216 pages that every member of the Lord's church needs to read. In it our brother traces and documents the historical parallels between the digression/apostasy of the last half of the 19th century with the same sad drifts/departures the church has suffered in the latest 4 or 5 generations. You will find it hard to put it down once you have begun reading. Published in February, the book is already in its third printing. It is offered **free of cost** (\$3.00 p/h requested). When you receive/read yours, I think you'll want to order to give to others. Order it from Brewer Publications, 308 S. Oklahoma Ave., Elk City, OK 73644, or by email at txjch@att.net.



We now have limited funds that enable us to mail single copies **FREE OF CHARGE**. Send us addresses and we will send "**The Thing Hath Been...**" **without cost** to you. The **book** is **FREE** and, for a limited time, so is the single copy postage! Order from txjch@att.net.

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